

A WRITER'S JOURNAL

Using journal entries to generate academic and creative writings

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YOU AND JOURNAL WRITING - 1

I am placing in your hands a powerful tool that will unlock a tremendous amount of energy as you and your students become deeply involved in the journal process. The energy unlocked will not die. Some of your students will appreciate journal writing so much that they will continue writing journals for the rest of their lives.

You, the teacher, are an essential part of this journal writing program. You are among the first teachers in the world to use this technique for human development with adolescents. Although I have worked hard with my editors to make the following teaching suggestions clear, I realize future revisions will be necessary because of the feedback I receive about the problems you encounter.

More than 200,000 adults have used portions of this structured journal to open out their lives, release their creativity, and experience new growth. This teacher notebook is designed to help you set up your own journal and to use your own life as a foundation for your teaching. Since you probably haven't been to a workshop that provided specific training and instruction in these techniques, you will be training yourself by writing as many of the three sections' entries as you can—before your students begin using A WRITER'S JOURNAL.



“

... all of us have within ourselves a seed of un-lived potential that is unfolding throughout our lives ...

”

The premises on which this journal is based have to do with the nature of the human psyche. By this I mean the whole of the conscious and unconscious mind. To use a gardening metaphor, let's say that I believe that all of us have within ourselves a seed of un-lived potential that is unfolding throughout our lives. It is as if we had an acorn within us that knows our oak tree. And just as the acorn unfolds the oak throughout its life, so do we, too, grow and blossom. We move through successions of growth, first blossoming, then withering, in preparation for the next growth. This journal evokes blossoms and can be used to help the writer move through the inevitable periods when the ground is being plowed and nothing obvious seems to be happening.

YOU AND JOURNAL WRITING - 2

When your students are conscious of the fact that you are keeping a journal while they are keeping theirs, you will inspire them. My success with *A WRITER'S JOURNAL* over the years is directly related to the hours I have spent writing in my own journal. I usually share my journal with my students in order to stimulate them or to clarify a section's requirements if they seem to be confused

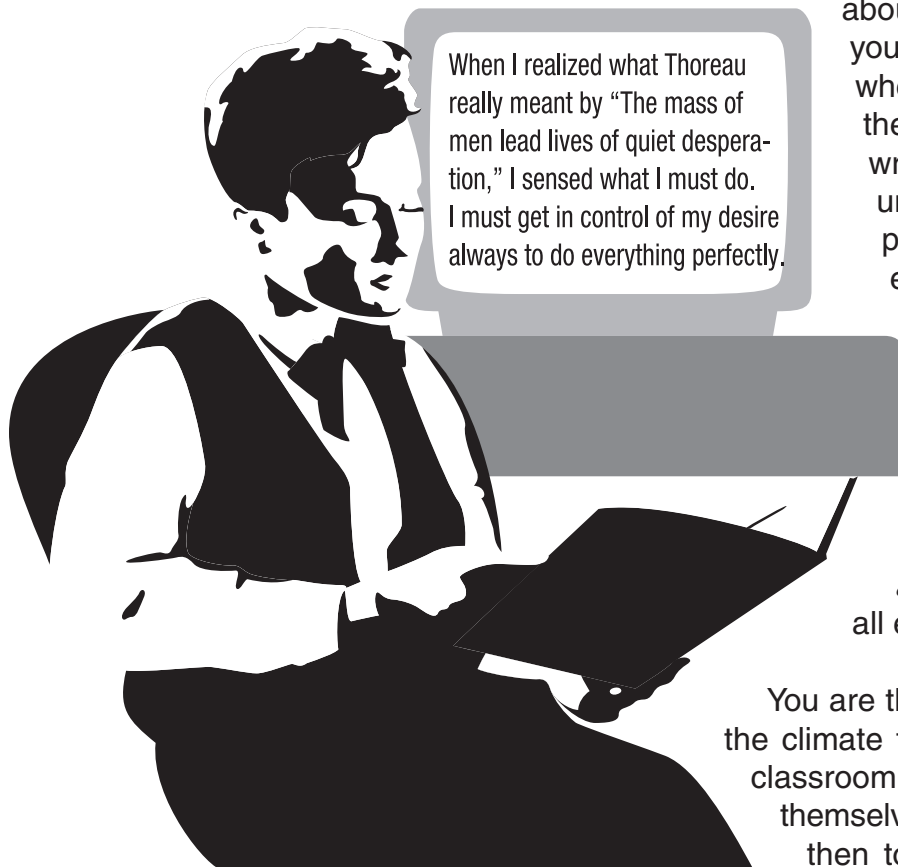
about procedures. You may share your journal by reading to them whenever you like. If you write all the entries *before* your students write them, you will convey your understanding of this journal process more clearly whenever a student asks a probing question. There will be questions, many of which will surprise you. However, you will encounter fewer surprises and you will be more comfortable if you know the material *personally* because you have written all entries.

You are the most important element in the climate that must be created in your classroom in order for students to make themselves visible—first to themselves, then to you. Becoming visible is a stunning experience. You and your students will discover things about

yourselves that will delight and amaze you. I hope you will be as happy with *A WRITER'S JOURNAL* as I am to share it with you. Almost all of your students will also be happy with this writing process because they will work in a climate of privacy, because they will respect the difficulty of the work and its power to build a forward momentum in their lives, and because they will find out that they *can* write.

When you keep *A WRITER'S JOURNAL* along with your students and share with them some of what you write, there will be two benefits:

- you will better understand the process; and
- your students will perceive you as a more authentic teacher and human being.



TEACHER INTRODUCTION - 1

Tab 1

Intro Plus

Purpose I wish to explain my philosophy about writing as a means of self-discovery and to describe the structured journal process. I teach my students that writing must be honest and specific. When we first meet, many of them do not like to write, believing that it has little to do with their lives. Others are disappointed in the work they produce. But I have found that students handle the English language competently—even eloquently—when they discover they have something *authentic* and *unique* to say.

Tab 2

Reflections

A structured journal Experience has taught me that I learn most readily when I search for information from past knowledge or experience and then work to organize this knowledge so that I can make sense of it. I have learned, too, that I can most easily do this by keeping a structured journal. To help my students organize and make sense of the knowledge and experience of their lives. I teach them how to develop a journal framework consisting of five separate tab sections of a 3-ring notebook:

Tab 3

Conversations

- **Intro Plus** This first tab section contains the program's student introduction plus sheets of 3-hole paper upon which students write their journal entries.
- **Reflections** In these entries they write about past moments in their lives—"from birth to the latest moment."
- **Conversations** In these entries they write dialogues with persons and events in their lives.
- **Introspections** In these entries they write about what they discovered while they went "inside" themselves.
- **Applications** Here students write or draw fragmented notes, outlines, paragraphs, diagrams, essays, and letters. They are planning creative and academic writings for school assignments, or other writings for responsibilities, understandings, and pleasure within their real lives.

Tab 4

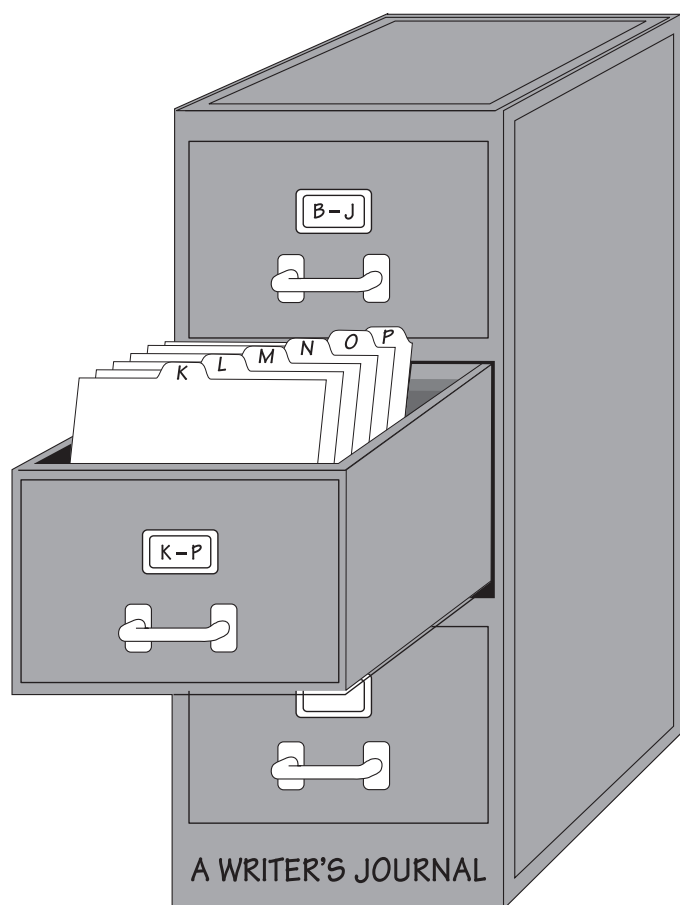
Introspections

Tab 5

Applications

Fitting the program to the classes While helping students develop their writing skills with A WRITER'S JOURNAL, I use this program differently in different classes. If students are taking a creative writing course, I make A WRITER'S JOURNAL one of the course's core experiences—a pre-writing source for their actual poems, stories, and scripts. In such a course students are assigned to write most entries. They must also write regular Progress Reports. (See the **Progress Reports** paragraph on the next page.) On the other hand, in other English classes I assign only those entries appropriate for the course's objectives and students' ages and abilities. However, I always give students the option of writing as many entries as they wish, and I reward them for the amount they write—as well as for any evidence they can give me that keeping this journal has helped them write more effectively or understand themselves more fully.

TEACHER INTRODUCTION - 2



In my classroom I have A WRITER'S JOURNAL file cabinet. There I keep all the program's handouts. Consequently, both my students and I can access them whenever they are needed. (I encourage students to open this file and take out handouts for either of two reasons—because they want to earn bonus points for their grades ... or ... because they want to write certain entries for their personal growth.)

Private and public writing While teaching the development of this journal, I make a clear distinction between *private* and *public* writing. Students first write *privately* in all five sections. This private writing gives the students an opportunity to get in touch with their unique life histories, joys, sorrows, plans. It serves as a reservoir of ideas, a way to tap the sources of each student's inner life and creativity. The private portion of the journal is read by no one but the writer—unless he or she wishes to share some writings. To be truly public, the writer takes ideas from the Applications section and produces something to be shared with one or more persons.

Progress Reports In creative writing courses I stay aware of student progress in private writing as follows. I check each journal for quantity by quickly scanning selected pages and for quality by periodically reading the Progress Reports each student submits. (A PROGRESS

REPORT SUMMARY SHEET is found on page 35 of this tab section if you wish to use it as a handout.) In such reports, the student describes how his/her journal writings reflect both academic and personal progress. Of course, I often require public writings that are graded for content and mechanics.

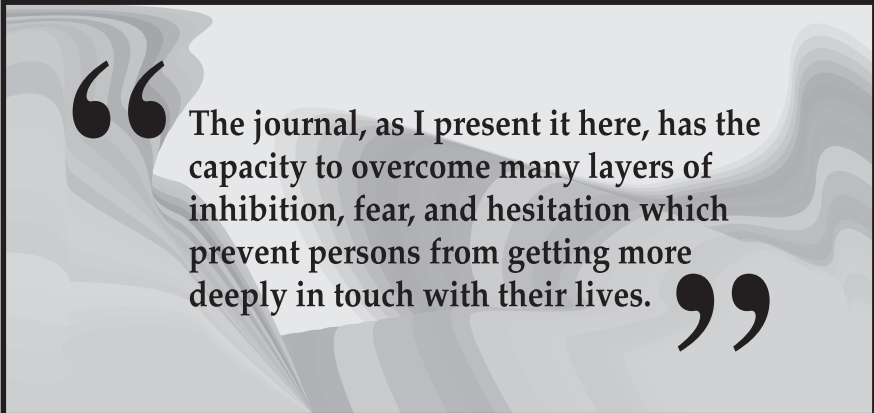
Success with the program Over the past two decades while using this process, I have been very pleased with the success of my students in various types of English classes. In my regular and remedial classes, students become deeply involved in keeping their journals as they explore their own feelings and life situations. They begin to experiment with ways to organize and clarify the spontaneous thoughts and images written in their journals. Students who generally ignore correct spelling and grammar become eager to polish their public writing because it reflects some important aspect of their private writing and, hence, of themselves. I am particularly proud that even students enrolled in my English make-up class passed the basic skills examination required for promotion, mainly on the basis of journal motivation.

TEACHER INTRODUCTION - 3

Creative writing classes In my creative writing classes students revise at least eight journal entries into poetic or fictional form. They photocopy their revisions and share them via small group “read-arounds.” Using this method in the past, my students selected writing to publish in a school literary magazine which received an All-American honor rating from the National Scholastic Press Association for four sequential years. Of course, I do not expect all my students to write for publication; however, I do encourage each of them to develop a distinctive style of writing which he or she can be proud of and find personally rewarding.

Final comments As a final encouraging word, may I refer you to the philosophy of writing instruction developed by language arts specialist James Britton. My students have behaved exactly as Britton predicted they would if they were taught *expressive* writing (e.g., personal diary or journal) before being asked to produce *transactional* writing (e.g., expository paragraphs or essays) and/or *poetic* writing (e.g., short stories or poems). Britton’s research, involving more than 2000 writing samples from 65 secondary schools, led him and his associates to conclude that expressive writing is the source of both transactional and poetic writing.

Unfortunately for student growth, according to Britton, most English teachers require impersonal, transactional writing before assigning expressive writing experiences, if they assign such at all. This tradition inhibits the writing process because the student cannot—or sees no reason to—integrate his or her life into the process. Students using A WRITER’S JOURNAL avoid such inhibition by working directly with their own unique life stories *before* they move to more impersonal writing.



“ The journal, as I present it here, has the capacity to overcome many layers of inhibition, fear, and hesitation which prevent persons from getting more deeply in touch with their lives. ”

The journal, as I present it here, has the capacity to overcome many layers of inhibition, fear, and hesitation which prevent some persons from getting more deeply in touch with their lives. Out of the thousands of separate experiences that your students have had, a forward momentum of writing can be built into their journals. All students, regardless of their writing ability when they enter your class, can learn to open out

TEACHER INTRODUCTION - 4

their lives and go to their own inner sources for leads, ideas, and story lines that can be used for academic and creative writing.



In conclusion, I am interested in your reactions and your suggestions for how this program might be improved. Consequently, after you have tried *A WRITER'S JOURNAL* and have had an opportunity to examine the writing that your students generate, write me directly, care of Interact, 10200 Jefferson Boulevard, Culver City, California 90232-0802.

Please make your comments as personal and specific as you can. ***Thank you!***

OBJECTIVES - 1

“... it integrates the cognitive, affective, experiential, and expressional domains ...”

A WRITER'S JOURNAL presents a unique journal method structured to include a wide spectrum of the intellect and emotions. Unlike traditional, unstructured diaries in which the writer often churns through material over and over again, this journal technique elicits forward movement. Incorporating A WRITER'S JOURNAL within your classroom—as a requirement or as a student option—will humanize the educational process because it integrates the cognitive, affective, experiential, and expressional domains. Depending upon how extensively students use the program inside and outside class, they will experience some, much, or all of the following knowledge, feelings, and skills:

Knowledge

Students will become familiar with the following:

1. Writing styles of fictional and nonfictional literature
2. Authors who have used journal writing as a tool
3. Specific writing techniques to use in exploring their own lives and as an aid to improved creative and other forms of academic writing

Feelings

Students will experience the following:

1. Competence in exploring personal potentials and capabilities
2. Inspiration in discovering the inner workings of one's life
3. Creativity in writing poetry and fiction based upon one's unique life story.
4. Increased sensitivity from sharing writings and hearing classmates share theirs
5. Respect and inner strength as a result of understanding more deeply their inner selves
6. Understanding and improvement in communication with others—including authors and characters in literature
7. Awareness of one's life
8. Establishment of a positive self-image

Skills

Students will demonstrate the following:

1. Capturing the spontaneity of the subconscious on paper
2. Enriching general language through including vividly described life experiences
3. Evoking rhythm in poetry through syllable manipulation
4. Writing summaries of general journal observations in polished, public writings without grammatical or organizational errors
5. Writing autobiographical sketches
6. Writing dream poetry
7. Writing seven and ten syllable poetry
8. Writing personal experience essays

OBJECTIVES - 2

9. Writing short stories with dialog
10. Writing biographies
11. Standing up and reading formally before the class
12. Making decisions based on “authentic” rather than “imposed” values
13. Using the English language correctly
14. Writing clearly and expressively
15. Expanding personal creativity and appreciating it in others
16. Expressing personal thoughts and feelings in writing
17. Thinking more deeply about one’s own and others’ life situations
18. Becoming familiar with traditional as well as modern modes of literary thought
19. Gaining insight into the nature of language and creativity
20. Developing critical and analytical thinking abilities
21. Summarizing journal writings and organizing and evaluating

them in the form of periodic Progress Reports

○	Progress Report 3 <div style="float: right; text-align: right;"> <i>Susan Andrews</i> <i>Period 3</i> <i>Mrs. March</i> </div>
	During the last few weeks I have written five entries that are
	helping me understand several events in both my life and the
	life of a character in the novel <i>Pigman</i> .
	First of all, the set of MARKINGS I wrote on the

BEFORE YOU BEGIN - 1

How much of this program will you use?

Depending upon the time you wish to give to this journal writing and the degree to which you are committed to its purpose, you will likely use A WRITER'S JOURNAL in one of three ways:

- **Considerable time and commitment** You would have your students write most or nearly all of the 18 entries in the four sections during your course's time schedule. You would do this because you are teaching a creative writing course or because you really believe A WRITER'S JOURNAL should be a core process around which you build much of your course.
- **Some time and commitment** You would have your students write about one-third to one-half of the 18 entries in the four sections. (You would select only those which you feel are appropriate for your course.) Of course, you would encourage students interested in the journal process to write as many entries as they wish in all four tab sections—for extra course points.
- **Less time and commitment** You would have your students write only a few of the 18 entries in the four sections. (You would select only a few entries which you feel are appropriate for your course.) Of course, you would encourage students interested in the journal process to write as many entries as they wish in all four tab sections—for extra course points.



Note: *I can't emphasize enough how important it is for you to write your own journal entries as you use this program with your students. You might want to reread my comments on page 2 of this Teacher Materials section.*

Setup Directions

1. **Your copy of A WRITER'S JOURNAL** Keep this notebook close at hand. Place it either on your desk or in your briefcase (or in whatever else you use to carry home papers to evaluate). Begin writing the entries in advance of your students so that you have a feel for what happens to a writer writing particular entries. Also make this notebook *your journal* by adding other teaching ideas and articles to its tab sections. Be ready to tell students, other faculty members, and loved ones: "This is *my journal*. Please do not open it or read it without my permission."
2. **Student notebooks**
 - a. When you introduce A WRITER'S JOURNAL to your students, have them organize its five tab sections either into a *separate* personal 3-ring notebook or inside a *portion* of a school 3-ring notebook—depending upon time and commitment—so that they are ready to write as many entries as you assign or that they themselves choose to write.
 - b. Students keeping a separate 3-ring notebook should have notebooks that are at least *one-inch deep* since they will eventually contain a large number of pages.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN - 2



You will be amazed by what your students can create while making their own tabs.

- c. If you wish your students to have separate journal notebooks and they are willing and able to spend a small amount of money, you may wish to locate stores near your school where they can purchase new three-ring notebooks and appropriate tab dividers.
 - d. Students may also be able to find notebook tabs in a nearby store. Point out that tabs with no printing on them are best. However, rather than purchasing tabs, you and your students may wish to use your imagination and creativity to develop tab dividers for the five sections. These dividers do not have to be professionally printed. Students can make them out of old manila folders or any available cardboard. Artistic individuals will want to draw images on their section dividers.
 - e. If your students lack the money for the 2b-c-d above, help them obtain any serviceable three-ring notebook.
 - f. Above everything else, encourage each student to feel, "This is my private and personal journal."
3. **Classroom arrangement** Set up the A WRITER'S JOURNAL classroom file or set of classroom boxes with 21 folders: 1 for the five page Intro Plus handout (pages 1:1 through 1:5; 20 for the A to T entries handouts. Place this file or set of boxes in a readily accessible classroom location. **Note well:** *Do not keep your masters in these 21 folders. Keep them in your teacher notebook.*
4. **Duplication** Duplicate the following:
- Title page and TABLE OF CONTENTS page (class set—on 3-hole paper, back to back, if possible)
 - INTRO PLUS INTRODUCTION (class set—on 3-hole paper, back to back, if possible)
 - the remaining entry handouts you plan to assign (class sets—on 3-hole paper, back to back, if possible)
 - all remaining entry handouts (10 or more copies—on 3-hole paper, back to back, if possible)
 - WRITING A PROGRESS REPORT (class set—but only if you intend to use the Progress Report for student evaluation when you are committed to using quite a few of the entries—see **Considerable time and commitment** on page 9)
 - PROGRESS REPORT SUMMARY SHEET (several class sets—but only if you intend to use them for student evaluation when you are committed to using quite a few of the entries—see **Considerable time and commitment** on page 9)

BEFORE YOU BEGIN - 3

Overview

The TABLE OF CONTENTS on the back of the Title page shows the four journal sections in which students write and store their journal entries.

The **Reflections section** In order to uncover and examine the experiences of their lives, students first write about them, then expand upon them by exploring their memories and feelings about them. Students accomplish this task by focusing their attention on the events, people, and periods of their life history.

The **Conversations section** Having recorded and explored their life history, students are ready to examine the contents on a deeper level by creating dialogs in which the people, events, and situations of their life speak to them. Through these dialog sections of their journals, students are able to establish inner relationships with significant areas of their lives.

The **Introspections section** Now that they have worked with the conversational exercises, students are ready to explore their lives on a level which is deeper than the conscious or surface level. Introspection entries help students mediate between the conscious and deeper-than-conscious levels of their lives. Dream work, imagery work, and explorations of inner wisdom are recorded here.

The **Applications section** Entries in this section build upon the previous private writing by producing forceful academic and creative writings. For example, students often use their Reflections section entries to generate personal essays and autobiographies, their Conversations section entries to generate fiction and argumentative essays, and their Reflections section images to generate poetry.

Class assignments Of course, those assignments stemming from journal activities you will evaluate as you would evaluate other assignments. See suggestions about evaluation in the evaluation section of this notebook on pages 25 and 26.



When this first happens to a shy or retiring student, you will be very happy!

A pleasing benefit Sometimes students recognize a piece they have written in a private entry in their journal as something they would like to share. They either revise it or leave it “as is”; they then share it with you and possibly with the rest of the class.

Progress Reports If you use A WRITER’S NOTEBOOK as a core experience in your class, consider having students regularly write PROGRESS REPORTS. *(Have students attach a PROGRESS REPORT SUMMARY REPORT on top of their Progress Reports.)* Examining these will help you so that academic growth can be assessed. You should explain to your students that Progress Reports are public documents which may be read by others.

JOURNAL FEEDBACK - 1

A critical part of A WRITER'S JOURNAL is using journal feedback. Half of the work is writing; the other half is feedback. Help your students become familiar with the various kinds of feedback explained below.

Immediate rereading

Encourage students to immediately reread an entry as soon as they have finished it. Their introductory materials stress the importance of "catching-the-thoughts-that-think themselves." We often start to write about a particular subject, feeling, or experience. Then we find, upon rereading, that other ideas are presenting themselves. This is a consequence of the evocative power of journal feedback. Therefore, stress several times to your students that *immediate rereading is important and that they should add whatever ideas are stirred to what they have already written.*

Reading aloud in private

Rereading entries aloud stirs new thoughts in writers' minds. Encourage your students to read aloud wherever they can be alone: the attic, the basement, a hillside, their room.



“

... we find, upon rereading, that other thoughts are presenting themselves ...

”

Recording and listening

Reading aloud to a tape recorder and then listening to what has been read stimulates the journal keeper in a different way. He/she will hear subtle emphases being given to words and thoughts and will become an observer.

Reading aloud to others

From time to time you may want to provide voluntary opportunities for students to read aloud to you or to read-around groups. *When private writing is shared aloud, a great act of trust is required.* Your role must be to see that no one's feelings are hurt by others' thoughtless comments. Here are suggestions to help you with this delicate task.

1. Protect the students from prying classmates who want to ask personal questions about an entry's content. Explain to your class, "When persons read aloud in class, it is not an invitation for anyone else to start commenting and giving advice. Each person in this class knows how to make his or her own way in the world. We read

JOURNAL FEEDBACK - 2



Of course, you hope that students will eventually add to their entries without your prompting them. Think of the satisfaction you will find when your students have developed the inner motivation to see the value of expanding their journal—without your continually suggesting that they do such expansion!

- aloud primarily in order to get in touch with our inner wisdom and to reveal the kind of person we are becoming.”
2. Respond to students’ reading aloud with simple questions such as, “How does it feel when you hear yourself reading your own entry aloud?” ... “Is there anything you wish to add?”
 3. When readers respond to questions such as those in number 2 above, they get in touch with their feelings. Encourage them to add to their entries. They might write, “When I read aloud in class, I felt...” Later, when they know most of A WRITER’S JOURNAL’s sections, you might ask, “Can you think of any other section of your journal where you could take that issue (idea... problem...) and open it up further?”

APPROACHING DIFFERENT CLASSES

This journal process is intended for use in English classrooms. Its Reflections, Conversations, and Introspections sections can also be used in psychology and human behavior courses. I have used this journal writing method with students of different ages and abilities in both traditional English courses and electives. I therefore make the following general recommendations:

Grades 7-10: High Ability

1. Use all entries in the journal. Take time to help seventh and eighth graders with the new vocabulary.

Grades 7-10: Low Ability

1. These students may need some extra explanation for the CROSSROADS and CONVERSATIONS WITH WISDOM FIGURES entries.
2. CONVERSATIONS WITH EVENTS, SOCIETY, AND WORK entries may seem too difficult for some of these students because the concepts are abstract. For example, they may say, “Events don’t really talk.” Also they may not have matured sufficiently to be interested in either society or work.
3. Be careful with entries L and M. These sections are unusual and full of creative potential, but some students may complain they don’t want to do them because they are “weird.” If you decide to use these sections, do so with very clear and explainable educational objectives in mind.

Grades 11-12: High Ability

1. Treat these students as adults and scholars. Be sure to emphasize that you are using this journal writing process to enrich and not to replace any of the standard course objectives.
2. Have optional activities available for any students who would rather not participate in A WRITER’S JOURNAL.

Grades 11-12: Low Ability

1. This group will likely approach the structured journal most enthusiastically. These students are often full of anxiety about their future. Several entries will give them a chance to deal constructively with that anxiety.
2. Note, however, that these students often fear writing because they expect to be reprimanded for mistakes. A WRITER’S JOURNAL will give them a chance to write—and to write often—without that fear.

Creative writing classes

1. Approach them as adults and professional writers. Students who like imaginative writing are usually the ones most interested in the Introspections entries.



Some of my most successful experiences with this journal program has been with this group of students. Do not hesitate to use A WRITER’S JOURNAL with students whom you might think at first would never want to try it. Don’t sell any students short. They all want to grow.

FURTHER TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 1

I have tried to write each entry handout with clear instructions for your students. When you do the exercises yourself first, you will discover what additional kinds of encouragement and explanation your particular students will need. Please feel free to add to the instructions whenever you think students need more help and then let me know how you made the materials clearer and more helpful to them. *I want to hear from you.*

If you have students in your classes for whom English is a second language, tell them that they may write the Reflections, Conversations, and Introspections sections of their journals in their first language. Much more writing will be done by each of them with your permission to go to the original source of their life stories. However, have them write their Progress Reports in English.

Here are further suggestions for using this program with your students:



A teaching colleague of mine who uses A WRITER'S JOURNAL with his students suggested this technique to me. He told me that he, as well as his students, brought in countless photo albums as the year began. "Mark," he said, "the albums not only kicked off the journal process. They also helped start class members to care for one another. I believe it set the tone for the whole school year."

Introducing A WRITER'S JOURNAL

1. A dramatic way to introduce the idea that each of us has a unique life story is to suggest that students bring in family photo albums which show pictures of themselves during infancy and childhood. (Later they may want to paste or tape their favorite pictures beside certain entries in their journals.)
2. You may want to go over the students' introductory pages carefully with them as you begin. Encourage them to highlight certain ideas or statements with colored felt pens.

Teaching the Reflections entries

In these entries students examine their individual life histories.

B: DAILY ENTRIES

1. DAILY ENTRIES are raw materials.
2. It's important not to make this journal a new thing for some of your students to feel guilty about. Mandating students to write DAILY ENTRIES every day will kill students' enthusiasm. You can see that I'm recommending loose, casual use of these entries. They are a place for them to write when they're not familiar enough with the rest of the journal to know where else they can take material which is coming up out of their personal storehouse of experiences.
3. Five to ten minutes work on one of these entries is a good beginning. They can do their first entries right in class with minimal encouragement and support from you.
4. Start teaching them about Journal Feedback as discussed in the Using Feedback comment on their page 1:3.

FURTHER TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 2

5. Call students' attention to the QUESTIONS/ANSWERS portion of the handout. Explain how this represents their chance to imagine talking with the author. Encourage them to write down questions in the margins of any handout they do not understand. Then when they come to class, they can ask you for further clarification.
6. Carefully discuss with your students the difference between an *Introductory Assignment* and an *Advanced Assignment*. Explain that Advanced Assignments should be undertaken only when they have completed all Introductory Assignments for the entries in their Tabs 1-2-3 sections.

