Color Coding

General Statements: Could appear in many pieces of writing—avoid specifics—deal with abstract things.

Examples: “I saw him every day and was keenly aware not only of his physical changes, but his spiritual ones, as well.”

“It may be different for others, but pain is what it took to teach me to pay attention.”

“I had learned that a shrug doesn't allow for much discussion.”

“How would you feel if something like this happened to you.”
The white house across the street from the high school looks run down. The car port, supported by red posts, is sagging. The tulips that grow along the red and white slatted fence look like they were planted years ago. They wave their spindly stems with a chorus of weeds now, but they used to sing with daffodils. Every time I see these things, it makes me sad. This was my grandma’s house, before the traffic of 4800 drove her to another house a block away. Since she died, seeing this reminds me of all the memories we shared.
Color Coding

Specific Details: Proper nouns, specific descriptions, names of specific objects, specific event, anything that would be difficult to plug into another piece of writing.

Examples: “The tug of the diesel engine made the caboose lurch, and Father lost his balance and tumbled off the steps.”

“The bowl itself reminded me of soup, Campbell’s chicken noodle soup, my favorite food.”

“Her mower, now a gas powered self-propelling Toro, sparkled in the corner of the meticulous garage.”
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Epiphany: Realizations, clues to your purpose, general statements that lead to realizations

Examples: “There was a purpose in letting us do that—a thought that had never occurred to me.”

“It was only a passing remark yet it made me feel like the first fish that ever crawled onto land.”

“That was the lesson: It wasn’t about me; it was about us.”
Volunteer Workshop

A. What is the purpose?

B. What places in the essay engage you and why?

C. What places in the essay confuse, disengage, or fail to affect you and why?

D. What general advice could we give to improve the essay (even if it is already good)?