

SIXTH ASSIGNMENT

Preparation: Read “Our Secret” by Susan Griffin from *A Chorus of Stones*, in the packet.

Due Dates: Proposal due Sat. noon. Draft due 4/30. No revision is required. You may choose to revise it for your final portfolio, however.

Length: Proposal—one paragraph, with questions. Drafts: 4-6 pages.

Audience: Magazine readers unfamiliar with our class and Griffin’s piece; provide enough context.

Purpose: To analyze effects of the interwoven strands of autobiography, biographical material about Heinrich Himmler, the history of nuclear weapons, facts of cellular biology, dynamics of violence, etc. Identify two or more strands in Griffin’s essay. Trace the roles of each and of the two (or more) together. Consider relationships between ordering principle(s) and the essay’s effects.

Topic: Describe the roles of two or more of the strands in “Our Secret,” specifically in terms of the contributions to autobiography (*auto*, the self presented; *bio*, the life story; and *graphein*, the form of writing) and to the message about World War Two and violence in general. Trace the development of these strands through the entire piece, in relation to each other, AND in relation to other strands or parts of the essay that you find especially significant. Begin with a thesis that articulates the significance of the strands in terms of their inter-relations, other strategies Griffin uses, the effects she achieves, and (or) the subject of her essay.

OR-- Write an autobiographical piece that employs AT LEAST THREE strands (preferably four). Note the kinds of themes Griffin uses--history, biology, biography—and the rhythms in which those strands appear. Are all the sections the same length? What seems to determine their order and length? Make the length, order, and rhythm of your sections serve a purpose. If you pick apt themes, you do not need to plot the entire piece before writing it. For example, pick a topic you have studied or one that fascinates you: music, rocks, one of the sciences, a hobby, a country; one successful past paper used volcanoes in an essay about the pressures of school to good effect.

Tip: The autobiographical choice should be fun; I encourage you to try it!