C: PERIOD ENTRIES

1. This part of the journal is for a review of any recent period longer than a day or two. Usually this section allows the journal keeper to go back into the past and write up to the present. For one person, it's two years since a decision was made to start saving to buy a car; for another, it's five years since his parents were killed in an accident. For someone else, it may be two months since she began her first after-school job.
2. Students can write PERIOD ENTRIES whenever they wish, but these entries always begin in the past and are brought up to the present.
3. Students who have kept diaries before may ask you how to integrate them into this structured journal. I suggest that they reread their old diaries and then write a PERIOD ENTRY to review the time span covered by the diary (but they should bring the PERIOD ENTRIES up to the present). An alternative place to summarize earlier diaries is in AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES, Section E. The student then has two options: to summarize in a PERIOD ENTRY, which is always brought to the current moment; or to summarize in the AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES section.



MARKINGS are profoundly important to the journal process. Students find writing them fascinating. Tell students not to judge their MARKINGS' quality. There is no way they can do them "wrong."

D: MARKINGS

1. The idea of doing the major signposts or MARKINGS in a life comes from Dag Hammarskjöld's *Autobiography*. What the student is trying to do here is organize his/her life experiences into something manageable. By alternately compressing and expanding, the student generates energy to build a forward momentum for writing. Each person's MARKINGS are unique in all history. The sense of the specialness of each life can begin to develop through writing successive sets of MARKINGS.
2. This handout D provides many suggestions to choose from. Each time a set of MARKINGS is written, it reflects the writer's position at a given moment in time. The same person writes a chronicle of disasters, traumas, and tragedies at one sitting; four

FURTHER TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 3

months later her/his MARKINGS are celebrations full of joy. Joy is not more valuable to a writer than trauma. Both are important. Discourage any judgmental thinking about which section or which entry is “more important” than any other. Everything written is grist for the mill. Some little two line note in a DAILY ENTRY may be the springboard for a later story or drama.

E: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES

1. These entries work in a complementary way with MARKINGS. In the latter we compress. Here we open out and expand. You may give your students permission to “fall into” their first MARKING selection as they bring it to this section. Instructions for this part can include the words, “Let yourself be flooded with the memories of persons, works, your relationship with society, the events of your life, and the condition of your body at the time of the MARKING you have chosen to write about today.”
2. Eventually this part of a journal becomes the person’s autobiography, but it is written spontaneously over time from powerful random memories of the past.



*To impress students with the power and relevance of Robert Frost's poem **The Road Not Taken**, I have copied and illustrated it on a piece of poster board. I post it at appropriate times—such as when introducing CROSSROADS entries.*

F: CROSSROADS

1. Exploring old roads-not-taken may provide a new way to free energy from the past. The three sections (MARKINGS at the center; AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES on the one hand; and CROSSROADS on the other) form a great trilogy to compress and expand creative energy.
2. To become a “road-not-taken,” the alternative must still have strong pull on the individual. By this I mean that thoughts of the old path must come again and again.
3. It is important that old roads not be used as a new way to build guilt (e.g., “Oh, I wish I’d done it that way” ... “I feel bad that I didn’t try another way” ... etc.). Encourage students to learn from the old road rather than to feel guilt or regret. You may say things like, “Substitute the words ‘Next time I will’ ... for the words ‘If only.’” *“If only” is the most destructive, nonproductive phrase in the language.* You can teach a valuable lesson here, one that students can use throughout their adult life. For example, the roads-not-taken can sometimes be traveled at a later date. The reason we cannot take them at earlier times is often that we are not old enough, or wise enough, or experienced enough when they first present themselves. “Next time...” will be an important stimulus for the imagination and will pull the students forward into their writing.

FURTHER TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 4

Teaching the Conversations entries

Conversations are dialogs written in a script form such as a dramatist uses. The conversation is between the journal keeper and someone/something else.



Give students extra help when introducing CONVERSATIONS. Read some samples you have written that are both very effective and quite ineffective. Ask them how your weaker ones could have been improved—and why your good ones are good.

G: CONVERSATIONS WITH PERSONS

1. These conversational parts of the journal take the raw material that is gathered in various journal entries and permit us to work deeply with it. Explain to students that almost all of us “talk” to persons “in our heads.” We rehearse and replay various encounters with others again and again. Writing the conversation in the form of dialogs helps us understand our own and others’ feelings and thoughts. Movement is generated by taking our energy from an internal focus to an external one every time the “other” person responds. In this way we move down into the deep self. These movements from internal (student speaking) to external (other speaking) help change the perspective on the relationship.
2. When these conversations are read back, the scripts often surprise the writers. Students suddenly find that they “know” more than they thought they did, and they become more intuitive without any loss of rational power.
3. Typically students will ask, “Shall I write what I know they’d say or what I’ve always wanted them to say?” Frankly, it doesn’t matter. Some writers begin with what they’ve heard the other say, and it may take a couple of pages to get down deeper to where the new, “unknown” information is waiting. Teach them that we cannot change the other person, but that we can change ourselves. Changing the way we perceive the other person is what these dialogs accomplish.
4. Later they may want to develop these conversations into plays. However, remember that if your students know that you or their peers will actually read these scripts, the writing will lose its effectiveness. Why? Because a self-consciousness will creep in, and students will stay on the surface of their lives instead of opening to their depths.

H: CONVERSATIONS WITH BODY

1. You know that adolescence is a time of great changes in the body. Growth spurts leading to early maturation in girls in particular, or slow growth, resulting in late maturation in boys, can be a source of real anguish for your students. About 80 percent of all American youngsters have acne at one time or another, to mention only one common problem. Consequently, your students can use this part of their journal to help themselves manage their self-consciousness about their bodies.

FURTHER TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 5



*Write and share
your own BODY
HISTORY. Students
will love you for
doing so.*

2. Besides expressing irritation at their bodies, they should strive to accept themselves. They must accept the fact that this is the only body they are going to get. Some of them are desperately unhappy about their bodies. Suggest that they write a "Declaration of Peace" with their bodies. This action will help some of them.
3. Body history which students write first in Introductory Assignment H-1 will stir a great many sensory memories. Body history is a series of brief entries just like MARKINGS but not limited in number. It may take some students two hours or longer to do their history. Be sure to direct them to the AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES section if they want to expand a particular memory in detail. After body history is completed, some will be troubled; others will be delighted by their memories. Encourage them to capture the painful as well as the joyous ones.
4. When they have written a thorough history, stop the class. Before students go on with their conversations, you may want to set aside some time for *optional* reading them aloud. These readings act as a stimulus for the rest of the class. Make a safe place for them to share whatever comes to the surface. If some don't choose to read aloud, never insist that they do.
5. The body conversation which follows can be a source of comfort and nourishment for budding writers. The idea of these entries is that the students will learn to write self-caring, affirmative dialogs.

I: CONVERSATIONS WITH EVENTS

1. CONVERSATIONS WITH EVENTS permit the students to open out the separate parts of their lives in still another way. These conversations have a way of dead-ending if they are approached in an analytical way. Questions which stop the writing ask why a particular event occurred; therefore, tell students to use open, evocative questions like these:
 - "Where are you, the event of my 16th birthday, trying to go? or to take me?"
 - "How can I learn from you, the event of my parents' divorce?"
 - "How will you, the situation of being the first-born in my family, affect my life?"
 - "What shall we make of the circumstance of being the only girl in a family of six children?"
2. As soon as the student becomes analytical with questions that are demanding, angry, or insulting to the event, the writing usually comes to a halt. Students, given the examples like those above, will soon learn how to pull the events forward rather than to seek specific answers.



Communicate with your social studies colleagues that your (and their) students are writing J entries. They may wish to try this dialoging process as public writing in their classes.

FURTHER TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 6

J: CONVERSATIONS WITH SOCIETY

1. These dialogs deal with issues. As you list the different aspects of societal issues for your class, you may think of other examples of issues to give your students.
 - **Aesthetic “thank you”** to poets, playwrights, entertainers, composers, and **votes of “no confidence”** to purveyors of TV violence.
 - **Consumer rave** about clothing that falls apart or shrinks with the first washing ... Lemon cars and crooked car repairmen ... Gratitude for honest and good workmanship.
 - **Fiscal distress** about low hourly wages, lack of employment opportunities, small allowances from parents, and the high costs of dating.
 - **Social complaints** with institutions, such as schools, hospitals, churches; or **expressions of gratitude** for great services rendered.
 - **Ecological anguish** about pollution or **excitement** about effective pollution control programs.
 - **Sex role** expressions of frustration and pleasure in relation to the work of being a man or a woman.
 - **Political pleasure or pain** with local, national, or international events and leaders.
 - **Historical conversations** with roots (talking with ancestors) to overcome feelings of alienation and separateness.
2. This diverse section of the journal will allow for much discussion of current controversies in the foreign and domestic arena. A really good use of this section includes conversations with authors about their works. No limits should be placed on these topics because the conversations are all private writing and self-chosen.

K: CONVERSATIONS WITH WORK

1. We grow through relationships with other people and through our work. The work of being a student is the major task confronting your students, but “work” ranges along a continuum from single activities to lifelong pursuits.
 - **Specific tasks:** Cleaning the garage, keeping the journal, writing a report, solving a problem.
 - **One-time efforts:** The work of being a man or woman, a contributor to society, a daughter or son, a good citizen; finding a meaningful career.
 - **Infinite** The work of making a life into a work of art.
2. See that your students address the work itself with questions like, “Where are you, my work, trying to go?” or they may talk with some wise person about their work, perhaps someone who does the work that they aspire to do themselves.

FURTHER TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 7

Teaching the Introspections entries

These entries necessitate the most intuitive kinds of student writing. This section of the journal deals with dreams and imagery from which poems may evolve.



Remember to be careful about assigning certain Introspections entries. Some students and parents may feel you are invading persons' privacy.

L: DREAM ENTRIES AND CONTINUATIONS

1. In a DREAM ENTRY the student records his dream as he remembers having it. In a CONTINUATION he records his reactions when he reads a series of dreams that he has collected over a period of at least 30 days. (It is best to work with a series of dreams.) It is important that paper be kept at the student's bedside so that the dreams can be recorded immediately upon waking. This section of the journal can be especially useful in generating ideas for stories and other types of creative writing.
2. Students who do not report dreams or who have no memories of their dreams may feel self-conscious or deficient about this section. From recent research on dreaming, we know that we all dream, but it is not necessary to remember dreams in order to use this journal. Reassurance should be given to ease the discomfort of individuals who have no dreams to record. In time, when the path is open, dreams will be remembered and can then be recorded. If students ask about old dreams that they remember, encourage them to record such old dreams at the beginning of the section.
3. After recording 20, 30, 40 dreams—without any interpretation—time should be allotted to reread the entire series. Ideas about recurring themes are noted in the CONTINUATION section. When a student reads a series, perhaps one or two dreams will seem to be outstanding or have a powerful “pull.” These dreams can be enlarged. Figures in these signal dreams can be worked with by dialoging with them. Symbols can also be evoked through dialoging.
4. When dream settings go back to earlier years, these times can be remembered in detail in the Autobiographical Dimension.

M: IMAGERY ENTRIES AND CONTINUATIONS

1. Help your students quiet themselves by breathing deeply. Let their imagery present itself spontaneously, without criticism, judgments, or evaluation. They will then begin to discover rich new sources within themselves that they can bring to their writing. Images are available “down in the well” in a never-ending stream. Creative adults can move freely up and down their “wells,” thus bringing up new, varied materials of great beauty and power.

FURTHER TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 8

2. Be prepared for the fact that not all images will be beautiful. (Some may be “scary” or even frightening.) Nevertheless, even the darkest ones are to be recorded. You can say, reassuringly, “Simply record each image and let it be there in your journal for now. Don’t judge or worry about any one of them. They are all to be used to build the forward momentum of your writing.” Stress also that there is power in the “dark” images, too.
3. You may want to read to the entire class the progressive poems in Ira Progoff’s *The Well and The Cathedral* (Dialogue House, 1976) to help establish the atmosphere of deep respect for the imagery process.
4. After making a few entries, students can reread them and construct their own seven syllable phrases to take themselves “down the well” every time they begin to work in their journals. Students who are “afraid” to “go down their well” can use a neutral seven syllable phrase (e.g., “The breath moves at the center”) or something equally quieting.
5. Some students will want to use only one word as recommended by Herbert Benson in his book *The Relaxation Response*. Others will find that a pair of phrases will be preferable. It is important to make the maximum range of possibilities available to your students. You may say, “Do it your own way,” as often as you like. Occasionally students will report that the phrase “changes itself” spontaneously. Reassure them that this does happen. It is an example of their own process at work.
6. These phrases are to be used during an imagery session to take the writer down his/her well. As soon as the images begin occurring, the phrase is no longer repeated.



Here is a particularly powerful place for capable students to write entries that show their intellectual and spiritual growth. Encourage students to share their best ones with one another.

N: CONVERSATIONS WITH WISDOM FIGURES

1. These conversations are dialogs written with wisdom figures. They come from the deepest parts of the self and help a person get in touch with the seeds of his/her own inner wisdom. Dialogs are sometimes written with a famous teacher, an inventor, an artist, an athlete, a saint, a religious figure, a poet, a novelist, or a fictional character.
2. These journal entries are comprehensive in that they encompass all journal areas. For that reason, it is a good focusing activity as well as a good review activity.

O: PERSPECTIVES

1. In these entries a person has dialogs with stages of life. For example, a person could write a conversation with an expanse of time. The stage could be from the past, the present, or the future.
2. If some of your students have trouble visualizing specific periods of time, refer them to their PERIOD ENTRIES or MARKINGS.

FURTHER TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 9

Some MARKINGS are at a hub of a great period of time.



You and your students will both feel good when you see how personal journal writing has had a positive impact upon students' academic performance.

Teaching the Applications entries

The following entries comprise the Applications section of the journal. These activities help students apply what they learned in the first three sections in order to produce public, academic, and creative writings. Each entry centers around one or several assignments which are introduced by a PURPOSE statement usually followed by an example. **Note well:** *Encourage students to come up with their own applications that will help them be better students and happier, healthier human beings.*

P: FREE ASSOCIATION WRITINGS

1. A basic rule in completing a FREE ASSOCIATION WRITING is to keep one's pen moving on paper for at least ten minutes at a time. By concentrating on creating "private" writings first, the strength, uniqueness, and individuality of one's voice will unfold as remembered experiences surface.
2. You will encourage some of your students if you offer to come by their desks and point out lines they have written which you feel are worthy of expansion.

Q: OTHER WISDOM LOG

1. Here the journal writer collects or processes the wisdom of others in many formats: interviews; book reviews; magazine reviews; or simply random comments about readings, radio and TV programs, or films.
2. Most commonly, a journal entry here is used for reactions to reading. Encourage students to record any passages or quotations which strike them as worth saving or expanding. In order to avoid interruption of the reading, tell them to make these entries immediately after finishing their reading.

R: POETIC WRITINGS

1. Poetry can be produced by students if they are able to put themselves in the role of a poet by looking through their journals from time to time and expanding their dreams, images, ideas, poetic lines, dialogs, and daily reflections into finished poems.
2. Encourage students to copy or mount favorite poems which they may wish to keep and perhaps emulate.

S: FICTIONAL AND DRAMATIC WRITINGS

1. Serious students are sometimes interested in reading the published journals of famous novelists (e.g., Fitzgerald, Woolf, and Tolstoy) and looking for the similarities and relationships between the private and public writings of the authors.

FURTHER TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 10

2. Remind your students that most fictional and all dramatic writings depend on realistic dialog. They can be practiced in this journal's Conversational entries.



If you have a colleague outside your department who requires research essays, suggest that he/she have students write a dialog with a person, idea, or event related to the research. For example, a student researching T.R. and the 1912 election for a history class might ask questions of T. R. trying to pin down exact reasons why he entered the race.

T: NON-FICTIONAL WRITINGS

1. Entries here help students relate their journal to a wide variety of academic writings they are producing for your class and in other classes.
2. Biographical research writings, for example, can be enriched through the journal process. For example, a student interested in Joseph Conrad can write a dialog with Conrad. By so doing, the student may get into the depth of Conrad's life. The student can then comment on primary as well as secondary source materials more powerfully and enthusiastically.

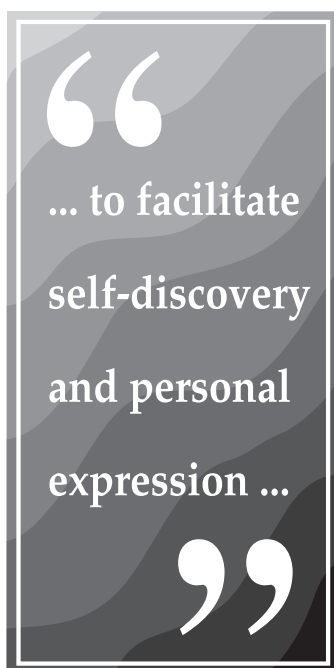
Original entries

Some of your most creative and energetic journal writers will ask, "Is it OK to originate my own journal entries—ones totally different from the author's?" Of course, you will answer an enthusiastic "Yes!" Their inventions may include a special person, hobby, vocational, or academic interest. Please don't forget to let me know what they generate. I am always intrigued by students' reactions to A WRITER'S JOURNAL.

A final note

There is nothing at all wrong in having many—even all—teachers within your department use this journal writing process with their students. As these students grow and change over time, so will the depth of their journal entries they write for different teachers in different classes.

In addition, if you have students who have already worked with a structured journal in another of your courses, allow them to experience again any or all entries. I have had students who began their journals in the eleventh grade in my creative writing course and then continued on with new entries in my senior English class. Their enthusiasm actually deepened over time rather than diminished. These students were able not only to go faster than the rest of the class but also to help other students who were just learning the journal process.



EVALUATION OF STUDENT GROWTH - 1

Philosophy

The structured journal's primary purpose is to facilitate self-discovery and personal expression. While this purpose is being achieved, the student's writing skill will almost certainly increase—particularly if he/she understands that private writing will not be graded. You will, however, evaluate just as you always have. The following suggestions will help you resolve the grading dilemma.

Suggestions

1. Require students to write Progress Reports at least every three weeks. Assign above average students to write them outside class as homework; give below average students time to write them during class. When you are ready to have your students write their first Progress Reports, thoroughly explain to your students what you expect them to write—as explained immediately below.
2. Explain to your students the sequence they are to follow while writing a Progress Report. First they fill out all of a PROGRESS REPORT SUMMARY SHEET except for the final part—Personal Evaluation. Then they write the actual Progress Report, following whatever organizational pattern you suggest. Students then fill out the Personal Evaluation portion of the PROGRESS REPORT SUMMARY SHEET. Finally, they attach their actual Progress Report to this sheet—together with a sample of their best work, if they wish to hand in such a sample.
3. If the ability level of the Progress Report samples—found on pages 30-34—seems too high or too low for your students, provide a different model of your own.
4. Use your own judgment, but seriously consider students' personal recommendations while you are deciding upon students' grades for all journal work accomplished during the time period. Explain to your students that your job of evaluating their Progress Reports will be aided if they give specific examples to illustrate what they have learned from their reading and writing. Obviously, you will evaluate Progress Reports partly on what the students say they have done (content) and partly on their ability to communicate (mechanics). Here are some criteria to help you evaluate your students' Progress Reports:
 - a. concrete language (use of rich, vivid detail)
 - b. probing rather than superficiality
 - c. ability to generalize significantly from reading and experience
 - d. discrimination and subtlety
 - e. sustained development of an idea
 - f. ability to compare/contrast ideas and experiences

EVALUATION OF STUDENT GROWTH - 2

- g. an increase over time in perception, awareness, powers of observation, creativity, imagination
 - h. mechanics
5. When you are preparing your final examination (which covers all subjects you have included in the course), here are some suggestions for possible writing topics:
- Write a conversation between yourself and the person (or event, or subject) most often mentioned in your journal during the semester.
 - Write a conversation between the research paper you wrote and the subject about which it was written.
 - Write a dialog with your journal about the parts you used the most and the sections you used the least.
 - If your situation will permit, you might wish to call the semester final exam a Semester Progress Report. If so, have students write it during the time allocated for your final—or have students prepare it at home and submit it the day of the examination. The time allocated for the final could then be used for oral sharing.



Consider having students suggest how the personal journal writing program could be fused into your course's final examination.



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This basic text for the Intensive Journal is the seminal work of most of the Reflections, Conversations, and Introspections sections of A WRITER'S JOURNAL. However, A WRITER'S NOTEBOOK is not authorized or approved by Dialogue House or Ira Progoff.

Capacchione, Lucia. *The Powers of Your Other Hand*. North Hollywood: Newcastle, 1989.

A guide to the use of a journal for self-guidance and expanded creativity.

Simons, George F. *Keeping Your Personal Journal*. New York: Paulist Press, 1978.

Offering a synopsis of recent educational trends, this work is heavily indebted to Progoff. It does an outstanding job of explaining and giving suggestions for the application of Progoff's ideas. For example, on page 62 Simons capsulizes five chapters of *At A Journal Workshop* when he recommends "dialoging with

- people in your past, present, future;
- your job, hobbies, skills, career;
- your body or any part of it;
- dream and fantasy figures;
- important moments and events, both personal and public;
- literary, historical, artistic, religious works (as well as figures, events, and places);
- feelings (e.g., anger, joy, pain, boredom, fear, emptiness); and
- unfinished decisions and plans."

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WRITING PROGRESS REPORTS - 1

Regularly you and your teacher need to assess your academic growth while you work in A WRITER'S JOURNAL. You will help such assessment by writing Progress Reports. After you have been working in the private writing sections for awhile, you will turn back to these specific directions below on how to write Progress Reports.

[illegible]

Directions:

1. Fill out a copy of a PROGRESS REPORT SUMMARY SHEET. (Unused copies should be kept in your journal's Intro Plus tab section.)
2. Write either a *formal* or a *spontaneous* Progress Report, depending upon your teacher's recommendations.
3. Attach the SUMMARY SHEET to the Progress Report.
4. After your teacher returns your Progress Report, file it in your journal's Intro Plus tab section.
5. Reread previous Progress Reports before writing new ones.

Writing a formal Progress Report

A formal Progress Report starts with five paragraphs.

- The first paragraph states the three most important things you have learned during the time period covered by the Progress Report.
- The second paragraph gives details about the first item mentioned in your opening paragraph.
- The third paragraph explains the second most important thing you learned.
- The fourth paragraph develops the third item mentioned in paragraph one.
- The fifth paragraph briefly summarizes the ideas introduced in paragraph one.
- Once you have completed these first five paragraphs, you may add other paragraphs containing additional thoughts or feelings learned from assignments, from read-arounds, and from journal writings in all four dimensions.

WRITING PROGRESS REPORTS - 2

Sample formal Progress Report

Here is a formal Progress Report written by a capable creative writing student in one of the author's classes.

As I reflect on the last six weeks in this class, I first wish to explain three things I have attempted to develop: the discipline to write on a regular basis, the perseverance to continue working on an idea, and the tolerance to be less critical of other people's work. After explaining these three developments, I wish to comment briefly on other class experiences.

To begin with, I have developed some discipline in my writing. I have always had a difficult time writing on a regular basis, particularly in a journal. I tend to let myself get very lax and not bother to write things down until the very last moment. But now I am beginning to see the value of at least trying to write something every day. It forces me into a habit and allows an outlet for my thoughts, important or not. And sometimes it's the seemingly unimportant thoughts that can be used later in an essay or poem.

Second, I feel I have developed a little more perseverance while working on an idea. It's very easy to give up and abandon something when the right words don't seem to come. I have often found myself throwing a paper away when finding the right words starts getting a little rough. I convinced myself that it wasn't very good and therefore not worth the effort. I believe this class has taught me to stick with an idea and follow it through to the end. Consequently, I have written some pieces that I can feel proud of, and that is what the class is all about!

Third, my most important experience is I have become much more tolerant while reading someone else's work. I often find myself being very critical of other people, and I realize now that this is wrong. I know the value of constructive criticism, but it can be taken too far. A poem or short story is as personal as a piece of the heart and should be treated as such. Someone else's poem may not appeal to my senses, but that doesn't give me the right to condemn it as bad. We all operate on different levels of consciousness, and that has to be taken into consideration.

Thus, I feel I have recently learned three very important things: the discipline to write on a regular basis, the perseverance to keep working at an idea, and the tolerance to accept other people's work as it is.

Now I wish to reflect on other experiences during the past six weeks. I have finished reading *Narcissus and Goldmund* by Hermann Hesse. I enjoyed the book very much, feeling it offered a very interesting contrast between the emotional and the analytical mind. I have also read through *The Basic*

WRITING PROGRESS REPORTS - 3

Teachings of Sigmund Freud, which doesn't really pertain to this class, but which I found very interesting and thought-provoking. And I have just begun *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy.

I try to write in all four phases of my journal. The most pleasurable for me is the Introspection section. I enjoy letting my imagination flow, and I am most pleased with my entries here. The only patterns I notice in my dreams are their strangeness and bizarreness. I'm sure Freud would have several things to say about these dreams, but I'm not really sure what any pattern means, if in fact it means anything at all!

During the last six weeks I received an "A" in the class, and if I compare this six weeks' effort and progress, I guess I deserve an "A" or at least a "B." I really hate to evaluate myself, especially since I don't know how everyone else is doing. So, I leave it up to you...

Finally I want to include a Meditational Thought from my journal ... Again ... I close my eyes and try to transcend all levels of reality, to delve deep into the very core of the soul in search of wisdom, of understanding, of truth. Ancient philosophers, buried in some unopened catacomb of the mind, begin stirring and a trace of knowledge drifts in a sea of one-dimensional thoughts ... As I move closer to the ultimate revelation, it becomes suffocatingly crowded. Faces of the long dead and the not yet born dart in and out of this tangled web of creativity, taking with them all concept of time and place. A flashing sword of light pierces my mind's eye, and I am overwhelmed by the sound of falling feathers... and in the distance the fog begins to clear. Within reach are all the secrets of the universe. I am offered a piece of wisdom, but before I can taste the fruit of enlightenment, I am violently thrust back into reality by someone asking to borrow a piece of paper...

Comments

Because the student has carefully organized the first five paragraphs, readers can readily understand the student's positive experiences. The later paragraphs contain many specific examples revealing the impact of the writing and reading experienced during the six weeks.

WRITING PROGRESS REPORTS - 4

Writing a spontaneous Progress Report

Sometimes your teacher may ask you to write less formally than the formal Progress Report sample. Then you can choose one or more items from the list below:

- **Academic Progress** Extract and summarize thoughts/feelings about what you learned from assignments and journal writings.
- **Personal Progress** Discuss relationships with persons, work, society, events, your body. Mention patterns noticed from dreams.
- **Reading Progress** Comment on your reading. Share any thoughts that show what you have been thinking about as a result of your reading.
- **Evaluation of the Course** Discuss things from the course you like or consider valuable, and those which you dislike or consider to be of little value. Give suggestions to your teacher on how to improve the class.
- **Revised Writings** Attach any of your own work that you want to share after revising or censoring them. (If you wish only your teacher to read such writings, mark them *"For Your Eyes Only."*)

Sample spontaneous Progress Report

This spontaneous, two week Progress Report was written by a 17-year-old student for the author in a creative writing class.

Lately in my journal I have been doing a lot of reacting to short stories. They seem to be powerful in getting their message through to the reader, and they have so much to say. After I have read a short story, the meaning is very vivid and real to me, but for some reason it is hard to describe the message successfully.

Recently, I have read "The Waltz" by Dorothy Parker. She was completely honest and straightforward in her writing. Without covering up her feelings, she revealed many things about human relationships and feelings. Her writings impressed me very much because of their honesty.

I read about seven short stories by Poe, and I went on reading them for a long time. His style of writing is extremely powerful. He grabs the reader and takes him/her away with him and doesn't let go even after the story is over.

Other short stories I've read lately are "Bargain," "The Most Dangerous Game," "An Underground Episode," "The Necklace," and "After You, My Dear Alphonse."

I enjoy reading short stories. Each author needs to express himself with his own unique style. I have yet to read two short stories that come across

WRITING PROGRESS REPORTS - 5

in a similar style. I have noticed some interesting things about my personal life as well as my readings.

Since school started, it seems I never have enough time to finish the things I want and need to do. I have started writing daily reminders to organize my time and get as much done as I can. It works out really well for me. At first, I am overwhelmed by the tasks I have to do, but when I start doing them, they are over quickly.

Because of this lack of time, or maybe poor use of time, I have been staying up until 11:00 or 12:00, then waking up about 4:00 or 4:30 so I can get my work done. I am exhausted when I go to sleep, but I sleep deeply all night. When I wake up, I can never remember my dreams. Once, I remembered one person, but I couldn't remember what happened. I haven't done too many DREAM ENTRIES.

I have been working on a couple of poems which are almost finished. One of them which I'm having problems with I wrote in a special mood; the things I said came from deep within me. I was being very honest. As I read it now, I can see it coming across to someone as phony, although the experience is genuine. I feel what I wrote, but I feel uncomfortable with it now, because it does not communicate my feeling.

I wrote a reaction to one of the pictures that were handed out. It was on the same theme as the poem I'm having problems with, but it came across in a more subtle way. Still, I wasn't comfortable with the impression it was conveying, so I didn't finish writing my reaction. I want to finish because I think it could be valuable for me to do so sometime when I'm alone and can pull the feeling up again.

I wrote up my MARKINGS again; it's strange how different they are from my first ones. I am also working on an expansion of one of my MARKINGS that has a special message for me now.

I have been writing in my DAILY ENTRIES a lot lately. It is nice to reread an entry and try to understand how I got out of the mess I was in. Writing was the main thing that cleared up my head, so I could work toward a solution and somehow things would usually work out.

Comments

The above sample Progress Report is very spontaneous. Thoughts flow out onto the paper without conscious organization. Nevertheless, the Progress Report is lively and readable. This student chose to emphasize personal progress more than academic progress. Such emphasis may or may not be acceptable to your teacher. Consequently, before you write any Progress Report, listen carefully to what your teacher prefers. If you are in doubt, ask.

