1. Earliest Memory of the Military
Think back to your very first understanding or consciousness of the military. Perhaps you remember learning something in school, seeing war movies on TV as a child, playing with GI-Joe toys, overhearing family conversations about the military, or being told a story or shown pictures about the military. Write down everything you can remember about that moment. Try to dig deep to recall everything you saw, heard, thought, and felt in as much concrete detail as possible. What year was it? Who else was in the room with you? What was going on in the immediate, cultural, or historical background? If you can’t isolate one specific earliest memory, try writing down three or more early memories of the military.

2. Independence Day
In past years, we’ve distributed prompts at this time of year that ask what the 4th of July means to you, or that invite you to chime in on a larger conversation about how fireworks can affect veterans with PTSD. This prompt asks you to recall one specific and memorable July 4th, and write everything you can remember about that day/evening. If you can’t remember any July 4th, feel free to address one of our past July 4th prompts.

3. Anaphora
Anaphora is the use of a repeated word or phrase at the beginning of a sentence or line of poetry. Here’s an example from Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech:

Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God’s children.

Anaphora allows for a rhythmic intensification of emotion and a more exhaustive exploration of one’s subject. In the example above, it is used to make a political argument, but it can also be used in more personal forms of writing. Try using anaphora in your own writing. Come up with your own key word or phrase to repeat, and see if you can generate a short piece. You can, of course, depart from the pattern at any point and return to it if/when you wish.