Composition Resource Book

This is a handy book for those who are teaching composition. It includes resources for all phases of composition work.
EN120 Composition
Meg Petersen

Conference Questions

Please bring your draft in progress to all conferences and think about the following questions ahead of time and be prepared to answer them. You should come prepared to direct the conference.

How close is this paper to completion?

How did you approach this subject? Why did you decide to approach it the way you did?

What do you think is working well with this draft?

What problems have you encountered in writing this draft?

What problems or weaknesses do you see in the paper now? What is not working?

What ideas do you have for revising this paper?

What feedback/response do you want/need?

Critical Questions to Ask of Drafts (in group conferences):

- What is powerful in the writing? Identify an image, line, metaphor, or representation of a person which is powerful.
- What is omitted? Who/what is absent and/or hinted at or overgeneralized?
- What clichés are used to gloss over experiences, facts and feelings?
- What doesn’t fit? What contradictions emerge?
- What aspects of culture (gender, race, ability, social class, age, etc.) are constructed? Which are concealed?
Personal Narrative Writing:
   Some quotes to think about, that speak to what we are all about.

   "My story is not important because it is mine... but because if I tell it anything like right, the chances are you will recognize that in many ways it is yours. Maybe nothing is more important than that we keep track... of these stories of who we are and where we have come from and the people we have met along the way, because it is precisely through these stories in all their particularity... that God makes himself known to each of us most powerfully and personally... to lose track of our stories is to be profoundly impoverished not only humanly, but spiritually.
   "I not only have my secrets, I am my secrets. And you are yours. Our secrets are human secrets, and our trusting each other enough to share them with each other has much to do with the secret of what it means to be human."
   -Frederick Buechner

   "Memory is a complicated thing, a relative to truth, but not its twin."
   -Barbara Kingsolver

   "The discovery of being bound to a particular society and a particular history, to particular sounds and a particular idiom, is for the writer the beginning of a recognition of himself as a finite subject, limited, the beginning of a recognition that first puts his work in a real human perspective for him. It is a perspective which shows him his creaturehood."
   -Flannery O'Connor

   "For the writer there is no oblivion. Only endless memory."
   -Anita Brookner

   "You look out the window, and you see the tip of a tiger outside, and you know there's a whole tiger attached to that tip, and you wonder about the tiger."
   -Mekeel McBride

   "Part of becoming a writer is the desire to have everything mean something."
   -Louise Erdrich
"If we had to say what writing is, we would define it essentially as an act of courage."

-Cynthia Ozick

"A story isn't about a moment in time, a story is about the moment in time."

-W. D. Wetherall

"You don't write about the horrors of war. No. You write about a kid's burnt socks lying in the road."

-Richard Price

“You don’t look back along time, but down through it, like water. Sometimes this comes to the surface; sometimes that; sometimes nothing”

-Margaret Atwood, Cat's Eye

“All poets are liars.”

-Maxine Kumin

"Planning to write is not writing. Outlining... researching... talking to people about what you're doing, none of that is writing. Writing is writing."

-E. L. Doctorow
Introductory Activities

The following activities are ice-breakers. I use the one about what makes writing a positive or negative experience to help the students understand why I have set up the class in the way that I have. Why I do not assign topics etc.

The second activity and its variations help the students to get to know each other better and also get them familiar with interviewing skills.
Introductory Activity: Composition

What makes writing a positive or negative experience?

Free write for five minutes on what makes writing a positive experience. What is it easy? When does it flow? You may describe specific incidences or just write generally about the topic.

Stop. Turn over your paper, or draw a line. Now for the next five minutes, write about what makes writing a negative experience, when is it difficult? When is it painful?

Share responses in small groups and prepare a list of common points. (Instructor should circulate, challenge groups to think more deeply about the meaning of what they have written, try to help students to abstract principles from the specific instances—for example, if they find letter writing easier have them speculate on why that might be—known audience, focus on content, etc.)

Discuss in large group. List points on the board. Discuss.

I use this exercise as a lead-in to why I set up the class the way I do. Times for the free writes can be varied.
**Interviewing to Create Portraits**

This exercise is a good introduction to interviewing, for helping students to get aquatinted and to help them to learn to focus their writing.

- Generate five open-ended questions which are so broad and open you could ask them of anyone.
- Pair off randomly (I often pass out index cards and people find the person who has the same number on the card that they do.)
- Ask each other the questions on your sheet. Note down your answers. Try to get good quotes to use.
- Pause. Generate five specific follow-up questions from the answers you have received to your initial questions. Decide on an area on which to focus your questioning.
- Interview each other again. Get quotes.
- Ask any follow-up questions which occur to you.
- Write a portrait of the person you interviewed, including information relative to your focus and excluding anything not relevant to your focus.
- **VARIATION:** Instead of writing a portrait, ask students to write a story using the person they interviewed as a main character. They must use anything they do know about the person, but they are free to make up what they don’t know. So if they know the person is from New Hampshire, they can’t have him born in China, but they can make up anything they do not know and are not obligated to mention everything they do know.

Examples (of portraits)

PJ likes to do simple things in life. He enjoys taking life one day at a time and never passing up an opportunity to have fun. It seems like he’ll go through life enjoying it, instead of fearing what may be ahead. This is good because he’s way too young to get stressed out. He’s the type of guy that a lot of people wish they could be like.

Ryan seems to value power and money. He would like to own his own town someday if he can so that he could take care of his citizens and they would look up to him. Obviously, owning a town takes money and when I asked him what his driving passion—the thing that makes life worth living—is, he replied, “money, because money is the most important thing in society and everything revolves around money, except for love.” Maybe he has a sensitive side too....
Ways to Help Students Find Topics

I rarely assign topics for papers (although I do put constraints on assignments, and I will do an “assigned topic paper” later in the semester to help students learn to make an assignment their own) I feel strongly that students should have to choose their own topics, so that they will choose topics which are meaningful to them and thus, be more invested in the work of revision. I realize, however, that the process of identifying topics is difficult for some students and that many others are not used to it. Often they do not feel that they have anything worthwhile to say. Also, when the topic is too open, it doesn’t give the student any starting point to hang on to. Therefore I begin with some exercises to help them generate topics. These are given here. I also try to do at least one exercise every week which the students may use to develop into their papers if they have nothing else they would rather write about. This also allows them to practice skills. The exercises are also often keyed to the assignment constraints each week and help the students to get a jump-start on their papers.
Quick Writing

- The purpose is to generate ideas quickly, to associate and free the mind. Quick writing is a lot like free association. It generates lots of ideas for you to work with later.

- It is an all-purpose generating technique which is transferable to many different situations.

- Set a time limit and stick to it (ten minutes often works well). You can always write more later.

- Write rapidly, try to keep the pen moving on the page.

- Use whatever shortcuts you like (e.g. “&” for “and”).

- Let your words chart your thinking path (which means digressing is just fine—maybe even desirable).

- If you can’t think of anything to write about, write that, but keep writing.

- Don’t edit. Pay no attention to spelling, grammar, word choice, etc. This is first-draft writing and thinking.

Using Free Writing to find a topic

Write for ten minutes without stopping, ignoring mechanical issues etc. Let your words lead you where they will. (You might use a general prompt such as “I remember”, or you may being with an object and start with “This reminds me of…”).

Stop

Read what you have written to yourself. Check anything that you found surprising or interesting.

Read what you wrote to a partner, or read the parts that you feel comfortable reading—remember that this is not intended to be polished writing. The purpose is to suggest ways you could go with your writing. Ask your partner what they thought was interesting, what caught their attention.

Choose a focus—the most interesting part of what you wrote the first time. Free write on that for another ten minutes.

Use this free-write as the basis for a paper.
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Ways to get ideas for papers

- think back on life events, personal experiences
- listen to yourself talk, what do you say?
- read things, think about how they were written, how do you react
- listen to the news, what makes you angry? what interests you?
- try things you have already done in different ways
- look over the exercises we have done in class
- think about the day you just had
- use your friends’ experiences
- think about your daydreams and visions
- look through old photographs
- talk to other people
- begin in the middle of an old story
- practice leads
- ask for a first line
- take a quote as a first line
- go somewhere (like MacDonald's, Dunkin Donuts or the cafe) and listen for a good quote-- write the story behind it.
- think about things that bother you
- think about your enemies
- think about strange people
- think about vacations, sporting events, horror fiction
- think about places you have lived or spent a lot of time, list everything you remember about them
- think about a particular year in your life, write everything you remember about it.
- free write-- write everything that comes into your head, look through what you have after ten minutes for possible topics.
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Using genres to get ideas
If you can't think of something to write about, sometimes it is helpful to look at different forms or genres. Sometimes just thinking about these modes and genres will give you an idea for a topic. This list will also give you an idea of the broad range of what is possible.

Personal experience narratives
Fictional narratives (short stories, fictionalized events, tall tales, science fiction etc.)
Autobiographies
Biographies
Essays
Textbooks
News Stories
Reports of current events and features
Children's books
Letters to the editor
Editorials and opinions
"How to" papers
Parodies
Advice columns
Scripts (plays, skits, radio plays, puppet shows, TV commercials etc)
Public notices
Last will and testament
Eulogies
Interviews
Oral History
Instructions
Movie, concert and record reviews
Sports article
National Inquirer/ News of the World- type article
**Writing From Artifacts:**

Go through your wallet or backpack and pull out a photograph or other artifact and free write for ten minutes about what it means to you.

If you don’t have photographs, you can write about what you are carrying in your backpack or purse and what it means to you.

**Homework:**

Go through a photo album and find a picture of yourself as a baby.

**In class:**

Write three paragraphs about the picture.

In the first paragraph, try to describe objectively what is in the photo from the point of view of an outside observer.

In the second paragraph, try to write in the voice of the baby or child in the photograph.

In the third paragraph, write about the photograph as your adult self looking back on it.

**Writing From Artifacts:**

1. Describe the artifact objectively so that someone who could not see it would get a good visual picture of it. Your aim is to be very objective and precise in your description.

2. What questions could you ask about this artifact? (These should be genuine questions.)

3. Describe the artifact in use, in context. What stories does it remind you of?

4. Write about the significance of the artifact to you now as you look back on the time or the relationship or the activity or whatever it represents.

5. Free associate, using the artifact as a base and coming back to it. You might return to describing the artifact if you run out of things to write until another idea occurs to you.

6. Tell a story about the artifact.

**Critical Stances Related to Artifacts**

These questions can lead to thinking about artifacts in terms of their place in the global economy. They can help students to consider artifacts critically.

a. Value—reconsidering types of value—What is the value of this object? What kinds of value could we look at?

b. Timescale—historical and personal—where does this object fit into our cultural history?

   Into our personal history

c. Space—what spaces has it occupied? Where has it traveled?

d. Production—who made it or found it and under what conditions?

e. Mode—How could we describe its feel, shape, dimensions, etc.?

f. Relations to institutions of power—How does this object relate to global or local institutions of power? Who controls the artifact and its attendant communities?
Guided Imagery—Shifts of Vision  [This is a script for a guided imagery—you read the script to the students and they follow the instructions within]

One thing many people have found valuable to write about is a shift in perspective, those times when suddenly we see things differently. Vision is a word with rich associations, so perhaps I can help you to consider some of the possibilities. People often see things one way and then come to see things differently at another point in their lives. Listen as I talk about these possibilities, try to associate with something which you could write about. Listen for items which remind you of things in your life, which trigger significant memories or ideas for writing.

What are some things you have come to see differently? [very slowly, pausing between each idea] As a young child, did you ever realize that something was not what you thought it would be? Was not as you had seen it before? School, Day care, the library, a first tooth, a first romance, all look different to us after we have experienced them. As a more grown up person, did you ever come to see a person differently over time? This person might have been a parent or a teacher or a partner. Have you ever had the experience of having someone do something and suddenly seeing them so differently that you will never be able to see them in the same way again. Sometimes we are hit with new perceptions like a bolt of lightning, suddenly we see things in a new light, sometimes it is only in looking back on a situation, in re-visiting it through writing that we are able to gain perspective and see it differently.

Sometimes we grow up and change and no longer see people in the same way. Sometimes the change is in us, and when we look back we no longer see a circumstance, a place or a person in the same way. Can you think of a place which looks different to you now? Can you think of a person who you no longer see in the same way? Are there events in your life which you have come to view differently as you have grown and changed? Are there students who revealed themselves to you in different ways over time? Are there moments when you have been revealed to yourself in a different way?