[illegible]

Class: _____ Time period covered _____ to _____

Reading Completed

[illegible]

Writing Completed

In A WRITER'S JOURNAL		# of hours
Quantity		
Quality		
Outside A WRITER'S JOURNAL		
Quantity		
Quality		

Personal Evaluation

I have written a Progress Report and will attach it to this sheet. The quantity of my work has been _____ than the period covered by my last Progress Report; the quality of my work has been _____ than the period covered by my last Progress Report. Therefore, I recommend a grade of _____ for this time period.

STUDENT INTRODUCTION - 1



We're all snowflakes

Although each snowflake that falls is similar to others, it is also unique. You also differ from all other human beings that have lived, are living, and will live. You are unique. At this moment you are beginning a writer's journal in which you will reflect upon and express many aspects of your uniqueness. As a result, you will discover more about yourself.

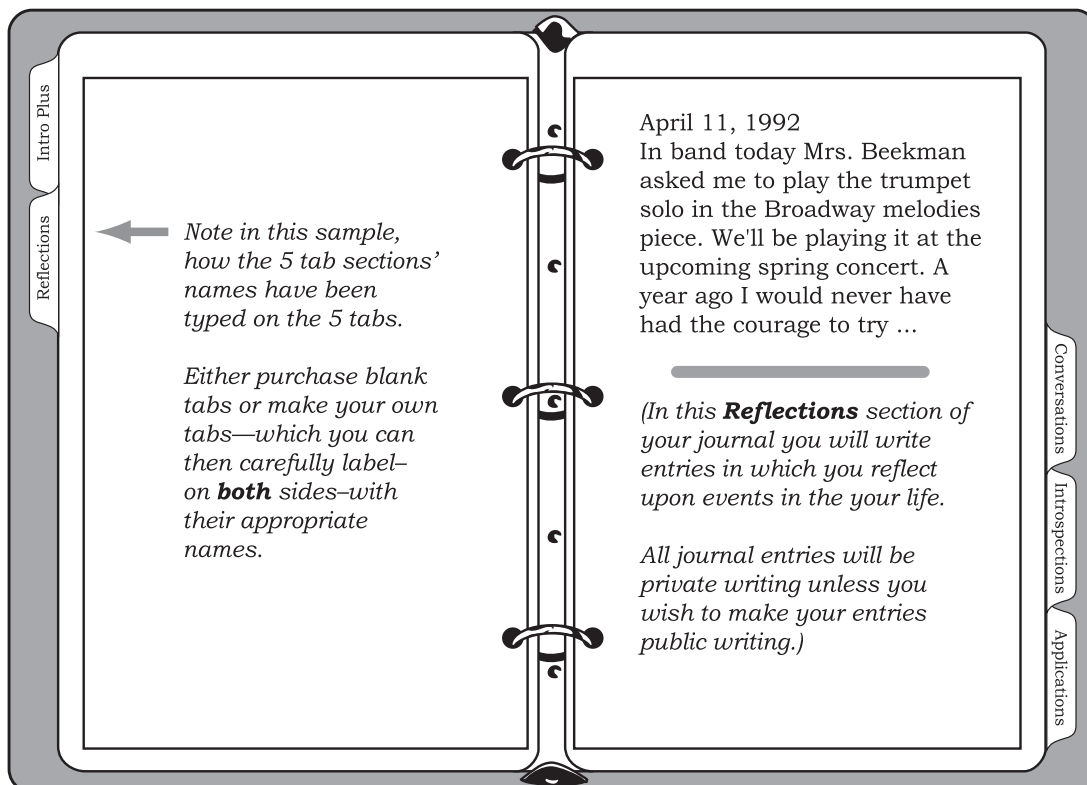
Why keep a journal?

Thoughtbooks, journals, and diaries are part of the American literary tradition. Our Puritan ancestors wrote about their moral progress in journals. Captains of ships kept logs. Pioneer women making their way to an unknown new life in the West used their journals as companions. In this journal you will do much more than express "what happened to me today." Such tepid entries are found in diaries. But you are not beginning a *diary* which only tells what happened to you. Instead you are beginning a *journal*—a companion in which you reflect upon your feelings about your past, your present, and your future—*your own unique way of being in this world*.

Setting up your journal

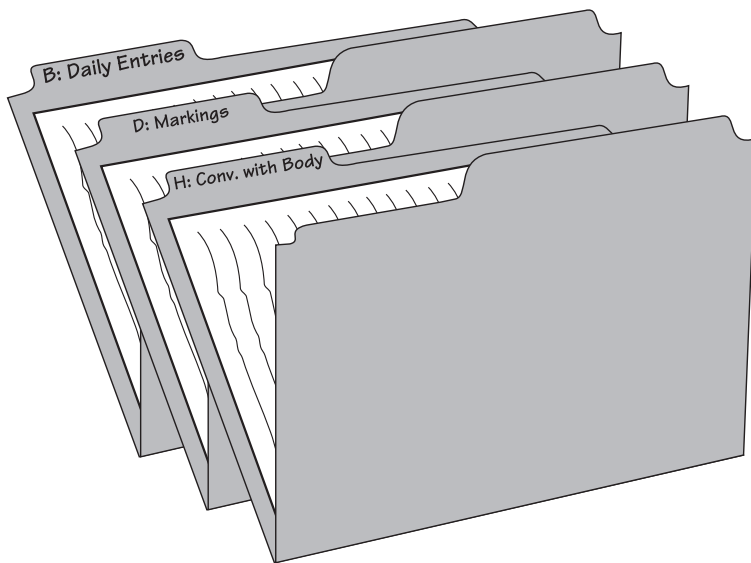
Your journal will be private and personal; every entry will be dated. It will be *structured*. The word structured means that your journal will be organized in a 3-ring notebook with five tab sections as in the illustration on the left. What you keep in each tab section is explained on

the top of the next page.



STUDENT INTRODUCTION - 2

- In **Intro Plus** you keep these introductory A WRITER'S JOURNAL pages plus fresh writing paper you will use whenever you begin a journal entry. Any entry you complete you will file in one of the other four tab sections. If at first you don't complete the entry, you will leave it in this section to complete later. (See *A. WORKS IN PROGRESS* on page 1:6.) Of course, in this first tab section you can also keep any other materials related to your personal journal that you wish to keep.
- In **Reflections** you will write entries about your unique daily life.
- In **Conversations** you will write conversations—like dialogs in a play—with persons (real and imaginary) and with other elements of your life.
- In **Introspections** you will go inside yourself, writing to make sense of the deep thinking you have been doing about yourself.
- In **Applications** you will write several structured entries to help you with academic and creative writing for all your classes. You may also choose to use this section of your journal to make brief notes or write statements about things you can do to improve as a student and as a human being. Thus, in this last tab section you will use the ideas which surfaced in the second, third, and fourth tab sections to generate either polished public writings or informal private realizations about your personal growth.



Handouts

Your teacher may assign one, several, or all of you to write certain entries in your journals. If any unassigned entry intrigues you, consider writing it for personal and academic growth. Your teacher will have all 21 entries filed in classroom folders. (Your teacher may give you optional grade points for extensive writing.) In reality, the act of writing your journal entries will likely become so meaningful to you that you will want to write much more than your teacher assigns—just because you suddenly sense the value in such authentic writing.)

The journal writing you do will have a *lettered* entry (B to T) to help you get started. Whatever you write first will be *private*—you do not have to share it with anyone. After all, it is your life. However, there will be opportunities for you to make your private writing *public*. It is up to you whether or not you choose to do so.

STUDENT INTRODUCTION - 3

Using feedback

An important aspect of journal keeping is learning to use self-feedback. Here are several ways to increase the forward momentum of your writing by using such feedback:

- Read back after every entry. Never close your journal without reading back to yourself what you have just written. As you are reading, catch any new *thoughts-that-are-thinking-themselves*. Add them to your entry. Occasionally, you will want to reread material written over longer periods of time.
- Read aloud to yourself. In your attic, on a hillside, in your room alone, find a quiet place to read aloud and listen to your voice reading your own entries. Add thoughts and feelings that are stirred by the sound of your voice.
- Read aloud to a tape-recorder. Then listen to yourself. The effect of hearing your words aloud sometimes stimulates new ideas. Add them to your entry.
- Read aloud to your classmates. From time to time your teacher may invite you to share, but don't feel that you have to do such public reading.
- If you've kept a journal before, read your old entries and summarize them in a PERIOD ENTRIES you write in this journal.



“
... As you
are reading,
catch
any new
thoughts-
that-are-
thinking-
themselves ...
”

Final questions and answers, suggestions, and comments



- “You recommend that I should regularly read back what I have written in my journal. Why is this so important? When I get through writing, I just want to close my journal and forget it.” You missed a point I made earlier about the importance of journal feedback. Reading back is half the work. You read back so that you can stir the contents of your A

WRITER'S JOURNAL even deeper. I realize that some material is painfully difficult to write in the first place, and even more difficult to read back, but let me repeat that *any part of your life that you cannot examine is like a prison you have constructed for yourself*. Breaking out of prison means slowly opening doors to take a look at what has happened to you through the years, including the painful events. We can learn to give up pain. Don't forget your journal's potential value: you can write a dialog with the shovel that you use to turn any painful experience into the soil of your life—just as a gardener can make fertilizer out of garbage—and thus you ultimately use the pain to enrich your life.

- *“My journal notebook is getting full. When do I start a second notebook?”* You have several options (there is no one way to keep this journal). For example, you may want to start a new journal notebook when your old one is full or when some special MARKING occurs. I’ve kept a structured journal for years. In the first few months I wrote DAILY ENTRIES a great deal. After awhile I bought a separate large notebook for these entries. When I learned to write all over the journal and use all the entries in all tabbed sections, although the notebooks were never even (that is, never had the same amount of work in every section), I set the whole journal aside after it was filled. Whenever I am about to change from one journal to another, I read in the old journals. I always then make a summary or notations about what to do next. Often, I am exploring one or more important themes and I find material in the old journal that is very open-ended. I take these entries and put them into the new journal to carry me into the next work that will be done. Feel free to move material around.

“

What you have in front of you is a tool that you can use continually for your own personal growth.

”

- *“How can I use my journal when this class is over?”* What you have in front of you is a tool that you can use continually for your own personal growth. You have mastered your journal by writing in all of the sections as you completed your school assignments. Now this journal can become your companion—in or out of the classroom. There are many ways to use this process on your own, and no two people will keep their journals alike. You will find a place and time to write that is best for you. It may be every night before you go to bed; it may be on weekends; or perhaps you will write only a few times each month. Remember that journal-keeping is not a new thing to feel guilty about!

Suggestions

1. Make a date with yourself to do some writing. Set aside a specific time and date to work in your journal.
2. When you have not written in your journal for some time, write a PERIOD ENTRY about the period of your life that has taken place since you last worked in the journal. Read it back to yourself and see if there are any feelings or situations that can be opened up in other sections. Perhaps you were involved in relationships that you can take to CONVERSATIONS WITH PERSONS. You might want to dialog with your body about the way you have been feeling. Maybe a work problem can be explored in CONVERSATIONS WITH WORK. Make a list at the end of your PERIOD ENTRY to include all the possible places you might work in your journal to open out the recent period of your life. This can serve as a reminder or agenda for the future.
3. Reread parts of your journal, section by section. See what stirs when you read back several dialogs with a specific person. Is there more to be said? Can you take some new memories to the AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES and open them up there? You can summarize your feelings as you read back an entire section. Then let yourself be pulled forward to the next entries to come.
4. Use your DAILY ENTRIES and DREAM ENTRIES as a continuous source of new material to take to other sections of your journal. This is the “raw data” of your life, and it can be expanded in many ways.



“

... a friendly, safe place
for making meaning in
your life ...

”

Where does writing start?

Writing does not start on paper; it starts in your spirit and mind. Before beginning an entry, quiet yourself by taking ten deep breaths. What you then write can help you clarify your life as well as your academic work. Your journal can become a friendly, safe place where you will make meaning in your life. As you share with others the meaning you have found, you will continue to feel the power and uniqueness of your inner sources of energy and wisdom.

Your life as a stream

In the second paragraph of this Student Introduction, I reminded you that your life story is unique. It is like a stream that is constantly changing. In your journal, you can catch and explore its subtle ways. You will become more familiar with both the surface and the depths. And here you will have a record of the full flow of your life as it swirls, transforms, and carries you forward.

A: WORKS IN PROGRESS

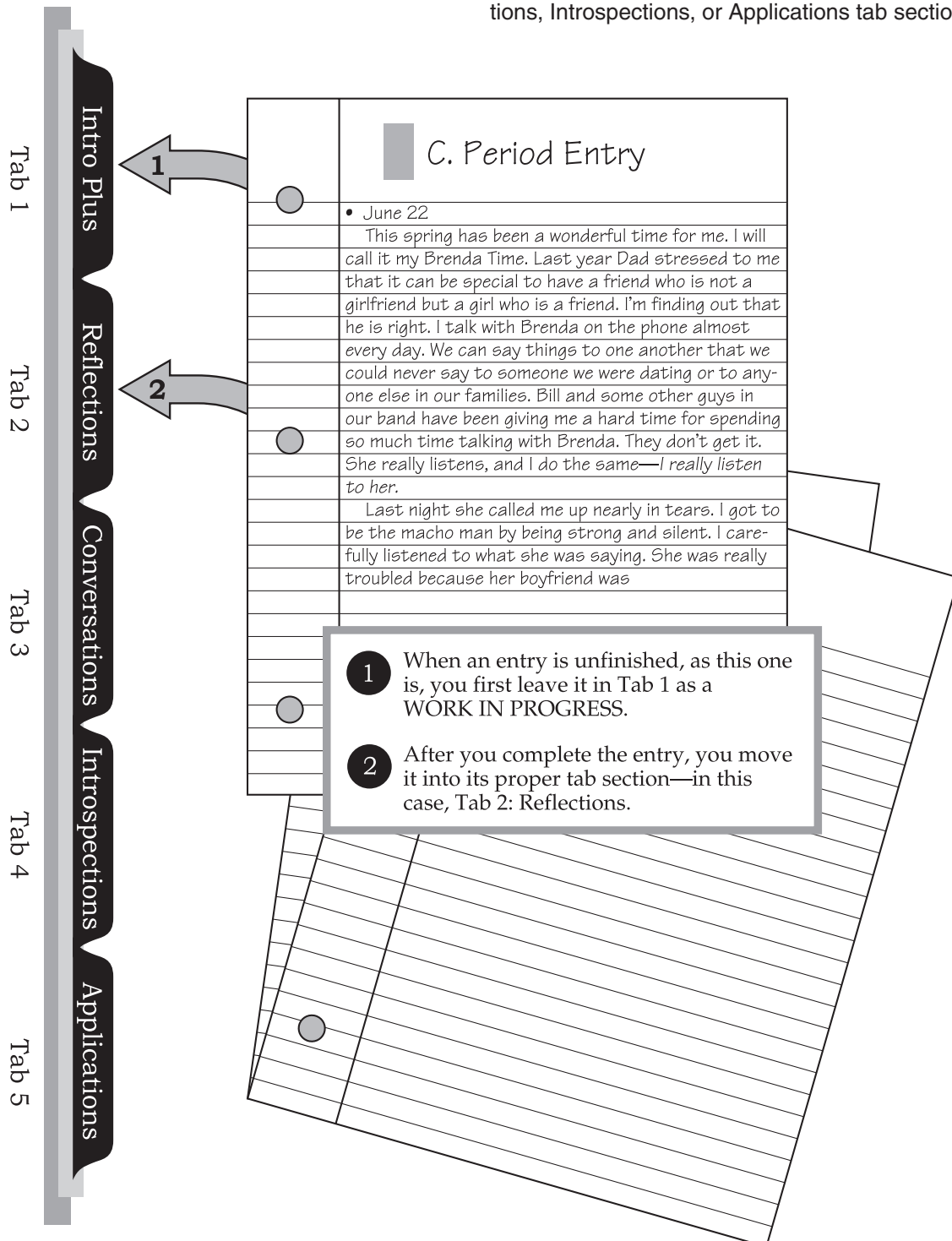
Definition

WORKS IN PROGRESS are those uncompleted entries (B through T) that you keep together so that you will have in one place all writing still needing work.

Explanation

- Note well:** Because you will be cross-referencing entries, be sure you always write the date on each entry.

- When either your teacher assigns you to write a specific journal entry or you yourself decide to write an entry, you need to have a place to turn for paper that awaits your pen.
- In this Tab Section 1: INTRO PLUS you will keep unused paper—either at the front or the back. Being consistent about where you keep it will make it habitually—and therefore, more readily—accessible.
- Of course, after you complete an entry, you should immediately file it in either the Reflections, Conversations, Introspections, or Applications tab section.



Make this
first tab
when you
set up
your
journal
notebook.

Intro Plus

Make this
second tab
when you
set up
your
journal
notebook.

Reflections

Introduction to REFLECTIONS

Before you begin

Be sure that by now you have set up the first and second tabs of your five tab journal. (See the examples at left.)

Content

In your journal's second tab section you actually begin your journal. You examine your unique life by writing DAILY ENTRIES, PERIOD ENTRIES, MARKINGS, AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES, and CROSSROADS entries.

Public or Private?

Much of this Reflections writing will likely remain **private writing** because you will be writing almost entirely for yourself—at least when you first write. Soon you will take pride in your growing number of carefully written and filed pages. You will begin feeling that you have a new companion in your life. Since you will usually read over your entries after finishing them, in your mind you will be dialoging with your entries. The feedback will make you happy in your new friend—your own journal!

Later you may want some of your Reflection entries to become **public writing** because you wish to share some of your life with others whom you trust and love. Most persons know or sense that anything written down is powerful. Persons will realize that if they choose to read any of your journal entries, they will be sharing portions of your inner life—and that such sharing brings with it responsibility. The consequences should include increased communication and understanding. If you are concerned about another persons reading your journal, realize that *to have friends and to find persons you can love you may have to risk betrayal*. Believe me, the risk is worth it.

*Sharing involves risk,
but without such sharing,
how can we ever find
friendship or love?*

Formats

Note well: *Whatever format you use, be sure you date each entry. Writing down the date above each Reflection entry will be meaningful later when you cross develop it with another entry in another journal section.*

- **Lettered entries B through F** These five entries have assignments which show you how to structure them in sentence fragments, paragraphs, essays, and narratives.

B: DAILY ENTRIES

Definition

This section of your journal is a place to record your reactions to the events and thoughts of any particular day. (These entries do not have to be written daily.)

Explanation

- Entries should be brief.
- Find a quiet place to write, breathe slowly, and feel the day as a whole. When you awoke, did you remember any dreams? How did you feel as you came to school? What moods did you move through? How did you feel at the end of the evening? Worried? Angry? Joyful?
- Learn to record your reactions without judgments. “I was angry” is a feeling that can be reported; “I was stupid to be angry” is judgmental.
- Don’t censor yourself. Record events that are happy, painful, embarrassing. Give equal consideration to failures and accomplishments.
- It’s okay if your entries are rough and unorganized.
- You will use some of your DAILY ENTRIES to compose more polished work when you prepare your Progress Reports, assignments, and creative writings.

Introductory Assignment B-1: DAILY ENTRY

Take a fresh piece of paper, date it, and spend five to ten minutes writing your first DAILY ENTRY. You may add to the entry throughout the day. Try to average at least four DAILY ENTRIES per week.

Student Samples

• Sample 1

(13-year-old boy ... August 22)

I practiced my trumpet again today for a long time—about two hours total in three sessions. I broke the routine by playing some of my Wynton Marsalis CDs. I can’t believe how well he plays Gershwin’s *Embraceable You*. Mr. Angelo says I should try to play in Marsalis’ relaxed style. I’m a long way from being relaxed. School starts soon, and I’m looking forward to 8th grade band. I feel ashamed about how I played the jerk so much there last year. Mr. Angelo and Susan are both going to be surprised at how much I have improved. I want to be better! I wonder what Susan will think of me this year. I liked how she smiled as we walked by one another at the movies yesterday. I’m going to really like being with her in the trumpet section.



• Sample 2

(17-year-old girl ... June 1)

Woke up a little disturbed by C.’s call about 7 PM last night. I worry about him. Didn’t say anything about it to M. or A. when I called them later. Talked to C. over the phone again about 9:30. Felt better because he felt better. He’s supposed to come over after school tomorrow. Great to have a boy who’s a *friend* who doesn’t pressure me to think of him as a *boyfriend*. M. and A. don’t realize what they’re missing by not having boys to talk to when the situation isn’t loaded with the pressures of dating. Intrigued about what I’m learning from talking to C. so much on the phone. He calls me at all hours. Also talks to me on way to history every day. Maybe he’s the brother I always wanted to have and love.



“ Maybe he’s
the brother
I always
wanted
to have
and love? ”



Comments

Notice how the samples react to events rather than merely list the events. Many students write their DAILY ENTRIES in complete sentences. Others write in fragments and use frequent abbreviations. Develop your own style. *Do it your own way.*



• “The title of this section is *DAILY ENTRIES*. Does that mean I have to write in it every day?” Absolutely not. In this work you write when you please. It’s good to have your journal out, or to have some paper ready so that when an idea hits you, you can note it. For the first few weeks, writing often will help you attain mastery.

• “What if I start writing *DAILY ENTRIES* and just keep going and going? That’s no different than my old diary is it?” Try not to blunder through your DAILY ENTRIES. Write a little and then reread. As you learn to use all the parts of your journal, you’ll soon see that you can use these brief notations as jumping off places to take your work into deeper aspects of yourself.

• “I can type a lot faster than I can write. Are there any objections to my typing my entries?” It’s OK to type entries, but realize you won’t always have a typewriter or computer nearby. Don’t type your beginning entries for, at first you are learning how to slow down your rational mind and turn on your imagination. If you do have your own computer at home, you can set up journal files there and print out whatever you write, taking to school any entries you wish to share.

Advanced Assignment B-2: FICTIONALIZED POETIC DIARY

Note well: *Advanced assignments are part of the second cycle or second phase of your journal writing. These are more complex and should not be attempted until you have worked at least once in every section—B through T.*

To complete this assignment, follow these steps:

1. Think of situations which have actually existed in your life. To get ideas you may wish to look through your PERIOD ENTRIES, DAILY ENTRIES, AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES, MARKINGS, or CROSSROADS. Make a list of situations which you may want to write about. Think back to your childhood and start making notes. If you wish, you can work in chronological progression.
2. You are going to recreate a situation which actually happened in the past, but you will turn it into poetry. You'll be talking about the past as if it were happening now. You can invent a new setting (a time and a place). You can invent new people.
3. Start writing this assignment in prose, but move into poetry and back into prose as the mood strikes you.
4. Once you've written several pages, go back to edit and polish your work. Rework your poetic lines. Bring them together and make complete poems whenever possible.



Student Sample

This sample from a student's life is included only to give you one example of a form you might follow. Notice how the student hadn't finished writing the poem until three days had passed from his first prose writing.

Note: *Of course, your content will and should be completely different because you are a different person.*

(16-year-old boy ... December 26)

Duluth was cold and crisp today. I goofed around and played in the snow, then went into our wonderful white barn. I love it! Thanks, Dad. And Mom made a very good pecan log just for me. One was wrapped in linen, resting on the refrigerator. I was inhaling its sweetness and tasting it in my dream world until I was distracted by the pudding—hot, dark, and chocolate—cooling on the porch.

(December 29)

Our white barn stood solid and serene
Against the biting, burning Duluth winter.
Its half-opened doors welcomed me,
And I stopped my rush through snow
To enter its friendly warmth,
Sinking into a comforting womb of sweet straw.
Dad, so short a time ago
I resisted your decision
To move us to the country.
You were right.

And Mother,
If only I were Mozart
Writing you a celestial song
Celebrating your earnest fingers
That made a perfect pecan log
Honoring me and vacation's end.
Wrapped delicately in linen,
Placed carefully on our refrigerator
Where I would quickly find it,
This blessing waited for me
To inhale and taste its sweetness.
I did and slipped into my dream world
As I looked through your kitchen window
Only to be jerked back by what I saw ...
A New Year's pudding—
Hot, dark and chocolate,
Cooling on our snow-touched porch.

“

... And Mother

If only I were Mozart

Writing you a celestial song ...

”

C: PERIOD ENTRIES

Definition

These entries provide a review of your life which begins at some given point in the past and comes right up to the present moment.

Explanation

- Was there a specific event that marked the beginning of this recent period of your life? An idea you had? A person you met? A decision you made? A decision someone else made? When did this recent period begin? It may be five years or five months or five days long. (This period could have begun with graduation from elementary school, the arrival of a baby brother, a death, a surgery, an anniversary of some trauma or celebration...)
- Once you decide when this recent period began, you can start writing. You may wish to start by describing the main occurrences as the recent period unfolded. Did they involve relationships with other persons? With a subject you were studying in school? With a clique or a peer group? Were there events of great anger, depression, love, joy, or anxiety?

Introductory Assignment C-1: PERIOD ENTRY

1. Take a fresh piece of paper, date it, and for 20 minutes or so record the movement of emotion through this recent period of your life.
2. Start by asking yourself what two or three adjectives (e.g., happy, humorous, or miserable) best describe this period in your life.
3. Possibly a simile or metaphor will come to mind to describe this period. For example, "It was like a dream world in which my every wish was answered." Or "It was as though I were a pet dog, alternately loved or kicked."



Student Sample

(13-year-old girl ... April 6)

This period of happy change began a little over three months ago, just after Christmas Day. My stepmother and I began blossoming in one another's presence. We became two opening flowers that had been planted unwillingly in strange soil. Suddenly I am so happy and expectant. We are getting to know one another. I feel reborn. It's a sort of Easter for our two spirits.

When my father married Marilyn—I don't call her Mother yet, but I sense I will soon—and brought her into my real mother's home, I didn't like her being here. (I'll have to admit I loved her little daughter Ellen right away. It's neat having a stepsister as sweet as she is.) But I couldn't accept Marilyn since Mom had been dead only seven months. How could Dad marry someone so new and different so soon? At first I wasn't kind to her. In fact, I was cruel in many things I said and did—except for how I treated Ellen. I made it clear that though I loved Ellen I didn't want Marilyn telling me what to do, and I never really touched her or let her touch me. I had made up my mind to freeze her out.

But on Christmas Day she and I suddenly saw one another in a new light. We sensed we were both individually crying for someone we wanted there—I for my dead mother, she for another daughter who died two years ago and who would now have been ten if she hadn't had leukemia. On December 26 just before I went to sleep, Marilyn came into my bedroom and talked with me for over an hour about how we both cried on Christmas Day. We didn't touch physically that night, but we touched emotionally. She became a more real person to me. Now I am ashamed of how I had treated her before Christmas.

Since that night we have had several special times together, and I am thinking of calling her Mother. I know it would make her happy. I know Mom would approve, too. Life has to go on, and Marilyn is a fine person. Dad is so happy to have found a woman to love again. (I know he still also loves Mom.)

This period has certainly shown me that I'm growing up. It's about time!

“ I feel reborn. It's a sort of Easter for our two spirits. ”

Comments

Not all periods deal with a single theme or situation. The period discussed in the previous sample deals with acceptance as well as personal growth; it illustrates how differing situations can affect one another. Do you consider the period described in the previous sample a period of struggle? a period of accomplishment? both? neither?



• “I’m not much of a writer. Will I have the ability to do this?” The quality of your writing at this point is irrelevant and unimportant. Your spelling, sentence structure, and knowledge of English grammar are not at issue. Just write what you feel like writing. No one will criticize your entries; for they are for your eyes only. You may wish to use one or more of these entries for public writing later, but if you do, you can edit them—with your teacher’s help if you need it—to eliminate any mechanical mistakes they may contain.

• “I just wrote my first PERIOD ENTRY to review the past two years of my life. Now I think I want to go back even further. I think it was an event that took place seven years ago that began this period. What shall I do?” Just take a fresh piece of paper and start writing. You’ll find that the past two years will seem somewhat different when you’ve written about them in a larger context. This is exactly what your journal entries are designed to do—open out your life. Your intuition is working perfectly. Just follow that lead and that impulse to wherever it takes you. Remember that we are all in different overlapping mental time periods, depending on where our mind is at any given moment. You can write your way through your life again and again. PERIOD ENTRIES covering several years often appear as beginning journal entries. But they needn’t be lengthy. Just find your own way.

“

... My visit with
my grandparents
back on a farm
in Ohio ...

”

• “I think I understand the use of the PERIOD ENTRIES. I can review any recent period of my life, some short, some long. But is there anything else to do in that section?” Yes. If you get all “journalled out” and stop writing for awhile, anytime, you can put yourself immediately back into the work by reading your PERIOD ENTRIES and writing a new one to bring yourself up-to-date. This section is the raw material you will use to take yourself deeper into your life in the conversation parts of the journal.

Advanced Assignment C-2: PERIOD ESSAY

After you have made several entries in your PERIOD ENTRIES section, read them over and gather some ideas for writing a one or two page period essay. Use this journal checklist to flesh out your original thoughts:

- What was happening with the *Persons* in your life?
- What was your relationship with your *Work* or school?
- How was it between you and the larger *Society*?
- What *Events, Situations, or Circumstances* were part of your life?
- How were things between you and your *Body*?
- What were the *Dreams* that you remember?
- Do you recall any *Images*?
- Did you make any major decisions that you could identify as intersections or *Crossroads*?

Student Sample

(Beginning paragraph from 16-year-old boy’s essay ... September 11)

My visit with my grandparents back on a farm in Ohio was one of personal growth. While I was away from my parents and our California home in July and August, Grandfather Bill and Grandmother Helen controlled me too much at first, but they gradually gave me freedom to take chances. Above all, they gave me attention and told me all about my Dad and what he was like while he was my age living on the farm. As a result, my time in Ohio increased my confidence about my mind, my body, and my relationships with girls. Now I’m really looking forward to my junior year in high school.



