Critical Reading Guide for Workshops: Autobio/Narration

Writers: Include the following information on the top of your typewritten workshop drafts:
1: Audience: Who are your readers and how do you expect them to react?
2: Purpose: What do you want your readers to learn from your story?

Readers

Write a brief (four sentence) paragraph on each section to help give critical comments on the essay being workshoped. For more detail, see the text.

Essay Title: ________________________________

Author: ________________________________

Reader’s Name: ________________________________

1: First Impression: What’s the dominant impression you get from the first quick reading?

2: Effectiveness of the storytelling: Read it again. What’s the climax of the story—or can you tell where it is? Point to place where the intensity slackens, where stronger verbs or descriptions might help.

3: Consider how vividly the scenes and people are described: Point to any descriptions, similes, metaphors, or details that are especially effective. Indicate any descriptions that contradict the story’s dominant impression. Note any scenes that need more development. Identify dialogue that could be summarized or that is not needed. ➔
4: **Is the Autobiographical Significance clear?** What have you learned about the writer from the story? Point to any passages that impress you with their clarity or eloquence. Are there places where the writing seems sentimental or overstated?

5: **Suggest how the organization could be improved.** Consider the overall plan. Are there good examples of transitions and verb tense markers that help situate the reader in time and place? Point to places you think description interferes with action; where you think more description is needed. Point to locations in the essay you think certain paragraphs or material could be moved to.

Is the *beginning* effective? **Why or why not?** Should the essay begin somewhere else?

Is the *ending* effective? **Why or why not?** Is it too abrupt? **Suggest how you think the ending could be improved?**