Now put down your pencils and relax, sit back in your chair and get as comfortable as you can. You can take one or two deep breaths… taking a moment to relax your body. I am going to give you some suggestions to help you do some internal research, to explore your own memory. While I talk, you may find it helpful to stare off into space or to close your eyes, so you can fully appreciate the pictures that my words call up in your mind.

As you sit there, you can notice the pressure of your back against the chair… and your feet on the floor… and when your eyes are closed, you can hear the sound of the air rushing through the ventilator, or the hum of the fluorescent lights. Your may become aware of your won breathing … the air flowing in and out of your lungs… the feeling as you exhale… and as you become increasingly relaxed… you can be pleased to discover … that you can take yourself back in time… and, using your memories… recreate scenes from your life.

And so now I would suggest that you return to a moment and a place which was significant in terms of your shift of vision. As you arrive there, you will notice that time is slowed down, making it easy for you to find yourself in the scene, and settle slowly into yourself. Now you can take a good, long , slow look around. What do you see? Look down at yourself. Notice how you are dressed. . . now turn and look to your right… What do you see? … Now look to your left and notice what’s there… And you can even turn all the way around and look behind you and notice what you see there… You can notice the sounds in this place… and the feel of the air on your cheek… Is someone here with you? Who is it? How do you feel about this person or these people?… And what are you saying?… And what are you doing?… And what are you thinking?… And feeling?… And now time begins to move on and you can experience your shift of vision and the events which are taking place…. [long pause]

And s you finish experiencing this event in your life, you can think about what it means to you now, and you can appreciate the insights it gives you… And now, you can gather up the sensations, ideas, sights and sounds to bring back with you… and you can gradually return to this time and place… to this room, taking all the time you need.

And when you are fully ready, you can open your eyes. [Change voice tone to normal] And now you may want to pick up your pencil and make a few notes so you will remember the many things you have just observed in your experience.
Ways to Use Journals/Writer’s Notebooks

This is only the barest of minimum ideas for using journals in a writing class. I generally tell students to keep a journal/writer’s notebook in which I ask them to write ten minutes a day, but that I will not collect them or check them in any way and the journals will not count towards their grades. We will, however, use them in class and therefore I require them to bring them to class to use for exercises and to use as a basis for writing. I do quick writes many days that I have them write in the journal. I bring in my own journal and I might read an entry at random (of course I do not read anything I am uncomfortable sharing, nor would I ask them to). I ask them what in that entry I could develop into a piece of writing. Then I ask them to pick an entry at random from their own journal, read it over and come up with a topic from their entry. There are many other possibilities for using journals in class. I prefer to allow the journals to remain private, to allow students to control access to them, because I feel they are more valuable if they are seen as private space. Whatever you decide to do with the issue of privacy, be up-front with the students so they will not feel obligated to share writing they thought was private. I do, however, sometimes give them assignments which involve writing in their notebooks.
Journal Writing
General Considerations:

- remember that this is for you
- recording -- reflection -- meaning --
- set time, make it routine
- write quickly
- don't evaluate your writing
- ignore questions of spelling, grammar, word choice etc.
- don't judge what you write
- strive for neutrality, objectivity in recording
- relax conscious controls and let images and feelings come
- be spontaneous, record things in the order they come to you
- don't think about anyone else reading what you write
- pay more attention to inner events, go to what affects you emotionally

Exercises for Journal Writing

These notebook topics are from The Poet’s Pen. The aim is to help students to become more aware of their surroundings and awaken their senses to their realities.

- Listen to people talking and record at least five strange or funny remarks.
- Sit in one place for ten minutes and write down everything that you observe: sights, sounds, smells, feelings, temperatures, etc.
- Go back to the same place and observe again. Compare the two observations.
- Sit where you can watch a group of people. Observe what they are doing with their time. Would you say that any of them are wasting their time? Define what you mean by “wasting time”? How might someone else see this?
- Write down as much as you can from an overheard conversation.
- Watch someone doing something and try to describe it objectively with no emotion or judgment on your part.
- Describe an object you find beautiful or ugly and try to describe it without using those words so someone else will see it as you do.
- Sit in a public place and describe the people you see coming and going.
- Pick two things that are important to you and explore in writing what they have in common and how they are different.
- Write about something you wanted very much but were unable to get.
- Think about someone with whom you “get along well enough.” Explain what you mean by that phrase.
- What is your greatest treasure? Describe it so someone else could see its value for themselves.
- Create a really convincing lie about yourself.
- Watch the news. Write one of the stories as if you were involved in it.
- Write a letter to your 8th grade self, providing advice.
Collecting Exercise

One of the purposes of a writer’s notebook is to collect ideas and topics that you might want to explore later in a more sustained piece of writing. This exercise is meant to stimulate your thinking about people, events, and issues in your life. It can help you to discover, in your own experience, knowledge, and attitudes, potential topics for your writing.

In your notebook, record the following lists:

- ten things that you like
- ten things that bother you
- five things a friend would say that you are an authority on
- five things you would like to know more about
- five people who you admire and why
- three crossroads or turning points in your life
- three people who taught you things you will never forget
- three interests you have in common with your parents
- ten moments when you remember being really exhilarated—really full of happiness and glad to be alive
- Three times when you were really scared.
- Things you have lost or misplaced or things that have mysteriously disappeared.
- Five books you would never want to read again and five that you would take with you to the proverbial dessert island.
- Five quotations that have special meaning for you. They can be from any kind of text: books, music, poems, ads..
- Five sayings you would like to find in a fortune cookie and five you would never want to see.
- Things that have been invented in your lifetime.
- A list of ways to complete the sentence, “I wish I were…”
- Make up your own list.
Journal Writing Prompt to spur imaginative thinking

This prompt is based on a process called “synectics” from Models of Teaching by Bruce Joyce and Marsh Weil. The purpose of the writing is to look at common objects from a different perspective and spur imaginative ways of thinking.

Possible Topics:

- How is your life like an ice cream sundae?
- How is a rose like chicken soup?
- How is a prisoner like a toaster?
- How is school like a salad?
- How is your life like a day at the beach?

The sky is the limit with this one and sometimes it is fun to have students bring in their own comparisons and put them in a bowl and pick out combinations. Sharing these can lead to interesting class discussions.

You can also pose questions like:

- What color is love? Why
- What colors can love be?
- How is prejudice like the color red? green?
- How are you like a piece of cheese?
- If you were a musical instrument, which would you be and why?
- If you were an automobile what kind would you be and why?
- If you were a book, which would you be and why? [you might try a whole list of these and invite students to pick some out and use them to compose a poem about themselves]

Create Metaphors:

Write a list of ten things that interest you down the left hand side of the page. (Such as: a saxophone, fireflies, merengue, the blues, constellations, dandelion seeds, armadillos, moles, sparklers) For each item, write a sentence beginning with that item and then using the words “is like” to make a comparison. For example: A saxophone is like a lonely voice wailing in the dark. or Fireflies are like cold explosions of light in the universe of a summer night. Try to work quickly and don’t edit. Choose a sentence from your list that you particularly like to expand into a paragraph or use as the basis for a free-write. You can also list abstract concepts in a second column and play mix and match metaphors.
The Writer’s Craft

These exercises are designed to help students master some of the ways writers work with language, character, time and audience.
I have also included an activity for helping students to deal with writer’s block.

The next three sections develop leads, focus and description in more depth.

In the section on Leads, Endings and Titles I have included both expository material and activities. Often these exercises appear to dramatically improve the quality of student pieces. The beginning carries so much impact.

Focus is notoriously difficult for beginning writers, but so essential to good writing. The section on focus contains exercises and ideas for working with their own papers.

I have also included a section on description of places and people. Some of the poetry activities dealing with people might also be appropriate for working with description.
Dimensions of an Essay

Use the following dimensions to enrich the treatment of a theme in your essay.

**Scientific Inquiry Dimension** — Consideration of the ecology, environment, elements, reactions, geography, effect on the human body, what can we learn through observation, question posing, scientific method, etc.

**Creative Thought Dimension** — Consideration of beauty, creativity, stories, folklore, works of art, music, etc.

**Past and Present Dimension** — How does the past influence the present in relation to the theme of the essay? You can think about history and politics, current events, etc.

**Self and Society Dimension** — How does culture and the relationship between the individual and the society influence the theme of the essay? What types of people are involved and what are the power relations between them?
Time Exercises

1. Take an incident of no more than five minutes—an experience you feel strongly about (this makes it easier to remember sensory details) and write a page or more about it. Label this “time Stretch.” Use examples “Off the Deep End” by Lisa Hall and “The Eleven Minute Eternity” by Cassandra Marcella.

2. Think of a long period of time you feel strongly about—three years of being afraid of a bully, two years of a bad (or good) relationship, a month at summer camp or boot camp, a soccer season. Capture the essence of that time in a paragraph. The key is to include specific details. See the examples below:

[For one summer] I was a gopher on a heavy construction crew. We laid 60” reinforced concrete pipe through the swamps of Southwest Georgia, sixteen-inch polyvinyl chloride water main next to I-20, 25 feet down in red Georgia clay. My dad would wake me up around 4:45 every morning so we could be at the office by 5:30. Trying to stay awake during the long drive through the unlit back roads of North Augusta and Richmond County was a whole new kind of heel. Every time I drifted off to sleep, Dad would punch me hard in the biceps… Dad would offer a chew of Levi-Garrett. I didn’t hate chewing because of the taste, I got used to the gasoline flavored juice—it was mostly the stale piercing smell of tobacco that permeated the truck that made me sick. By the time the sun rose, we would be slinging pipe. Sunrise comforted me because I could then look for water moccasins instead of feeling for them. By lunch time my hair was crunchy from all the dirt trapped under my hard hat and my lips were parched from the sun. Shade was no relief because the swamp mosquitoes seemed oblivious to repellent.

I will always remember the regulars, that’s to be expected. I will always remember the hustling and harassment, that is, after all, why I left in the first place. Unfortunately, these are not the memories I would prefer to leave with as I look back on my job waiting tables at the Shaker Inn. This had started the summer of my sophomore year and ended the summer of my senior year. I will never go through such a hassle again the next time I need money. I hadn’t even had any experience bringing food to rich people, but that was OK, none had been needed. The first time I was yelled at for not writing a check up right by the cook, my trainer threw a pencil at my head. It’s safe to assume the atmosphere was pretty hectic. It’s wasn’t long thought before I was gliding my sandal-clad feet across the hardwood floor to well-dressed people bearing either bloody marys or veal medallions. If the steak was too tough, or the eggs were too runny, I would smile like a trooper and return to the kitchen for a barrage of complaints. However, I soon found my dream summer job when I quit—I went to work at a general store where the coffee was self-serve.
Handling Problems of Time and Pace

The traditional rule is that episodes meant to show important behavior in the characters, to make events dramatic as in theater, or to bring news that changes the situation should be presented in a scenic or eyewitness manner. Stretches of time that are secondary to the story’s development are handles by means of what is called a narrative bridge. Dialogue is a direct report of speech; in direct discourse is the summary of what was said. Some examples:

Scenic:

Now they were at the ford, the rain was still falling and the river was in flood. John got out of the jeep an stared at the white violence of the water they must cross to reach the place where the muddy road picked up again.

Narrative Summary:

The journey to Punta Gorda took two days by near-impossible road. At one point, they had to cross a raging river and follow a muddy track that only a jeep could manage.

Dialogue:

“Well how are we going to get across?” Lisa asked.
“Easy,” said John, “We take the rope over, get it around that big tree and use the winch to pull the jeep across.”
“But who swims the flood with the rope?”
“Well I can’t swim, “ he said, “But you are supposed to be good at it.”

Indirect Discourse:

When they came to the swollen river, John suggested that they put a rope across and then use the jeep’s winch to pull the vehicle to the farther bank. Because Lisa had talked so often about her swimming ability, he suggested ironically that she be the one to take the rope over.

Look at one of your pieces. Mark where you have shown a full scene or an incidental scene. Mark where you have used summaries, either narrative summaries or summarized scenes and indirect discourse.

Evaluate your choices. Where would you change them in revision.
Show, not Tell

Most writers will agree that it is far more effective to show, rather than tell. Compare the following:

- She was really crazy.

- She walked along, muttering to herself about Martians under her breath. She looked up at me with a sneer. “Spoiled meat,” she muttered.