D: MARKINGS

Definition

These entries contain a series of major stepping stones, signposts, or flags in a person's life history. The name comes from *Markings*, the autobiography of the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld.

Explanation

- MARKINGS are listed to make a chronological track of your life. For example, 1) born... 2) started school... 3) brother born....
- Your first set of MARKINGS should contain no fewer than eight, no more than 12 events. Do you remember how Hansel and Gretel left crumbs behind them for a trail? That's all you need—a few crumbs for each MARKING. You'll know what you're talking about. At most you will write a sentence or two for each event.
- Compressing your life's major events into such a short list is a preliminary step to later opening up these events and finding their meaning in your life.

Introductory Assignment D-1: MARKINGS

1. Become quiet so that you can review your life history before you start writing your list of MARKINGS.
2. Briefly list what you consider to be the major events, or encounters, or decisions, or movements of your life.
3. Don't judge your MARKINGS list. Write spontaneously, without worrying, "Am I doing it right?"
4. Bring your MARKINGS list right up to the present so that you include the whole of your life in your consideration. This first list should be titled MARKINGS OF MY LIFE.

Student Sample—Markings of My Life

(16-year-old girl ... February 21)

1. I was born. My mother died.
2. I crashed on my tricycle and broke my leg. (Age 4)
3. I found my balance by becoming a gymnast. (Age 7)
4. I learned and listened and did OK in school. Miss Markham really loved me. (Age 9)
5. I sang and danced, after joining the chorus and dance club. (Age 11)
6. My father remarried, and I found mother-love with my new step mom. (Age 12)
7. I decided to become a lawyer after learning to debate and winning a few speech contests. (Sophomore year)
8. My leg was not an interference when I swam, so I went out for the swim team. (Junior year)

Comments

1. Suppose after you've written your first set, you are surprised to discover you have omitted important events or that you want to add or change some things. Leave the first set unedited, take a fresh piece of paper, and begin again.
2. MARKINGS may also be written about "themes" in your life—certain feelings or events that occur over and over again. When you look at the movement of a life theme over several years, you often may be able to gain a new perspective about it. Like the running broad jumper, we move back in order to leap forward.
3. Here are some titles for other possible sets. Go on to the next section, AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES, after you have written one or two more sets.

Answering The Question: What Is My Work? Think about the work that you have been doing in your life. It may be your school work or your work outside school as a boxboy, a clerk, a waitress. Or it may be the work of uncovering the meaning of your own life.

Reflections On My Models Of Behavior (Both Men And Women) Reflect upon how you behave. See if you can identify the sources of your models. What persons taught you to behave these ways? Is your behavior identical to their behavior, or is your behavior opposed to theirs?

Music And My Relationship

To It Write this set by referring to your relationship with composers and performers as you developed and changed your taste through the years. Or you can write about the musical compositions or songs that you have liked since you were a child.

“ ... musical compositions or songs you have liked since you were a child... ”

Things I've Seen That Moved

Me This set will provide you with the opportunity to review TV, movies, plays and other things whose power, either positive or negative, stays in your consciousness. (You might wish to do another set called, "Things I Wish I Hadn't Seen.")

Intellectual And Scholastic Life Review your relationship to school and the world of ideas that you encountered either formally as a student or informally outside of school. Are there ideas that you feel are a source of tremendous stimulation or great sensuous pleasure? Where did they come from?

Womanhood or Manhood What has influenced your thinking about the meaning of the words “man” or “woman”? Trace the sources of your definition of this sexual role. What ideas of manhood and womanhood did you take from your mother or father that you use in your life now? What did you reject?



My Relationship With The Opposite Sex Begin with the presence or absence of your father or mother. What other men and women, boys or girls, have you known and loved or hated?

Ideas For New Ways Or Approaches To Life Do you think you are going to be controlled for the rest of your life by ideas that no longer seem true to you? Have you been accepting new ideas? If so, what has been their source? Do you listen to your inner wisdom?

Things I've Said Goodbye To This set may be one way for you to get in touch with how courageous you were when you decided to say goodbye, when you decided to end activities or relationships that were no longer fruitful. Sometimes goodbyes are said with relief; sometimes they are said with sorrow.

Guilt What do you feel guilty about? (Can you recognize a guilt shot, that is, a hook being sunk into your flesh by another when you are vulnerable? You can begin to get unhooked by doing this set of MARKINGS and working with the leads that present themselves.)

Where I Have Lived Write down the addresses and street names of every place you've lived, including summer camps and stays of two or three weeks or more. Draw the floor plans.

Things Begun And Not Finished What activities, issues, and causes have you abandoned? What things do you keep coming back to? Do you find yourself returning to deep motivations you had when you were younger, or are you glad that you're able to give up things which motivated you earlier in your life?

Fighting Whom have you fought with in your life? What were you fighting about? What is worth fighting about today? What are the issues or ideas for which you would be willing to sacrifice a part or all of your life?

Times I've Cried What have been the saddest moments in your life? Have there been times when were so full of joy that you wept in joy rather than in pain?

Excitement What have you been excited about your life? What joyful experiences have you experienced?

Reflections

Excitement might include discoveries of capacities, of skills, of sexuality, of spirituality, getting in touch with new strengths, of your own personal power, or of observing your wounds healing.

Life Crises I've Survived Outline your life's major traumas, the painful periods, the losses and separations. Note the things that you did as well as the things others did to you as you discovered the strength you have. Survivors are entitled to celebrate!

My Family Here you can remember your parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins, grandparents, and the order of your birth. What would you list as the significant MARKINGS around the idea of your family?



• “I’m getting the idea that I should go on writing these sets for quite a few days if I choose. Is that what you mean I should do?” It is better to do only a couple of sets at first and then go on to the AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES, which is your

next assignment. Make notes of the other titles for sets that you might find interesting to do, but one or two at the beginning is enough.

• “I want to write in detail as I think of each one. Is this OK?” No. Not yet. Do them briefly first so that you get the *compression* effect. Then you can open them up in the AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES if you want to expand upon them. Don’t get bogged down with details at the beginning of your journal.

• “My sets of MARKINGS are lovely. I think I might want to share them by publishing them or other journal work. What do you think about that?” Never write your journal work with the idea of publishing it or sharing it with another person. If you write your journal with the self-consciousness of someone who is thinking about publication, you derail your own process because you are judging the work. However, after your entries have been made, you may select and edit individual pieces of work for public sharing.

• “Do I have to limit myself to only 12 MARKINGS in every set? I wrote one set that had 16.” Once you’ve learned how to compress the events of your life into brief lists, it’s OK to run over. Fewer than eight doesn’t give you the whole of your life. Many more than 12 means you’re not really making decisions about what’s important when you do your first set of MARKINGS.

Advanced Assignment D-2: Sets of Markings

Write at least five new sets of MARKINGS.

E: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES

Definition

In these entries you record detailed memories of previous events in your life.

Explanation

- Whenever you let yourself remember where you were, what your life was like, and what happened at a previous time in your life, you can write an AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRY.
- As time passes and you have written several AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES, you could use these entries as the basis for writing your autobiography.
- Eventually, if you desire to organize your autobiography, you can pull all the entries out of this part of your journal and organize them into the chronology in which they actually occurred.
- Such an autobiography, randomly collected from vivid memories, is likely to contain powerful writing.

Introductory Assignment E-1: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES (MARKINGS expansion)

1. Quiet yourself. Read your sets of MARKINGS, and as you are reading them (perhaps several times), one MARKING will seem to pull you into it, drawing your attention more than the others. Your intuition will lead you if you let it.
2. Choose one MARKING. Don't select the most recent one because you have many other places to deal with recent events, and this part of the journal is for your life history.
3. At the bottom of the page on which you did your MARKINGS, make a cross-reference. For example, "On this date..., I chose to expand MARKING #2." Now turn again to your journal's AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES section. At the top of the page in your AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES where you are now going to work, write something like, "On this date... I picked out MARKING #2—Dad and my bike—to work with today." These cross-references will become invaluable later when you want to reread a quantity of material in exactly the order in which it was written. If you don't cross-reference yourself, after a few days you'll forget what you wrote, where, and when.
4. Let yourself remember where you were, what your life was like, and what happened in the MARKING you're expanding (e.g., "Dad and My Bike" in the next column.) Remember the sights, scents, and textures of that period. Then start writing your AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRY.

Student Sample

(On May 20 Tyrone, a 14-year-old ninth grader, chose to expand a 4-word MARKING called "Dad and my bike" into an AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRY.)



Dad and My Bike

One of my earliest memories is my Dad teaching me to ride a bike. He told me later, "You were just five, but you were a little tiger. No matter how many times you fell down, you picked yourself up and kept going, picked yourself up and kept going, picked yourself up and kept going." It's a little thing, but I'm proud of what Dad said to me. It's what I remember first whenever I think of him, now that he's been dead four years. I look at that picture of us together Mom took that day, and I remember it all so clearly. I guess it's supposed to be a symbolical event.

When I played soccer, Dad helped the coaches so he was always there. I wasn't very good, and at first some of the big kids shoved me down and picked on me. Two fat ones even sat on my face. I was scared because I was small. Then Dad looked right at me. His eyes burned. He said, "Get up and get 'em, Tiger!" I had to live up to that bike memory so I got up and shoved back.

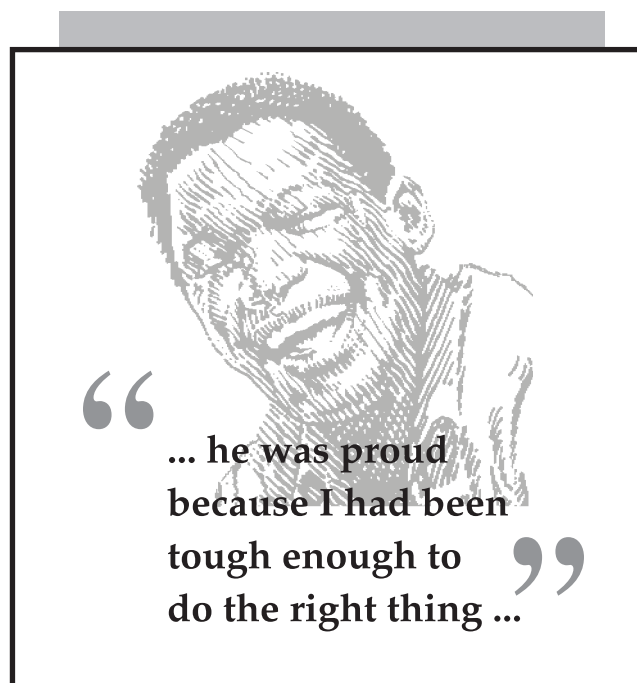
Soon they learned I'd kick butt hard if they picked on me. They quit. And so, even though I never made many goals or anything in soccer, Dad was happy because I tried hard. He said, "Life isn't easy son. You have to fight back."

I never got in trouble at school or let teachers or other stuff get me down because I had to face Dad at the dinner table. He sat there in his blue policeman's uniform every night and asked me about school. Reading and art stuff were always easy. I got A's. But some

days in math, I knew I was stupid. But I also knew Dad's eyes and that old bike story were waiting for me at the dinner table. So I toughed it out and always made at least a B- in math.

Once after when I got home, Mom was really mad at me. My face had some bruises, dirt, and blood on it from a school fight. She had made me wash the blood and dirt off my face, but she wouldn't let me put any bandages on the bruises at first. She told me, "Your father is gonna beat you because of those bruises." But when I told Dad how I got four other third graders to fight back against this dumb, ugly fifth grader, Dad told me, "You should try not to fight, son, but sometimes you have to." In his eyes I could see he was proud because I had been tough enough to do the right thing. And he didn't beat me though Mom wanted him to.

I was in fifth grade when Dad was killed trying to stop a gas station robbery. I'm glad I never saw it happen. But I am really proud of him. He was tough. I'm tough. No matter what happens to me, I'm always going to be his "bike tiger."



• "What happens when a memory of the past comes that's not in a set of MARKINGS? I record it in my AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES. Right?" Right. You can note it first in your DAILY ENTRIES, if you don't have time to write about it at the moment it

comes to mind. Then as soon as you can find the time, let the memories come flooding back and record them in detail in this section.

• "What if I start out opening up MARKING #3, but ideas about #5 keep intruding and intruding? How could I handle this?" This is an instance where you learn to rely on your intuition. Make a bracket around the ideas from #5 that are presenting themselves the first or second time it happens so that the "thoughts-that-are thinking-themselves" about MARKING #5 will stand out. Then later you can follow up by opening up that one. After a few minutes, if MARKING #5 becomes insistent, make a note right there in the page and say something like, "I started on #3, but I'm feeling so much urgency about #5 that I'm going to work on that." Take a fresh piece of paper and put #5 on the top of it and go right to it.

• "What's the difference between PERIOD ENTRIES and AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES?" PERIOD ENTRIES start at a specific point in your life and always are written right up to the present moment. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES are for ancient history, so to speak. For example, in an AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRY you might write memories of your parents' divorce that took place when you were five. However, if you wished to review your life since the divorce, you would write a PERIOD ENTRY.

Advanced Assignment E-2: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

1. Write at least three paragraphs explaining and expanding a MARKING or event which changed your life.
2. Conclude your AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT with other paragraphs which relate your memories of the old event to your present life situation. *Note:* Also give hints of changes to come.

F: CROSSROADS

Definition

In these entries you examine special types of MARKINGS called CROSSROADS. These are moments in your life when you took one road rather than another road, and by doing so, denied yourself the opportunity to explore other alternatives.

Explanation

- CROSSROADS can be both voluntary or involuntary. If your parents chose to move from the Midwest to the East coast when you were 12, that would be an *involuntary CROSSROAD* in your life because you would not have been able to attend your old school or remain with your old friends. By contrast, here is a *voluntary CROSSROAD* example. Because of pressure from your father, in tenth grade you chose to go out for the track team instead of the drama/dancing club, and if you still yearn to be in drama or ballet but don't do it, not acting or dancing represents the road not taken.
- In order to qualify as a "road not taken," you must still feel a pull toward the road.
- This means that energy you could use in your future sometimes is trapped on the road not taken. You may choose to take the road later in life when the time is more appropriate, or when you are wiser.
- You use this section in two ways: 1) to review past decisions to find clues about new possibilities; 2) to examine current decisions and their possible effects upon your future.
- MARKINGS, AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES, and CROSSROADS work together when you write them. They give you a different perspective on how time is moving through your life.

Introductory Assignment F-1: CROSSROADS

- Read your sets of MARKINGS.
- Identify those MARKINGS that were crossroads.
- Choose one that seems to draw your attention at this moment. *Remember: A road not taken **must** have a strong pull.*
- Close your eyes and in your imagery see yourself taking the first road you did take. What were the consequences? Write about them.
- Now visualize yourself taking the other road, the road you didn't take. Imagine what the consequences would have been if you had taken it. Write about them.

Student Sample

(A 15-year-old sophomore boy wrote this CROSSROADS entry on October 17.)

My dad was always a track fan because he had been good in track while in high school and college. He nearly ran a four minute mile once. As I was growing up, he talked track to me night and day. We always watched track on TV, particularly the Olympics every four years. Dad kept pointing things out to me that were going on over and over.

I remember that on my seventh birthday Dad started me jogging with him several mornings a week. At first I liked being with him, but eventually I felt it was sort of a bore—and painful. But I stuck with it because I felt I'd disappoint him if I didn't run. In junior high I won a few meets in long distance events. Dad was proud and told me how much fun I'd have in high school being on the track and cross country teams.

In tenth grade I reluctantly ran cross country and also went out for the track team. My life was filled with practice and pressure for winning from all sides. But I also had some friends, guys and girls, who were in drama and dance. They seemed to enjoy themselves so much more than all of us who were always sweating and groaning as we ran around that track or up and down hills for cross country training.


I really wanted to join the drama and dance club. This year I have been wondering what would happen to me if I had gone the drama/dance road? I close my eyes and see myself entering the drama room to sign up with Ms. Martinez. I imagine myself in an audition, and I'm accepted. I can even see myself as a tall senior dancing ballet with Angelica Anderson ...



“ ... I can even see myself as a tall senior dancing ballet with Angelica Anderson ... ”

Comments

As we grow older, it may be possible that we can take a road not taken. You may observe your parents pursuing long-neglected interests in their middle years. The boy in the Student Sample on page 2:10 may still have time to follow his interest in drama and dance. Aspects of yourself not used in earlier times of your life can often be realized when you are older. For example, the youth in the student sample on the previous page may try out for a play in his senior year, or in college, or in community theater when he is an adult.



*Be an optimist!
Life is full of choices. You **can** return to some roads not taken the first time.*



• “When taking the roads not taken, I started to say to myself, “If only...” This made me feel stuck, and I stopped writing. What about this?” Substitute the words *next time* for *if only* and see what you’ve learned that you can use *next time*.

“ ... see what you’ve learned that you can use *next time* ... ”

Advanced Assignment F-2: “THE ROAD NOT TAKEN” PERSONAL ESSAY

1. Read Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken.”



2. Study the two roads you described in Introductory Assignment F-1.
3. Plan and write an essay of at least 500 words. Your essay should be an expansion of your Assignment F-1 thoughts.
4. Insure that you do more than chronologically record your life on the road you took. Also, show how your life would have been changed if you had taken the other road.
5. Start your essay with all or a portion of Frost’s poem to capture your reader’s attention.
6. End your essay by evaluating how you feel because you have not traveled the other road. Are you sorry? Happy? Not sure of your feelings?
7. Proofread your essay and turn it in.

Introduction to CONVERSATIONS

Before you begin

Be sure you have set up the third tab of your five tab journal. (See the tab example at left.)

Make this
third tab
when you
set up
your
journal
notebook.

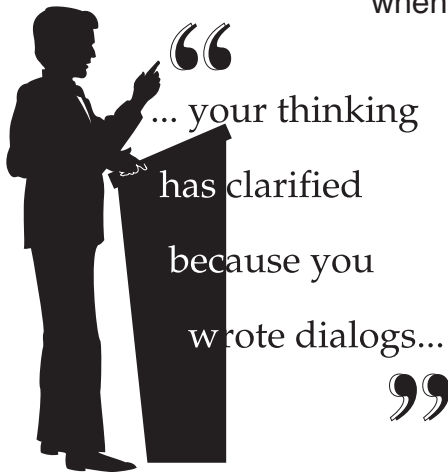
Conversations

Content

In your journal's third tab section you continue your journal by learning the power inherent in writing dialogs—conversations as in real life or an onstage drama. You will write conversations with PERSONS, BODY, EVENTS, SOCIETY and WORK.

Public or Private?

Much of this Conversations writing will likely remain **private writing** because you will be writing almost entirely to figure out things or to come to terms with ideas or events just for yourself—at least when you first write.



Later, depending upon how much you enjoy revealing your convictions, you may wish to share what you have learned with others. In such a case, your CONVERSATIONS entries will become **public writing**. The persons who care about you or the combatants with whom you are in contact will realize that your thinking has clarified because you wrote dialogues with persons, ideas, issues, and events. The power inherent in the written word will have been transferred into your power as a quiet communicator or public speaker.

Formats

Note well: Whatever format you use, be sure you date each entry. Writing down the date above each Conversations entry will be meaningful later when you cross develop it with another entry in another journal section.

- **Lettered entries G through K** These five entries have assignments which show you how to structure them in lists, focus statements, dramatic dialogs, and essays.

G: CONVERSATIONS WITH PERSONS

Definition

Conversations are dialogs written in a script form such as a dramatist uses.

Explanation

- There are several kinds of CONVERSATIONS you can write: with persons (the focus of this section), with your work, with yourself, with a social issue, with an event, with a circumstance, with a situation, with your body, with a wisdom figure. Dialogs are an extremely powerful form of writing, for they help you change your inner perspectives.
- The way to learn how to write a CONVERSATION is to first write a script in which you talk with a person who is important to you.

Introductory Assignment G-1: CONVERSATIONS WITH PERSONS

1. On a fresh sheet of paper write today's date. Title it CONVERSATIONS WITH PERSONS.
2. Make two lists, one labeled "Persons From the Past," the other "Persons From the Present." List the people who are or who have been important to you, whether or not they are still living. **Examples:** mother and father (or their substitutes); sisters and brothers; aunts, uncles, and cousins; teachers, priests, ministers, and rabbis; neighbors, classmates, friends, counselors; finally, even people with whom you had only one short contact—if the contact changed your life in some way. The list need not be exhaustive. A few names from the past and a few names from the present are sufficient.
3. Read your lists back to yourself, and choose one name for this assignment. Make the choice by letting a name present itself just as you did when picking out your first MARKING.
4. Indicate the choice on your paper with a reference such as "Chose mother today."
5. Quiet yourself and bring your mother to mind as clearly as you can. Then write her MARKINGS as if she were writing them: "I was born," and then, and then... (Remember eight to twelve items is the number for a basic set.) Accuracy is not important. You know that if she were writing them herself, she'd write her own way, but you write them for her in order to put yourself into her life differently than you ever have before.
6. Next write a brief paragraph about "how it is" with you and this person today. Here are two examples:
 - Mother has been dead for two years, and there is so much unfinished business between us. I think of her often. I wish I could talk with her. Her death ended her physical life, but not our relationship.

• My boss, Mr. Henry, is driving me crazy. He never says please or thank you, just nags at me and everyone else, day after day. I'm holding so much anger and resentment. I'm afraid I'll blow up one of these days. I need some relief or I'm going to have to quit the job.

7. Finally, begin the CONVERSATION, writing as if you were writing a script for a play. The person greets you, and on the next line of your paper, you greet him/her. Just let it come to you what the other would say. You can have the person say whatever you wish, but when these dialogs "take off," they write themselves.

Student Sample

Leticia, an eighth grader, wrote the following as if she were five years old again and talking with her father.

“

Daddy,
you're
gone.
I don't
know
you.

”



ME: Daddy, you're gone. I don't know you. I never knew you. Mom and I are alone; we're so lonely. We laugh a lot, but I can feel she's unhappy. And I'm scared and confused and I never know what's going on.

F: I'll come every other weekend from now on. We'll go horseback riding and to the park to play games. I'll fly kites with you and buy cotton candy and ice cream. We'll get to know each other.

ME: I don't know who you are. We're alone and I'm afraid of having the house broken into. I'm afraid of being kidnapped. Mom sees shadows. She always feels we're being followed. I never feel secure. We need help! We don't need a man! We can do it! We're afraid! Where are you?! I hate you. We're so unhappy. I hear so many messages. I'm so confused. I don't know what to think.

F: You're doing fine. You're so smart and pretty. I'm proud of you.

ME: I get all dressed up when you come. Momma is nervous. Everything has to be perfect. This isn't real. I don't feel anything. I don't know what we're doing. Why do you make her nervous? Why is this all done for you? Why do you still affect us? There are so many secrets. I don't understand anything.

F: I wish I could always be with you.
ME: No! I don't want that. We're having too much fun. We can do just what we want to. Go away!
F: Don't you love me?
ME: No, I don't know you. Go away!



• *"I started to write a CONVERSATION, but I'm doing all the talking, just raving and ranting. Is this all right?"* No, not if the other person never gets a chance to even say things like, "I didn't know you felt that way," or "Oh, really?" If you don't give the other individual a break once or twice on a page, you stay with the typical way we human beings deal with others—we too often churn our frustration and rage round and round in our heads and stay stuck. Certainly, if what you feel is a lot of pent-up emotion, you need to put it on paper; but let the other person talk and yourself breathe every few lines. This action moves your energy back and forth and takes you farther down your well.

• *"The other persons won't answer me. They keep leaving the room. What can I do?"* Of course they will answer. You are trying to talk with someone to whom you have been giving your power. Take it back. Make them talk. You are in charge of your journal and your life. They will say something when you insist on it. Sometimes being powerful is frightening to us, so we give our power away to others in the vague hope that they will take care of us, and we won't have to take care of ourselves. This action never stimulates our growth.

• *"My CONVERSATION was writing itself for awhile, and then I got stuck. Everything bogged down. What can I do next?"* If you've read it back to yourself a couple of times and there is nothing more to be said right now, leave it alone. Go on to the next section of the journal. Later you can turn back to this CONVERSATION.

• *"Can I add more to a CONVERSATION whenever I please?"* Yes. When you feel like talking with this person again, quiet yourself, reread the previous entry, leave some space, then put the new date on the paper, and get on with it. You leave space between entries so that you will have room to add whatever occurs to you when you reread old entries. Jamming a new entry right on top of the previous one doesn't allow for the thoughts-that-think-themselves during the feedback process. When you are rereading and you see that you feel differently now from what you did when you wrote the entry, say so. It's as if you've moved a grain of sand from one side of the scale of your life onto the other side. Eventually you get into balance.

• *"I want to read my CONVERSATION to the person with whom I wrote it. What do you think about this idea?"* No. Tell them about it. Remember that your purpose in writing was to change your perspective on the relationship.

If you've grown or changed through the work, then the other person will respond to you differently. It may take many written CONVERSATIONS over time to change the way you see things. It's best to keep your journal to yourself. As soon as you start writing with the idea that you will read it to someone, a self-consciousness comes over the work that keeps what is written from being a surprise to you. It short circuits your process. Furthermore, reading aloud is an invitation to the listener to go down your well—or to at least put a toe in there. Unless your listeners are familiar with the journal process and know what you are trying to do, they are likely to take you off your path. Be careful about whom you invite into your well. Take responsibility for your own growth. You can discuss what happened in detail when you did the CONVERSATION, but word-for-word recounting is not necessary to enrich the relationship.

Advanced Assignment G-2: THEMATIC CONVERSATIONS

1. Read your lists of people from the past and present and pick out the person you love the most.
2. Pick out the person you hate the most.
3. Write MARKINGS for each person.
4. Write a focusing statement about each one which explains "how it is" between you and each person.
5. Write one CONVERSATION with the person you love and one with the person you hate.
6. Summarize what you learned about love and hate from doing these CONVERSATIONS. (Can you see any place in your dialogs where you are changing as a person?)

Advanced Assignment G-3: PERSONAL INTERVIEW

1. Look through your dialogs and select one which you think you would like to pursue further with a person who is available for an actual interview.
2. Set up the interview with the person at a time convenient for both of you.
3. Prepare 7-10 questions. Just for fun, try making some questions identical to those you asked or implied in your dialog.
4. Make an audio tape of your interview.
5. Playback the audio tape and compare its tone and content with your previous journal dialog's tone and content. Write your conclusions. If the tone and content differ significantly, how do you account for the difference?



You will find this assignment both challenging and enlightening.

Good luck!

H: CONVERSATIONS WITH BODY

Definition

A conversation with your body is a dialog between you and your body in which you get in touch with the wisdom that operates, maintains, and repairs your body.

Explanation

- Your body is wise because it maintains thousands of chemical processes without any conscious direction from you. For example, after it is cut, your body heals itself without direct commands.
- The idea of conversing with your whole body, or parts of it, about your health, or discussing your life with your body, is to establish connection with that marvelous aspect of yourself on which you depend for your physical life.
- Some people think of their relationship with their bodies as a war; they regard their bodies as an enemy. But recognize one thing right away: if you didn't have a good body, you would have died in your infancy.
- If you don't like your body, it will be important to learn how to write a declaration of peace with your body so you can reduce tension and get on with your life.
- You prepare for this section by writing a body history.

Introductory Assignment H-1: CONVERSATION WITH BODY

1. In Section H put a separate sheet of paper into your journal for each five years of your life.
2. Label the sheets as follows: Birth to 5 years; 6 to 10 years; 11 to 15 years; 16 to 20 years.

3. Turn back to the first sheet, quiet yourself, and remember the tasks, sights, sounds, smells, feelings, and events of your childhood—as your body experienced them. Write down your body memories. Here are examples:
 - Birth to 5 years: rowed in a boat by father—age 4; waking on bloody hospital sheets after a tonsillectomy—age 4; bandages being changed after surgery—age 4.
 - 6 to 10 years: running away from a stranger who offered me candy—age 6; playing doctor with the neighborhood children—age 8; mother's hot oatmeal with cream and sugar on cold winter mornings before going to school—age 6 or 7; hiding in the neighborhood lilac bushes in the springtime and being intoxicated by their aroma—age 9; climbing a fence and tearing the inside of my thigh so that I had to have stitches—age 7; lying in bed at night being so afraid that the bogey men or monsters under the bed would get me if I let my feet go close to the edge that I fell asleep rigid—every year from about 6 to 10; learning to read with the blends and sounds on cards being held up by the teacher and reading until I got bleary-eyed every night—age 6.
4. Be sure you list your body memories for each five years on a separate page. You may need several hours to record all your body history. *Don't rush it. Be thorough.* You may add to the lists at any time.
5. When you are through with your body history, you are ready for a dialog with your body. Quiet yourself and then greet your body, "Hello body." Your body will then reply with something like, "Hello, you. I've been wanting to talk with you for years. Now we can communicate directly with each other." Let this CONVERSATION WITH BODY write itself.

Student Sample

(This senior wrote this conversation with his body on February 9 in the last semester of his senior year in high school.)

ME: When I look in the mirror, I'm confused. I admire what you can do as a roundballer, but I'm not sure I like *body* being the part of me that people think of first whenever they look at me.

BODY: Why wouldn't you like me? Coach says I'm a scoring machine, and you know how all the college scouts want me. They say as a high school player I'm a man among boys. And don't forget how the girls are always hanging around. They treat me like the next Michael Jordan or Magic Johnson.

ME: Yet, the girls go for you and the coaches want you, but are you really me? Are you all there is?

BODY: Of course I'm you. For 15 years you have been working me hard so that I can scorch those hoops. Think of the hours you've put into making me a future superstar.

ME: But you're missing the point. You're only part of me.

