

Workshop #1:Draft, Essay #1

Dear "Expository Writing" Students:

We will have several essay drafts to review and comment on for next writing workshop due in Class #5. This workshop has a dual purpose: (a) to provide individual feedback to several of you and (b) to help identify common writing concerns, as all of you prepare to revise your essays.

Your assignment for this workshop is to review each draft essay twice, carefully and critically, and type a letter (1-1/2 typed pg., double-spaced) to each writer. (Bring **two** copies of each letter to class, one for me and one for the writer.) You should also make marginal comments on the essay, in addition to the letter. This editing task should take 2- 2 ½ hours. The best practice is to break up the task: review one or two essays, take a break, and review the remaining essay(s).

Your letters should let your fellow students know two or three **specific** strong points in their drafts, and two or three **specific** things that you think need work or that you have questions about. We are primarily focusing here on the essay as a whole and how it might be strengthened, rather than more minor problems of "polishing" (e.g., grammar, punctuation, etc.).

What you're aiming for here is constructive criticism that will help your peers craft a better final draft. Since most writers learn more from constructive comments rather than being "slammed," it's best often to acknowledge first what you like about a draft, before identifying its weaker or more problematic areas.

Here are some questions for you to consider:

1. Do the title and introduction engage you as a reader? Does the writer's choice of voice/tone seem appropriate to the topic? Does the introduction establish a context for the essay?
2. How well does the draft vividly present and reflect upon life experience? Are there any aspects of the experience that seem unclear or undeveloped? What else do you, as a reader, want to know? How well does the author use setting, character and dialogue, when appropriate? How effectively does the draft effectively connect personal experience with a social or ethical issue(s)?
3. Is the draft clearly **organized** so that you can follow the movement of thought? Are there any sections or paragraphs that would work better if reordered or omitted?

4. How effective is the conclusion in (a) dynamically closing the piece and/or (b) opening up reflection to broader issues? Can you see the connections between the introduction and conclusion?

5. Are there any ways in which the author might strengthen the draft on the paragraph or sentence level (e.g. issues of paragraph flow and cohesion, grammar, word choice)?

Remember that we abide by the norms of confidentiality in our workshops. That means that we, as a writing community, agree not to share the content of our peers' writing or our evaluations of our peers' work outside the classroom. To that end, you will need to keep your classmates' drafts in a secure location.

In class, we will spend equal amounts of time on each essay. Since we can't possibly cover all suggestions in 20 minutes, these letters are critical in providing feedback. At the end of the class, you'll return the marked-up essays with your letters to the writers, and copies of the letters to me.

Thanks in advance for your hard work.

P.S. Keep a copy of the essay assignment sheet (or "prompt") in front of you as you review these drafts.