The second example allows the reader to come to the conclusion which is expressly spelled out in the first example. The conclusion generally has a more powerful impact if the reader can come to it on his or her own. The same rule applies to emotion—let the reader experience what gives rise to the emotion, rather than explaining your emotion to the reader. If you want the reader to feel horror, describe the horrible circumstances to the reader. Don’t merely tell the reader it was horrible. Let your reader feel the horror for him or herself. Draw on examples from your own life to rewrite the following sentences so that they show, rather than tell.

- He (or she) never respected me.
- The cop was arrogant.
- My heart was broken.
- He (or she) didn’t respect me.
- Ann was not the shy type.
- My mother was constantly confused.
- Look for places in your work which you can rewrite in order to show, rather than tell.
**Emotional Words Activity**
Brainstorm words on the board that refer to emotions or concepts (e.g. love, hate, greed, isolation, pride, generosity, etc.) Choose two of these words. For each, write a scene or a description which suggests that emotion or concept. It can be fun to read these aloud to guess which word inspired them. Discuss how it is more effective to show than to tell.

**Writer’s Block**
Brainstorm ways to avoid or overcome writer’s block. Work in small groups. Combine each group’s answers on the board.

**Audience Exercise:**
Write a one-paragraph evaluation of a course you are taking or have recently taken. Write three different versions.

- For a friend who is thinking of taking the course next semester
- For the professor
- For the department chair

You must say the same thing in each version, but say it in different ways according to your audience.

**Vague sentences**
Pick out vague sentences from student work. Write these on the board. Ask the students to rewrite these with detail so that they present a vivid picture. I usually tell students to let themselves go if they wish and write small stories or paragraphs if they are so moved. Some students get ideas for papers out of this exercise. Go around and share answers. Comment on responses which are especially more vivid or interesting than the originals. (see sample list of sentences below)

1. It was a pleasant day.
2. He was a strange-looking guy.
3. The class was boring.
4. She never listened to me.
5. Her room was a mess.
6. The view from the top of the mountain was awesome.
7. We got along well enough.
8. The street was busy at this hour.
9. She never pays attention.
10. The night was scary
Leads

Leads that work are generally honest, specific, direct, quick, begin at the best part or at least in the middle.

Types of leads:
- Anecdotal lead- tells a little story to introduce the theme of the essay
- Quotation- can be formal— for example beginning a paper on the LA riots with this quote from Martin Luther King—“A riot is the language of the unheard”.
- Dialogue
- Shocker lead—one of the best I ever saw was “I was dead” other examples: “I never had any parents”, “I have always had a fascination with lizards and amphibians”
- Descriptive lead—sets a scene
- Voice of a character—establishes the narrator’s voice
- Problem or announcement
- Show the characters in action

Endings:
Same as leads—everything that works as a lead can also work as an ending.
The best endings leave the reader with something to think about, echo the lead, present an extension of the ideas in the piece rather than introducing new topics.

Titles
Should be specific, refer to something important, do some work, give some information, help to focus the piece.
Exercises with Leads:

1. Write a lead to your autobiography. Don’t begin with “I was born in __________.” Instead, find a moment in your life that defines who you are and begin there.

2. Write questions about some of the things you wrote into the web of your life or the positive/negative graph you made of your life. Pick the best question. Without using the question itself, answer it in a lead and keep going.

3. Read these questions and answer them with leads. Pick one that intrigues you and write on.
   - Who are you?
   - When did you become an adult?
   - Why don’t you write?
   - How do people change?
   - Who were you?
   - Is the night sky the same as it was when you were a child?
   - What’s a dream you have?
   - Where do ideas begin?
   - Who will you be?
   - What have you lost that you wish you could regain?
   - What was your destiny?
   - What do you regret?
   - What is something you wish someone had warned you about?
   - What is something you wish someone had told you?
   - When did you meet a significant person in your life?

4. Write five questions about yourself aimed at revealing harsh truths. Try answering one in a lead.

5. Look through your journal. Write down questions that a reader might have. Answer one of them in a lead.
Examples of leads:
Compare. Talk about these leads. Which of each group is more effective and why?

Football paper #1

“Hey there, freshman. I’m going to run you over.’
“Blue, ready, set, go!” the quarterback growled off the cadence.
    My eyes shifted from the quarterback back to the mountain of flesh in front of me. For a split second I think that I saw drool sliding down the chin of the cave man that had spoken to me. In another second, I was officially on my butt and underfoot of several hefty linemen.
    “Welcome to the Red Team” was the only response that I got.

Football Paper #2

In my paper I’ll talk about a broad range of topics that deal with football and with life that comes with football whether you like it or not. Some of the topics I’ll be discussing is how football is a demanding sport which is not just a one season sport but one that involves preparation throughout the whole year whether you lift weights or get aerobically fit, you cannot afford to slack off in the off-season if you wish to be a successful player. Another area I’ll be talking about is that if you are a good football player you are also expected to be a good role model for the whole community and if you make a mistake by blowing the championship game or get caught drinking the people do not forget that quickly if at all. I’ll also be talking about how people who don’t ever play football are the people who criticize the players the most. I’ll talk about these subjects by taking you through some of my senior year at X Academy.

Compare:

Draft 1

The adolescent I interviewed is Eric F, a 16-year old high school sophomore. I knew a bit about Eric’s personality prior to the interview because we work at the same restaurant. This knowledge, however, was of no great detail, basically just superficial characteristics. As I explained to Eric, my primary focus of this interview is to get a clear understanding of his personality. With this I will then have insight into the relationship he shares with his family and how this relationship has affected his life.

Draft 2

Sixteen-year old Eric isn’t going home tonight. It’s a Friday evening and his spirits are soaring. He has successfully convinced his reluctantly trusting mother to loan him the car, so he can stay at a friend’s house. He holds the prized keys up and laughs at his deception. His mother has no idea that tonight he’s going to attend a party and he’s going to get drunk.
Beginning with a Given First Line

Choose one of the following lines (all adapted from published works) to begin your own piece of writing.

-- I used to dream about mother, and it was always the same dream.

--He was only pretty if you loved him.

--She knows he has read the letter.

--Mother raised us on white lies.

--Our holiday was going badly.

-- The phone was ringing.

-- I met him on the stairs.

-- Where were you last night?

--I can't believe you said that.

-- I only have one photograph of him left.
Focus

Read over your paper. Try to state the focus in one complete sentence—aim for a focus that is more than just a statement of the topic. You could begin with “This paper is trying to show…” Exchange papers. See if your partner comes up with the same or a similar focus statement.

What is this Story About?

Write a family story in a paragraph or two. It could be about the time your uncle or your brother did something. It could be about how some one was born. Try to tell the story briefly.

After you have written it, try to come up with three things the story could be about—it could be about your uncle’s stinginess for example, or the way your aunt tolerates him or how he gets away with things. It could also be about male and female roles, etc.

Read your story to a partner or to a group. See how many more possibilities they can come up with. Discuss how you would write the story differently to highlight the different meanings. What details would you emphasize, what would you ignore or play down. What would you include? What would you leave out? Discuss how you would write the story differently. This is what focus does to a story and how it affects your writing. To find the focus, ask yourself what the story is about and what you want it to be about.
Themed Revision Activity

*What is this Story About?*

Take your draft of your current piece. Try to come up with three things the story could be about beyond its literal meaning. A story about how your uncle wouldn’t take you to an amusement park when you were little for example—it could be about your uncle’s stinginess, or the way your aunt tolerates him, or how he is always disappointing those who love him, or his cruel streak or how he gets away with things. It could also be about male and female roles, etc. On your own, try to come up with three themes that your story could explore.

Then read your story to a partner or to a group. See how many more possibilities they can come up with. You should not comment on or evaluate any of their ideas. Just write them down. Don’t worry if the themes are not true to the story. The point of the exercise is to generate lots of possibilities.

Discuss how you would write the story differently to highlight the different meanings on your list. What details would you emphasize? What would you ignore or play down? What would you include? What would you leave out? Discuss how you would write the story or essay another way.

Choose two very different themes from your list. Make a T-chart showing how you would change the draft to bring out each theme. What would you include? What would you leave out?

Share examples of these with a partner or with the whole class. Discuss the differences.

Think about what thematic focus does to a story and how it affects your writing. To find the focus, ask yourself what the story is about and what you want it to be about. You may not always know the focus when you start, but as part of the revision process, you should look for and hopefully discover, the focus and think about ways to bring it out.
Using quadrants to plot out your personal narrative

List ten moments in your life that you keep coming back to, that just won't let you go. These do not have to be huge momentous turning points in your life. Actually, no moment is too small to be a subject for writing.

When you have your list, I would like you to eliminate five of these that you don’t want to write about today. You can place a small x by the side, so that you will have these in your notebook for later.

Now eliminate two more. Now eliminate two more, until you are left with the one that you will write about today. Remember, you can always come back to the others.

Now, before we begin to write about that moment, I would like you to engage in some brainstorming to get ready to write.

Place your event in the center of your paper. Create a quadrant around it.

In one section, note or draw everything you can about the setting where the event took place, including as many details as you can. It might help to close your eyes to visualize the scene.

In another quadrant situate the event in time. What can you remember about the year when this took place, think of social history, cultural history, as well as personal history?

In the third quadrant, make notes about or draw the characters involved in the story. Consider both physical and personality characteristics. Look for details that reveal character.

In the final quadrant, put your thoughts about why you think this event might be memorable or significant. What do you think it means?

Use this map to find a starting point for entrance into the story and use it as a reference as you write.
Place Descriptions:

Think of three places you have lived, or three places that have been important to you and where you have spent a lot of time. For each place, list as many details as you can remember. Share your list with a partner. What moods and what stories are suggested by what you have shared?

Travel writing:

1. Most travel writing is a balance between material about the internal and external landscapes. That is to say, there is an interplay between the person and the place—the place is used to reveal character in the person and the life experience and perspective of the person is used to reveal the character of the place. Think of a journey you have taken—this doesn’t have to be a long trip, you can use a trip to a concert (or a conference). Try to reduce the experience to one moment—try to think of the most significant moment of the journey, the moment which defined the journey. Now write about that moment in two ways.

   In your first version, emphasize the person, the narrator, use his or her experiences to reveal something about the character of the place or the journey itself, about the external landscape. Keep your focus on the life experience of the narrator and use that to reveal the journey.

   In your second version, emphasize the place and use the features of the place to reveal the character of the person. Keep your focus on a description of the place which can reveal aspects of the narrator’s character.

   Compare your two versions. Which do you think worked better? Why do you think so? What did you learn from this exercise?

2. A common related exercise is to describe a place from the point of view of a man who has just lost his son in the war and a man who has just been married and is about to set up roots in a new place. Do not mention the war or the son or the marriage. Try to reveal through the way the scene is described, the state of mind of the narrator. You can, of course, vary this exercise and choose characters with whom your students might be more familiar.
Exercises to improve your use of description

Choose a spot with a view you like. It does not have to be scenic. Any place will do. It can be new, or familiar, cluttered or bucolic. Spend 15 minutes observing and taking notes. Try to use all of your senses. Use this setting. You may write a description of it, or use it as a setting for action in your story.

Describe a place that you know well. It could be your room from home or the place that you live now. Limit your description to about three paragraphs. Now describe the same place again, this time choosing a tone from the list below. Communicate this mood through your description. Repeat this exercise for several qualities from the list. If you wish, try describing a person instead of a place.

Moods: Anger, Love, Boredom, Anxiety, Fear, Impatience, Shyness, Condescension, Nostalgia, Happiness, Desire, Weariness, Defeat, Awe

Observing a Stranger;
Go to a public place such as the library, a fast-food restaurant, the cafeteria, the HUB, a class etc. where you can inconspicuously observe the people around you and choose one person to focus on. Find someone who interests you and try to observe for 20 minutes. Try to answer the following questions; What is the person’s physical appearance? Describe his or her attire. What is the person’s approximate age? What do you think this person’s occupation (or major) might be? Where do you think this person might live? Why? what kind of person do you think this person might be? What are the clues to his or her personality? What other kinds of information can you come up with? How would you describe this person’s social class background? How much education do you think this person has? You may follow your subject and try to eavesdrop on conversations. Later, try to write a story with this person as a character.
Revision and Editing

Students often have trouble distinguishing between revision, editing and proofreading, and many have little experience revising their own work. Sometimes I ask them to brainstorm differences between the processes, just so that I am sure they understand the distinction. More often, I also use a metaphor relating these processes to a house with revision as major remodeling, editing as interior decorating and proofreading as home repair.