BODY: I'm the most important part! What else could be as magnificent as me?

ME: How about our mind.

BODY: How about it? It's part of me.

ME: True, but how much of it are you using? Haven't all those practices and phone calls from coaches actually been all about body instead of mind? How much time has mind really been in control of body?

BODY: With this body I don't have to worry so much about mind. I'm gonna make millions in the NBA.

ME: Listen to me. There's so much more to *us*. I have thoughts and feelings that I'm afraid to reveal. They're not coming from you. They're in my brain and spirit. Am I ever going to get to get them out when you're in the way? Everyone wants a piece of me because they think I'm a machine that puts a ball through a hoop, some big dummy that's gonna make a lot of money? *Get the point, body, I'm a lot more than what you are.*

“
Get the point,
body. I'm a lot
more than
what you
are.”



•“*My body is going to die someday. This idea is difficult for me to handle right now. Can I work with the event of my death here?*” Yes. Now that you have spoken the unspeakable—that you will die—and we all will, it can be a great opening for

you. Why not talk with your body about how to make a meaningful life in the years ahead?


•“*I've written a CONVERSATION WITH MY BODY about my overeating. What can I do next?*” Perhaps you can begin with a set of Markings Of My Relationship With Food and expand it. This could take several pages of writing. See where it leads. Addictions of all kinds need to be considered in the context of the whole life.

Advanced Assignment H-2: COMPARATIVE CONVERSATION WITH BODY

The purpose of the following assignment is to illustrate and compare different aspects of body dialogs.

1. Write a set of MARKINGS based only on sensory experiences.

	Markings of Wonderful Hiking Experiences
●	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
●	5.
	6.
	7.
	8.
	9.
	10.
●	11.
	12.



For example, in a MARKINGS OF WONDERFUL HIKING EXPERIENCES, one thing you might list would be a breathtaking vista of a certain mountain or a grove of fall trees.

2. Select one MARKING and use it as a starting point to write a CONVERSATION WITH BODY.
3. Write a second set of MARKINGS based on another one of your senses.
4. Select one MARKING and use it as a starting point to write a second CONVERSATION WITH BODY.
5. How are your two conversations alike? How are they different?

I: CONVERSATIONS WITH EVENTS

Definition

These conversations are dialogs you write with an event so that you can ask any event where it may be taking you.

Explanation

Here are some examples of subjects for these CONVERSATIONS WITH EVENTS:

- falling in love with someone who doesn't love you;
- living with an aging relative(s);
- a religious experience that involves or alienates you;
- a gradual release of parental control as you are becoming increasingly adult;
- a sudden change in your family's financial condition;
- becoming handicapped;
- losing your closest friend or sibling (brother or sister) who either dies or moves away;
- being discriminated against because you are a member of a minority group;
- experiencing your parents' divorce.

Introductory Assignment I-1: CONVERSATION WITH AN EVENT

1. Search the MARKINGS section of your journal for important events in your life.
2. Make a list of these events.
3. Read your list and choose one event to work with now.
4. Think about this event's relationship to your life. The questions you put to any event should be those that will draw the event forward. Some questions work better than others. For example, "What can I learn from you, the event of my parents' divorce?" is a forward-moving question. By contrast, "Why did you happen to me?" is analytical and will probably be a dead-end.
5. First write a focusing statement on your relationship with the event; then go directly into the conversation.

“

The questions you put to any event should be those that will draw the event forward.

”

Student Sample

In October 1989 an eighteen-year-old girl found a MARKING about her parents' divorce, which took place three years ago when she was 15 and in tenth grade. After reflecting upon the event for awhile, she wrote this focusing statement about her relationship with her parents' divorce: "I seem to spend lots of time blaming many of my problems on my parents' divorce." Finally, she wrote this CONVERSATION WITH AN EVENT—the event of her parents' divorce.

ME: Hello, event of my parents' divorce. I wonder how it would have been if you had not taken place.

EVENT: Hard to say. What exactly do you mean?

ME: Oh, I'm sad so much of the time. It's not just my parents. So many of my friends' parents have also divorced. Everyone I meet seems to be one of the "walking wounded." It's not just in real life. Look at the movies and TV. And then, there's my problem with boys. You're to blame for that, too, I believe.

EVENT: Wait a moment, why are you blaming me? After all, you're bright enough, quite intelligent, and you do well in school and your weekend job.

ME: I just wonder if I would get along better with boys if I didn't come from a broken home.

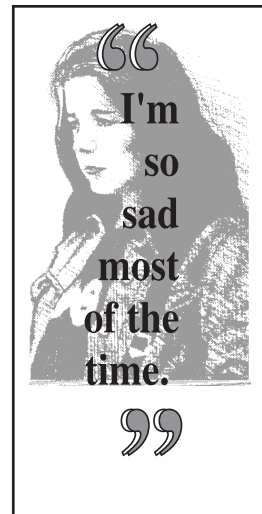
EVENT: Why don't you get along with boys?

ME: I don't trust them, at least not the ones I'm attracted to. I figure if I'm really attracted to them, it's just too good to be true and something will ruin the relationship. I worry most that the boy will leave me soon. After all, something ruined my parents' love for one another. So when I go with a boy for a while, I find myself ruining the relationship just when it's starting. Sometimes I act too nervous around the guy. Other times I'm purposefully rude. I'm just not myself. I guess I purposely drive them away. So it seems written in stone: *No relationship is going to last.*

EVENT: Have you talked with your parents about how you relate to boys?

ME: Not very much. Neither wants to talk with me about anything that's very sensitive or emotional. And neither of them has remarried. They are definitely scarred for life. And I don't want that to happen to me.

EVENT: Come on. Several persons you know must have marriages that you admire. Have you really looked around you carefully? Ask your friends about marriages they admire. I ask you again—Have you really tried to find successful marriages? Or are you just down on me, your parents' divorce, and so you won't really try? Isn't there some neighbor, some family in your church, a minister, a teacher, a school counselor—someone—



who has a marriage you admire. Certainly one of those adults would talk with you. I believe you can find one of those individuals who would open up to you and get you feeling more positive.

ME: I guess you're right. I could talk with my civics teacher Mr. Higgins. I work as his aide period 5. He has pictures of his wife and three kids on his desk at school. I've seen them altogether at a basketball game and they seemed happy. I know he likes me and probably would be happy to talk with me.

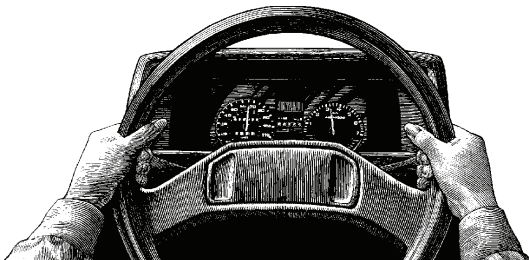
EVENT: Wait a moment. I just thought of something else. Why don't you try dialoging with both of your parents—separately, at different times. Let your imagination take off. In your mind create an ideal circumstance where you and the parent feel close. Try asking some questions—gentle at first—to see if something positive won't happen. I'll bet each of your parents would have some thing to say that would make you feel better.

ME: Well, maybe ... OK, I'll try it.



•“I just bought my first car. Is this an event to have a conversation with?” Definitely yes. You might want to have a dialog in order to get in touch with your feelings of freedom, adulthood, and independence.

You would explore the opportunities and responsibilities that accompany this important event because it opens so many possibilities.



“ ... have a dialog in order to get in touch with your feelings ... ”

Advanced Assignment I-2: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE ESSAY

1. Scan your sets of MARKINGS for an event which changed your life such as a childhood experience that gave you a desire to do something for the rest of your life. For example, the time your parents gave you a rabbit to raise.



“ Mom, I’m going to call him **RONALD** ... ”

2. Concentrate on this particular event that affected your life. Explain, analyze, and develop later reactions to that event or decisions you made because this event happened to you. Explain how the event changed your life.
3. Avoid a brief, hurried chronological record. Instead, cover the significant events that grew out of the first events that led up to the key change or situation which is the focus of your essay. (For example, if having Ronald started your interest in, devotion to, and concern for animals that led to your decision to eventually become a veterinarian, describe in detail key moments and events that moved you to this life decision.)
4. Write your essay. Polish its contents.
5. Read your essay aloud. Does it include a significant expression of ideas? Are the details vivid or fuzzy? (Details should use language that makes pictures in a reader's minds.)
6. Your parents, friends, or school counselor would likely enjoy reading this essay if you are willing to go public with its contents.

J: CONVERSATIONS WITH SOCIETY

Definition

These conversations are dialogs you have about issues that have to do with your relationship to society (a group of human beings bound together by institutions and culture so that they can perpetuate themselves and feel secure).

Explanation

- Your life is very complex because you live in a society. From society you receive “gifts”—some marvelous, some you don’t want. Society tells you how to behave as a man/woman, how to act as a student or son/daughter, what to believe, and how to relate to others.
- Because society is people, ideas, and institutions, it is “speaking” to us, and we respond in many ways. In J journal entries you can express your appreciation, your acceptance, your rage, and you may ask your questions about your relationships with roles, institutions, and other members of society.
- For instance, you have an *aesthetic self* that is stimulated by paintings, sculptures, songs, poems, novels, plays, films, and television productions which enhance or diminish your sensibilities. You may have wanted to say thank you to Beethoven or Michael Jackson. Perhaps you have wanted to argue with Shakespeare, Maya Angelou, Stephen King, or Spike Lee.
- You are also an *economic being*. Are you unhappy about the distribution of wealth in this country? Are you worried about your parents’ or your own financial affairs? Is some consumer advocate like Ralph Nader your hero? Your consumer voice might shout to the heaven about some “lemon” such as a family car or TV set.
- You are a *social being* too. Are you worried about our society’s treatment of minority group members? the position of women and the influence of the Women’s Liberation Movement on men? society’s pressures on you to be a certain kind of “man” or “woman”? How do you stand on abortion, population control? sexual morals? Should the government do more or less about AIDS research and affirmative action? Get into these topics in this part of your journal.
- Generations of ancestors preceded you on this planet. Some of their genes influence you to this day. You can reconnect with your past and establish your feelings of historical continuity, one of the only known antidotes to alienation. Are you feeling powerless, socially isolated, alienated, and self-estranged? Here you can find your roots so as to heal and close old wounds by speaking to someone who preceded you by generations.
- Your role as a son or daughter in the culture can be explored here.
- You have, in addition, an aspect of self which is

political. Citizens have rights and responsibilities. For example, should all young adults have to give a year of their lives to their country either through military or social service? Do you want to take a swing at some politician for disappointments or enthusiasms? Do you want to thank some politician or group for his/her/their idealism? If so, do it here.

Introductory Assignment J-1: CONVERSATIONS WITH SOCIETY

- List certain issues you feel strongly about and select one. Write a set of MARKINGS about your relationship with this issue. How did you develop such intense feelings about this?
- Next, list some names of people you might want to talk with about this issue. Suppose your issue centers on the women’s movement. On your list could be some leaders of the movement and some chauvinists.
- After your list is written, choose one person. These dialogs seem to go better if you have a foil, either a proponent or an opponent with whom you can talk. Sometimes general dialogs with the whole of society will work, but often they bog down. Try to find an individual who represents a side of the issue that you have strong feelings about. Write something here before you go on to read the examples in this section.
- Now write your dialog.

Student Sample

The CONVERSATION WITH SOCIETY sample on the next page was written in April 1991 by a 17-year-old boy while his American History class members were studying **HERSTORY**, a unit on male/female relationships throughout our history. The set of MARKINGS on the next page was written before the CONVERSATION.

Markings of My Manhood	
	Conversation with Arnold
	ME: Mr. Schwarzenegger, I want to—
	ARNOLD: Call me Arnold.
	Wait until you read the dialog between this young man and Arnold Schwarzenegger on the next page.

Markings

1. wearing blue clothes while baby
2. getting first crewcut haircut and first cowboy boots
3. playing with balls: big/round, wiffle balls (and bat), baseballs, footballs, soccer balls
4. fighting back in Kindergarten (giving and receiving a bloody nose): "You're a little man, son. You're tough." Mom cries.
5. quitting Little League and soccer in same year: Dad almost had a stroke; Mom shouted "HOORAH."
6. singing in church choir with both boys and girls
7. joining school drama group and getting to act and dance in several productions
8. winning the 140 pound spot on the wrestling team
9. wearing my first earring

Conversation with Arnold Schwarzenegger

ME: Mr. Schwarzenegger, I want to—

ARNOLD: Call me Arnold.

ME: Well, Arnold, I'm having a problem with my parents about my sexual identity. Mom wants me to be one thing; Dad wants me to another. I'm just not sure how a man is supposed to act.

ARNOLD: So you came to me because I'm always knocking people down or blowing them away in movies, right?

ME: Sure. Of course, I know your movies aren't meant to be real, but still, you were the first person I thought of when I thought of the word "man."

ARNOLD: Just because I have all these muscles doesn't mean that I don't get confused about the word "man." A real man is certainly more than tough on the outside; a real man has to be both tough and tender on the inside. Men who try to be tough all the time can never be tender enough to have real friends, both male and female. And without friends of both sexes you're only half a person. Also realize that women today are confused about what they want a man to be.



“
... without
friends of
both sexes ...
”

ME: I have an earring, and I'm on the wrestling team.

ARNOLD: Does that mean you're trying to be tender and tough?

ME: I don't know. Doesn't it show how really confused I am?

ARNOLD: Not if you want both. Try to relax a bit. No one is ever totally consistent. Life is full of contradictions. Nothing is ever completely clear.

ME: Arnold, you've got plenty of brains after all. I like it that you can admit you don't have all the answers.

Conversations

ARNOLD: Only a fool has all the answers. Now here is a suggestion. Look around you in school and out in the world and find some youth, young adult, adult, middle aged, and old men and women whom you admire because they seem to have a good blend of "man" and "woman" in themselves. They seem "together." If they are around you, talk to them. If they are in films, TV, or books, write some dialogs with them. I'll bet they'll have plenty to say

ME: Good idea, Arnold. Who says you're all body and no mind. I'll give it a try. Thanks.

COMMENTS

These conversations give you an opportunity to deal with personal issues, just as the young man above did in his dialog with Arnold. CONVERSATIONS WITH SOCIETY allow you to come to grips with your convictions about society. As you explore some of the issues discussed above, you will discover the kind of social being that you are becoming.



• "I started out talking with one expert on my problem, and in the middle of my dialog, I decided to talk with someone else. Is this all right?" Absolutely. You know with whom you want to talk. When another idea begins to pull you, flow with that idea.

• "I can't think of anyone to talk with about my aging grandparents and what a hassle they are getting to be for our family. I'm upset and confused about what to do." Did you talk with them first? Do that in the CONVERSATIONS WITH PERSONS section and find out what they want. Then you might try a conversation with your other family members, an imagined social worker, or a gerontology specialist. A number of new books are on the market about the problems of senior citizens. Perhaps the author of one of these books would be useful to you.

Advanced Assignment J-2: BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT ESSAY

1. Scan your journal for a dialog with an artist, a rock composer or singer, an author, or a film director.
2. Through research* or, if possible, a personal interview, examine the person's relationship with society. What does he/she think are his/her most important contributions to society? Does the person look at his/her art as a contribution, or is it just something done for money or pleasure? How has this person's art affected society?
3. Decide on an opinion this person holds or an impact this person has had that would make a good focusing point for your biographical statement essay.
4. Write your essay.

*(Check your library for biographies which interest you.)

K: CONVERSATIONS WITH WORK

Definition

These conversations are scripts you write as you dialog with your work, asking it what it wants to become or where it wants to go.

Explanation

- A work is something important to you that you are trying to do well (e.g., being a student, keeping this journal, doing housework, repairing a car, taking care of a baby sister, writing poetry, managing your money, designing airplanes, drawing floor plans for your dream house, tuning engines, baking bread, being a safe driver, being a son or daughter, succeeding as an athlete, etc.).
- Work can be public (everyone knows you're doing it) or private (only you know).
- Work ranges along a continuum. It can be a single action such as mowing the lawn, an all-encompassing activity such as writing the novel that has occupied you for the last 13 months, or a role (e.g., being a loving big brother to your little sister).

“
... something
important to
you that you
are trying to
do well..
”

Introductory Assignment K-1: CONVERSATION WITH WORK

1. After you have relaxed and quieted yourself, let your mind flow over the works in your life. Make a list of these works. Remember that works must meet two criteria to be on your list: they must be important to you, and they must be things you are trying to do well.
2. Choose one work to begin conversing with right now.
3. If it's appropriate, do a set of MARKINGS of your relationship with this work. Once begun, some WORKS seems to have a life of their own. If you have done a MARKINGS of the work, suddenly the dialog may flow with a momentum of its own, as if there's a person in the work. (It's that metaphorical person with whom you will hold your CONVERSATION WITH WORK.)
4. Now write a focusing statement (or a summary statement) of what your relationship is with the work today.
5. Start your conversation with a salutation: For example, "Hello, my work of becoming a musician," or "Hello, my housework," or "Hello, my report that isn't finished." Then ask, for example, "Where is it that you, my work, are trying to go?" Saying, "Damn it, work, why can't I finish you?" is like beating a tulip bulb because it hasn't bloomed yet.

Student sample

Tomiko, a high school sophomore, first wrote the following set of MARKINGS about learning to drive a car. Later she wrote her CONVERSATION WITH WORK.

(Date: December 21, 1991)

1. Sitting on daddy's lap when I was little while we drove around the countryside.
2. Having a little red fire engine to drive with pedals.
3. Riding a two wheeler for the first time at age 8.
4. My big brother gets a car two years ago. He starts taking me with him, but he won't let me touch the car. I sit in it from time to time practicing anyway.
5. I start saving my money so that I can buy a car when I learn to drive.
6. I take Driver Education classes at school. I do all right.
7. Just when I'm ready to start the Driver Training part, I'm in a wreck with one of my friends. My right leg is in a cast, and my right shoulder is still hurting.
8. I'm feeling really anxious about taking the Driver Training when the cast comes off.

Focus statement: Although I've been waiting to drive for years, now I'm kind of scared. It wasn't Gene's fault that the car skidded at the intersection. It was slippery and wet that afternoon, but he turned the wrong way. We ran right into a telephone pole which was stupid. He's only a little older than I am. I'm wondering if I might make the same kind of error while I'm driving.

ME: Hello, my Work of Learning to Drive a Car, I hate to admit it, but after all this waiting, I feel like postponing the Driver Training for a few months.

WORK: I'll be around when you're ready. I'm not going anywhere.

ME: That's just it. I won't be going anywhere either unless someone drives me. I want to learn to operate the car, but now I'm just scared. I can't forget the sight and sound of that crash. The whole right side of the car was caved in. I'm lucky I wasn't hurt more.

WORK: I'm glad you weren't hurt either. Can you push yourself gently away from that old scene and just move along with the way you were going before the accident?

ME: I guess so. Maybe I'll always be scared in a car?

WORK: You'll probably be more careful than people who haven't had an accident. That may save your life. Maybe someone else's too.

ME: That's a good point.



*Notice how
writing
this focus
statement
helped the
writer zero
in on the
topic.*

WORK: It's OK to be a little scared. You'll get over it in time. Practice helps everyone relax. You know you're a natural. You've got good timing. Basketball, soccer. You can do this.

ME: I guess what I'm most anxious about is the cast coming off my foot and my leg. I hope I'll be OK.

WORK: So it's not really the driving that's worrying you, right?

ME: No, it's my leg. It will be working OK.

WORK: You've been eating great food. You're young and healthy, and you've done everything the doctor told you too. How can you lose?

ME: Only a couple more days of dragging this concrete around.

WORK: Celebrate when the cast comes off. See about the driving then.

ME: I feel better!

WORK: Good, Tomiko.

“
I feel
better!
”



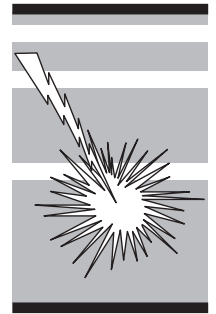
- “I don't have any work. That's my problem. So how can I use this part of the journal?” Write a dialog with worklessness and see where it leads you. Or you might write a MARKINGS review of

every job you've ever had (paid for or assigned by parents) since you were a child. Include in the review some memories of your feelings about the work. Remember what work turned you on when you were younger. Maybe some of these MARKINGS are CROSSROADS and you can open them up there as roads not taken.

- “I have writer's block. I haven't had a good idea for months. Do I talk with the writer's block?” No, instead of dialoging with the block it may be more useful to write a CONVERSATION WITH WORK THAT IS WAITING TO BE BORN. That way you will be evoking the potential that is within you.

- “I'm not satisfied with my fast food service job after school. I really hate it. Should I write a CONVERSATION WITH HORRIBLE FAST FOOD SERVICE?” Of course. Dialog with the work and see what it has to say for itself. Then converse with some other work that you think you'd like better and perhaps the steps necessary to change your work or your attitude toward it will present themselves.

- “I have an idea that it would be helpful to me to keep a part of my journal for a piece of writing that I'm doing—like a poem that is in progress. What do you think?” Works in Progress can be stored in Tab 1's Intro Plus Section. Of course, if you are writing a great deal, you could pull works out of your basic journal and put them into a separate notebook.



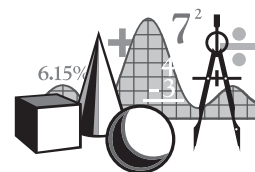
Writing
can unleash
powerful ideas!

Advanced Assignment K-2: VOCATIONAL DEPTH PROJECT

1. Scan your dialogs to locate one with the type of work which could form the basis of your future career.
2. Plan a trip to the type of facility which hires people in this career.
3. Arrange an appointment with a person in your



food careers???



Engineering
and
math
careers???



sports
medicine
careers???

considered line of work. Make a list of carefully thought out questions before the appointment.

4. Review the written and visual materials on your considered vocation in your school career center or in your school or local library.
5. Write a paper explaining the steps you plan to take to insure your success in your chosen vocation. Be specific. Explain how you became interested in the vocation and why you should follow the planned steps in order to insure your success. Finally, define success as you perceive it in your personal and vocational future.

Introduction to INTROSPECTIONS

*Make this
fourth tab
when you
set up
your
journal
notebook.*

Introspections

Before you begin

Be sure you have set up the fourth tab of your five tab journal. (See the tab example at left.)

Content

In your journal's fourth tab section you continue your journal by looking inside yourself. First, you use your dreams to record DREAM ENTRIES AND CONTINUATIONS; second, you ruminate to find IMAGERY ENTRIES AND CONTINUATIONS; third, you hold CONVERSATION WITH WISDOM FIGURES; finally, you write dialogs that help you develop your PERSPECTIVES about past, present, and future time periods.

Public or Private?

Much of this Conversations writing will likely remain **private writing** because you will be writing to find and understand deep thinking inside yourself—at least when you first write.

Later, depending upon how much you reveal and share your innermost thoughts, you may choose to make some of this sections' entries **public writing**. You will likely share this Introspections section only with persons you really trust—close friends and those whom you love.



Formats

Note well: *Whatever format you use, be sure you date each entry. Writing down the date above each Introspections entry will be meaningful later when you cross develop it with another entry in another journal section.*

- **Lettered entries L through O** These four entries have assignments which show you how to structure them in stream of consciousness sentences/ paragraphs, narratives, poetry beginnings, polished poems, lists, and dialogs.

L: DREAM ENTRIES AND CONTINUATIONS

This section is divided into two parts: 1) DREAM ENTRIES, and 2) CONTINUATIONS.

Definitions

In a DREAM ENTRY you record your dreams. In CONTINUATIONS you record your reactions after reading a series of dreams collected over a period of at least 30 days.

Explanation

- Record your dreams like a reporter who writes down only the facts. Even though magazine articles, television productions, and movies may have given you the idea that analyzing a dream is the most appropriate thing to do with it, I want to discourage you from such analysis at first.
- Your deep self creates dreams to stimulate the forward movement of your life. Dreams are leads that you can use as you work in depth in your journal.
- Important:** *Keep journal paper at your bedside so that you can record your dreams immediately upon waking.* A flashlight would be handy so you can capture them at night without getting up to turn on the lights. You can train yourself to recall your dream even if you can catch only the tail end of it. Record even the merest fragment of a dream.
- Another awakening technique that is helpful is to keep your eyes closed and move yourself slowly into your favorite sleeping positions, one at a time. You may be able to recall dreams that occurred during the night while you were in a certain posture.

Introductory Assignment L-1: SERIES OF DREAM ENTRIES

Record your dreams in detail, each one on a separate, dated piece of paper, until you have collected them for at least a month.

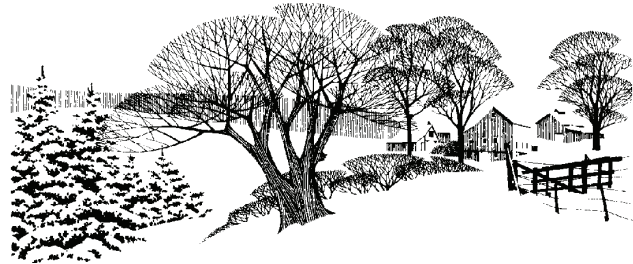
Student Sample

(This DREAM ENTRY was written by a 15-year-old sophomore boy on December 7, 1989.)

In the morning I enter my grandfather's barn to gaze at his classic black 1941 Chevrolet coupe. He has promised me that I will drive it once the snows are gone. The coupe is not there. I leave the barn and walk across a snowy pasture in muted winter light. In the distance a hill rises gradually. My eyes slowly travel into my grandfather's woods. Somewhere among those trees are a road and the Chevrolet.

I am looking for the black Chevrolet and the person who may have taken it. My grandfather did not drive it from the barn because he never lets snow and slush touch

its shiny midnight black finish. He keeps it hibernating in the barn—covered and waiting for spring.



I struggle up the hill, moving through knee-deep, wind-drifted snow. I enter dark woods and no longer hear the wind. Something is missing. Suddenly I feel the cold deep inside my jacket. My bones feel pierced by a freezing grip. And it is so quiet. I notice no birds are singing. Sensing movement, I focus on a cluster of thick trees in the dark distance. Moving in and out of the trees is a tall man wearing a heavy long coat like Clint Eastwood's in his old Western films. I see only his back, not his face, as he slips behind, then out of the trees. I try to hurry, but the snow slows me. He is getting away. I press on, sweating heavily under the thick coat and muffler that protect me from the cold. Suddenly I stumble and fall against a stump. On hands and knees with my face close to the snow, I breathe deeply, catching my breath. I lift my eyes to search the woods, looking for the man. He appears from behind a thick tree and suddenly stops and turns. His eyes lock my eyes for several long seconds.

Suddenly a cry shatters the frozen moment. I look up. A large raven flies by, banks, and returns to fly about ten feet over my head. I stand up. The circling bird looks into my eyes, speaks a second angry cry, sweeps low to the ground, and flies toward the thicker trees which hide the escaping man. I hurry on after the black raven moving over the white snow.

Comments

Note what the writer wrote and did not write. Only the dream was recorded—and exactly the way it occurred. The writer made no attempt to amplify the dream by interpreting its possible meanings or by drawing associations from it.

Introductory Assignment L-2: DREAM CONTINUATIONS

- After you have done Introductory Assignment L-1 for at least one month, you can start working seriously with your DREAM ENTRIES by writing DREAM CONTINUATIONS—your reactions to these entries as you examine them.

2. As you study your DREAM ENTRIES, see if your dreams reflect two or three themes on which your deep self seems to be working. If you find such themes, record them as DREAM CONTINUATIONS, which follow immediately after your DREAM ENTRIES in this part of your journal.
3. Other suggestions for writing DREAM CONTINUATIONS follow these STUDENT SAMPLES.

Student Samples

- (February 21, 1990: Written by boy on previous page)

Today I read my dreams for the last two months. The obvious theme has been a concern with movement, deadends, and starting up again. I dreamed automobiles, trips that didn't happen, accidents, traffic tickets, turning the car around and returning to places I had been. Another theme is mourning.

- (May 10, 1990: Written by boy on previous page)

I read the dreams of my past three months. In them is a recurring symbol of a golden ball, mysterious and marvelous. I think it would be interesting to have a conversation with that ball.

Comments

- The above brief examples of DREAM CONTINUATIONS are just that—*brief*. However, you may want to spend considerable time and several pages reflecting on the images and ideas that come after reading your DREAM ENTRIES.
- You can pick out a dream and develop it into a set of MARKINGS. For example, dreams of being pursued or running away could become "Times I've Tried to Escape." In this way, you can feel the presence of a dream theme as it's moved throughout your life.
- On rare occasions you may notice an important dream as you are reading your entries. For example, in the midst of 20 or 30 dreams you may find one that draws you into it. Write your observations in this DREAM CONTINUATIONS section.
- When a new person or figure appears in your dreams, you can write a dialog with that person in DREAM CONTINUATIONS. Ask the figure what advice or gifts he or she has to give you. If you dream of someone you know, you can go right to CONVERSATIONS WITH PERSONS to dialog with them.
- If you should dream about your past (e.g., living in your old neighborhood or being in the second grade), you can write your memories of these times in AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES. Let all the sights, sounds, and feelings come flooding back.
- Remember to cross-reference every time you move directly from one section of your journal to another.
- Any number of new books advocate control of dreams and a variety of alternative ways to work with them. I am convinced that however they come to us, dreams are gifts. None of them should be

discounted, devalued, discarded. Rather we should honor them for their importance in our growth and unfolding as human beings.



• "What does it mean if I have the same dream over and over?" Recurring dreams are powerful evidence of your deep self saying, "Will you please pay attention to this message and see what there is for you to learn?" If we do nothing to increase our awareness, our deep self patiently gives us the dream again, saying this time, "Will you please pay attention?" Zap! We get it again and again until we learn what it has to teach us.

