

Writing Challenge 2.0: Expository Foray

engl 281 / sec. D / autumn quarter 2009-10 / chang

This week's writing challenge is all about exposition all of the time. What is exposition? What does it mean to be expository? Basically, it's the kind of writing that most people do in high school and college writing classes: inform, explain, describe, and define. You remember: what I did over summer vacation, compare and contrast, book reports about *Little Women* and *James and the Giant Peach*, and fact-filled summaries cribbed right out of an encyclopedia. The best expository writing, though, is simple, focused, lucid, elegant, and illuminating. Drawing on your readings this week – writing by and about John McPhee – select a single idea, a single topic, a single subject you are very familiar with and surprise us with what it is, what you know, and what you want the reader to know. In other words, try to “endow fact with both the coherence and the odd resonance that belong to a work of art” (as qtd. in Vipond & Hunt 200), to turn “a sea of complex detail, facts, and characters into a smoothly flowing narrative” (Berkes). The subject matter should be something near and dear to you: a favorite place, the best way to fry an egg, a perfect roundhouse kick, the explanation of a local slang word, a portrait of an influential mentor. Pick something specific and narrow. This is you as the expert, but a little light research might be helpful but is not necessary.

Guidelines and Due Dates

Format: 3-4 pages, typed, no title page, double-spaced, proper heading

Due: Tuesday, October 13, at the start of class

Writing Challenge 2.0: Expository Foray

engl 281 / sec. D / autumn quarter 2009-10 / chang

This week's writing challenge is all about exposition all of the time. What is exposition? What does it mean to be expository? Basically, it's the kind of writing that most people do in high school and college writing classes: inform, explain, describe, and define. You remember: what I did over summer vacation, compare and contrast, book reports about *Little Women* and *James and the Giant Peach*, and fact-filled summaries cribbed right out of an encyclopedia. The best expository writing, though, is simple, focused, lucid, elegant, and illuminating. Drawing on your readings this week – writing by and about John McPhee – select a single idea, a single topic, a single subject you are very familiar with and surprise us with what it is, what you know, and what you want the reader to know. In other words, try to “endow fact with both the coherence and the odd resonance that belong to a work of art” (as qtd. in Vipond & Hunt 200), to turn “a sea of complex detail, facts, and characters into a smoothly flowing narrative” (Berkes). The subject matter should be something near and dear to you: a favorite place, the best way to fry an egg, a perfect roundhouse kick, the explanation of a local slang word, a portrait of an influential mentor. Pick something specific and narrow. This is you as the expert, but a little light research might be helpful but is not necessary.

Guidelines and Due Dates

Format: 3-4 pages, typed, no title page, double-spaced, proper heading

Due: Tuesday, October 13, at the start of class