**Revision** refers to global level changes. Revision includes rewriting all or part of the paper, changing the introduction or conclusion, changing the order of ideas, writing the paper from a different point of view or in a different voice, expanding on a particular section of the paper, cutting or collapsing part of the paper, beginning the paper in a different place…etc. Revision occurs as the meaning becomes clearer to the writer.

**Editing** refers to changes which are more like decorating and less like remodeling. It includes such matters as word choice, sentence variety, adding images, descriptions, breaking up paragraphs and adding dialogue.

**Proofreading** refers to ensuring that the paper conforms to the expectations of conventional English usage. It includes checking spelling, capitalization, sentence boundaries, etc.

What is revision?
When researcher Nancy Sommers asked that question of student writers and professional writers, she got radically different responses. The student writers talked about revision in terms of “fixing the paper”, finding a better word, fixing surface errors, etc. The professional writers spoke of revision as rethinking, re-envisioning and most of all, rewriting. We need to be careful to distinguish between revision, editing and proofreading. These activities can occur simultaneously and in a recursive manner, but it is still important to distinguish between them because they are quite different.

These revision exercises are designed to expand the students’ concept of revision.

The editing exercises can be fun, if done in a spirit of play.
What follows are some revision exercises:

**Unsettling Drafts**

Often students do not have much experience with revision and do not understand it as a way to look at their drafts in totally different ways. Too often they confuse revision with editing. In addition, they see revision as punishment. They believe they are being asked to do something over. Our writing classes have the potential to help students conceive of writing in fundamentally different ways, and at the same time open up their view of the world.

This activity is designed to help students to expand their ideas about revision in a non-threatening way. On the day the papers (this could work for rough or “final” drafts) are due, ask students to put their papers aside and, as an exercise, write to one of the following prompts (These are only examples):

- Start the piece in an entirely different place
- Write about what happens after the piece
- Write the piece from a different point of view
- Write two new introductions
- Write two new conclusions
- Describe a place alluded to in the paper
- Add dialogue where you have only description of an event
- Write a dialogue with a friend in which you discuss your paper, telling why you thought it was important, what you thought was important
- Describe a person mentioned in the paper
- Choose one crucial event or scene—expand that to create a new paper.
- Create an opening which starts in the midst of the action
- Rewrite your conclusion as the introduction, then write a new conclusion
- Create a dialogue representing two or more points of view on the issues raised in the paper.
- Write the paper as a letter to a friend
- Take on the point of view of a character with only a minor role in the paper.
- Describe what happened before the events described in the paper.

Emphasize to students that these in-class writings may or may not become part of the paper. The idea is that they see a new angle, another perspective. There may be bits in what they write that might be useful additions to the papers, or this in-class writing may suggest a whole new approach to the topic and lead to a whole new draft.

After my students have written four or five pieces, I assign a paper called “New Take on an Old Theme” in which students are asked to write about the same topic as in one of their previous papers, but to write about it in an entirely different way.
Revision Exercise:

Ask the students to:

Free write about something they care about--an issue or incident--for ten minutes. Some teachers might assign a particular topic, but I prefer not to. You could use this in connection with a reading as a warm-up for a paper in response to literature. You might also give some choices of topics you think would be common to the students. After they have written for ten minutes, say, “Stop. Draw a line under what you have written. Begin again. Write about the same issue or problem, in a different way.” You might need to give them some examples or ideas.

After they have written for about seven minutes, stop them again and direct them to “Draw a line. Begin a third time. Write about the same issue or problem.” [They may groan, but insist.]

When they have finished, ask the students to read over the three versions they have written. You might ask them to share these writings with another student to get a different perspective on what they have written.

Ask the students what they notice about the three writings.

Ask the students why they think you asked them to write about the same thing three times and what they learned from it.

Discuss how revision can mean writing again. You are not committed to what is already on the page.
Revision: The Hard Part.

These questions work well for peer response to drafts if your responders are beginning to understand revision.

Find the walls:

- Describe what the piece is about – its gift to the world, in five words or less
- What’s the controlling image?
- What keeps you reading?
- Chart your feelings and responses as you read, or changes of mood and speed
- Diagram or draw the piece
- Is there a through line? If not, decide on one.

Tap the Walls:

- Who owns the piece? Is the voice authentic?
- Are there parts that sound hollow, or self-indulgent? Which walls need to go?
- Are there parts that need unpacking? Do you need to add a couple of rooms?
- Have you been entirely honest? Or is something struggling to emerge?
- What’s the hook? What drives the piece? What’s the turning point? How are things resolved?
- Do the characters earn their keep? Have you let your characters talk? Does the dialogue serve a purpose?
**Radical Revision**

Similar to “Unsettling Drafts,” radical revision involves revision as rewriting. One way that writers revise is by writing an entirely new thing. Radical revision is helpful as a way of getting students to re-envision their writing. The writer’s struggle to find meaning often transcends point of view and genre. This outline might be useful in getting students to rethink their writing.

**Radical Revision Possibilities:**

Change the point of view
- Be a different person, change characteristics
- Pick a different narrator
- Write the story as many times as you have characters, catching only what they see

Change the chronological order of events
- focus on the beginning, middle or end only
- 1234 becomes 3241

Give the piece a new ending or beginning
- you can practice this on someone else's writing

Change the tone or voice of the narrator
- make the timid, shy kid the bold brash hero
- change the voice of the 20-something heroine to be the voice of the emotional child within

 Completely alter the genre
- poem to essay
- essay to newspaper article
- newspaper article to one-act play

Alter the focus (may be done while altering the genre)
- Write it to show something radically different than what it originally showed. Your essay about your father’s endearing eccentricity becomes the tale of his neglect.

From: Radical Revision: My Road from Fairy Tale to Catharsis  By Juanita Willingham The Quarterly of the National Writing Project 2004 Vol. 28 No. 2
Revision exercises for Narrative and Fiction

Writing Outside the Story:

Have your main character do the following exercises as if he or she had his or her own notebook. Remember, the character is doing the exercise and not you, the author. As your main character:

- Make a journal entry for the time of the story
- Make a journal entry for the time preceding the story
- Write a letter to someone not in the story about something that is happening in the story.
- Write a letter to someone in the story
- Write a letter dated at sometime way beyond the story to someone not involved in the story reflecting on that time of the story

Or you might explore places in the story you haven’t shown

- What events happened before the beginning of the story? Try writing scenes of events that affect the beginning of the story.
- Write past the ending. What happens after the story is over?
- Have your characters avoided a confrontation. Force them into one.
- Write a journal entry from the point of view of a minor character.

Opening Up Your Story

Choose a story to work with that is in early draft form. Read it through if you need to in order to familiarize yourself again with the characters and the story. Then find a place in the story to insert one of the following sentences (change the pronoun as necessary).

- The last few nights she had had a recurring dream (nightmare) about _____
- Her mother had always warned her that ______
- One thing I couldn’t say was __________
- The telephone rang. It was a wrong number, but the caller refused to hang up. Instead, she -----
- Something seemed different -----
- The last time she had worn this _____ was when _____
- If someone had said make a wish, he would have wished for _____
- As for God, _____
- People were probably saying _____
- This time last year he was __________
- Five years from now, he’ll be __________
- Secretly, he collected _____
- Suddenly she remembered she had forgotten to __________
- The TV (or CD player) was tuned to __________
- The smell of _____ brought back _______
- He suspected that __________
- As a child, he had learned __________

Allow your subconscious to go with the material for at least a few sentences. Watch what the inserted material teaches you about the story.

What is this Story About?

Take your draft of your current piece. Try to come up with three things the story could be about beyond its literal meaning. A story about how your uncle wouldn’t take you to an amusement park when you were little for example—it could be about your uncle’s stinginess, or the way your aunt tolerates him, or how he is always disappointing those who love him, or his cruel streak or how he gets away with things. It could also be about male and female roles, etc. On your own, try to come up with three themes that your story could explore.

Then read your story to a partner or to a group. See how many more possibilities they can come up with. You should not comment on or evaluate any of their ideas. Just write them down. Don’t worry if the themes are not true to the story. The point of the exercise is to generate lots of possibilities.

Discuss how you would write the story differently to highlight the different meanings on your list. What details would you emphasize? What would you ignore or play down? What would you include? What would you leave out? Discuss how you would write the story or essay another way.

Choose two very different themes from your list. Draw a line down the page and do some planning on each side about how you would

Share examples of these with a partner or with the whole class. Discuss the differences and how they were achieved.

Think about what thematic focus does to a story and how it affects your writing. To find the focus, ask yourself what the story is about and what you want it to be about. You may not always know the focus when you start, but as part of the revision process, you should look for and hopefully discover, the focus and think about ways to bring it out.
New Take on an Old Theme

You have written the paper you have selected for revision in one way. There are many other possible ways you could have written this paper. The point of this assignment is to experiment with one of these ways. Decide which of the following approaches would work best for the paper you have written:

- Start the piece in an entirely different place
- Write about what happens after the piece
- Write the piece from a different point of view
- Write two new introductions
- Write two new conclusions
- Describe a place alluded to in the paper
- Add dialogue where you have only description of an event
- Write a dialogue with a friend in which you discuss your paper, telling why you thought it was important, what you thought was important
- Describe a person mentioned in the paper
- Create an opening which starts in the midst of the action
- Rewrite your conclusion as the introduction, then write a new conclusion
- Create a dialogue representing two or more points of view on the issues raised in the paper.
- Write the paper as a letter to a friend
- Take on the point of view of a character with only a minor role in the paper.
- Describe what happened before the events described in the paper

Now set your paper aside and write to the prompt you have chosen. This should be the beginning of an entirely new draft. This week’s paper should not contain more than 10% material from the old draft. Do not look at the old draft until you have completed a full draft writing it a new way. If, at that time, you want to incorporate elements from your first draft, you may, but no more than 10% of the new paper.
EN1200 Composition
Editing Exercise Part I
A Dozen Ways to Trim the Fat

1. Cut extra words: that, really, very, although, moreover, therefore, in fact, that was
   the reason that, in my personal opinion, ...

2. Watch for places where you have unintentionally repeated words or phrases.

3. Try to eliminate “he said, she said” when possible. Watch for repetitive ideas, “My
   mother responded to me,”

4. Cut adjectives and adverbs; substitute stronger verbs and nouns. “He walked slowly
   over to me.” “She lived in a little house.”

5. Work to eliminate the verb “to be,” (is, are, was, were) especially in description.
   Substitute action verbs.

6. Eliminate clichés, try to tell the truth. Go back to the experience and try to describe it
   clearly. “I remember it like it was yesterday.”

7. Streamline transitions—Try to avoid phrases like “Saturday rolled around” or “We could
   hardly wait for Saturday to roll around.”

8. Where you see yourself repeating a word or phrase, especially within the same
   paragraph, use a thesaurus to find another way of saying what you want to say.

9. Try to recast or combine sentences which begin with “There is” or “It is”. “There are
   three levels of teams in my school which anyone can try out for.”

10. Eliminate filler phrases such as “I think” or “In my opinion” or “Needless to say” “I
    thought it was cool how…”

11. Vary your sentence length. Look for places where you have a series of choppy
    sentences and see where they might be combined. If you have a series of long
    sentences, consider adding a short punchy sentence to break up the rhythm and catch
    your reader’s attention.

12. Cut places where you find that you are repeating the same meaning. This can often
    happen at the end of the piece.

Using these tips, try to cut 15 words from a single page of your draft.
Editing Tips #2 Expanding and Enriching Your Writing

1. Use prepositional, absolute, and participial phrases to expand your sentences and make them more lush and descriptive:
   a. She saw the muddy shoes with the wad of gum between the soles.
   b. She looked at Pecola, saw the dirty torn dress, the plaits sticking out on her head, hair matted where the plaits had come undone, the muddy shoes with the wad of gum peeping out from between the cheap soles, the soiled socks, one of which had been walked down into the heel of the shoe.
   c. She had seen this little girl all of her life, hanging out of windows over saloons in Mobile, crawling over the porches of shotgun houses on the edge of town, sitting in bus stations holding paper bags and crying to mothers who kept saying “Shut up!”

2. Do the writing. Do not say. “The feeling is indescribable.” Or “There are no words to describe how I felt.  Try to focus on a specific image and describe that.