• "I don't think I ever dream. At least I can't remember any. Do I really dream?" We all have nightly dreams, whether or not we are aware of them. When we don't remember our dreams over long periods of time, it is sometimes because we are afraid of something that we don't want to remember or face. One of my students asked me this question, and I suggested that now that she had her journal and a place to work on her dreams, she could tell her deep self that it was OK to send her dreams. She went home, and every night for a week she gently asked for a dream before she went to sleep and nothing happened. When she reported this in class the following week, I suggested that she'd better indicate to her deep self that she wasn't kidding, she meant business, and insist that the dreams be sent. She went home, and during the next week she demanded to dream every night until Sunday evening. On Sunday, she had been hiking all day and was completely exhausted when she fell into bed. So that night, she said, "Not tonight, I'm too tired," and of course, that night the first dream took place that she could remember in four years. She felt it to be incredibly precious. Other dreams followed spontaneously, and she's been having dreams that she can remember ever since.

• "I am afraid of some of my dreams. What can I do about my fears?" Everything in a dream is part of you. Just remember that all dreams are leads that you can use in your journal work. Simply record them as they occur. Work with them in series only and hold conversations with the terrifying aspects of your dreams. Conversing with terrors will lessen them.

Advanced Assignment L-3: DREAM VARIATIONS

Examine one of your dreams and interpret it in at least three different ways. Write your interpretations.

“... in at least three
different ways ...”

M: IMAGERY ENTRIES AND CONTINUATIONS

Definition

Images are those waking dreams which come to you when you are not asleep but are in very deep places in yourself. According to the psychological theories of Carl Gustav Jung, these images come from the same place in your deep self as dreams. Images can be several things:

- a feeling of knowing; a sensing of something about your life;
- bodily awareness of sounds or smells from the past;
- emotional memories of old songs that were meaningful to you at some important moment of your life; and
- visual memories in the form of bits and pieces or entire scenes that unfold, just like dreams.

Explanation

- Before you start the following exercise, think of your mind as a kind of well, the way psychologist Carl Gustav Jung did.

“... think of your mind
as a kind of well ...”

Jung believed that operating on the surface of your well are the *beta* or conscious brain waves. These brain waves work while you are planning future events or doing cognitive tasks such as grammar or math problems. When you daydream or relax a little, you sink into the *alpha* or pre-conscious portion of your well. First below the alpha brain waves are the *theta* or unconscious brain waves, which are dominant just before you go to sleep or just before you wake up. Farther down in your well are the *delta* or subconscious brain waves, which operate while you sleep.

- Scientists have discovered that many human beings sitting in a quiet room for a minute or so will likely start experiencing imagery. Try it and see.
- If you're still a little confused by the word *images* (or imagery) as used here, think of images as what happens to you when you daydream. See if many images present themselves as you relax.

Introductory Assignment M-1: FINDING IMAGERY DOWN YOUR WELL

1. Prepare to go down your well. Sit up straight, unfold yourself, and put your feet on the floor. (If you're sitting on the floor, straighten up.) Close your eyes, breathe slowly, then more slowly, letting yourself

relax. Invite your deep self to present you with whatever will come.

2. Record whatever presents itself without making judgments about its value or significance. If the imagery is all murky, that's the imagery. Record it. If old memories come, that's the imagery. Record it.
3. You may stay in the well as few as two to three minutes, but 20 minutes is a recommended time period.

Student Sample

(A 15-year-old sophomore girl wrote this Imagery Entry on February 22, 1989.)

I dive below the surface into the ocean, the cool blue waters. I can breathe, I am in control, moving easily up or down. I spot a shell on the sandy bottom.



Light is filtering through to the bottom. Inside the shell a baby is curled into a fetal position, calm and asleep. I carry the shell with me as I swim onward. I have the desire to go deeper in order to find drops in the sea bottom, where I can swim deeper. And I do.

As I go much deeper and deeper into the ocean, the light becomes less. More murkiness. All is muted. I see below me something moving—rhythmically—like a heart. Yet it is long like a tube. The opening pulsates with each beat. Open and closed. I enter, and the inside is smooth and round and completely dark. The sound of the beating is deafening, and with each pulse it pulls me gently onwards, further down the tube. I am still holding the shell. Then, as I am still inside, I view myself from the outside. I sense myself caught in the pulsing tube. I swim over and lay my body on top of it. I feel the pulsing, and I feel myself inside, wrapped around the child in the shell.

I leave myself and float away and up to the surface. On the water's surface I float on my back. As I put my head under the water, I still hear the terrible loud pulsing of the heart below. It fills the ocean. It moves me. Yet when I lift my head, there is an intense silence pierced by bird sounds and the wind. I float gently in this silence.

Comments

The imagery you just read takes place between conscious and unconscious thought, between the right and left hemispheres of the brain. Your right hemisphere controls the left side of your body and the intuitive part of your thinking. The left hemisphere controls the right side of your body and the cognitive part of your thinking. When you write IMAGERY ENTRIES, you are getting in touch with the depth dimension of your thinking, the source of your creative intelligence. The creative person is able to move freely from the surface where the task is, to the depth where the sources are, and back again.

- “Nothing is happening. I think I am afraid to go down my well. Should images come spontaneously or do I have to force them?” We never force this work. The tulip blooms when it is ready. The images will come spontaneously when we quiet our rational mind and invite our deep self to send us information that we can use to take our journal work further.



Don't be so quick to judge that “nothing is happening.” Something is always happening in the depths of ourselves. Respect your own timing. When you are ready, you will go down your well. To help you get started you might find it useful to read something like Ira Progoff's book *The Well and the Cathedral* (New York, Dialogue House, 1976.)

- “I had a very scary image of a great snake. What should I do with this?” Just let it be there, recorded, for now. Later you may want to have a dialog with the snake image. You can ask the snake where it is trying to go in your life. Powerful images deserve to be honored for what they are—leads for future journal work.

Further Explanation

- Becoming quiet for your journal work is a relaxation experience. Relaxation simply means quiet reflection between the top and bottom of your well. *Remember to take slow, deep breaths to relax.*
- Whenever you work in this journal's first three dimensions, you should be in a state of relaxation.
- Work in your journal can be a deep kind of relaxation like the more traditional deepening of self (e.g., reading inspirational poetry, singing, praying, jogging, doing specific relaxation exercises).
- Here's a way to relax yourself when you are attempting to go down into your well. Synchronize your breathing with a quieting phrase of seven syllables. Here's an example:

“The breath moves at the center.”

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Use the first three counts to breathe in, the second three counts to breathe out, and the seventh count to rest.

Introductory Assignment M-2: IMAGERY CONTINUATIONS

1. First write your own seven syllable phrase. Then quiet yourself and begin breathing in and out, slowly and regularly. Repeat your own phrase under your breath.
2. Record what happens to you when you repeat this phrase and go down your well as an IMAGERY CONTINUATIONS entry in this journal.
3. When you have practiced a bit, write other phrases of your own. (They can be any number of syllables from three to eight; they don't have to be seven syllables.) Your phrases will be based on your imagery. First repeat your phrases out loud to yourself. They should be smooth. They should be open-ended rather than commandments. They should evoke rather than proclaim. They do not need to be beautiful or soothing. They may come from scary images.
4. Now read how images and a seven syllable phrase interrelated while a student was down in the well.

Student Samples

(A 13-year-old eighth grade girl wrote these Imagery Continuation Entries in March 1991.)

Imagery Continuation Entry 1

I rush down a mountainside. There's a waterfall cascading over rocks. The cliff is sharp, yet it does not hurt or pierce me. I move with ease downward—downward, and it brings me to its end. Suddenly the river disappears. There is no more.

The ground is dry and brown. I stand on it. I move a few steps away, and I look back and wonder where the water has gone. I take my hands and pull the dirt away where it ends. The water advances toward me. I draw the dirt apart, farther and farther, and the river moves into the path I make.

I take my hand and pry apart large sections of the earth. It splits and the river rushes in to fill its space. Soon the water follows the path without my help. It gains momentum and rushes with great force down the mountainside. The power is monumental. It mows down trees. Yet its path is narrow—and straight—and it is contained—not a threat. Great bursts of water flow forth and disappear in the distance. I feel the end of it is so far away.

I climb a small hill next to the water and sit next to a tree. Below me I see the countryside and the ocean far away, the light shimmering in it, where my river empties. I feel the force and energy of the water next to me and hear its roar, and yet I feel the separateness and strong peace within me. I know. I need never leave.

I feel so strong reading this back. I make a seven syllable saying:

“Draw the power; let it flow.”
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I record it as an IMAGERY CONTINUATIONS entry in my journal. Then I go down the well again with it.

Imagery Continuation Entry 2

A baby is all curled up. Strip after strip of thin gauze covers it. It is lying in a crescent moon, rocking back and forth, faster and faster, until I am dizzy. The moon becomes a full moon—penetrating light. It surrounds the baby—now standing—and melts over it again and again, covering it with a cooling liquid.

Comments

1. Included in IMAGERY CONTINUATIONS are the following:
 - dialogs you write with figures in your imagery;
 - drawings you make of your imagery; and
 - imagery you make into several syllable phrases you use to take yourself deeper into your well.
2. You will return to write more IMAGERY ENTRIES AND CONTINUATIONS over and over again in your journal.

Advanced Assignment M-3: SEVEN SYLLABLE POETRY EXERCISE

1. Think of a seven syllable phrase to carry your breathing (e.g., “The breath moves at the center,” or “I am relaxing right now.”) Write your phrase in this section of your journal.
2. Turn off the trying part of yourself. Let yourself sink into the well of your own consciousness.
3. Breathe your seven syllable phrase to yourself as long as it takes to start the imaging.
4. When you are ready, slowly open your eyes and jot down any words, hunches, feelings, or fleeting memories as they came up during the period. As you are writing them, catch any other ideas that are being triggered by the experience of doing the writing itself.
5. When you are through with your recording, begin to compose a free verse poem.



(Here is a free verse poem example a 17-year-old high school junior boy wrote in August.)

To Dennis

Loved by Dana, Jeff
And everyone
I knew
Who knew you,
It's hard to think
Of you as gone.
Yesterday you smiled.
Your warmth filled
A school that
Admired and idolized you.
No one guessed
You would leave
In such a hurry.

6. Revise the free verse poem into a seven syllable poem. You may use your seven syllable phrase as your opening line or as one of the lines in your poem, but it's not mandatory. Try to write seven syllables into each line but allow yourself leeway for your own spontaneous rhythm.

(The young man in #5 continues with his poem about Dennis.)

Golden Boy

Dennis, Dennis, blond and strong
Loved by Dana, Jeff
And everyone I know who knew
You were the pride of our town
It's hard to think of you
As gone when yesterday you
Smiled and filled a school
With power and confidence.
Your classmates were afraid
To consider you their friend.
What heresy. You did no wrong.
You always won the games.
You always scored the points.
They placed you upon a
Pedestal inscribed “Don't Touch”
Just admire and idolize
Like a resurrected Viking king.
No one guessed that you
Would leave in such a hurry.
Vikings never shot themselves.

7. Revise your poem for a third time. This time see that each line contains ten syllables and be sure to rhyme every other line. Make no exceptions.

(The young man in #5 and #6 on the previous page continues with his poem about Dennis.)

Golden Boy

The last time I saw you we talked of friends
among friends. They were boys. You were seeking
girls, pretty ones, like a hunter who pretends
he seeks a deer to shoot, but only watches.

I notice, in my classroom, your old seat
and almost see your savage cheekbones fade.
Your smile dissolves. Your eyes, steel blue, meet
my eyes in silence to refresh memories.

Jay sat in back waiting for you to lead.
Jay kicked off. You dove and sailed through halfbacks
like a Viking through waves. You said your seed
was of Nordic origin, from Viking kings.

Donna had hair as blond as yours. She smiled
when she wrote of you, and dreamed of babies
with golden down. She prayed you'd call and styled
herself to your content. You were her god.

No one guessed we'd be deserted by our king.
Vikings never shot their mouths with deer rifles.
Donna cries. Listen through your rifle's ring.
"I could have saved him if only he had called."



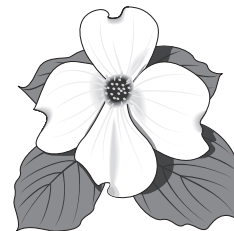
“No one guessed we'd
be deserted by our king.”

8. Which of the example poems did you like most? Why was it better than the others? Which of your own poems do you like the most? Why was it better than the others?
9. Did you feel, while you were revising the mechanical aspects of your poems that your unconscious was also at work? Perhaps you would like to share one of your poems with the class by passing out dittoed copies, or reading it orally, or by doing both.



• “I just realized that a prayer I’ve been saying since childhood, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy,’ is a seven syllable phrase. Is that right?” Yes, every major religion seems to have seven syllable prayers. Use your old ones if you like, or make new ones.

Readers who have never used phrases for relaxation will find this to be a fascinating new experience.



“Your seed knows
when and how
to flower.”

• “Everytime I seek imagery, I get a gray void. This is discouraging.” The imagery is the gray void. Think of the void as a pregnant space. The void is pregnant with what will come to fill it at exactly the right time. We never rush to fill up voids because those times of void, of transition, which are “not this, not that” are like the spaces between the notes of the music of our lives. Those spaces are terribly important. We simply let them be there, knowing that it is ground-plowing time. Dialog with the void: you speak; it speaks. Then let it tell you what is waiting to appear. Your seed knows when and how to flower.

N: CONVERSATIONS WITH WISDOM FIGURES

Definition

These conversations are dialogs you write with wisdom figures. They come from the deepest parts of yourself and help you get in touch with the seeds of your own inner wisdom.

Explanation

- In Section N of your journal you may have the wisest men and women in history for confidants. You may ask any questions; they will respond with their wisdom.
- In Section G you hold conversations with persons who have really been in your life, but in this section you have the opportunity to stretch yourself.
- You may write dialogs with an ancestor, a famous teacher, an inventor, an artist, an athlete, a saint, a religious figure—anyone you want. The minds of these enlightened persons will help you tap your own inner wisdom.

Introductory Assignment N-1: CONVERSATION WITH WISDOM FIGURE

1. Begin by writing a MARKINGS entry called MARKINGS OF MY MORAL/ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT. (Write this MARKINGS entry before your CONVER-

	Markings of My Moral/ Ethical Development
1.	
2.	

SATION WITH WISDOM FIGURE. See the sample on the right. The MARKINGS entry prepares you for this CONVERSATION, just as a Body History prepared you for a CONVERSATION WITH THE BODY entry earlier.) Here are three examples of a first MARKING you might write if you were of one of these three religious persuasions:

- Born into a Southern Baptist family that read the Bible every Sunday.
- Born into a devout Catholic family of ten children.
- Born the only son of an honest, upright mother and father who never went to church.

Remember when you construct this set of MARKINGS that you are noting how you got here from there rather than what you believe. Whom did you meet along the way who influenced you? a priest? a rabbi? a grandfather? What books did you read? Did you have any striking dreams or visionary experiences?

2. Next, list those individuals, either historic or contemporary, that you feel are imbued with the deep

knowledge that you admire and with whom you would like to talk about your life. You may have religious figures on your list: God, Confucius, Buddha, Jesus of Nazareth, saints and holy women. You may list mythological figures: Athena, Demeter, Diana, Eros, Mercury, Venus or any cohorts. You may choose from any of the greats in all of the artistic and intellectual disciplines: Plato, Madam Curie, Thomas Edison, Byron, Emily Dickinson, Charlotte Bronte, Dostoevsky, Thoreau, Emerson. You may want to choose historical figures: Plato, Galileo, Daniel Boone. You may also choose contemporary men and women whose wisdom you respect—or even *key characters in fine novels*. When you have completed your list, choose one figure to begin with.

3. Go down your well, following the procedure you learned in Assignment M-1. Allow yourself to move as far down into your well as possible so that you approach this assignment with proper respect for yourself and for the inner wisdom of the person with whom you are going to have the dialog.
4. Write your CONVERSATION WITH INNER VOICES.

Student Sample

In fall 1992 the following conversation was written by a 17-year-old senior girl who respects Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), the great leader of the Indian nationalist movement, whom the world honors because of his doctrine of non-violence.

J: Most of the time, Gandhi, I am a bubbly, happy person who really loves life. People say when I enter a room I'm like a blast of sunshine. But lately, the world's problems have been weighing on me. I watch TV news and suddenly feel heavy and old. In less than a year I'm going off to college, and I've been feeling a little frightened. Here I am, this affluent teenager with top grades and supportive parents who really care, and I wonder what life's all about. Why am I on this earth? Can my life really make a difference?

G: You're here because you, like all of us, have much work to do on this earth—to bring about justice, peace, and happiness. We must never give up; we must never be discouraged. Your life *will* make a difference.

J: But even though I appear energetic all the time, I get tired. I'm only 17! My parents and so many of my friends and teachers don't realize my doubts and my mistakes. They always consider me *Miss Perfect*, and that bothers me too.

G: Whenever you make mistakes, you can begin again *and you will*. Do not be afraid, my child. You will find your way. You can do your small part to make this a better world for all those who follow.

J: But I'm so insignificant. I want to help others, but I don't know how to begin. What can I do?

G: First, you must not doubt yourself. Do not fear. Have faith in yourself. God loves you and is with you and will bring you comfort.

J: But you see, I get so angry. I'm a girl, and I'm African-American—and I get discriminated because of both.

“
But you see, I get
so angry. I'm a girl,
and I'm African-
American ...
”

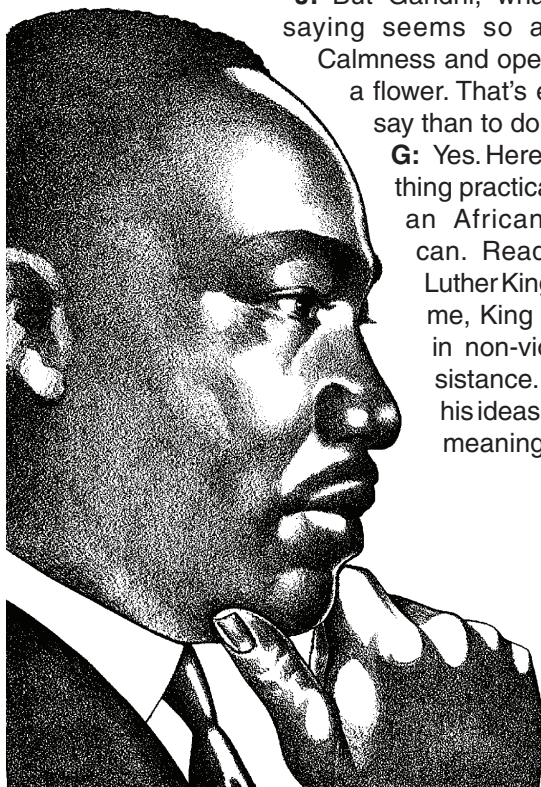


The things I could tell you! I get so mad that I want to say and do crazy things. Because I'm a girl, lots of persons don't listen to what I say; and because I'm African-American, well, you know what I have to put up with. You faced discrimination all your life because you were a man of color. One moment I forgive people; the next I want to strangle them. I wonder if I really do want to save the whole world. Can't you see how confused I am!

G: Calm yourself. Confusion always covers some other emotion. Sometimes it's necessary before growth can occur. Go deeper and see how you really feel. Pay less attention to what others think of you. Stand quiet inside the impenetrable shield of your goodness. Accept what you are. Wait for your true self to open like the blossom of a flower.

J: But Gandhi, what you're saying seems so abstract. Calmness and opening like a flower. That's easier to say than to do.

G: Yes. Here's something practical. You're an African-American. Read Martin Luther King, Jr. Like me, King believed in non-violent resistance. Possibly his ideas will have meaning for you.



(The student continued her conversation three weeks later.)

J: I want to thank you. I reread our previous conversation and felt comforted. I also read some writings of Martin Luther King, Jr., as you suggested.

G: I'm glad. The purpose of your life will become more and more clear to you as you mature and read and think about ideas. You must always act according to your deep convictions—not out of envy, greed, malice, ambition. Let your love of your fellow human beings guide your every action and your thoughts. Be careful not to waste yourself on trivial things. Seek deeply for answers within yourself. Focus your energies on doing good work on behalf of mankind, as King did.

J: I pray that I will be able to do this at least part of the time. I can't live up to such expectations 100 percent of the time. I want to forgive myself for not being able to do it all the time. Can you understand my human shortcomings and help me deal with them?

G: Of course I can. We humans are all imperfect, but our courage comes from our deep selves and our attunement with the world. Have courage, have courage. All will be well with you again.

J: You're right about the importance of courage. Martin Luther King, Jr. certainly had it when he was leading my people and all America in the fight for civil rights.

G: You are correct. He accepted himself and his mission and wore his self-acceptance like armor. As a result, he was invincible.

J: Thank you, Gandhi, for your help. You'll always be special to me. The world is a sadder place since you have left it, but you are not forgotten. Your memory inspires me, and others, I know, must be moved by your sacrifice and your devotion.

Comments

As this young student's teacher, I was pleased to see how Martin Luther King, Jr. popped into the dialog. Possibly when her history teacher had suggested that she read King, she had ignored the suggestion; however, when Gandhi suggested it in her conversation, the reason for reading this great American's ideas suddenly made sense to her. This is an example of the power of writing dialogs with wisdom figures.

“
... some writings of
Martin Luther King, Jr. ...
”

- “I started out talking with one person, and in the middle I had an impulse to talk with someone else. Is this all right?” Yes. Maybe you will even want three different people in the same dialog or different people at different times. Do what feels right. Do this work your own way.



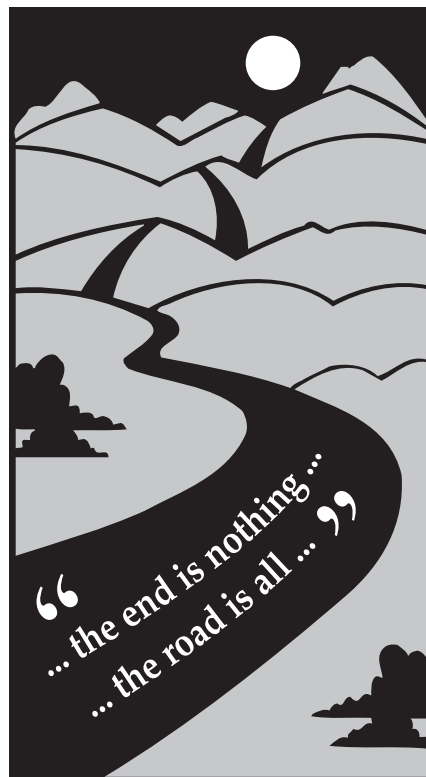
- “I did a conversation with Socrates and don’t feel that anything particularly wise was exchanged. I’m disappointed.” Don’t judge your work so harshly. Just let the work rest in your journal. Take another figure from your list and write another dialog.

- “I’m feeling uneasy about these talks with dead people. We’re not trying to connect with their dead spirits, are we?” Of course not. What we are doing is connecting with our own inner wisdom. We choose wise persons with whom to confer because the act of moving our energy back and forth in the exchange and imagining that we are talking with someone wise helps us get in touch with what we already know. As a result, we bring our own wisdom to the surface.



Advanced Assignment N-2: CONVERSATION WITH NOVELIST OR FICTIONAL CHARACTER

1. Read over your MARKINGS OF MY MORAL/ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT. Reflect on the moral and ethical values you use to guide your actions. Also remember how these values developed over time.
2. Make a list of past or present novelists or fictional characters whom you might want to ask the most profound questions of life. *Examples:* Ernest Hemingway, Leo Tolstoy, Willa Cather, Charles Dickens, George Orwell, William Faulkner, Alice Walker, Kurt Vonnegut, Ray Bradbury, James Michener, Lord Jim, Jay Gatsby, Rubashov from *Darkness At Noon*, and Alexandros Zorba from *Zorba the Greek*.
3. Select one person from your list.
4. Write his/her MARKINGS, if you know the person well enough. For example, one of my students who became fascinated with the author Willa Cather after reading her superb novel *My Antonia*, did brief research on this writer’s early life in Nebraska around the turn of the twentieth century. The student became fascinated with Ms. Cather’s pithy statement, “The end is nothing; the road is all.” Consequently, this quotation plus her experience with *My Antonia* inspired her to write a powerful dialog with this important American author.



5. Write a brief statement about your questions and concerns in order to focus the dialog.
6. Begin your dialog.

O: PERSPECTIVES

Definition

In this section you have dialogs with stages of life. You write a conversation with an expanse of time in your life.

Explanation

- Within each person's life are a number of major stages. Stages are periods of time characterized by certain dominant and intense goals, interests, or roles.



Examples: Maybe during your long-legged skinny stage you tried but failed to become the best rope jumper in the third grade (age 8). Other examples of stages you might have lived through: obsessed with excelling in Little League (ages 8-12); hating your paper route and finally getting your parents to allow you to drop the route (ages 9-10); wanting to look like a certain TV star or athlete (ages 13-14); striving in vain to get Bob to notice you during a whole year of biology (age 15); falling in and out of love with Eddie (age 16); learning how much you loved your terminally ill grandfather as you helped him live his last six months with dignity (age 17).

- If you are interested in the stages of life all human beings inevitably go through, go to a good library and look into the work of Erik H. Erikson, who has divided life into eight stages we all live through. You may be particularly interested in his analysis of Stage 5: Identity. (Erikson coined the phrase "the identity crisis.")

“
... the
identity
crisis ...
”



- You don't have to restrict yourself to your past. In this section you can also write a dialog with a part of your future (i.e., a day, week, month, or year to come—instead of New Year's Resolutions!). Here are examples of specific future periods you might want to hold conversations with:
 - that first week when you will have your driver's license;
 - the months next spring when you will be your team's shortstop; next summer when you will work as a waitress at a lodge in Yellowstone National Park;
 - your adult years when you will be an important doctor (or lawyer or mechanic or beautician or housewife or mother or father or...?).
- Since this section of your journal is called PERSPECTIVES, you may also use it as a place to gain perspective on what this journal is coming to mean to you. For example, after reflecting upon what you have written, you may want to set goals here for what you are going to write in certain sections (e.g., how much, and when).

“ ... You can also write a dialog
with a part of your future ... ”

Introductory Assignment O-1: CONVERSATION WITH A STAGE OF LIFE

1. Read your MARKINGS. See if they can help you identify any stages in your life. MARKINGS such as "Made the soccer All-Star team," or "Earned enough money mowing lawns to buy my first professional quality baseball glove" would obviously identify a journal writer's Little League Stage.
2. In the MARKINGS section write a new set of MARKINGS of the major stages of your life. (The "Before I Learned To Read Stage," the "Baby Is Born Stage," and "Dad and Mom Get Divorced" are other examples.)
3. Then choose one of these stages, cross reference yourself, and come back to this part of your journal. (If you have forgotten how to cross reference and why it's necessary, see #3 under Introductory Assignment F-1 in CROSSROADS.)
4. Date your entry and write a new set of MARKINGS *within the stage you have chosen*.
5. Write a brief focusing statement on your relationship with this stage. For example, was your Little League Stage a happy period? Did you learn anything of lasting value from it? Did you give it your best effort? Would you change anything if you had a chance to live through this stage again?
6. Write your conversation with the stage of time you chose.

Student Sample

(This Conversation With My Little League Stage was written by a ninth grade boy in May 1992.)

Focus statement: I chose to open out this period after reading my MARKINGS that I wrote on January 6, 1992. After reading this set of MARKINGS, I realized this was an incredible stage of my life. I was miserable a lot of the time. So I want to look into this period.

ME: Little League Stage of my life, I get upset immediately when I think about you. I was competing with my brothers to get attention from Mom. She was always driving them to Little League whenever they wanted. They were older and took it really seriously because they were so good. And since they were older and good at baseball, whatever they wanted they seemed to get. I often had to walk to the field because Mom and the car were gone. And once I got to the field, I wasn't much of a ball player. The number of balls I dropped ... yuk. So Little League Stage, I hated you.

LLS: Why bother hating me? Hate ought to be saved for something significant. Am I worth hating?

ME: You're not listening. Nothing went right. A girl I sort of liked, her name was Michelle, she even came out for the team and was better than I. Why in practice one day she pitched and I struck out. How embarrassing. The guys never let me forget how she struck me out. So can't you see why I hated you. Aren't you listening to me?

“You're not listening.
Nothing went right.”



LLS: Wait, aren't you listening to me? Why hate me? Why not hate terrible persons who kill baby seals for fur coats or parents who abuse their kids—something really destructive? I didn't hurt you. Didn't you learn something from me because of all the pain?

ME: Well, I guess I did learn something. I learned how important it is to be a team member (even if I wasn't much of a player, I did contribute something); I learned how to swear; I learned that even though Michelle was a better player than me, I could take it (after all it's not a matter of life and death); I learned playing the piano was more important to me and came first.

LLS: Exactly. The experience with me taught you—

ME: Yeh, it taught me *plenty*. I also learned that I'd rather hike or ride my bike if I wanted to sweat. I learned that I could keep doing something I didn't like—you—for

two years. Sometimes it's important to stick with something you don't want to do. You shouldn't quit something right away. And most important of all, I learned to make a decision when it was time to do so: I decided to quit and spend more time with the piano.

LLS: Good.

ME: Then in the eighth grade we got into soccer in PE, and I found a team sport that I liked better than you.

LLS: Fine. You see, all those things you listed were important things to learn. Nothing is really wasted in life. You can always learn from life. Life is *the* teacher.

ME: You sound like my Mom. I guess she's right more times that she's wrong.

