

Essay I (4-5 pages)**Timeline:**

- 1st Draft due in class Tuesday 9/28
- Revision due in class Tuesday 10/5
- Final revision due Tuesday 10/12 or by agreement with me.

NOTE: This assignment contains a lot of information. Please read it through carefully at least twice, so you can be sure that you understand it. Don't hesitate to ask questions in class (or catch me before class) if you aren't sure what this assignment is asking of you.

What kind of essay is this? Essay I will be inspired by our readings and class discussion, and grounded primarily in your own experience (which might include the experience of family and friends). It is an *exploratory* essay: it will explore an idea about creative process. As opposed to a thesis-driven essay, an *exploratory* essay feels less airtight; it is question-driven rather than proof-driven. Your goal is to explore an image or idea that “shimmers” (Didion) for you and, in the course of the exploration, to clarify and deepen it. Or you may start with a question that intrigues you and that you want to try to answer. If you are truly exploring, you may not know where you're going to end up. That's OK—try not to censor or prematurely edit out interesting digressions, because they may turn out to be the heart of the matter. If you let yourself be surprised you will probably find it easier to surprise your reader.

How do I proceed? Select a brief passage, a sentence or two, from one of our readings thus far, or a brief quote from *Dancemaker*—a passage that expresses a theme you would like to explore. This quoted passage will become the epigraph for your essay. (An epigraph is a quote that appears below your title and above your text, and announces a theme.) Themes suggested by our readings thus far might be:

- inspiration or motivations for creating;
- conditions for creating;
- failure and creativity
- fear and creativity/fear of creativity;
- the solitary creator
- collaborative creation;
- blocked or stifled creativity;
- creativity and neurosis/creativity and psychic health;
- work and play in the creative process;
- time and the creative process . . .
- OR, you may want to take for your theme the process of making a poem, a song, a dance, a quilt, a garden, a painting . . .

You may also draw on your journal, homework writing and class discussions. You are welcome to bring in additional voices—from poems, plays, songs, movies or books—to enrich your discussion the way Alice Walker does in “In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens.” This is not, however, a research paper. I expect you to draw most of your evidence from your own experience, observation and thinking.

Additional notes:

- An exploratory essay still has to *arrive* somewhere, to repay the reader's effort: like all essays, it is a journey with a destination, not merely a series of jottings. It has a spine, but one that is supple, not rigid. We call that spine the essay's *idea*.
- The final revised essay retains the energy of the writer's genuine exploration and discovery, but is *shaped* so that false starts and loose ends are gone and everything, including apparent digressions, moves toward your conclusion. Title, introduction and conclusion resonate together and reinforce each other.

(more)

FORMAT FOR ESSAYS

Please follow this format for all the essays you produce for this class.

At the top left of the first page of your essay:

Serena Student
Creative Spark
Essay I/Draft 1*
September 23, 2003*

* Change the Essay no., and Draft no. and date for each new draft!

The Title of Your Essay Goes Here

Epigraphs go here

Text begins here.....

Titles are not underlined, in quotes, or in italics; you may use boldface if you like, and you should use initial capitals, as shown.

Number your pages, by hand if necessary.

Margins 1" top and bottom; 1¼" left and right.

Font Use type that is easy to read—no script, italics, all caps, etc.—and a size similar to this. A 5-p. essay means 5-p. double-spaced in type this size.

Double space essays.

Paragraphs Please indent paragraphs. Do not leave extra space between paragraphs unless you intend it to signify a transition.

Citation We will use informal citation for Essays I and III. That means that you work sources' names into your text (not in parentheses) and do not cite pages; this is the style used in book reviews, magazine articles, etc. For example: As Joan Didion remarks,; According to Updike; In an essay on punctuation Louis Menand claims . . . We will use MLA style for Essay II, the research project.

NOTE: All drafts must be word-processed or typed. I will not read handwritten drafts or drafts submitted by e-mail.