3. Look at your paragraphs, and evaluate points of emphasis. Your best sentence should be the last one in the paragraph. Put your next best sentence first in the paragraph. Bury any boring stuff in the middle of paragraphs. Try to vary paragraph length. If you have a great sentence buried in the middle of your paragraph, try to move it to the end, or consider a paragraph break after that sentence.

4. Look at points of emphasis in sentences as well.
   a. Compare: That night, in bed, the three of us lay still.
      i. The three of us lay still that night in bed.

5. Vary sentence length. Shorter sentences will receive more emphasis, but too many of them lead to choppy writing.

6. Use figurative language (similes, metaphors) to make your writing more vivid. “Those sugar-brown Mobile girls...are as sweet and plain as buttercake.”

7. Add appositives (naming phrases) to elaborate on your sentences: “My mother, the woman who once told me that boys were just naturally smarter than girls, now claims that gender played no part in the way she treated my brother and me.”

8. Add personification through the use of verbs and phrases. “The mountain threatened to engulf us.”

9. Experiment with adjectives out of order. “Sunday shirts will billow on hangers from the doorjamb, stiffly starched and white.”

10. Try to substitute specific details for where you speak in generalities. “They wash themselves with orange-colored Lifebuoy soap, dust themselves with Cashmere Bouquet talc, clean their teeth with salt on a piece of rag, and soften their skin with Jergens Lotion.” “They do not drink, smoke or swear and they still call sex “nookey.”

11. Use sensory details; expand beyond what you saw to what you heard, smelled, etc. “It was a lonesome Saturday. The house smelled of Fels Naphtha and the sharp odor of mustard greens cooking. Saturdays were lonesome, fussy soapy days. Second in misery only to those tight, starchy, cough drop Sundays, so full of “don’ts” and “set’cha self downs.”
Composition
Proofreading – In teams, discuss and correct these sentences. Make sure every member of the team has the same answer and can explain why the changes were made.

1. He won't do nothing about it.
2. I need alot of attention.
3. I forgot I was suppose to prepare.
4. He shouldn't of told her about the party.
5. I gained organizing and thinking skills, along with thinking quick.
6. If a student is made to write on a topic of little interest to her, the chances of her learning anything is slim.
7. Everybody has to bring their own juice.
8. As a future teacher, censorship seems to me to be an overblown issue.
9. I never showed up because, my parents wouldn't let me have the car.
10. The teacher cannot teach students to write, this can only be learned by doing it.
11. There is only one reason why the new sex education program will never succeed; parental objections.
12. To make your spelling more perfect, study structure.
13. "I don't want you to go.", said mom.
14. We stopped at my parent's house to change clothes.
15. "I felt lonely." Was the answer.
16. Pulling the gate that lead to the yard, he noticed light coming from a first floor window.
17. We loved eachother all through highschool.
18. As I approached the house, Jim wasn't home.
Proofreading for Clarity

1. Personally, I think that it just doesn't make any sense.

2. Because we are all from the same town, we have basically all the same friends, who many of go here also.

3. When you go there, there's usually alot of brothers present, if not all of them.

4. Being a father in the sixties and seventies is very different than the eighties and nineties.

5. A friend, I feel presents love unconditionally, one trait I feel must be present in order to have a good friendship.

6. Any thing that a reader has to read several times to understand usually is a good indicator that there is a problem.

7. Examples of what specific lyrics were at the heart of the controversy were printed.

8. In my opinion, I think the men are more friendlier than the women here.

9. I have countless amounts of memories.

10. The reason why it was at 2:30 was because there had to be time for everyone to get there.

11. it was a very cold September morning that happened to be a Sunday that I had to get up to go to a game.

12. It took us about an hour and twenty minutes before we pulled into the ski area.

13. I was unaware of the fact that he had arrived.

14. We should consider the question as to whether drugs should be legalized.

15. My first visit to Boston will always be remembered by me for as long as I live.

16. I first met him when he worked at the same restaurant where we both worked.

17. Someone had recognized the military life style effected the servicemen stationed at sea and had to fight in wars.

18. People are yelling and raising their hands giving their support or just because it was race day.

19. The need for learning what to do with all the information learned is also necessary when presenting oneself to a perspective employer.
Conventions

1. Censorship is an infringement on a free countries rights.

2. I felt like I was the one who's grade will suffer.

3. Parent's must keep a closer eye on there kids.

4. Don't get me wrong, college is great.

5. Just let the public know what their up against.

6. It's a wise dog that scratches it's own fleas.

7. Me being the person I was back then decided I was going to flirt with him just to see his reaction.

8. I had gotten very attached to the children, and them to me.

9. Stacey was scared and confused of what to do.

10. For if I took the medium level, I might have not went through all this pain.

11. She was a sophomore in my school and was interested in me since the beginning of freshman year.

12. We were now together for a year and a half.

13. "I can't attend". she said.

14. No sacrafice is to big for John and I.
Peer Response

Almost nothing is more important to the success of a writing workshop than the creation of a positive, supportive community within the writing classroom. It is also crucial that students get response to their work in order that they can begin to distance themselves from it and make revision possible.

These guidelines are designed to help students move beyond their initial reluctance to criticize and enable them to be more specific in their response to each other’s work. The teacher’s role is crucial here. You must model good response and monitor the types of response given by the group.
The Language of Response

- Try to find the positive you can build on in the piece of writing you are responding to. This is considerably more difficult than finding fault with it. It is of much more use to the writer to help him or her identify the strengths in the piece that can be worked with rather than when isn’t working.

- Express any feedback or response that you give in terms of yourself the reader and the effect the piece had on you rather than making sweeping generalizations or judgments. Compare the effect of “The beginning of your paper has nothing to do with the rest of it.” to “I didn’t understand the connection between your introduction and the rest of your paper.”

- Be specific in your response—tell the reader exactly which lines or phrases affected you. Tell the reader what you remember of the piece—avoid general praise like “good paper”.

- Give suggestions, not commands. Begin by saying something like—“You might want to try putting more dialogue into this scene” rather than “Put more dialogue here.”

- Show the writer that you are listening. It isn’t enough to be listening, you need to let the reader see that you are listening. Eye contact helps as does your visible reaction to the story. It isn’t easy to read your work out in front of others. Show the writer that you are paying attention.

- Respond. The worst response is no response. React to the piece as it’s being read. A laugh at a joke tells the writer more than volumes of written feedback.
Writing Workshop: Guidelines for response groups

Please read over the following guidelines and discuss them. Modify them in any way we need to in order to fit the needs of our group. Good response cannot happen without both parties, (those responding and those whose work is under discussion) playing their part well. It is as important to be good at receiving response well as it is to give it.

**When your work is under discussion:**

- Ask for the specific feedback you would like.
- Make notes on your copy as people talk--even if you don't immediately agree with what they have to say.
- Tell us what stage of the writing process you are in, but without saying how bad, trivial or unworthy your work is.
- Don't explain why you wrote it; this should become evident.
- Remain silent and listen as people respond to your work. Try to really hear what they are saying without defending your piece or trying to explain.

**When responding to someone else's work:**

- Try to see the potential of each piece. Try to build on what is working rather than pointing out what isn't-- this is much more useful for the writer, and more difficult to do.
- Express your response in terms of the piece's effect on you, the reader-- avoid sweeping judgments and generalizations.
- Articulate your response as clearly as you can. It is not enough to simply feel something. Good response depends on your making conscious and articulating your responses.
- Tell the writer what you remember most clearly.
- Tell the writer where you lost attention or were confused.
- Tell the writer what you liked, what moved you, what you can still see or feel-- be as specific as you can.
- Be respectful of the writer. Do not criticize in a belittling way.
-Keep the focus on the piece you are discussing. Avoid telling stories of your own experience. This is not about you.

-Refer to the "I" character as "the speaker" or "the narrator" rather than "you". Even though this may be personal writing, the writer has, in effect, presented him or herself as a character in the piece and should be referred to in this way. Also, we are here to discuss the writing and not the writer.

-allow the writer to retain ownership. Do not try to make major changes or rewrite the piece for the author. Your job is not to impose your own view, but to help the writer convey his or her view more powerfully.

Additional suggestions:

Each group should have a time-keeper who gives a one-minute warning and tells the group when the time to discuss a particular piece has elapsed. This job should be rotated. Each group should also contain a facilitator who reminds group members of established rules, "Refer to 'I' as 'the narrator'." or "Keep the focus on the piece." At the beginning of each meeting, divide the time up realistically. If necessary, split into smaller groups so that everyone can get response if they want or need it. Do not allow extra time. It may seem necessary, but most often it is not.

Go around the circle with each person speaking in turn. This is the best way to insure equal participation and to be sure to hear everyone's response. Do not repeat what has been said before, just express your agreement and pass. Allow everyone to speak before discussion ensues.

The writer should be allowed to not respond, but listen. In order to help this to happen, direct questions should not be addressed to the writer in this initial phase. He or she will learn more from listening to the rest of you discuss something you are not clear on than from clarifying it for you. The writer may respond briefly when the formal response is over.

Allow five minutes, or whatever seems necessary at the end of each session to evaluate it. Again, each person should speak in turn. Decide on the facilitator for the next meeting so that that person can take notes about what worked well and what needs to be improved.


EN1200 Composition

Praise, Question, Consider

Each author should introduce his or her paper, requesting what help he or she needs. Read the papers thoroughly before beginning and prepare your responses. Discuss each paper while the author remains silent for five minutes, and then give the author an opportunity to respond. For each paper, groups should do the following, so take notes in each category.

Affirm: Most writers long for some kind of recognition, so begin your response with praise. What about the piece is memorable? If after a first reading you immediately had to tell another person what caught your attention, what would you say? Be very specific about what you liked by using an example. If you keep an open mind and a sympathetic attitude, there is always something worth affirming, and by beginning with a positive example, you increase the likelihood the writer will be receptive to any changes you suggest.

Also, if a piece is very good, don't be stingy! Cite multiple examples of what you like. The key is to be sincere and specific. While "You are the greatest writer ever!" is initially pleasing, most writers prefer to hear why their piece works more than a hollow hooray.

Question: Next, ask the writer about anything that confused you or seemed inconsistent while you were reading. Statements can easily seem confrontational; questions allow the writer to consider for herself without feeling directed. For example, saying "I really didn't get why the horse was so important" could be read as an attack, whereas "The horse seems important. Can you tell me more about why it was so important?" gives the writer a space to make a judgment without feeling judged.

Sometimes what is in the writer's head doesn't make it to the page, yet the writer sincerely believes she has communicated clearly. A constructive question from you can point out such blind spots. Asking such questions does not challenge the writer's skills, yet still says something needs a second look. As long as you ask sincere questions, you will be helpful to the writer.

Consider. Even experienced writers sometimes miss an opportunity to make their piece the best it can be. As a reader, you may see potential that is invisible to the writer, so you naturally want to share your insight. Since many writers are sensitive about receiving advice, it is a good idea to avoid sounding like you are directing their piece. The word consider has a positive connotation, so starting your advice with Consider avoids the tone of a command. For example, "Consider telling more about the horse." Or “Consider changing the piece from present to past tense”

Along with consider, another helpful word is wish. Saying "I wish you had told me more about the horse." communicates the writer is in control and that the reader is not some expert ordering mandatory changes.

Adapted from: Brian Slusher, Teacher Consultant with the National Writing Project
Peer Response Sheet for Drafts

Questions for the Writer:

1. How close to being finished is this project?

2. What steps do you plan to take to complete it?

3. How can readers help you most at this stage? (Note any specific areas on which you would especially like feedback)

Questions for the Reader:

1. What do you think the writer is driving at? What is the main point of this draft? How clearly expressed is that point?

2. What strengths did you notice in the piece that the writer could build on? Note any particular sections or phrases that you thought were particularly effective.

3. Suggest steps the writer might take to complete the project. Give your opinion of the steps the writer has outlined.

3. Please respond to the writer's request for help.
Assignments

What follows are the specific guidelines I provide for each paper my students complete in composition. They might be useful to provide examples of how assignments can be structured with constraints that enable.
The House on Mango Street is written in an episodic style where the author uses little vignettes focused on pivotal coming of age moments in the life of her main character, Esperanza. This week, we are going to experiment with some episodic writing.