Comments

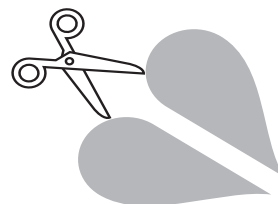
This STUDENT SAMPLE really reveals how much can be learned from taking some time to write a conversation with a stage in life. And what you learn you can carry forward with you. In these conversations watch to see what happens to your old anger and hate. You can use such strong feelings for energy to stimulate movement in all your writing. Maybe one of your “bad” stages will look hilarious to you when you reflect upon it and have to talk to it. By all means bring your sense of humor into your journal. Regardless of what happens, writing a PERSPECTIVES entry is likely to result in personal growth.

Advanced Assignment O-2: PERIOD CONVERSATION

1. Follow this section's Introductory Assignment directions for procedure, but use your PERIOD ENTRIES (Entry C) instead of MARKINGS as a source for generating ideas for writing your dialog.
2. One way to start would be to look through your PERIOD ENTRIES to see if you can identify a humorous or sorrowful period or stage in your life. Look at the title to the student's PERIOD CONVERSATION immediately below. Doesn't it look like one you'd enjoy reading?

My First Love Affair

A Conversation With Heather—
How You Cut My Heart in Two



3. Write a conversation with the period you choose.

Introduction to APPLICATIONS

Make this
fifth tab
when you
set up
your
journal
notebook.

Applications

Content

In this fifth tab section of your journal you use ideas and information from writing entries in your journal's earlier four sections. Thus, what you have discovered and experienced will help shape new creative and academic writing.

Public or Private?

Much of this writing will likely become **public writing** because you will be writing for actual school assignments in various classes. As a result, your teachers—and possibly your classmates—will read what you have written.

Some of the writing will remain **private writing** simply because you do not wish to share with others what you have written. For example, since journal writing is so powerful, some of the realizations you have reached from keeping your own journal may be thoughts such as resolutions or commitments you wish to live up to that you feel are *for your eyes only*.

Formats

Note well: *Whatever format you use, be sure you date each entry. Writing down the date above each Applications entry will be meaningful later when you cross develop it with another entry in another journal section.*

1. **Lettered entries P through T** These entries have assignments which show you how to relate previous journal entries to regular academic and creative writing classes. They are included to get you started. However, they are not meant to be the only materials you include in the Applications section. Feel free to use other formats such as b through e immediately below.
2. **Miscellaneous formats**
 - a. Use the lettered **P through T entries** as models as mentioned above.
 - b. **Brief statements** in which you comment on something you have learned about yourself. (Always date them and possibly comment on how you might expand upon what you sense you have learned by opening up the realization in another section of this journal.)
 - c. **Formal statements** in which you develop the brief statements into carefully crafted paragraphs or essays.
 - d. **Idea clusters** for creative writing for poems, stories, or novels.
 - e. **Lists** of resolutions you wish to live up to during a certain period in your life.

Note well: *These formats are only a few of the many formats you will likely use as you personalize your journal in this APPLICATIONS section.*

P: FREE ASSOCIATION WRITINGS

Purpose

You write FREE ASSOCIATIONS to put yourself in the creator role rather than the editor role. By concentrating on creating *private* writings first, the strength, uniqueness, and individuality of your voice will unfold as you tap the sources of your remembered experiences. How vividly you share your experiences and make them available to a *public* audience will depend on how deeply you involve yourself in your free association writings.

Explanation

- Write in your FREE ASSOCIATION entries for about ten minutes at a time.
- Write in this section in the late evening if you are a night owl. Write in the early morning if you are an early riser. FREE ASSOCIATION WRITING is easiest when you are in the imagery state. Refer back to Section M if you need some reinforcement.
- A basic rule for FREE ASSOCIATION WRITING is to keep your pen on the paper. If you can't think of anything to say, just write "I can't think of anything to say" repeatedly until your pen starts writing something else.
- Try to write in this section of your journal several times a week.
- Some writers feel that writing free associations is one effective way of curing "writer's block." Consequently, when you find yourself stuck in the middle of a piece of writing, try writing some free associations. Of course, rereading previous entries in other tab sections may help you through the obstacle.

Assignment P-1: IMITATIVE POETRY ASSIGNMENT

Step 1 Select one of your FREE ASSOCIATION WRITINGS to work into a poem.

Step 2 If you are not inspired by any of your previous FREE ASSOCIATION WRITINGS, quiet yourself, put your pen to paper, and keep it moving for 15 to 20 minutes.

Step 3 Review your writing and edit to correct organizational and grammatical errors.

Step 4 Write or type into stanzas several phrases or sentences which strike you as being unique or poetic. Then edit and revise them into a free verse poem.

Assignment P-1 has

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

steps ...

Author Samples

The following FREE ASSOCIATION WRITING and resultant poems were written by the author about a girl he met when he was 18 and she was 16. She later joined a commune.

Hello Joy

How could I not be with you
when I see you in my mother's face?
I see you in old annuals.
I see your picture on the bulletin board
you gave me for my office wall.
It hangs below the collage you made
with Angela Davis staring from the center.
When she stares at me
I stare back and see you too.

I see you in Balboa Bowl
where you sang your acid tunes
to empty seats and ran
like an excited child
to meet me on the 50 yard line.

Your friends in Julian remember you,
naked and clothed in your 1969,
right on time, counter culture sandals
and your Mazatlan wedding shirt.
They don't take many trips
to town these days.
They've been to space and back
and now they sit and watch their eye-lid movies.

I see you in Kensington
where your firm young body
pressed against my chest
and took my breath away.
You blew it back again.

Twice a week I see your sister, Laura,
who doesn't realize
I see you in the moment
that I look into her eyes.
She laughs at my lines
and would never understand
that the only lines
I've ever given you
are the ones in the palm of my hand.
She meets me twice a week
outside the gym at State.
She's 20 now.
She was 15 when you left.

I hear you in your mother
who speaks on the phone
in an arthritic tone.
She has no hope of your return.
Laura tells her your commune's evil,
Love takes their money for himself
to insure the family members will
live out his dream,
and forget their own.

Mary says your child is called Delight
and all the family is his mother,
and all the family is his father.
How can I be among you
when you don't know who you are?

The times we could have made it
have all come since you've gone.
The times we played as children
live on in places near.
We were never ready to grow together.
Time was never on our side.

Step 5 Expand your poem. See where it leads.
Perhaps you can use your expanded rough draft as a
source for several polished poems on several different
subjects.

Step 6 Read a poet of your choice (e.g., Gary
Snyder). Get a feeling for his or her rhythm and form.
Try to find several poems by the same poet.

Step 7 Restructure the words of your poem to fit
the rhythm and line pattern of the poet you have been
studying. Imitate the rhythm and form found in the poet's
work in general.

Farewell to Linda
Now Called Joy
October 20, 1977

Last night I saw your picture
in our high school annual
and I feel your presence
in our orange grove
and I remember the times
in the backyard
when your young body pressed
against my chest
to take away the breath
we shared through lips
the same in size and shape.
I close my eyes
and see your face
and sometimes late at night
I dream I hear you breathing
on the pillow next to mine.
I hear your commune's band
play acid tunes in Stuard's Park
I see you dancing, still alone,

in your Mexican wedding shirt.
Now the family circles
and sits to eat upon the grass.
Courage says the prayer
and leads the chant.
Patience and Prudence
pass out soup and bread.
I see Delight, your son.
"Where is his father?" I ask
and I'm answered.
"All of us are one
and all the family is his father
and all the family is his mother."

How could I stay among you
when you don't know who you are?
I ride with Love
on the commune ranch.
We ride his private horses.
He does not know
to pull back to reverse.
I show him and he thanks me.
He talks of his commune,
his Mercedes, his Lear jet,
his hundred wives. Love's head
is full of plans to see
you live his story
and forget you have
a story of your own.

Ice rain awoke me early
and standing by my bed
I thought I felt your body warm me
as though you never left me
to be replaced by frigid air.
Today, at school,
I saw your sister.
She hears my lines and laughs
but would never understand
the only lines
I've ever given you
are the ones in the palm
of my hand. I search
my heartline for the crease
you made there. It
never changes. I even find
the little marks where children
should be but never will be.

“

... but would never understand
the only lines I've ever given you
are the ones in the palm of my hand ...

”

Time was never on our side.
 The times we could have made it
 have all come since you've gone.
 The times we played as children
 live on in our back yard.
 You may find me picking oranges
 or crayfish from the stream.
 Don't think my breath
 does not hold yours.
 I feel your breath
 expand my chest
 and soothe my feet
 as summer grass
 between my toes.

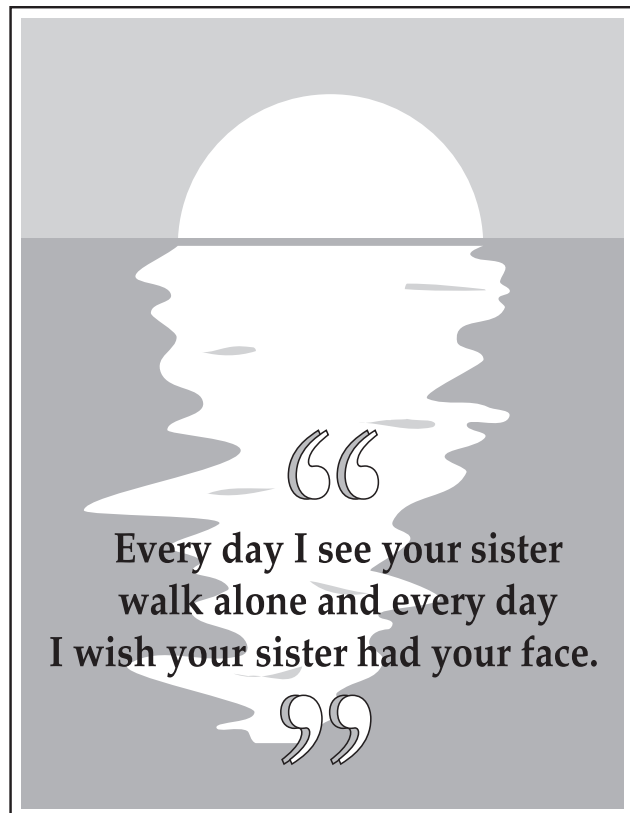
Step 8 Finally, revise and polish your poem into a finished work. You may want to study the works of several more traditional or contemporary poets before you start to polish the final draft of your poem. The following poem was revised after studying the works of Gary Snyder, a contemporary poet. It was revised five times and cut to one-third of its original length.

A Long Resonance

I stand in my back yard
 and I remember when
 your young body pressed
 against my chest
 and almost took
 my breath away.
 When I dream of you
 your brown hair floats
 and I think
 I hear you breathing
 on the pillow next to mine.

Today I worked at my desk
 and thought of your
 slim legs dancing
 in a white laced dress.
 Your commune band
 plays "All you need is Love"
 and your family circles.
 Your son, Delight,
 passes me the bread.
 I ask you where his father is.
 You say, "All of us are one
 and all the family is his father
 and all the family is his mother."
 Love prays for wealth
 and calls it abundance.
 You read his Bible
 and he hands you censored mail.

Everyday, at school,
 I see your sister, Laura,
 who doesn't know
 I see you smiling
 when I look into her eyes.
 Her voice, like yours,
 is resonant but anxious
 with desire. I can tell
 by the way she moves
 she's tender in her passion
 just like you.
 She hears my lines and laughs
 and doesn't understand
 the only lines
 I've given you
 are the ones in my palm.
 I search my heartline
 for the crease you made there
 and Peace, it never changes.
 I even find the little marks
 where children could be.
 Everyday I see your sister
 walk alone and every day
 I wish your sister had your face.



Q: OTHER WISDOM LOG

Purpose

In this place you collect or process other persons' *wisdom*. But what does this word wisdom mean? Do not confuse it with intelligence, which is only the ability to acquire and hold knowledge. Wisdom is much more—and less often found: it is the ability to use knowledge—usually acquired from experience over time—to determine right from wrong, good from bad, and truth from falsehood. Another way to differentiate says that intelligence often concentrates on specialized knowledge while wisdom finds the meaning and use in more generalized knowledge.

You collect other persons' wisdom in many formats: interviews, book reviews, magazine reviews, or simply random comments about readings, radio programs, film or television viewings. You also use this part of your journal to record any quotations which strike you as worth saving or expanding upon.

Explanation

- This section of your journal has an impressive heritage. Many Americans have composed volumes of memorable quotations (e.g., Ben Franklin, Henry David Thoreau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson).
- **Ben Franklin** often borrowed quotations from the Greeks (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Homer) in order to spice up his editions of *Poor Richard's Almanac*. Largely because of these quotations, his almanac was the largest selling book in America (next to the Bible) for nearly two decades. Of course, Franklin also originated many quotations of his own. A good portion of his sayings expounded upon the virtues of frugality and hard work. "He who sows while sluggards sleep will have plenty of corn to sell and keep" is just one of many examples.
- **Henry David Thoreau** studied Eastern as well as Western philosophers, jotting down ideas he came across in a "thought book" or notebook while he was an undergraduate at Harvard. This type of journal keeping was often the basis of the course work. (Using past thinkers this way to stimulate your own original thought is an important step in creating an environment where you will awaken and develop new forms of expression.)
- **Ralph Waldo Emerson** formed the American philosophy of transcendentalism after studying the works of several British nature poets: Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelly. He also incorporated thoughts gained from his readings of Kant, Descartes, St. Thomas Aquinas, Berkeley, Spinoza, and Hegel.



Five Samples From the Author's Journals

Our chief want in life is to find someone who will help us find ourselves.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

We know what we are, but not what we may be.

—Shakespeare

Few people think more than two or three times a year: I have made an international reputation for myself by thinking two or three times a week.

—George Bernard Shaw

The young man who has not wept is a savage, and the old man who will not laugh is a fool.

—George Santayana

The tragedy of life for most people consists in walking through the riches of existence unaware and unseeing, making a famine where abundance lies. In such constricted lives it takes an earthquake to reveal what waits at their doorstep.

—Ken Kesey

Introductory Assignments Q-1 to Q-4:

Q-1: Find a considerable number of quotations you like. Write them in this section of your journal.

Q-2: Illustrate some of your favorite quotations.

Q-3: Explain and/or paraphrase some of your favorite quotations. (To paraphrase is to put into simpler words every idea and key word in a quotation.)

Q-4: List quotes that contradict each other. Explain how neither of them is Truth, but each of them contains "a" truth.

The following quotations might give you some ideas. Feel free to choose your own favorites.

When you are writing, you are a writer, no matter how fumbling or poor your work may be. If you assume an attitude seriously enough and often enough and intelligently enough, it is likely that the attitude will become a natural part of you.

—Roger Garrison

Leave the flurry to the masses. Take your time and shine your glasses.

—an old Shaker saying

Read the best books first, or you may not have a chance to read them all.

—Henry David Thoreau

To start to write is to start to live, because it is to start to observe, to rage, to pity, to love. I wish everyone who sits down to a sheet of hopeful white paper would think about this.

—Walker Evans

The greatest gift is the power to estimate correctly the value of things.

—Francois

Listen to your intuitive self, the shadow in your blood. Follow your genetic lean. This self is yours. Be it.

—Ray Bradbury

Value exists only where there is consciousness. Where nothing is ever felt, nothing matters.

—Susanne K. Langer

The road goes on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now ahead the road has gone
and I must follow, if I can—
Pursuing it joins some larger way
Where many paths and errands meet
and whither then? I cannot say.

—J. R. Tolkien

Publishing a volume of verse is like dropping a rose petal in the Grand Canyon and waiting for the echo.

—Don Marquis

Move forward out of fire.

—General George S. Patton, Jr.

Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

The end is nothing; the road is all.

—Willa Cather

Simplify, simplify.

—Henry David Thoreau

Advanced Assignment Q-5: OTHER WISDOM ENTRY

This assignment is based on the journals of Henry David Thoreau; they were the source of his classic, *Walden*. About two-thirds of the book consists of edited journal writings. Thoreau gathered much of his wisdom from his natural environment.

Step 1 Find a special place for yourself.

Step 2 Sit down and close your eyes. Listen to the sounds. If your place is in the country, you may be able

to think of descriptions for the many different bird calls you may hear. City dwellers may discover new sounds they have not noticed before because of traffic noise.

Step 3 After about 15 minutes, open your eyes and note the sounds for another 15 minutes.

Step 4 Record both the associations that you made with sounds when your eyes were closed and again when they were open.

Step 5 Study the writings of Thoreau. (The intense nature passages in *Walden* would be most appropriate.)

Step 6 Now write a passage of your own observations about sound patterned after the intense poetic style of Thoreau's prose writings.

Advanced Assignment Q-6: OTHER WISDOM DIALOG

Here you have an opportunity to converse with a person you have learned from and written about in your OTHER WISDOM LOG.

Step 1 Scan your OTHER WISDOM LOG. Select a person with whom you would most like to dialog.

Step 2 Write a brief statement explaining your relationship with that person.

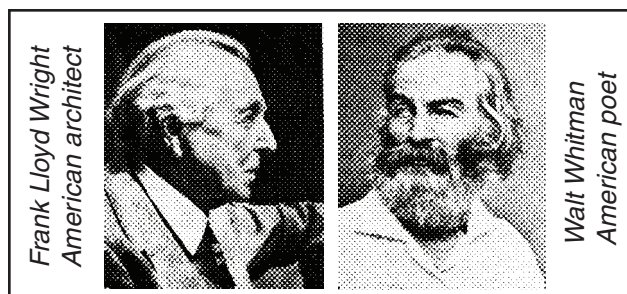
Step 3 If possible, research the person's life (e.g., birth, parents, childhood, loves, vocation, successes/failures, death, importance of his/her life). Consult reference books or encyclopedias.

Step 4 (Optional) Write several journal entries as if you were the person: PERIOD ENTRIES; MARKINGS; AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES; DAILY ENTRIES; and others?

Step 5 Now write your dialog with the person. Greet him/her, receive a greeting in return, and begin the dialog. When you are "speaking," write in your own style. When he/she is "speaking," write in his/her style.

Advanced Assignment Q-7: OTHER WISDOM DIALOG BETWEEN TWO FAMOUS PERSONS

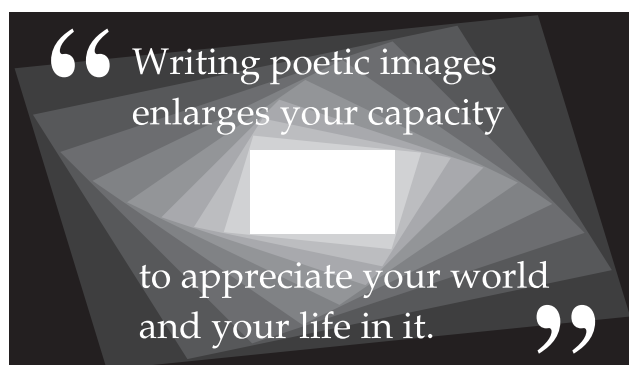
Choose two persons whose ideas you respect. Next follow Steps 2-3-4 in Advanced Assignment Q-6. Then establish a setting (a time and a place) and write a dialog between these two famous persons. Have each person "speak" in his/her style. You might wish to use two of my favorites below—Walt Whitman and Frank Lloyd Wright.



R: POETIC WRITINGS

Purpose

In these journal entries you put yourself in the role of a poet and write poetic lines. You save all poetic lines you write, for any line may become the nucleus of an effective poem, regardless of how it appears when you first write it. Writing poetic images enlarges your capacity to observe and appreciate the world and your life in it. Since poetry touches human feelings so deeply, you can ventilate, amuse, or entertain by sharing your thoughts, experiences, or emotions.



Suggestions

- When you read your journal from time to time, you will feel strongly attracted to some of your writings. If you like, use these writings for essays, short stories, or poetry.
- It's OK to change your previous writing experience completely while working to produce an effective piece of creative writing.
- Your ultimate goal will be to eradicate the influence of other writers so that you can be yourself, but you'll never get there without going through a process of imitation first.
- If you are interested in writing poetry, you should read the work of recognized *modern* poets such as Richard Wright, Robert Bly, Richard Wilbur, W. D. Snodgrass, Sylvia Plath, Robert Lowell, and Robert Frost.
- It is also important to be aware of the form, rhyme, and meter found in *traditional* poetry, because this awareness will train your ear and make you a more effective writer. Therefore, read the poems of several traditional poets (e.g., Emily Dickinson, John Masefield, William Shakespeare, William Wordsworth, Sara Teasdale, Robert Peter Tristram Coffin).
- When you transform a *private* writing to a *public* writing, you don't have to be literal. For instance, if your journal entry is about boredom, don't write a boring poem. Instead, try to write an exciting or insightful reaction to that boredom so that your poem's reader will feel your experience in an original way.

- Fully express your ideas. Then carefully edit your rhythm and word choice. Your intuition and instinct will help you edit as well as create.
- One last word of advice: "Save some of the universe for your next poem." A common mistake of beginning poets is to attempt to write too much about a general subject such as Life, Love, Truth, Beauty, or Death. Instead you might write an effective poem about how you were affected by the death of a person very close to you. What I'm emphasizing is this: *Your poem will be more likely to "come alive" if the inspiration for your poem is an experience that means a great deal to you.*

Introductory Assignment: R-1 to R-8: POETIC WRITINGS

R-1: Write four triplets of sentences. Have each triplet follow this pattern:

1. **The first sentence** must contain a color, a comparison, and a name of a place or person, must be a whopping lie, and must begin with the words, "I used to..."
2. **The second sentence** must also contain a color, must be a comparative and truthful response to the first sentence, and must begin with the words, "But now..."
3. **The third sentence** must be very short, must be a straight statement of unadorned fact (no colors, comparisons, or sensory data, please) and must be repeated as the third member of each triplet.

Two Examples

I used to be a Hollywood star, beautiful as diamonds in a blue velvet coat,
But now I am a small gray rock at the bottom of the sea;
My lover is alone.

I used to be Sitting Bull with red and orange feathers, and I was taller than the Electric Building on 39th Street,
But now I wear black shoes and keep a pencil in my pocket and try not to look out the window;
My lover is alone.

Considerations

- What would be the effect of other refrain lines (lines such as "I am afraid" ... "The sky is gray" ... "The cup is empty")?
- What would be the effect of transposing lines one and two in each triplet?
- What would such a transposition do to the refrain lines?

- **Optional:** You can avoid the “to be” predictions:
I used to beach-bag to Malibu, like a sycophant
to a shrine of gold,
But now I drink Establishment wine, though it
is gray as ashes;
Loneliness is my lover.
- Note that each line can have the compressed flash that is typical of Haiku.

R-2: Follow the suggestions below and write a poem of at least 20-25 lines.

1. Go to a place (see *below #3) and make a list.
2. Go to a second place and make a second list.
3. Now create a set of images, similes, metaphors that describe one of the places in the vocabulary of the other. Intensify these images. Make them as compact and tight as Haiku. Your images should throw off sparks of poetic meaning. Use as many of your invented images as you can, but don't get uptight if you don't use them all. Creating new images to support the themes you are working with—that's really what writing (and reading) poetry is all about: a process of discovering imagery, meaning, and expression.

*What do I mean by “Go to a place”? A “place” can mean a physical configuration in the real world (e.g., a beach, a forest, your room). Or it can mean one of the “places” in the mind. Education is such a “place” in your mind. You could describe it as a *game*, a *road*, a *stream*, a *prison*, or an *organic garden*. You might put purpose in this assignment from the beginning by starting with such a basic simile or metaphor. For example, “Education is an *organic garden*.” Then your lists would be about *education* and *organic gardens* and your poem would describe, eulogize, satirize, or verbalize learning as growing, teaching as cultivating, ideas as mulch.

Here is a final observation. Work with your language so that there is continuity as you move from prose to poetry.

Prose Young violets grow through the rotten stems of last year's meadow.

Poetic Prose Through the yellow stems of a once-verdant meadow, spring violets peep.

Prosaic Poetry:

Through the rotten stench
Of compost in the meadow,
New violets peep.

Poetry:

Through the yellow stench
Of dung-heaps in the meadow,
Brave violets slash.

R-3: Make a card deck of your life on small cards. List five places, people, animals, textures, foods, tastes, months, emotions, and any other categories you may wish to write about. Place only one item on each small card. From time to time look through your cards and

jot down any associations. You may be able to rework some of your associations into poetry rich in concrete images and void of abstractions.



R-4: Read through your AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES. Then come back to this section and record any ideas you have for poems about places or people you have known.

R-5: Invent journal sections A-M for an imaginary person. Dialog with this person. You might want to imagine you're sitting down to dinner with him/her before you start the dialog. See if you can use this person in a narrative poem, a story, or a play.

R-6: Read several poems in a literature anthology. Put yourself in a situation where you are dialoging with a poet about one of his or her poems.

R-7: Read through your IMAGERY ENTRIES AND CONTINUATIONS and write down ideas or first lines for poems as they come to you.

R-8: Immediately after writing various journal entries, consider them as sources for poetry or other types of creative writing. For example, the following DAILY ENTRY was written by the author while he was preparing breakfast.

March 11

Today in front of me I really looked at my bowl of eggs, milk, and vanilla. I was preparing French toast. Suddenly I thought how the contents of the bowl looked like an embryo.

I reflected on how all the people in the world were once embryos, of how my students were, and how miraculous it is that they should invent and create and develop in the ways they do.

I immediately sensed the strange and perhaps poetic quality of my daily entry, so (not having my journal available) I labeled another blank piece of paper R: 3/11. (R is the journal index letter for POETIC WRITINGS while 3/11 was, of course, the date.) I then wrote:

Some people are like eggs
 Having children is like
 reliving your youth
 I would want to make
 my boy things of wood
my girl dolls of clay

Pictures are important
 Because of them I can remember
 What my childhood barn
looked like today



Comments

Notice how fragmented the above entry is with nothing that would qualify as much of a poem. Also notice how each idea is separated by a line. I had a start, something to work with, something to work on at a future time. The next day I punched holes in the papers the entries were written on and placed them in my journal. A week later I wrote the following poem in the POETIC WRITINGS part of my journal. Notice how closely related it is to the fragmented thoughts I had jotted down eight days earlier.

R: March 19

Pictures Are Important

As a young child
 my favorite toy
 was a wooden barn
 my father made
 for me
 for my third Christmas.

If I had a boy
 I would make
 him things of wood.

If I had a girl
 I would make
 her things of clay.

Pictures are important.
 I can show you
 my childhood barn today.

Advanced Assignment R-9: DIALOG BETWEEN POETIC VOICES

1. Select a book or group of poems to read.
2. Notice that poems have voices within them. They may have one voice. They may have several voices. Identify the poetic voices of a favorite poem of yours. For example, who is speaking in the poem "Mom"?

Mom

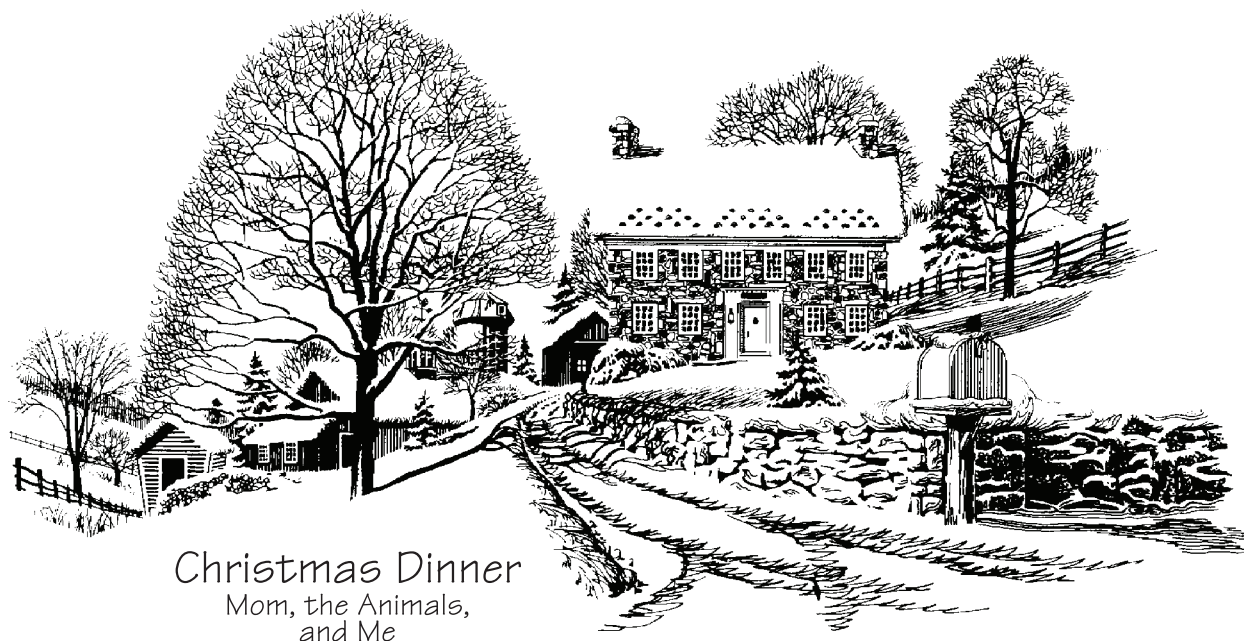
Mother writes from her converted water-tower,
 "Dear," she says,
 "Don't waste time with books.
 Live life, come home for some
 exercise and a home-cooked meal.
 You'll be surprised at all the changes.
 Buster's been chasing
 the little girl dog next door.
 Oatmeal's got big sores behind his ears
 but still manages
 to get out and frolic
 with the birds and rabbits.

Tabby's been sleeping by the stove.
 He's such a good cat. Never hurts anyone.
 You can always trust him. Ribbons is grazing
 in the pasture behind the house.
 She's looking well
 for being so old. Bismark is so sweet.
 He got out the other day. (Merlen forgot
 to latch the screen door.) We had to chase him
 all over the place. He just wouldn't stop
 barking and running.
 Evelyn, you remember her,
 our neighbor to the south,
 finally corralled him. Had a chat with Evelyn, very
 pleasant. She's always got something nice to say.
 Merlen can't find his red sweat pants and
 he has nothing else to wear around the house
 with his cashmere sweater—the one Bismark
 hasn't chewed a hole in yet. Cleaned your room
 today.
 I'm storing your old things in the garage. Left
 your bow and arrows up there. Why don't you
 come home
 for a little target practice? All for now.

