



School of Liberal Arts

University Writing Center

"Because writers need readers"

Cavanaugh Hall 427 University Library 2125

(317)274-2049

(317)278-8171

www.iupui.edu/~uwc

A Prewriting Exercise for the W131 Portfolio Writer's Essay

The portfolio writer's essay (your instructor might call it a retrospective, a portfolio writer's statement or even a "parapologia") is a piece of writing that analyzes your ability to meet W131 course goals --these goals are the criteria against which you and your instructor will measure your progress in the course

This handout offers you a menu of questions related to each course goal. It is a prewriting exercise designed to help you inventory your progress toward course goals. Using pen and paper or in an open computer file, freewrite in response to these prompts. When done, look over the ideas you've generated; draft a tentative thesis statement, and begin organizing a rough draft of your PWE.

Remember that your instructor probably will have very specific instructions concerning the PWE for your class. Be sure to follow those instructions as you draft your PWE.

CONSTRUCT ANALYTIC TOPICS FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

- * What was your understanding of analysis when you began this semester?
- * How has your understanding progressed?
- * What has helped you identify appropriate issues about which to write?
- * How have you gone about limiting a topic while still seeing it from many angles?
- * What prewriting techniques have you used? Which ones have worked best?
- * How have reader responses aided you in interpreting and shaping your work?
- * How have doing reader responses helped in identifying key composition issues?
- * What other lessons, class or group activities, homework, etc. have assisted you?
- * How have the textbooks aided your understanding of analysis?
- * What examples from your writing can you use to show your progress?

DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE THESIS STATEMENT

- * What have you found difficult about generating a thesis statement?
- * Which exercises, class activities, writing center conferences, etc. have helped you understand the thesis statement better?
- * How have you come to understand and use an evolving thesis statement?
- * What examples from your writing can you use to show progress?

SUPPORT THE THESIS, USING EVIDENCE APPROPRIATELY

- * What has been difficult about supporting the thesis statement with evidence?
- * How have source materials (the non-fiction book your class is using, the class itself, any materials your instructor has brought to class) become more valuable to you as the semester has progressed?
- * In what ways has *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* assisted you in using proper citation methods and techniques?
- * Why is the use of evidence so important in an essay? What outside sources have been valuable to you?
- * What examples from your writing can you use to show your progress?



INTEGRATE AND SYNTHESIZE VARIOUS VIEWPOINTS FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES, CITING THEM CORRECTLY

- * How has your understanding of summarizing grown?
- * What has been difficult about gathering and using multiple sources?
- * How has your understanding of synthesis grown?
- * How has your view of your own experiences broadened as you have examined those of others?
- * How have the suggestions and opinions received from your reader responses given you practice in synthesis?
- * What have you learned about the proper way of integrating and citing sources?
- * What examples from your writing can you use to show your progress?

UNDERSTAND THE DEMANDS OF RHETORICAL SITUATIONS

- * How has your understanding of the relationship between the writer (you) and the reader, context and content, progressed?
- * What changes have you made in vocabulary, tone, usage, etc.?
- * How has the consideration of audience changed your approach to a topic?
- * Why are such concerns (purpose, audience, tone, context, content) important?
- * How would you characterize the changes in yourself and your writing?
- * What examples from your writing can you use to show your progress?

UNDERSTAND THE WRITING PROCESS AND USE IT TO IMPROVE YOUR OWN PROCESS

- * How has prewriting assisted you in discovering ideas to write about?
- * Have prewritings lead you to thesis statements?
- * How have multiple drafts allowed you to develop ideas?
- * What strategies and techniques have you learned or developed for gathering information?
- * What have you learned about revision that has been helpful?
- * What do you consider the most significant changes in your writing? In the way(s) you go about writing?
- * Has your ability to find and correct mechanical and punctuation errors improved?
- * What examples from your essays can you use to show your progress?

WORK WITH OTHER WRITERS TO REVISE, BOTH CONCEPTUALLY AND TECHNICALLY

- * How has group work served to improve your writing and/or your approach to writing?
- * How has *receiving* reader responses affected your writing?
- * How has *doing* reader responses affected your ability to see revision needs in an essay?
- * How has your attitude toward others' responses to your writing changed?
- * What examples from your essays can you use to show your progress?

Created by Leslie Miller—updated May 2008

SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS
INDIANA UNIVERSITY
University Writing Center
IUPUI