Select a theme or subject or topic which really speaks to your life. You might use the same theme or topic as you used for your paper last week, but you might also select another topic related to your life. Your theme might be about your relationship with a significant person in your life, or with a sport, activity or pastime that has been central in your life. You can also focus on a larger idea such as racism, fear, loyalty, friendship, or responsibility, but you must anchor these big ideas in specific experiences from your life.

Brainstorm a list of memories or episodes from your life related to the theme. They should be anchored to specific experiences or memories so that you can present them in theme.

Select episodes around which to develop vignettes or scenes. Try to imagine the scene for each. You might close your eyes and try to visualize the scene in order to provide rich details. These scenes are often written in the present tense, although they do not have to be. Write these and arrange them in a way that creates the effect you are looking for, or seems most interesting to you.

Eight Rules About Episodic Writing

1. The work involves a dynamic character (in this case, you) one who develops in fits and starts throughout the course of the story in relation to the theme.

2. Episodes vary in length.

3. Episodes are roughly chronological, but not necessarily so.

4. Often, a single unifying device (such as an object) can run throughout the story, appearing in each episode.

5. Episodes are not related directly by cause and effect; instead, all are related to a central theme.

6. If a traditional short story is a movie, moving in a linear fashion from beginning to end, an episodic story is more like a slide show or a music video.

7. And finally, to borrow a rule from George Orwell, "Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous."
Artifact Paper
Build a paper based around the artifact you described in class today or another artifact of your choice. Use the writing we did in class today as a base.
Include a description of your artifact.
You might work with the descriptions of the artifact in use that lead you to specific stories or specific memories associated with the artifact.
You can also use the artifact in a more symbolic way. Perhaps something about the artifact suggests a different kind of paper in a different way. The texture of the object, for example, might remind you of something else in your life not related to the object in a literal way.
The final paper should use the artifact as a lens to reveal something about you as well as something more universal about the society in which we live.
You should strive to develop both a personal meaning and a more universal, “so what?” meaning. Think about what the object symbolizes to you personally, then try to open the paper up by suggesting ways in which your experience might speak to all of us.

The paper needs to be a full 3 and a half to 5 pages.
Please remember your author’s note.
As always, please feel free to email me any questions you have.
This week your assignment is to relate two incidences from your life at two distinct points in time. You could, for example, describe your scoring a goal in a deciding game and then flash back to another scene—this might involve a scene with your coach, a parent, or a time you tried and failed to make the team in a previous year, how you came back from an injury, etc. The scene you flash back to should help your reader to understand the current scene more deeply or in a different way.

Your task is to show the relationship between these two events in your life. You can do this through flashbacks, through vignettes, or through the “sandwich approach” where you begin in the present, flash back to the past, and then come back to the present again.

The more apparently unrelated the incidents are the better. If you think they are related, they are related. Sometimes you have to think about the meaning of the incident in order to figure out one that is related. One way to approach this assignment might be to think about something from your present, and then ask yourself what the reader would have to know about your past in order to really understand the significance of the present event. “Present” does not have to be strictly right now. As long as the incidents take place in two distinct points in time, you are meeting the requirements of the assignment.

The reading for Tuesday is a good example of this type of paper. Yours does not have to be as intense as that example, but it illustrates how it would be impossible to understand Joe in the present without understanding his past.

The paper needs to be a full 3 and a half to 5 pages. Please remember your author’s note. As always, please feel free to email me any questions you have.
This week we will be doing a number of different exercises, so there will be two paper choices to explore the scientific inquiry direction.

One option will grow out of the exercise we will do in class on Tuesday. Basically the assignment is to tell a story from your life, but to tell it from another point of view, or perspective. For example, you can tell the story of your high school graduation or your coming to college from the point of view of your little brother or one of your parents. This will require a real imaginative leap. The exercise we do in class on Tuesday should help with this. As always you will strive for a personal and a “So what?” more universal meaning, but in this case, the personal meaning will not be your own, but the meaning of the narrator. You will want to choose the perspective of someone you know well, but of someone whose perspective on the subject of the paper is very different from yours. You could even choose to retell the story of one of your earlier papers from someone else’s point of view. You may want to do research for this. You can ask the person involved to tell you their version of the event.

The objective of this paper is to make your reader believe that the other person wrote it. The reader should feel sympathy with that person.

Another option is to write about a conflict or disagreement you have had with someone you know well, describing that disagreement or conflict from that person’s point of view. Again, we should be sympathetic to that person’s point of view after reading the paper.

You can also:
Make an argument with which you do not agree. Write a paper arguing a point of view about some issue you care about which takes a position which is distinctly different from your own view of the topic.

The paper (whichever option you choose) needs to be a full 3 and a half to 5 pages.

Please remember your author’s note. In your author’s note, discuss what you learned from taking the a different point of view.
As always, please feel free to email me any questions you have.
EN1200 Composition
Cultural Event Paper: (Due Tuesday October 11th)

You are expected to draw inspiration from not only your readings, but also your community and your culture. In order to draw inspiration from the campus community, you will be required to attend and respond to at least one approved event ON CAMPUS. Additional events may be attended for extra credit. Approved events include readings, concerts, plays, lectures, etc. Athletic and social events are not considered cultural events for the purpose of this paper. You must attend the entire event. It is extremely rude to walk out in the middle of an event.

The paper should include a lead which grabs the reader’s attention, and a detailed description of the event including place, time, main featured performers, etc. This should be detailed enough so that a reader who did not attend the event will have a clear idea of what transpired.

You should describe the event using specific details. This does not mean that you give a blow by blow description of everything that happened. Rather, you should describe a few aspects or interactions which can serve to represent what transpired. For example, you can describe some of the speaker’s main points in more detail, rather than recounting everything the speaker said. This description should be objective. You should not interject your opinion into your description of the event.

Finally, the paper should include your analysis of the event and your opinions about it. At the end of your paper, you should evaluate, comment and conclude. This analysis should be in a separate section or paragraph so that it is clear to the reader when you have stopped describing the event and are offering your analysis and opinion.

The paper should be written in an engaging style which retains the reader’s interest. Assume that your audience is the readers of The Clock or another student newspaper. The piece “Slam Poetry” in the Comp Journal is a good example of an event paper. The paper should, of course, be carefully proofread.

The paper will be evaluated on the extent to which you: introduce the event completely, describe the event using specific detail, evaluate, comment and conclude, retain the reader’s interest and conform to conventions of language and mechanics.
A Short Guide to Learning to Look - Hood Museum of Art

Exploring a work of art involves four basic stages.

1. Close Observation
2. Preliminary Analysis
3. Research
4. Interpretation

A fifth stage, Critical Assessment and/or Response to a work of art, can also be undertaken but is optional.

1. Close Observation:
When approaching any work of art, it is important to begin by looking carefully at the object and describing everything you see.

2. Preliminary Analysis
Once you have listed all the visual elements you can see in an object, begin asking simple analytic questions that will deepen your understanding of the work. Questions such as: What do you think is happening in this scene? Who might this person be?

3. Research
The amount of research you choose to pursue depends on your goals. This method of inquiry encourages the viewer to construct meaning for his or herself. However, researching the object, the artist, the historical time period, etc. will certainly deepen your understanding of the object, validate or challenge your observations, and may lead to the formation of a new set of questions, such as: When do you think this object was made? By whom? Where? What do you think it is made of, used for?

4. Interpretation
Interpretation involves bringing your close observation, preliminary analyses, and any additional information you have gathered about an art object together to try to understand what a work of art means. There can be multiple interpretations of a work of art. The best informed ones are based on visual evidence and accurate research. Questions could be: What do you think this work is all about? What was the artist saying with this work?

5. Critical Assessment and Response
Critical assessment and response involves a judgment of the success of a work of art. It is optional and should follow the first four stages of exploring a work of art and arriving at an interpretation. An art critic often engages in this further analysis of the work of art. Questions could be: After all that, how do you feel about it? Do you like it? Is it relevant to your life?

*Different from assessment, the realm of response can be much more personal and subjective.
This week we will be focusing our work on a work of art which may be related to our course theme “What is race and how does it matter?”

The first option is to write an analytical paper about the work of art, using the exercise we did in class and the process outlined on the back of this sheet. You should describe the work of art in detail, raise questions about it, and then do some research to find out who created it and what has been said about it. This should help you move to the next stage of interpretation.

Another option will grow out of the exercise we will do in class on Tuesday. This assignment is to do a creative piece based on the work of art you have been assigned. You may respond to what you see, as well as involve your personal associations with the artwork. It may remind you of something from your life. You may tell that story and relate it back to the visual art. You may do a more imaginative piece based on a piece of visual art.

For either option, you should include some description. We will be practicing this looking at the way Toni Morrison uses language in *The Bluest Eye*.

The paper (whichever option you choose) needs to be a full 3 and a half to 5 pages. Please remember your author’s note. As always, please feel free to email me any questions you have.
This week’s assignment: The Bluest Eye

Option #1: Character Study

We are going to do some writing in class on Tuesday in connection with The Bluest Eye—writing about the characters—that could be the basis of your paper. Your paper should say something meaningful about the character. One example from a past class was a paper discussing whether Toni Morrison was successful in getting the reader to feel sympathy for Cholly, another was on Pecola and whether the writer thought she was a hopeless character. You can also compare two characters in terms of a specific trait, such as how Pecola and Claudia respond to oppression.

OR

Option #2: Using the handout on “concentric circles of control” from your first year seminar class, talk about how these circles of control operate in relation to a particular character, or how these circles work to control the characters in the novel. If you choose this option, you will need to develop an argument related to this. It is not enough to merely cite examples of each type of control, although this is a good way to start.

Option #3

Develop your own argument related to The Bluest Eye. You may use personal experience, as well as other sources of information, and the style of this paper is up to you, but you need to develop a meaning related to the novel. For example, you could compare the events in the novel to another text and come up with a relationship which illuminates something about the novel. You could use your own experience and relate it to something in the novel in a way that reveals a larger meaning.

For any of these options, you should cite quotes from the novel, and note the page numbers in parentheses after each quote. No matter which option you choose, you want to develop an argument or a meaning that goes beyond the obvious.

This week’s assignment is an assigned topic in terms of having to relate to the novel, but push the boundaries of this assignment to find something meaningful to you. I would advise starting early thinking about this assignment as you finish the novel.
Paper #8 Idea paper

The goal of the idea paper is to use one of your experiences as an example of an idea, and to illustrate that idea with other examples. These examples can come from your own experience, from research, from experiences of people you know, or from current events. There is no restriction on where these ideas come from.

So, let’s say that you have written a paper about a game you lost in a varsity sport in high school. You could use this paper to illustrate any number of ideas—only you know what the event meant to you. The experience could have taught you that sometimes you can learn more from losing a game than from winning one, or it might have taught you the importance of working together on a team. Whatever you decide the experience meant is fine. Let’s imagine that you decide to go with the teamwork angle. The first thing you would do is briefly describe the experience. As always, you assume that your reader has not read your other paper. You want to describe the experience briefly though, because the experience is not the focus of the paper—the idea is the focus of the paper.

After you describe the experience briefly in the form of an introduction, you should state the idea that you are hoping to illustrate. Try to avoid the words “I think” or “The idea of my paper is”. Just state the idea.

Then you should come up with other examples to illustrate and explore the idea. You might think of other examples from sports, but you do not have to confine yourself to sports. Think of other places in life that require teamwork and use those for examples. You can tell little stories here, but remember that the focus is on the idea, so you don’t want to get too carried away with the examples (going on for more than a page and a half on a single example is too much). Keep your focus on the idea.

The goal here is not to prove something, but to explore the idea further by looking at it from a number of angles. Don’t be afraid to challenge your idea or question it. After discussing your best examples, come up with a concluding paragraph that leaves the writer with something to think about and helps him to think more about your idea. This is the point where you open the paper up to a more universal meaning—you might conclude with something about how we all believe that our lives will turn out like the plots of our favorite sports movies where all adversity is overcome, but most of the time it doesn’t. Or you might ask your reader to consider the value of what you learn from losing in a way that opens the topic up beyond sports to all of life.

Process note: You may also begin with an idea and think of examples or experiences to illustrate this idea. This can be harder to do well. If you take this option, be sure to refer to specific example and avoid filling your paper with generalities.

