

EXAMPLE SHORT AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL (NONFICTION) STORY

Prompt: Write an autobiographical story about your life that contains at least five paragraphs and all the elements of a story. Use the APA style.

TITLE OF THE STORY: Just Call Me Xena!

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Just Call Me Xena!

My name is Juanita Perez. I was born in Barstow, California, in the middle of the Mojave Desert. When I was growing up, we lived behind a motel that my aunt and uncle owned. I am the youngest of four kids. My brother Juan is the oldest. The twins, Debbie and Susanna, were born next. I'm the youngest. We have a bunch of step brothers and sisters, too, because Mom got married three times. In my neighborhood, girls get married early and often. Many have several kids by their early 20s. They stay in our town all their lives. By the time I was 7 years old, I was cleaning rooms at the motel, and two years later I was doing some baby sitting. I actually liked working because I was away from my mom. Mom could be scary sometimes, especially when she was drinking. While I was cleaning the rooms, I used to watch daytime TV. I loved the reruns of "Xena: Warrior Princess." Xena could handle herself in any situation. She was one tough *muchacha*.

When I was 13, I got a job at the Anytime Fitness gym out by the bypass. That job was quite an eye opener for me because I met people from outside my neighborhood. I saw how they talked to each other and how they dressed. After I had worked for a few weeks, the gym manager, Jeff, let me take home old copies of *Muscle & Fitness* magazine. I couldn't believe all the muscles on the women in that magazine. I wished I could be as strong as they were, like Xena. When I showed the magazine to my mom, she said that I would never amount to anything. She laughed when I told her I was going to train as a body builder. She told me to be careful how

much money I earned at the gym. She was worried that she might lose her welfare checks if I earned too much money. A few days later, Jeff said I ought to get serious and enter a body building competition. I told him he was crazy. Jeff said he would pay me extra if he could use my photos in his ads. He wanted to get more girls to buy memberships at the gym, and he called me his poster girl. At first, I told him no. I didn't want any of my friends or family to see me showing off my muscles in public.

Meanwhile, my family continued their lives as usual. Unfortunately, when Susanna was 16, she got pregnant. She had to stop cleaning rooms the last few weeks before she had little Raul. The rest of us helped take care of him, but I still took the bus to the library after work three times a week. During that time, I started learning some anatomy, especially about the different muscle groups. At the gym, I talked to a nutritionist about how to make a diet plan. She taught me how to cook lean chicken, beef, eggs, and legumes. At the gym, I watched the other customers work out. I learned how to do squats, deadlifts, standing overhead presses, bench presses, and pull-ups. This training was hard work, but it paid off. I didn't realize it at the time, but the training was changing the way I thought about myself. When I got back to the motel one night, there was a cop car sitting out front. Susanna was pressing charges against her so-called boyfriend. She had a black eye and was crying. When I brought little Raul into her room to nurse later in the evening, Susanna said, "Juanita, you have to get out of this place." I told her I could never leave my family even if Mom was half crazy. She said, "Nita, you're the one kid that can make this family proud, and you know it. Just do it for me." She made me promise to build a career and make something of myself.

The next week, I went back to the gym and told Jeff I would pose for photos for his ads. I started doing serious workouts. I worked hard building my muscles. As I earned money, I put

most of it in a savings account, but I used some of it to buy decent trunks and a tight-fitting muscle shirt to wear while posing for photos. However, I was just going through the motions of training. I really could not imagine ever leaving town. Finally, the day of the deadline to enter the IFBB tryouts in San Bernardino came. That's the International Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness, which runs all the national bodybuilding competitions. Jeff knew that I could not afford to make the trip. He offered to drive me to the competition. He said, "I dare you to apply. I *dare* you, Juanita!" Fortunately, something snapped inside of me. I agreed to apply for the tryouts, and I was accepted.

After I attended the tryouts, I realized that this was the life for me. Actually, I did not even place at the tryouts, but I loved the scene and the competition. I started entering other regional contests on the West Coast and even placed in some. Eventually, I have been able to attract sponsors to help pay for my traveling expenses. They have also paid for my entry fees. Recently, I started earning enough money to train every day. I no longer have to work at the motel or take on odd jobs. Next year, I will travel to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania for the IFBB North American Championships. I hope I will win, but even if I do not win, I will make my family proud, especially my sister Susanna. I am determined to do something different with my life. I want to build a real career and not accept the idea that my fate is sealed.