Love, Mother

P.S. Be careful not to shoot the animals.

3. Once you have identified the poetic voice (or voices), write them down. Do this by making a brief list, by writing a dialog, or by writing a script or a play. For instance, using the poem on the previous page, you could simply list mom, or write a dialog between mom and her son, or a play in which the son came home for Christmas dinner. Mom, the son, Evelyn, and Merlen could all have speaking parts.



- The animals could enter the play as supporting characters. Perhaps one of them could be sitting at the dinner table, eating mashed potatoes, while another was sitting beneath the table quietly chewing on Evelyn's nylons.
4. You may have an opportunity to complete this assignment with a group of three to five other students who want to write and perform a play before the rest of the class.
5. In preparation for a performance, each student in your group should bring a poem which he/she would like to see dramatized.
6. The group members should then look over all of the suggested poems and decide which one they most want to dramatize.
7. Finally, the group members should establish characters, a theme, a plot, and a conflict for their play in accordance with what the voice (or voices) of the selected poem is trying to communicate.

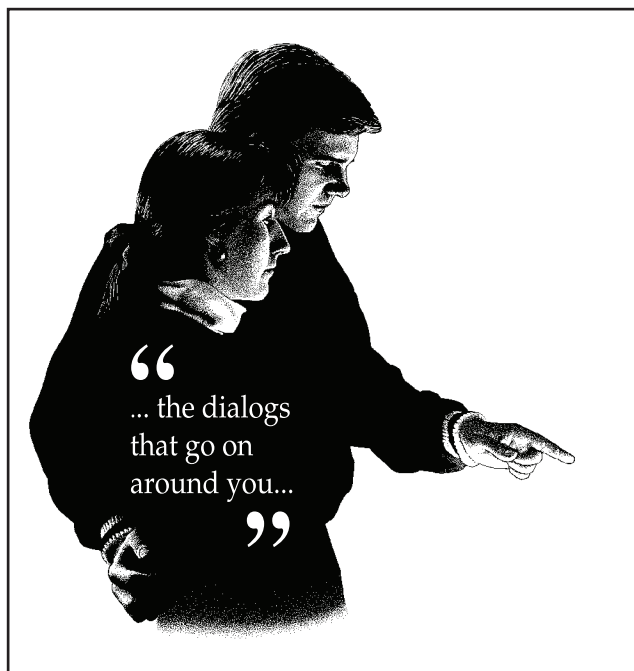
S: FICTIONAL AND DRAMATIC WRITINGS

Purpose

Short stories, novels, and dramas all involve dialogs between characters. You can use the journal process to generate such fictional and dramatic writing.

Suggestions for fictional writing

- In writing fiction you tap your unconscious thoughts as well as your conscious ones. Your DREAM ENTRIES AND CONTINUATIONS, as well as your IMAGERY ENTRIES, will help reveal your unconscious thoughts. Study them before you begin writing and try to identify themes that occur in your dreams.
- Your dreams and images identify the problems, persons, or places with which you are most preoccupied. Make up dialogs with these subjects as preparation for your fictional writing. Each voice should be distinctive, having a life of its own. Bring each voice in your dialog up from its source within you. Such empathy is what you must have when you create characters.



- Listen also to the dialogs that go on around you. Record conversations with your acquaintances. F. Scott Fitzgerald used to do this in his journal. He would wait until evening or the following morning and record them quickly and spontaneously as he remembered them. He never tried to record the exact words of the conversation, just the flavor of it.
- Dialog brings your characters to life. Practice writing dialogs often. Doing so will improve your ability to create conversation between your characters. Work at making these conversations sound simple and natural. This process may be hard at first, but few people speak with formality.

- Writers often base their short stories on characters they have known or incidents they have experienced. Ernest Hemingway's main characters were very much like him in age and philosophical outlook. However, J.R.R. Tolkien wrote his stories "from the characters out." In writing *The Hobbit* he thought first of the name Bilbo Baggins, then of what he would look like, then of how he would talk. Finally, he wrote the story around Bilbo. Every writer creates characters differently. Whatever way works best for you is fine. Fitzgerald and Jack London used settings similar to those in which they grew up. The setting (the story's time and place) determines much of the story's mood.

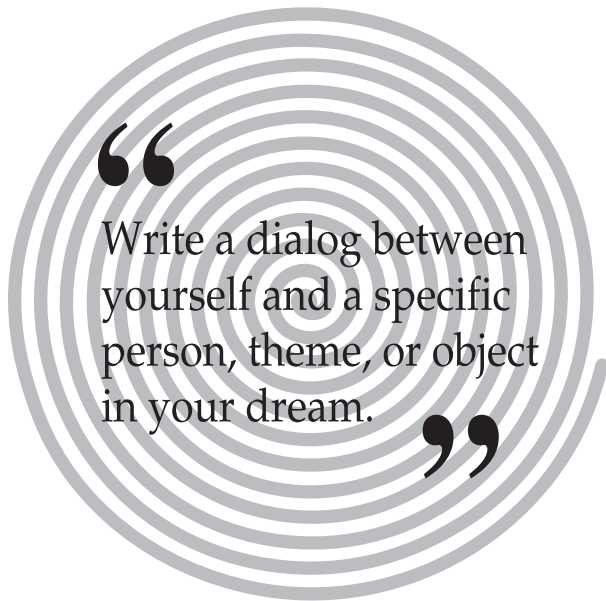
Writing your short story

- You may wish to write a short story based on a dialog in your journal. A short story usually deals with one or two main characters and involves them in one central theme (a comment on life). Use one of your journal dialogs as a starting point. For example, if you have recently written a dialog with a teacher, friend, or situation, try rewriting it as you *wish* it would have happened. Do several rewrites of your dialog, exploring a different angle each time.
- Rewriting is an integral part of the writing process. Keep rewriting until you are satisfied. This is the same process you will go through in the actual writing of your short story. In Jack London's short story "To Build a Fire," a man is trapped in the snow. "To Build a Fire" was rewritten twice. In London's first version the man survived; in the second he died.
- You may not be sure about your story's ending until you have written and rewritten several dialogs with your characters and situation. Try to become comfortable with the story and its characters. Caution yourself to *slow down*. Do not try to finish it too quickly. Let it take over and finish itself.
- You can also use incidents from your own life as seeds for a short story. One student wrote a dialog about joining the basketball team to please his father although he really wanted to join a music group. This dialog generated a short story in which he expressed his true feelings toward playing basketball. The story began with the boy, Bill, entering the gym for basketball practice as the target for insults from his teammates and his coach. After struggling through practice, Bill meets his father and during the long drive home listens to his father tell what a great player he was when he was in high school and how much it means to him for Bill to carry on the family tradition. At school the next day, Bill is confronted by Jenny; he suspects she wants to be his girlfriend just because he's on the team. That evening Bill's team is playing its arch rival for the league championship. The lead seesaws back and

forth in the final quarter as three of Bill's first string teammates foul out of the game. The coach is finally forced to let Bill play. He scores two quick baskets to bring his team to within one point. With six seconds left to play, he intercepts a pass, dribbles down court, and, just as he reaches the basket, stops, turns, and smiles as he throws the ball into the stands.

Introductory Assignments S-1 to S-4:

S-1: Study your DREAM ENTRIES AND CONTINUATIONS. Choose a recurring dream or theme. Write a dialog between yourself and a specific person, theme, or object in your dreams. This dialog may help you understand the reasons behind some of the dreams you have.



S-2: Rewrite this dialog from a different angle so that it ends differently than before. For example, if you have a dialog with your father in which he refuses to let you take a trip, rewrite the dialog so that he gives you permission. This helps to see characters from different angles, which is very important in fiction.

S-3: From your fictionalized dialog write a short story based on your dream incident.

S-4: Optional: Write a short story based on one or more of your AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES.

Writing your novel

- Ideas for a novel can be generated from the same dialoging process. Every novelist writes differently. Some start with a short story and build outward. Others start merely with an idea and build characters around the idea. In a novel you have a longer time to develop your characters. You can also put in more minor characters without detracting from your main idea. You have a longer time, as well, to develop motivations for your characters.

- In writing a novel you must be patient and let it build on itself. It is not a process that is begun and ended quickly. You must live with the characters in your novel for a long, long time. It took Tolstoy over a decade to write *War and Peace*. It took Alex Haley twelve years to write *Roots*. Do not rush your characters into situations or make them do things they don't feel. If you do, your writing will sound false.
- Use your *entire* journal to help you prepare for the novel-writing process. Some of the entries that might be most helpful are your MARKINGS; AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES; CONVERSATIONS WITH PERSONS; and CONVERSATIONS WITH EVENTS, SOCIETY, and WORK.
- Your MARKINGS will help you determine which incidents in your life have been most important. A novelist must understand which events have shaped her/his life the most. These events are an integral part of your writing because they have shaped the way you look at life. Before attempting to write a novel, discover through your MARKINGS the sources of your greatest joys and tensions. You will write better when you understand yourself. One of your MARKINGS may even prove to be a valuable part of your novel.
- Your AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES can help you discover yourself in the same way. You might want to write an autobiographical novel based on your own life. Of course, you do not have to be the main character, but you could create a character similar to yourself. Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Thomas Wolfe wrote novels of this type.
- You might also want to write a novel about a person you would like to be. For example, if you are excitable and impulsive and you dream of being cool and inscrutable, invent a novel around that type of person. You can live the life you have always longed for through your fictional characters.
- Like a short story, every novel has a principal character(s) and a central theme. You can digress more often in a novel, but you should never include material that does not move your story along. If you get stuck, dialog with the section of your novel you just finished. Find out where it wants to go next.
- Your CONVERSATIONS WITH PERSONS and CONVERSATIONS WITH EVENTS, SOCIETY, and WORK are helpful because they will take you outside yourself. It is important to write about other people and other situations besides your own.
- Write from your point of view, but avoid writing directly about yourself. In *The Great Gatsby* Fitzgerald wrote in the first person, but he personified himself in another character. In your CONVERSATIONS WITH PERSONS, EVENTS, SOCIETY, and WORK, write dialogs between other people, other people and their work, or other people and society. Practice getting outside yourself. It is difficult at first, but it will make your fiction more interesting. Ultimately, your perceptions of others will tell you more about yourself

than if you wrote about yourself directly. Of course, as with the short story, you will be recording these conversations with other people in your journal.

- You may wish to keep a separate journal for your main character and write in it every day as if you were that character. You may even want to keep separate journals for some of your minor characters. Try dialoging between yourself and one of the minor characters or between characters themselves to find out what a minor character thinks of the main character. You may want to use this device in the novel itself as a means of giving information about the characters involved without describing them directly.

Suggested Assignments S-5 to S-9:

S-5: After you have completed a short story, start a dialog with one of the characters to determine if anything was left out. If so, you may want to expand the story into a novel.

S-6: Write a novel based on your AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES, disguising yourself as the main character.



Computers of the Future—
Conscience on the Shoulder

S-7: Find an article in the newspaper that interests you and write a brief summary of it in your journal. You may want to write a novel about it later if it continues to interest you. Write a dialog with the author of the article or with the subject.

S-8: Write a dialog between two characters in one of your short stories to see if they have life outside the story which could be expanded in the form of a novel.

S-9:

- a. Look back through your entire journal and pinpoint a person, place, or situation which stands out in your mind. Be sure it is something that really matters to you and can be used as a springboard for a novel.
- b. Write a dialog between yourself and the subject you have chosen. *Why is the subject important to you? How has it influenced your life? What else in your life is involved with the subject?*
- c. Write a dialog between the subject and society. Try to leave yourself entirely out of it. Find out what effect your subject has on society, and what society thinks of your subject.
- d. Write a dialog between yourself and someone or something related to your subject in which you find out more about your subject.

Writing your play

- Dramatic writing is different from the short story and the novel in that it depends entirely on dialog and the author's stage directions. Your journal writings can be extremely helpful in generating drama.
- Reread the entries in the Conversations section of your journal. Extract some lines which you think could be used by a main character in your play. Find a line which describes an initial situation and also introduces a conflict. A play must have a conflict.
- The sooner the conflict is introduced, the more inviting the play will be. (Introduce your conflict as an argument between characters, or perhaps as an unfortunate combination of incidents that have occurred.)
- Try to capture the audience's attention immediately. Identify the conflict in your own mind, and show the audience how it is important to your major theme. If readers are to become involved in your play, they must care about your characters.
- Know and describe your characters in depth. Write brief biographies of each character in your journal. You may even want to keep separate journal sections for each character, as with the novel. Have the characters write dialogs with each other and with you. Invent dreams and images for them.
- Dramas have both round and flat characters. The *round character* is dynamic and flexible. He/she is the most interesting type of character, usually the protagonist. Your main characters should probably always be round characters. Round characters change and grow as the play progresses.
- *Flat characters* are stereotypes such as the dumb blond, the nagging wife, the mindless jock, the critical mother-in-law, the talkative cab driver, or the spoiled child. These characters have one dominant trait

that is constantly re-emphasized throughout each bit of their dialog. Their sole purpose in the drama is to demonstrate one characteristic; they seldom change or grow at all during the play.

- Your characters will either come alive or fall flat, depending on what they say. Effective dialog is necessary to make your characters seem real. Even your main character will appear flat if he/she speaks too simplistically. Therefore, develop your characters by having other characters comment on them or by having your character talk to himself or directly to the audience. In Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, the stage manager tells the audience about the characters when they are out of earshot. Therefore, we know information about the characters that they themselves never tell us.
- Characterization can also be enhanced by description of voice, attitude, actions, and physical appearance. The Stage Manager in *Our Town* tells us all of this about the characters in the play.
- You may also supplement your description of a character by having him or her make several pat or stereotypical statements. In Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, the main character Willie Loman continually says colorless things like "Isn't that remarkable?" to indicate just how average he is. Your character's dialog, more than anything else, reveals his or her personality.

Suggested Assignment S-10:

1. Reread your journal to discover possible characters for a drama.

2. Create a major character for your play. Jot down some notes about him or her. This character can be yourself, an acquaintance, a friend, or a fictional character you have written about in your DREAM AND IMAGERY ENTRIES.
3. Write a brief biography of your main character. Dialog with him/her. Develop the character's personality, the one you wish the character to express. Study the character until you feel confident you know what he or she would say in a given situation.
4. Write a soliloquy in which your main character "thinks out loud."
5. Write MARKINGS for your main character and each of the minor characters. Have a sense of your characters' complete lives.
6. Think of other characters necessary to the plot development of your story. Dialog with these characters before you have them dialog with each other.
7. Keep a mini-journal for each character.
8. Now write your play.

Final suggestion

Many books exist to give you help in understanding the glossary of terms used by writers and English teachers. Literary terms such as *characterization*, *conflict*, *setting*, *motif*, *theme*, *style*, *springboard situation*, *foreshadowing*, *climax*, *compression*, *exposition*, *protagonist*, *antagonist*, and many others are defined and illustrated in many books. Your English department or school library likely has several such books.



“ ... yourself, an acquaintance, a friend, or a fictional character you have written about in your DREAM AND IMAGERY ENTRIES ... ”

T: NON-FICTIONAL WRITINGS

Purpose

The journal process can be used to generate non-fictional writings such as biographies, personal essays, and school class essays, including research papers. Because such writing is based on fact, you may find non-fiction easier to write than fiction.

Explanation of types

- One type of non-fiction is the **personal essay**. This piece of non-fiction should present a brief description of your reaction to your environment. You might want to show yourself in conflict with yourself, yourself functioning within a group, or yourself interacting with either nature or mechanical objects. For example, you might try dialoging with your car before you write a personal essay in which you explain why and how you customized your car.
- A popular form of non-fiction is **biography**—a life story or part of a life story of a real person. By writing journal entries from a chosen person's point of view, you enter the person's point of view as you never have before. You can also dialog with the person and get in touch with his/her way of looking at life. Procedures for doing this are explained in the instructions for entries in Q: OTHER WISDOM LOG. You should, of course, research and present your subject in a factual and academically acceptable manner.
- Another type of non-fiction is a **"how-to" article**. *Examples:* "How to Lose Ten Pounds in a Week," "How to Crochet a Sweater," "How to Keep a Journal," and "How to Build Your Own Barbecue Pit." A piece offering advice is often interesting because many people are constantly trying to add to their fund of knowledge to improve themselves. If you know how to do something especially well and you are enthusiastic about it, try a "how to" article. Start your piece by writing a dialog in your journal with a person who doesn't know how to do something you plan to teach. Such dialoging will help you organize your thoughts and your method of presenting the material in written form. Another approach can come from explaining how you learned to do something. Your journal can also help you with this approach. Your "how to" theme will carry the reader toward his/her goal of achieving a finished product, a new expertise, a different state of mind, or a better way of life.
- The most common type of non-fiction you will likely be assigned to write at school is the **expository essay** (including the research essay). If you decided to write on the hazards of smoking, you could use one or more of the following sections of your journal to help you get started thinking about your essay topic.

C: PERIOD ENTRIES. Review this recent period. Find out whether smoking has been on the increase. Incorporate any research statistics that you can find.

D: MARKINGS. Write a set of MARKINGS called "Things I Thought I Couldn't Live Without" (addictions).

E: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES. Memories of some struggle you had while struggling to overcome a bad habit.

F: CROSSROADS. Whether to start smoking or not; whether to stop smoking or not; whether to try some new high or not, etc.

G: CONVERSATIONS WITH PERSONS. Dialog with someone you know (like a parent) who smokes. Talk about your worries.



H: CONVERSATIONS WITH BODY. Dialog with your body about air pollution or your own needs. Ask your body what it thinks about smoking.

I: CONVERSATIONS WITH EVENTS. Dialog with the event of being given this assignment and how you feel about writing an essay.

J: CONVERSATIONS WITH SOCIETY. Dialog with any of the following people: a famous person who died of lung cancer; a famous chest surgeon; the president of the American Cancer Society; a cigarette manufacturer; an advertising executive who prepares ads for magazines and billboards.

K: CONVERSATIONS WITH WORK. Dialog with the work of writing this essay and ask the essay where it would like to go; dialog with the work of overcoming a bad habit.

N: CONVERSATIONS WITH WISDOM FIGURES. Dialog with your chosen wisdom figure about this problem.

O: PERSPECTIVES. Dialog with your future about the problems of growing up and discuss how you will participate in efforts to protect people from hazards.

Final comment: Although it is beyond the scope of A WRITER'S JOURNAL to instruct you how to construct formal essays and research papers, an excellent text that does is Interact's STEPS, an expository writing program which will lead you, step by step, through planning and writing such compositions.

Finding your subject

- The non-fiction you write should spring from your interests and emotional responses to life. A non-fiction subject should be something you really care about. The process of writing and dialoging in your journal can help you discover which subjects are of most interest to you. To find such subjects, simply reread your MARKINGS section.
- Keep in mind that non-fiction always has a theme, just as fiction does. What main thought underlies your piece, even though you do not state it directly? If this is difficult at first, try dialoging with your subject. Ask it what its main theme is. Ask it what it hopes most that you will point out about it.
- Your non-fiction work should inform your reader, but it should not lecture. Make your tone of voice informative but never condescending. For example, if you were showing someone how to do something in person or relaying some other information, you would not talk down to the person. The same is true when you write. Respect your reader's intelligence.
- Be careful not to over inform the reader with tedious details or too much repetition. Non-fiction must have a specific focus and continually move forward to hold the reader's interest. After dialoging with your subject to determine your main point, make sure everything you put in the piece is relevant to that point.
- There should be a unity of effect in your piece. Strive for one particular message which is enhanced by all elements of your piece. Your unifying message should be present throughout, pulling together each individual aspect of the piece.
- In conclusion, let me stress once more: *the most important factor in non-fiction writing, as in all writing, is that you really care about your subject.*

Suggested Assignments T-1 to T-6:

Choose one or more of the following:

T-1: Think of something that you do well. Write a dialog in your journal between yourself and someone who doesn't know how to do it. Write a "how to" article.

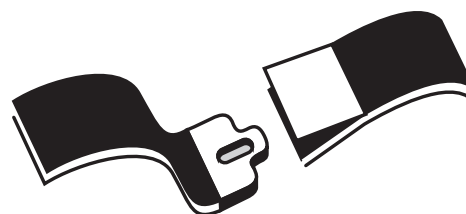
T-2: Write a review of a TV show you like or dislike. As a preliminary step, write a dialog between yourself and the show's producer or scriptwriter.

T-3: Review a book. First, write a dialog between yourself and the author or between yourself and the main character. It might also help to write MARKINGS for the

main character.

T-4: Write an essay based on some article in today's newspaper. Prior to writing the essay, write a dialog between yourself and the subject of the article. The subject can be a place or an event, as well as a person.

T-5: While writing a research paper, dialog first with the topic. Find out what the topic wants you to tell about it.



“**ME:** Seatbelt, since I'm doing a paper on you, what is it you want me to tell about you?”

Then write a dialog between yourself and the author of one of the sources you are using for your research paper. Find out if you agree or disagree with his/her opinion.

T-6: In order to do some biographical writing, think of a person who has had a profound influence on your life. Write the MARKINGS of this person whom you admire. How do these MARKINGS differ from yours? Write a dialog between yourself at a certain age and the person at the same age.

Depth Assignment T-7: PERSONAL PROFILE

Activity 1: Guided Recollection (5 minutes)

1. Think about some person you know fairly well who has recently gone through an important experience which has changed the way he or she feels about life or about the world. Probably you are too close to your family members to write about them, but you should be close enough to the person to have observed actions and heard comments during the incident that touched that person's life. Maybe that person came to you for help. Maybe you talked over the problems he or she was dealing with. Some significant changes probably occurred in that person as the crisis developed and was resolved. The person's whole appearance and lifestyle may have altered. His/her plans for the future may now be entirely different.
2. By now you should have thought about several people you know about whom you could write.

Choose one of these. Write as rapidly as you can, in fragments, images, phrases of description, all the feelings, impressions, pictures that this person brings to mind. Do not censor any ideas that come to you. Do not strive to organize the material or to group things. Try to cover a sheet, if possible, with every image or feeling that flashes into your mind when you think about your friend.

Activity 2: Feedback, Pointing, and Summarizing (8-12 minutes)

1. Turn to someone near you and exchange Activity 1 papers. Read quickly through what your neighbor has written and do the following things:
 - a. Draw a **straight line** under each word or phrase that seems vivid and exciting.
 - b. Draw a **wavy line** under each word or phrase that seems to you to be dull, vague, muddy.
 - c. Write **one sentence** which sums up what the person appears to be like.
 - d. Put down **one word** which most vividly describes the person. (Use a word which the writer did not use.)

Activity 3: Comparison (Perception of likenesses and differences)

(3 minutes)

1. Take another sheet of paper. Write as quickly as you can all the ways you can think of that this person is *like you*.

(3 minutes)

2. Take another sheet of paper and write as quickly as you can all the ways this person is *unlike you*.

Activity 4: Comparison with other figures

(2 minutes)

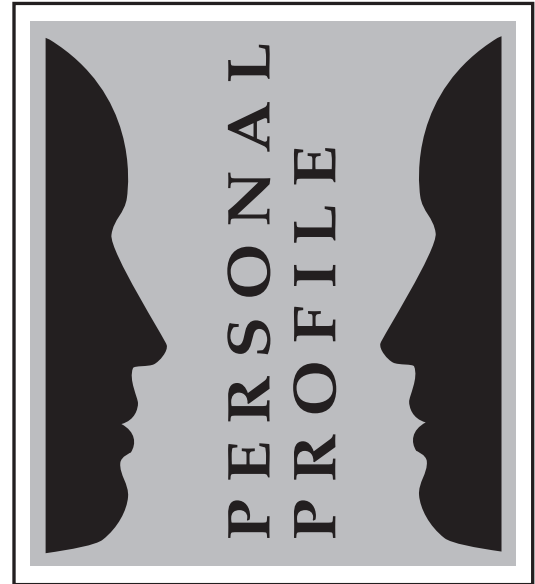
On the same sheet or on another one, write down any characters in books or in films or on TV who remind you of this person in some way. Do not explain. Just list quickly and put down everything you think of even if it seems strange at first. If no such characters occur to you, continue work on the lists of likenesses and differences.

Activity 5: Change (3 minutes)

Now take another sheet of paper and write down all the changes in personality or appearance which you noticed during the crisis situation.

Activity 6: Narration of events (5 minutes)

Now take another sheet of paper and free-write rapidly an account of all the events that occurred during the crisis which your friend faced. Tell each little thing that happened. These happenings may be in the order of occurrence, but do not be concerned if you add something which occurs to you later and which puts things out of sequence. Just write down all the events, actions, and happenings.



Activity 7: Rough Draft #1 (Completed outside class)

1. Now you are ready to begin writing your PERSONAL PROFILE. All of the activities have led up to this first draft. Begin your first organized presentation. Use all the materials you have generated in your listings and free-writings. Read them over, adding anything that occurs to you as you do so.
2. Decide what viewpoint you will use.
3. Decide what the phase in your friend's life seems to mean, but do not feel that you must pin this down exactly right now. As you begin to write your paper on this phase of your friend's life, your thesis will emerge ever more clearly and strongly. In subsequent drafts you can clarify and refine your central point.

Special note: This idea was adopted by Dr. Ruth Brown, San Diego State University, from a workshop presented by Dr. Charles Cooper.

Depth Assignment T-8: AN EXERCISE IN ARGUMENT AND PERSUASION

Before you do this activity, spend several hours reading examples of argument and persuasion, including editorials, fund-raising letters, and magazine articles. Zero in on one distinct issue that interests you and ask pointed questions: *Should county citizens allow an oil refinery to come in? Should oil drilling be started just off shore? Should the Sun Desert Project be re-activated (not just nuclear power in general, but this project)? What kind of diet is right for people on a small planet like Earth? Are the bike racks that have been added to buses worth the expense and trouble? Where could bike trails be put in the county? Should skateboards be allowed on campus?*

Decide upon one stand you wish to take. For example, if you are arguing about environmental controls, argue for one wilderness area that should or should not be opened up to logging, one subdivision that should or should not be allowed, one freeway (through your favorite canyon). *Remember:* To argue well, you'll need facts, not just passion.



Activity 1 (5 minutes)

Visualize the sort of person who would oppose your position on your special issue. For example, what kind of developer would want to fill your favorite canyon with condos? Free-write a detailed description of your opponent—vivid but realistic (no horns, fangs, or tails).

Activity 2 (8-12 minutes)

Write a dialog with your opponent, writing quickly, without reflection, putting down what you say and what he/she says as if it were in a play.

Me: *Do you realize the danger of off shore drilling to the wildlife of the area?*

Opponent: *The energy required by our city must come from somewhere. Don't worry about order or logic right now. Just hammer it out toe to toe with your opponent.*

Activity 3 (8-12 minutes)

1. Turn to a class neighbor, exchange papers, and do the following:
 - a. Underline each strong point the writer has made with a solid line.
 - b. Underline each weak or doubtful point with a wavy line.
 - c. Number the arguments in the order you think the writer should use in presenting them. Put the same number on repetitions of the same (or closely related) points. Be sure to put one of the strong points last.

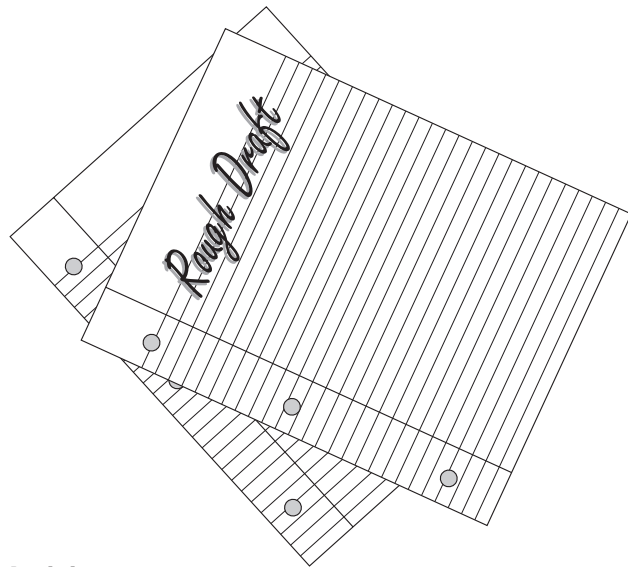
- d. Write one sentence which summarizes the main thrust of the argument.
 - e. Jot down other arguments which the writer might use.
2. On another sheet of paper quickly list all the advantages which your opponent claims the people would gain if his position were to prevail.
 3. List quickly all the advantages you believe the people would gain if your position were to prevail.

Activity 4 (3 minutes)

On another sheet of paper write down matters of principle on which you and your opponent agree: the welfare of the people, freedom, justice, etc., even though you do not agree on how to achieve these.

Activity 5 (5 minutes)

Turn to a neighbor (preferably the same one you shared with before) and exchange papers. Underline the principle on which you think the writer should begin his/her argument. Example: "Citizens of our county agree that healthful recreation for its youth is highly desirable, even necessary, and one means of supplying that outdoor recreation is an Off-Road Vehicle Park."



Activity 6

Write your first draft, using all the materials which you have gathered.

Activity 7

Go through your first draft and find the places that need additional facts to make them convincing. Put an asterisk by each one of these points. Check through your printed (or interview) sources to see if you have the necessary facts. If not, follow your earlier leads and dig out the facts you need to be convincing. *Example:* If you are arguing for an Off-Road Vehicle Park, find out the number of young people who were injured in street accidents on their motor bikes.

Special note: *This idea for T-8 originated with Dr. Ruth Brown, San Diego State University.*

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