

FUNDACIÓN EDUCATIVA DE MONTELÍBANO
MEMOIR ANALYSIS

NAMES: _____

Read the memoir. Then drag the element to the corresponding part of the text.

DIVING IN

Take your mark. Anticipation builds as I crouch and grip the edge of the rough plastic, ready to strike at any second. I finally hear the sound of the electronic starter just a few nanoseconds earlier than my competition. I hit a block of ice before I dive just below the surface. A few strong kicks and I'm taking my first stroke, and then another as fast as I can. Breathe as little as possible. By the time I'm on the second lap, I'm going nowhere. I am dying to take in gulps of air and rest for only a moment, but I know I can't. Surely this is almost over. My lungs and muscles burn for oxygen as I dig in for the final stretch; the end of the pool could not come soon enough. I look up to find that I have shaved a second off of my time and have achieved last place in my heat, as usual.

I have never been an athlete. My motions are awkward, uncoordinated, and uncertain. At fourteen, I had only just learned to swim the butterfly with a dozen eight year olds as my classmates. Deciding to try out for my high school swim team was the biggest challenge I had ever undertaken. I will never forget the day of my first tryouts. The coach had posted tryout times that were way beyond my reach: thirty-five seconds for fifty yards. I had never even come within twenty seconds of that time. All that time I had spent the summer before my freshman year swimming lap after lap, practicing for this day, seemed like wasted effort. I knew I could swim those fifty yards ahead of me, but only if I was given a full minute, not just thirty-five seconds. Holding back tears, I watched my classmates, fearless, dive into the water. Should I dive in behind them knowing I will fail?

It's not as though I've never failed before: a Latin test, a piano audition, or even as a friend. But I had personal experience behind me to reassure myself that I would get better. I started swimming with a stone cold slate and only a few months of summer training with a private instructor. No summer leagues or competitive teams. I just swam back and forth. Up to this point, I had never physically pushed myself so hard. All I wanted was to make the team.

Practices were much worse. Though no one was cut, I knew I was the slowest. My teammates passed me, and I always finished each set last. I can hear the coach yelling out the next set of drills: "Ten 100's! Ready ... go!" Meanwhile I am still struggling to get to the end of the previous set, deprived of energy, oxygen, and morale. I cried countless times out of frustration and self-pity, wanting to quit. I had made the team, but I was failing my teammates. I cramped my team's efforts and embarrassed myself, but I swam every lap. I may have been the slowest, but I was going to work the hardest.

I improved tremendously after just a few weeks of rigorous practice.

Although I was still the slowest, I was slower by a smaller margin. Fifty yards in thirty-nine seconds. No one else could say they had improved by seventeen seconds, a tremendous accomplishment. I persevered through every meet, practice, lap, and stroke. I had attained my goal: I was a swimmer.

Swimming is the hardest challenge I have ever undertaken. I have always been very driven academically and socially, but I was very afraid to push myself to be an athlete because balance, endurance, and coordination were so unfamiliar to me. However, I did not allow myself to accept failure. Just dive in and keep swimming. There is only me and the pool, a full immersion of body and mind.

Take your mark. My muscles and mind lock into place, attentive and poised. I hear the starter sound and take a leap, already stretching toward the end of the pool. My strokes are fluid, deliberate, and quick. Breathe as little as possible. I do a flip turn, tight and well executed, as I push myself harder and faster. I don't think about the air I need to fill my lungs or the other girls in my race; I only concentrate on what I feel. This time as I reach the end of the pool, I look up to find that I have reached a new personal record of thirty-six seconds and have achieved next-to-last place in my heat. I have won.

Engaging title that forecasts the subject of swimming and also hints at the memoir's theme.

Introduction starts fast with a lead that sets the scene, and it ends in a surprising way.

Background moves the plot forward

Conclusion resolves the conflict as narrator describes a newly gained clarity

The complication is introduced, an inner struggle the narrator faces.

Narrator's personal tone is maintained throughout.

Rich and vivid details give the story texture and intensify the complication.

<i>Memoir element</i>	<i>Part from the text</i>
Intimacy between the narrator and the reader	
Rich and vivid details	
Central theme	
The new understanding or revelation	