This should be between three and a half and five pages, just like our other papers, and be accompanied by an author’s note.
Inquiry Paper

As I do this paper in collaboration with the first year seminar class, my materials are a bit more skimpy. I include some materials from first year seminar in order to help give a fuller picture. They include the instructions for the personal inquiry and research portfolio which students complete in their first year seminar class, activities for finding and narrowing a research question and organizing sources, as well as for a research symposium and criteria and assignment sheet for the actual paper.
Personal Inquiry & Research Portfolio:  
*What is race and how does it matter?*

There are many ways to explore our course question, “What is race and how does it matter?” This project, a major intellectual endeavor and worth 40% of your overall course grade, requires you to examine our course question by developing a research question, or a “line of inquiry,” which interests you personally and which is narrower in scope but still relates to the larger course question.

There are many steps in this research project, including:

- the development of the question;
- a personal reflection about the question;
- library research and the compilation of an annotated bibliography;
- an interview;
- AND a portfolio with a course narrative in which you tell the story of research process AND what you have learned about critical thinking during this course.

Additionally, you will share your research (in) process with the class. During a “research symposium,” you will present what you have learned about research and your inquiry question and work with others to exchange ideas, listen, pose critical questions, offer feedback, and develop new ideas or lines of inquiry. Participation in the symposium is worth 10% of your overall course grade.

Eventually, you will use the ideas that emerge during your research to compose a research paper in Composition.

**Development of the Question (DUE: October 23)**

Develop a specific research question which interests you personally and which is narrower in scope but still relates to the larger course question. Think of your question as a “line of inquiry,” such that you follow a “line” of thought from your question to different possible answers, through multiple directions or disciplinary perspectives, and to other questions. Well constructed questions

- should be open ended (rather than a singular “pose a question, find an answer”);
- have multiple, plausible answers;
- relate to your experiences and/or genuinely interest you;
- relate to our larger course question;
- and should afford inquiry across the four directions (scientific inquiry, creative thought, past and present, and self and society).

We will begin this in class. For **October 23**, submit an overarching question and a brief statement of why you chose this question. Your explanation should consider literal, personal, and cultural implications of your question. Thirdly, submit a list of at least 2-4 more specific questions for each of the four directions. *This should be typed.*

**Personal Narrative /Reflection (DUE: October 30)**

Before conducting any outside research, write about what you think you *know*, what you *assume*, and what you *imagine* about your subject. For example, if you pose a question about the significance of Barack Obama’s presidency, you might *know* the names of the other candidates or something about his political platform. You might *assume* something about the historical significance of his election, and you might *imagine* how his election will affect race relations in this country in the future. For **October 30**, you will turn in a 2 ½ - 4 paged paper (typed and double spaced). *This should be written as a narrative.*

**Library Research and Working Bibliography (DUE: November 13 and November 20)**

Find relevant sources that help you see how others have asked, explored, and attempted to answer your question (or similar, related questions). This step will build from a visit to the library and an introduction to various ways of finding good sources for research. Collect and summarize a research portfolio of at least 10 sources, including:
- no more than two websites;
- at least one book (or a chapter in a book);
- at least four articles from a peer-reviewed journal;
- at least one article from the popular press;
- at least one form of creative expression (such as a painting, a poem, a film, novel, or a song);
- and at variety of disciplinary or ideological perspectives.

As you read, take notes and write about the literal, personal, and racialized meanings as well as the meaning for you as a reader/ writer/ thinker.

For November 13 and November 20, turn in four to six of your sources. For each source you should submit a printed, hard copy of the actual source (the article, painting, or chapter) stapled to your annotation. An annotation is an accurate MLA bibliographic citation followed by a typed, double-spaced paragraph summarizing the literal meaning (including the main argument or issue, conclusion, reasons and/or evidence), reflecting on your personal meaning, interpreting the racialized meaning (including how this source connects to other sources, your question, the course question or class discussions), and reflecting on the meaning for you as a reader/ writer/ thinker.

Keep in mind that meaning can be expressed as a statement or a question raised during your reading process (i.e. This made me realize…; This article relates to …; This made me wonder…; This raises questions about…). How did the source extend, affirm, or challenge your thinking.

**Interview (DUE: November 27)**

Identify and interview at least one person whose personal experience, perspective, or knowledge extends your thinking and understanding about your line of inquiry. It might be helpful to choose someone with some authority on your question or whose perspective is different from your own. We will work together to draft high-quality interview questions. For November 27, you must turn in written permission for the interview from your participant(s), a typed transcript of the interview, OR a copy of the interview questions and detailed notes, AND a 1-2 page reflection on how the interview has extended, challenged, or affirmed your thinking about your inquiry question.

**Research Symposium (DUE: November 29 or December 4)**

Working with a small group, peers with lines of inquiry similar or related to yours, you will present your emerging ideas to the class. Not a final presentation, your discussion should pose questions and share challenges related to your inquiry question as well as share facts or discoveries. Think of the symposium as a way to give and gain support to/from class members as you begin to compose your research paper and compile your research portfolio.

**Research Portfolio and FYS Course Narrative (DUE: December 11)**

A portfolio is a compilation and showcase of your work and thinking, in this case related to your “line of inquiry.” The purpose of the research portfolio for FYS is to demonstrate your ability to construct a line of inquiry by posing a question; gather and evaluate diverse sources related to an inquiry question; revise your thinking through writing; and describe and evaluate your thinking during the research process.

Your portfolio must include two main parts. First, you should resubmit each component of the assignment, revised as necessary, including
- Your initial proposal;
- Your personal reflection (revised as a narrative);
- A full bibliography (without the printed sources);
- And an interview transcript or summary with a brief reflection.

Secondly, compose a 3-5 paged course narrative in which you reflect on your thinking and research process. Think about what you have learned in terms of:
• **The history of your process:** How does what you learned compare to what you knew, assumed, or imagined before the inquiry? What ideas were particularly surprising, compelling, or difficult to understand? How did your question or focus change or shift during the process? What revisions have you been able to make during the research process? How would you change your inquiry if you had it to do over? What future paths or lines might your inquiry take? What arguments emerged? What questions still linger in your mind?

• **An evaluation of your work:** What strengths and areas for growth does your work reveal? What was particularly difficult or easy for you related to researching or thinking about your question? Of what are you particularly proud?

• **Enduring understandings about critical thinking and research:** What have you learned about critical thinking? How is thinking related to reading and writing? How is thinking like a narrative or story-telling? What have you learned about the ways ideas develop? What have you learned about the ways we analyze, interpret and represent ideas? What have you learned about the research process?

This inquiry project, worth 40% of your overall course grade, will be evaluated on your research process including revision, the quality of your sources, the overall clarity of the work, and most importantly, your ability to think critically about not only the content but also the process of your work and critical thinking. You will receive a rubric describing the specific criteria for evaluation.


Issues

Brainstorm controversial issues and fill the board with them. Aim for issues with both local (campus) and national significance. Choose an issue. Write a statement expressing an extreme position on that issue. Write for five minutes about to what extent you agree with the statement then write for five minutes on the extent to which you disagree.

Finding the Research Question

1. write down your tentative topic on the top of the paper. Just a few words will do. (e.g. Vietnam Veterans, anorexia, domestic violence, etc.)
2. State briefly why you chose this topic
3. List what you know about the topic already. Use shorthand. Your response should be in note form.
4. Build a list of questions about the topic you would love to learn the answers to through research.
5. Exchange papers with a partner. Try to add questions that your partner hasn’t thought of. When your partner returns your paper to you, review the questions he or she has added.
6. Check the most interesting questions on your list.
7. Start a fresh sheet of paper with the question you think might be the most interesting at the top. This may be a combination of a few of the questions on your list, but try not to make it too broad. This could be a possible focus for your paper.
8. Try to build a new list of more specific questions under that main one.
9. Share this list with your partner as you did at step 5.
10. Talk about your focus with your partner. You might use these more specific questions in interviews.

At this point, I go around the room and ask each student to share their focused question with the class. We make suggestions and try to refine the question into one which can be researched and suggest resources for interviews etc.
Organization of Sources Activity

Students take out all of their sources as well as the annotations they have done for the First Year Seminar class.

They are asked to put away their computers, backpacks etc. and to only keep out a writing utensil and sources, annotations, etc. They are asked to sit only two to a table so that they can spread out their sources.

Now that they have read all of these sources, I ask them to read them over make notes on the ideas and information. Put each key idea on a separate Post-it note, and code it with the number of the source that the information came from if they can.

I demonstrate the process on the white board with my own inquiry project.

When they have a large number of post-it notes with information, I ask them to arrange or map out the information by trying out different groupings, etc.

I demonstrate this process with my own sources on the white board. When I get groupings that I like, I label each grouping.

I ask them to label their groupings by using a different colored Post-it note with each group labeling it with the title of the group.

I ask the students to then consider:

What information are you missing? What would it be important to ask your interview subject?

I might, depending on how the activity went and the confidence with which the students were able to complete it, ask the students to write a list of their main findings. This can also serve to help them to organize their paper.

For the next class, I have them organize their materials to begin writing your paper.

Using the stacks of post-it notes, I have them create a map or an outline of their paper, and to color code the different parts of the paper. Then I ask them to go back to their sources and mark quotes that they might use.

I take them back to their list of findings, or we write a list if we had not in the previous class. I ask them how they can use these to organize their paper.

In class, we write a lead for the paper. They share these with a partner and receive commentary before leaving class to draft the rest of their paper.
Research Symposium
FYS: What is race and how does it matter?

A symposium is an intellectual dialogue, an exchange of ideas, usually organized around a larger idea or theme. A symposium is often structured as a panel discussion. Participants share their thinking and understanding as individuals as well as members of the group as a whole.

Working with a small group, peers with lines of inquiry similar or related to yours, you will prepare and participate in a symposium on November 22 or 29th. At this time you will have gathered all the sources for your inquiry project and should be in the process of composing your research paper, though you will not have a completed paper.

Therefore, this symposium is not a final presentation of your ideas. Instead, your job is to work collaboratively with your group and the class (audience) to pose identify big ideas, share emerging ideas, share the evolution of your ideas, as well as pose questions and share challenges. Think of the symposium as a way to give and gain support from class members as you compose your research paper and compile your research portfolio.

Specific requirements:

- One member of the group must introduce the theme and identify patterns or key ideas evident in all or most lines of inquiry. One way to think about and locate the big ideas might be to think about what the group’s inquiries teach you about race using the four directions.
- Each member should share her/his ideas related to her/his line of inquiry by
  - Explaining why she chose the topic;
  - Explaining how her thinking has evolved during the research process—discussing personal and racialized meaning as well as meaning as a thinker/reader/writer;
  - Sharing one specific surprising, thought-shifting, or intriguing idea from the library sources, including specific reference to one source, and one specific insight from the interview;
  - Posing a question or a challenge he continues to wonder about.
- One member of the group should summarize the theme and pose two open-ended questions for the whole class to discuss. These should be questions which would help the panel participants continue their work.

A visual aid is nice but optional; it should not become the center of your preparation for the symposium.

This assignment is worth 10% of your grade, part of which reflect your individual work and part which will come from your collaborative work.


Citing Sources in your work

In text citation

By far, the most common way to cite sources is to paraphrase or refer to ideas you got from sources in your text and to credit these sources with in-text citation.

Example: Haitians unified the island in 1822 under Haitian rule, freeing the slaves in the Dominican territory (Moya Pons).

Example: In the 2010 census, 29.6% of Dominicans classify themselves as white, 12.9% as black, 1.4% Native American, 0.3% Asian, and 46% “other.” An additional 9.7% classify themselves as “two or more races” (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, and Albert).

You should introduce the information and then situate it for the reader. Here is how that was done with the second example above:

The US census form asks respondents to first designate whether or not they are Hispanic, and then to designate a racial classification. In the 2010 census, 29.6% of Dominicans classify themselves as white, 12.9% as black, 1.4% Native American, 0.3% Asian, and 46% “other.” An additional 9.7% classify themselves as “two or more races” (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, and Albert). The data tells an interesting story of resistance as the overwhelming majority of Dominicans would be identified as black by Americans.

If you find yourself wanting to cite every line of your paper, you are not commenting enough on the information you present. You do not have to cite your commentary on what a source says. When you comment, do not refer to the information or the quote as a quote. Your goal is for your paper to read smoothly.

Integrating Quotations into Sentences

You should never have a quotation standing alone as a complete sentence, or, worse yet, as an incomplete sentence, in your writing. Ways to integrate quotations properly into your own sentences are explained below.

There are at least four ways to integrate quotations.

1. Introduce the quotation with a complete sentence and a colon.

Example: Nelsy Aldebot describes this phenomenon: “They bring out their heritage when it benefits them.”

