

Preparation: Read selections from Virginia Woolf's "A Sketch of the Past, pages 63-73 of the packet plus handouts of first page and beginnings of autobiographies by Kate Simon, Annie Dillard, Margaret Bourke-White, and Raymond Mungo. Consider the techniques these authors use to start their autobiographies and ways that you might begin yours. List five possible beginnings to an autobiography and feel free to consider the beginning of any selection we have read in class. (All books are on Reserve at Hayden Library; you may want copies for yourselves.)

Discussants: (your name can appear here: _____)

Someone to present Conway's chapter, "Assertive Women": _____

Due Dates: Proposals due Mon., 3/13 (or earlier, by email); drafts due Wed., 3/15

Length: Proposals should be about a paragraph; drafts may range 3-5 pages (3 copies).

Audience: Magazine readers unfamiliar with the class, so provide enough context.

Purpose: To consider the effects of various beginnings on readers; on the rest of a life story; and on the senses of *auto*, *bios*, and *graphein*. (We discuss these in class.)

Topic: Write a possible opening for your autobiography or analyze an opening. Realize that many autobiographers find a "telling" beginning only midway through the writing process (or later) but that all chapters need openings. (By "telling," I mean appropriate to the life and particularly revealing of its themes, shape, and organizing principles.)

Those not feeling autobiographical may consider the openings of our other readings (those not in the packet) in contrast with Woolf's; this approach will take you deeper into considering Rodriguez, Baldwin, Kingston, or Griffin.

Tip: Analyze Woolf's use of the past in "Sketch" and its focus on sensory perception. You may want to write on her techniques, compare her two accounts, or locate the selections we read within the complete "Sketch of the Past" (on Reserve).