Grade Level: 7-12

Time Frame: 1 hour


*Projection capabilities useful but not required

Learning Objectives: Students will write a personal essay in which they describe a physical scar and the event that caused it using descriptive language.

Prior Skills and Knowledge: Some familiarity with descriptive writing and using the five senses will be useful. This writing activity is not intended to introduce these concepts, but to allow students time to practice identifying descriptive writing in their writing and others.

Sequence of Activities:

Discussion, 25-30 minutes.

*Read excerpt from Paul Guest’s memoir:*


Some questions that could guide but should not limit your discussion:

- What is so striking about how the author spends the night before his accident?
- What is the speaker’s attitude toward Jody at the beginning of the piece?
- What is the speaker’s attitude toward Jody by the end of the piece?
- What do you think of Jody?
- Why does Guest include a description of setting off firecrackers in a book about how he broke his neck? What information does it add? What does it allow you to imagine that you couldn’t picture before?
- What are some of the sensory details that the speaker observes as his bike it crashing? What about sensory details leading up to the incident?
- What emotional or physical scars did the speaker likely sustain from this accident?
Can you think of a time you had an accident that left a scar? What do you remember about the experience? Does your body remember particular sensations, details, etc.?

**Writing Activity, 15-20 minutes.**

Describe a scar you have on your body using your five senses. Tell the story of how you got it. If you don’t have a physical scar, think about an internal or emotional scar you may have. If you could see it what would it look like? Smell like? Taste like? How did you get it? The scar or the event that caused it doesn’t need to be serious; it could be a birthday, the time you were the victim of a practical joke, etc.