If you use a complete sentence to introduce a quotation, you need a colon after the sentence. Be careful not to confuse a colon (:) with a semicolon (;).
2. Use an introductory or explanatory phrase, but not a complete sentence, separated from the quotation with a comma.

Example: As Torres Saillant notes, “Lamb’s Freeman embodies the mindset of many African Americans who construe the reluctance of many Dominicans…to make blackness their primary form of identity as a form of alienation that requires urgent corrective treatment (9).”

You should use a comma to separate your own words from the quotation when your introductory or explanatory phrase ends with a verb such as "says," "said," etc. You should also use a comma when you introduce a quotation with a phrase such as "According to Petersen,"

3. Make the quotation a part of your own sentence without any punctuation between your own words and the words you are quoting.

Example: At the same time, Dominicans who return to the island will do the nation “an inestimable favor” if they can rid it of the “white supremacist thought and negrophobic discourse” which has long dominated Dominican politics and culture (Torres Saillant 9).

4. Use short quotations—only a few words—as part of your own sentence.

Example: As Torres-Saillant points out, Dominicans have forged their own racial identity which has protected them from “state negrophobia” and has allowed them “to step outside the sphere of their blackness” and thus “remain whole” (6).

When you integrate quotations in this way, you do not use any special punctuation. Instead, you should punctuate the sentence just as you would if all of the words were your own.

All of the methods above for integrating quotations are correct, but you should avoid relying too much on just one method. You should instead use a variety of methods.

Citing your interview
Introduce your source the first time that you quote or cite him or her.

Example: Rigil Ballester, a Dominican man who heads Community Service Alliance, a Dominican-based company running cross-cultural programs, and an avid baseball fan, sees it differently, “You could compare the business of growing baseball players to ancient Rome and the gladiators. They took children from conquered countries and turned them into gladiators, offering them glory and paying with freedom. Only the times change and now it is money, and the gladiators don’t die, at least physically.” (online interview)

The first time you quote the source, you should note that it is an interview by citing (personal interview). You do not need to include this in future quotations as long as your source is clearly identified, but if you use information from your source without identifying him or her, use in-text citation (Ballester).
Integrating Source Materials:

Quotations:
Limit the use of quotations to those necessary to your focus or memorable for your readers. Short quotations should run in with your text, enclosed by quotation marks. Longer quotations should be set off from the text. **Integrate all quotations into the text so they flow smoothly and clearly into the surrounding sentences.**

Example from a paper on Video games:
Epistemic games, or games that “integrate the situated understandings, effective social practices, powerful identities, and shaped values of a particular community,” allow players to assume a role and learn in context (Shaffer 105).

Here is an example with the author’s name included as part of the text:
In her essay, Haraway strongly opposes those who condemn technology outright, arguing that we must not indulge in a “demonology of technology” (181).

Some verbs to use in signal phrases: notes, says, acknowledges, asserts, believes, claims, states, reports, suggests… [note that all verbs are in the present tense]

**Integrating paraphrases and summaries:**
Introduce material from other sources clearly, even if you are not quoting directly:

James Gee sees potential for games to teach these kinds of ways of knowing in the context of a virtual environment (105).

Materials which do not require acknowledgement:
- Common knowledge
- Facts available in a wide variety of sources, such as encyclopedias, almanacs or textbooks
- Your personal experience

Materials you must acknowledge:
- Sources for quotes, paraphrases and summaries
- Facts not widely known, or arguable assertions
- All visuals, even your own
- Interviews
Inquiry Paper Grading Sheet

Name _____________________________  Title ________________________________

Integration- All three types of sources must be present in the paper. How well did you integrate the three types of sources (personal, bibliographic and interview/observation) in your paper? How smooth are your transitions? How well does the paper flow? (10)

Focus- Does the paper have an overall main idea, or main point to develop? Does all of the information relate to this main theme? Does the paper leave loose ends or unanswered questions that detract from the focus? The piece should display unity and purpose. The paper creates a tension that makes the reader want to read on. The paper should trace a narrative line and not read like a bunch of disconnected facts. (20)

Lead/Ending/Title- The lead should grab the reader's attention and draw the reader into the piece, and at the same time be honest and relate to what follows in the piece. The ending should present the writer’s best thinking on the inquiry question and leave the reader with something to think about. The ending should follow naturally from the piece and not read as if it had been tacked on. The title should catch the reader's attention and make her/him want to read the piece. It should provide an idea of the content of the paper. The paper is well-organized and easy to follow. (15)

Meaning- The paper says something which introduces a new perspective. The meaning is universal enough to draw the reader in and make her/him care about what happens in the piece. There is a significant subject and some meaning which is somewhat unpredictable and unexpected, introducing an element of surprise. You should have something to say about your topic, and that meaning should have societal (level three) implications. (20)

Language and form- The paper meets or exceeds the length requirement. The paper has a definite style which draws the reader in. The paper is clearly written without mechanical errors and is economical in that the writer avoids unnecessary words which do not advance the paper's meaning. The paper is comprehensible in that the language allows the meaning to come through. The paper consistently follows the MLA style of citations. Sources are cited correctly and noted in a works cited list at the end of the paper. (15)

Information- The paper has been well researched, and uses the required number and type of sources. The piece should supply evidence: specific details, examples, facts, etc. to back up generalizations. The details should be appropriate to the focus of the piece, from reputable sources, and be carefully selected. (20)

Total _____/100

Comments:
EN1200 Composition -- Inquiry Paper

The inquiry paper has three types of sources. As it begins with a personal concern, you can use yourself as a source. The personal reflections you wrote for the FYS class are an excellent basis for beginning your paper. This reflection does not have to be direct, personal experience, but can involve imagination.

The second type of source is the direct research in the form of a personal or email/chat interview. Your interview source should be someone with expertise on your topic and someone with a different perspective on the topic than you have in terms of experience of the topic.

The third type of source is the library research. All of this has been covered quite thoroughly in your first year seminar, and the sources you use for this paper will be identical to the sources you have compiled for your inquiry portfolio.

This inquiry paper may differ from the research papers you have done in high school. The inquiry paper is not a compilation of what others have said on a particular topic, but represents, your synthesis, your analysis and your thinking. You should use what you have learned about your topic to develop a main point or idea.

The completed inquiry paper should blend the three types of sources in a smooth narrative, with the sources cited with in-text citations. All of this we will go over in class.

The final paper should be between 9-11 pages, counting the works cited page without a title page, have a strong lead to draw the reader in, use MLA 7 format (no urls, please), read like a smooth narrative, and develop a clear argument.

Inquiry paper schedule:
R 11/3 Interviewing exercise
    Generating interview questions

T 11/8 Mapping inquiry topic
    Student interview due

T 11/15 Discuss sample inquiry papers (on moodle).
    Diamond—“From Robes to Blogs” CJ
    “The Cultural Conflict Over Toilet Training” (Moodle)
    Interview for individual line of inquiry due

R 11/17 Research Writing – organizing your draft, integrating citations (double block)
    Integrating sources –Bring sources to class
    What are your findings ? Attach sources to findings. Where are the holes ?

T 11/22 **** Meet for FYS beginning at 9:30 for entire block
    Research Symposium (presentation of research)
    DUE: Individual Line of Inquiry (Research Portfolio)

T 11/29 Research Symposium (presentation of research) FYS
    Email draft in progress to me—at least three pages

R 12/1 (double class) Draft of Paper #10 (Inquiry Paper) and author’s note due at the end of second class Integrating sources smoothly

R 12/8 Paper #10 (Inquiry Paper) and author’s note due
EN1200.06 Composition
Preparation for your final Portfolio-- Review what you have done so far. Think about which papers you would consider to be your most successful. What made them successful? How were you able to be successful?

Weekly Papers: List the papers you have done for each of these

1—Personal
2- Episodic
3- Artifact
4- Past and Present
5-Scientific Inquiry (Point of View)
6- Art Paper
7- Bluest Eye
8—Idea Paper
9- -open
10- Inquiry Paper

Other Papers:
Event Paper
Classmate Interview paper

Look over all of these papers, I would like you to think about what you have learned in terms of: Cite specific examples from your papers.
• Process – How has your writing process changed over the course of the semester? What do you know how to do now, or to do better?

• Revision: What have you learned about revision? What revisions have you been able to make to your papers?

• Editing and Proofreading: What have you learned about language? What techniques can you use now to improve the language in your papers?
• Strategies you are able to use as you write and revise your papers—What strategies are you able to use as you write your papers?

• Consideration of Audience—How are you able to take into consideration the needs of your reader?

• Enduring understandings about writing—What have you learned about writing? About the drafting process? About how to develop ideas?

• Ability to cite evidence—Where have you cited evidence in your papers? What evidence can you cite for what you have learned about writing?

• Agency/passivity – Where have you been able to take control of your writing? How are you able to use the constraints of the weekly papers to enable you to say what you would like to say?
EN1200 Composition
Final Portfolio Guidelines

Your final portfolio should demonstrate the work you have done as a writer over the course of this semester. The portfolio should include:

- **Course Narrative:**
  - The course narrative should be typed and double-spaced, **at least three and a half full pages** in length. See specific guidelines below.

- **A list of the papers you have written over the course of the semester**

- **Four pieces of your writing (one of these is the inquiry paper).** You should include your drafts clipped to your final revised copy.
  - The pieces should be typed and double-spaced in a 10 or 12-point font. No fancy fonts please. A **title** should appear above each piece.

Writing should be **revised and edited.**

These items should be gathered or bound together in a way that permits easy reading and commenting. They should be collected in some sort of **folder.**

Portfolios are due in class on **Tuesday December 13th.** A late or incomplete portfolio cannot earn an A, and the grade will be affected at whatever level. Incomplete or late portfolios will not be returned before the end of the semester.

**Final Course Narrative Guidelines:**

Your final course narrative should enable you to reflect on your work and assess what you have learned about writing this semester. It should span the entire semester. You will need to review the body of your work and take notes on what you notice before you begin. The purpose of the narrative is for you to reflect on what you have learned and to clearly and specifically document that learning. The narrative is **at least as important as the work itself** and it should help me to see evidence of your learning by thoroughly addressing the following areas.

1. **Your writing:**
   - In this section of the narrative, address the work you are including in the portfolio. What have you learned to do as a writer as you wrote these pieces? You may have learned to revise, to build in levels of meaning, to include more concrete details, to write more exciting endings… What strategies are you able to use as you write your papers?

   For each thing you have learned, try to cite examples from your work. What would you like me to notice about these pieces of writing? What were some of the problems you faced in composing these pieces and how did you resolve them? What can you say about your evolving process as a writer?

   How do you feel about these pieces now? As you look at your pieces, what do you notice that you have learned about revision? What revisions have you made? What have you learned about editing and proofreading? What have you learned about language? What techniques can you use now to improve the language in your papers?
How has your writing process changed over the course of the semester? What do you know how to do now, or to do better?

How are you able to take into consideration the needs of your reader?

What have you learned about writing? About the drafting process? About how to develop ideas?

Where have you cited evidence in your papers to explain an idea? What evidence can you cite for what you have learned about writing?

Where have you been able to take control of your writing? How were you able to make the assigned topic your own? How are you able to use the constraints of the weekly papers to enable you to say what you would like to say?

Include specific examples from your papers to illustrate your points. You might look at the lists of strategies we compiled in class.

2. Your evolving identity as a writer:

Finally, think about how you have changed as a writer over the course of the semester. Taking into consideration items one through three, write about who you are and who you are becoming as a writer.

How does your writing in this class compare to your writing in high school? Where do your main interests lie? What have you learned and what would you like to know more about? What would you still like to get better at to meet the challenges of writing in college?

Note: These items are interrelated. I expect you to use these questions as a guide for your thinking and to do more than answer them mechanically. Your work can be used to show improvement in your writing, but I would also like you to use the narrative to explain how you have grown as a writer. You should refer to your work in the narrative, even quoting specific passages to show what you have learned. I would like you to use your narrative to explain what you have taken from all of this experience, especially those things which may not be so evident in the work itself.

Think about using the following sources (possibly in the form of direct quotations) in your narrative: your drafts, in-class exercises, reading responses, author’s notes, feedback you have received from me or from others, the texts.

Format:
The course narrative should be typed, double-spaced in a 10- or 12-point font. It should be proofread and free of typos and errors. It should be at least three full pages at a minimum.