

Noun Exploration Assignment Description

Draft for workshop, Tuesday, October 20th

Essay due October 22nd

Purpose

As writers, we are constant observers of the world and investigators of Truth. As Anne Lamott says in *Bird by Bird*, “the writer is a person who is standing apart, like the cheese in ‘The Farmer and the Dell’ standing there alone but deciding to take a few notes. You’re outside, but you can see things up close through your binoculars. Your job is to present clearly your viewpoint, your line of vision” (97). This essay will give you the opportunity to research a person, place, or thing that you are naturally curious about through primary and secondary research and present the information through your lens in a creative and literary way.

Method

For this essay you will explore and investigate a person, place, or thing—delve into its history, get to know it, contemplate your connection to it, and communicate its significance to your reader. Person can be a specific person (past or present) or a general concept (like bus driver or Pope or friend), place can be geographical like Durham, New Hampshire or locale-based like a restaurant or coffee shop, a park or cathedral or hospital or home, and a thing... well this could be ANYthing—a pair of shoes, a book, a statue, a meal, a scarf, a teacup, a blade of grass, a sign, a guitar, a television set, a dog, a word, an emotion, an exam... you get the picture (animals and ideas fall in this category). You will be reading and writing on objects, people, and places throughout the unit and you will be freewriting on each category. We’ll have some brainstorming time to help you decide on the noun you will be writing on and a bit about where you will go with your research and essay.

Over the next three weeks we will be reading examples of profiles, researched pieces, and literary journalism. Your experience with narrative and sensory details and description will still be needed for this piece, but instead of just observing, you will dig deeper to discover contextual, historical, or biographical information. This is a creative work so your voice, style, and connection should come through the piece, and any reporting is subjective. **Some research is required.** Allow yourself enough time to schedule trips or interviews and be open to letting your research lead you.

Primary and experiential research will be firsthand observation or experience or an interview (not just if you are profiling a person, interviews could be useful in other situations). Secondary research will involve other texts and information about your noun. Remember, in-text citations are not needed in creative nonfiction, but you still want to credit your sources. Use the full name and title of your source in-text or footnotes to include bibliographical information.

Audience

Your instructor and your classmates. Drafts of this essay will be due for conference and workshop. Someone you want to share your interest of this person, place, or thing with.

Length & Format

Minimum of 5 pages. Double-spaced, 12 pt. font, etc. (see syllabus). This is your chance to discover a different side of research. Be creative in both subject and style! This assignment is worth **20%** of your final grade.