

per•son•al state•ment [pur-suh-nl steyt-muh nt]

noun

1. A thousand words, more or less, carefully selected and arranged to display, both prominently and subtly, the personality and internal intricacies of the particular individual authoring the statement. Usually includes a clever or interesting anecdote (i.e. something about how the speaker went home last weekend and was overcome with the most incredible and cleansing sense of relief to be out of Blacksburg, eating his mother's food, and sleeping in a bed that smelled like warm, old dryer sheets and the cologne he bought in high school to impress Lauren, the girl with cascading blonde hair, but instead accidentally spilled onto the mattress without ever having a chance to wear, and even though that climactic moment of 9th grade tragedy struck within him a feeling of heart-and-stomach plummeting that he has never been able to forget or stop experiencing *ex post facto* when he thinks back on it, as with all who have lost something precious or something that cost forty dollars, it is still a fond memory that feels like home and growing up. Said speaker might mention how when he was home, he went with his little brother to the pool he swam in as a child and played pool basketball with his little brother's friends and forgot for one blissful hour that he wasn't still in 6th grade and free for the summer, and during that time the expanding entropy of the splashing water and laughing and his heaving chest and the thrill of competition, however juvenile, once again filled his veins with life. In an anecdote such as this, the speaker might mention, ever so tactfully, how embarrassed he is to have missed home so much and to have been so sad to leave because he had work at 6 a.m. on Monday morning, and he still wonders what kind of student and more importantly, what kind of man it makes him to acknowledge such a significant soft spot when he was supposed to be recklessly and tenaciously exploring the world and sowing his wild oats, so to speak. He should have been happily watching his childhood home disappearing in the rearview instead of longing to see it growing larger through the glass of life's figurative windshield and his

vehicle's literal one). The anecdote should help segue into an explanation of the larger metaphorical meaning behind the statement, the best of which will delicately lead the reader to believe the speaker has noble, admirable qualities without blatantly touting those most attractive traits. Or sometimes, as in the above example, the anecdote exposes, quite by accident, a weakness that the speaker never intended to reveal, but one that grew legs and walked itself into the spotlight of the personal statement as the speaker wrote and was carried away by a damning flow of words and feelings that finally broke through his mental floodgates after spending so many weeks building up and conspiring against his regularly assumed mantel of macho stoicism. The speaker in this case hopes that the meaning he intended to imbed in the narrative will not be lost on his audience, or worse yet, misinterpreted as something akin to the fickle diatribe of an emotional middle school cheerleader's secret diary. Instead, he wishes to convey that he, the speaker, is a man who, though often afflicted with what some would call weakness, is constantly striving to transmute those little gaps in mind and brain into incorrigible strength, and if this fails, he hopes that he would have at least blazoned a little flicker of courage by rejecting his apparently randomly allotted genetic and circumstantial makeup for a chance at something greater. Isn't that, after all, the most glorious thing a man can do? Flicker with courage?