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English 090, Winter 2011

*The Well-Read Essay, Draft 1*

Length: 2-3 (or more) typed, double-spaced pages  
Due: The Monday after Spring Break, in class  
Worth: 60 points towards final grade

Questions lie at the heart of the college experience. The more we ask questions, the deeper our thinking becomes, and the more questions we can ask. In a way, to read well means to ask questions.

The best questions address those aspects of life that are the most important to us. What really matters to us? Is it love? Morality? The nature of life itself? This assignment asks you to reread and write about 1-3 stories in light of a big, important, compelling question you have about your world and how you live in it. How do the stories approach the question? Do they give partial answers, either directly or indirectly? Through the stories, can you come up with an answer that satisfies you? Do the stories show you something about the question itself?

On the next page, I've given some examples of big questions. *Please note these are suggestions only: feel free to work with a big question of your own.*

Here is a list of what we've read so far this semester:

*Triplet · How to Work a Locker Room · The Briefcase · Wild Berry Blue · Brothers and Keepers · The Chameleon · Monster · Cathedral · A Small Good Thing · What You Pawn I Will Redeem · Mother Tongue · The Temp*

As with your previous essay, you will need, eventually, to develop a thesis. You will also want to draw upon your active reading skills in order to find deeper meaning.

It will be important to quote from the stories directly—this will help the reader appreciate your ideas. (See the attached sample draft for how to format your quotations.)

### Assessment

How much deeper meaning have I found in my story (or stories)?	20 points
How hard do I grapple with my big question?	20 points
Do I quote from each story at least twice?	10 points
Do all of my paragraphs have a main idea that somehow relates to my big question?	10 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>60 points</b>

Examples of big questions:

- Who owns the land?
- Are people basically good or not? How do we know?
- Why do we have secrets?
- How do our families shape who we are?
- How do we build our identities?
- Are our backgrounds responsible for the choices we make?
- How does the past influence the present?
- What is the relationship between the head and the heart?
- What drives human behavior?
- What do relationships teach us?
- How does language mold us?
- How can you honor your heritage?
- What divides a nation?
- Is anything worth dying for?
- Is it important to face reality?
- What role does work play in our lives?
- Can ideals survive catastrophe?
- Why do people break rules?
- Other than reproduction, why is sex important?
- Why do we sometimes do things we know are bad for us?

*The Well-Read Essay, Draft 2*

Length: 2-3 typed, double-spaced pages  
Due: Monday, April 4  
Worth: 60 points

Congratulations on reaching the second draft of this essay! Your writing should now feel more confident and alive. If you've been working hard on this assignment, I know it does.

As you revise, continue to pay close attention to your thesis statement and to your body paragraphs. Are you helping your reader to understand something important about your big question/theme through your discussion of your text(s)? Are you backing up your assertions with proof? Are you analyzing, not summarizing? These should be your goals!

A second draft of any essay usually needs a new title; make sure you leave enough time to give your essay an intriguing one. Try to imagine your title as a pop-up window that your reader can't help but click on.

Assessment

Do my body paragraphs clearly support my thesis--the main thing I want my reader to know?	20 points
Do I quote at least twice from each story I discuss, and have I included these quotations properly?	10 points
Have I picked the <u>best</u> quotes to support my thesis?	10 points
Does my thesis statement <b>mention</b> the title of the story (or stories) I write about, <b>reach</b> a firm conclusion, and <b>use</b> an action verb?	5 points
Is my grammar correct, and have I kept each sentence from becoming "too much" for the reader?	5 points
Have I made no mistakes with spelling or homonyms?	5 points
Does my essay have an interesting title that relates to my thesis? Have I kept story titles and the words "essay," "well-read," and "draft" out of it?	5 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>60 points</b>