**Personal Essay Description**

***Format.***

* Typed, printed in blue or black ink, double-spaced, one-inch margins.
* Times New Roman, Arial, or similar font.
* Place your name, the date, and my name in the upper left-hand corner of the first page.
* Include a title.
* Number all pages except page 1.
* Fasten all pages with a staple.
* Essay should be 5-6 pages.

***Description.*** Think of a word that you use to describe yourself (e.g. creative, analytical, genuine, stubborn, skeptical, etc.) Then, chose an event from your life that you believe helped to make you that way. Write an essay describing the event. (**Note: the event that you describe should not be longer than one day**). In your essay, be sure to show your audience how the event changed you by showing what you were like BEFORE and AFTER the experience. You should dedicate at least one page to the “before” and at least one page to the “after”. Keep in mind that a successful paper will be mostly “telling the story” (narration, description, etc.). **Only around 10% of the writing should be reflection** (i.e. “I felt blah blah blah…).

There are a few topics that you may not write about for this essay. These topics include: the death of someone close to you; a romantic relationship; a sporting event that you participated in; coming to college. This is not to say that these topics lack merit; my intention is only to encourage you to explore more subtle events and to help ensure that you have enough emotional distance from the topic to effectively analyze it.

For this essay, you will write for an audience that is sympathetic, but not knowledgeable about your experience. You’ll want to employ narrative devices that make the story engaging, ensuring your narrative is interesting to more than just those who know you. Determine the structure most effective for telling your story, provide details, explain concepts/moments that might be foreign to your audience, develop your scenes, and, most of all, clarify why this experience was significant to your development, understanding, or view of the world around you. Your style for this essay will be less formal than for your other two essays; you can use humor if appropriate for the subject matter.

**Analysis Essay Description**

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* Your final essay should be 6-8 pages (only go over by a paragraph/two)
* Include the works cited page with 10+ sources you cited in the essay (on a separate page after the essay’s conclusion, not included in the page count); **you cannot pass the paper if you omit this part.**

***Description:*** In this essay, you’ll closely examine an event in order to articulate to an audience how the event has impacted the world as we know it today.

***Topic Selection:*** You will choose an event that has had a major impact on some area of history, politics, culture, etc. This event can be from any time period. You must run your topics by me before the class period in which we meet in the library.

You will pinpoint the effects of the event you have chosen. Then, you will analyze how the event that you have chosen has impacted the world at large; the world as we know it today (this should make up the bulk of the essay). These two sections of the essay should be connected in some way.

Some possible types of events you might consider: Epidemics; wars; election of a certain official; climate changes; start of a social/economic/artistic movement; death of a public figure; a speech/ book/ movie/ poem/ television show; a scientific discovery. This is not an inclusive list, but these ideas will get you started. Remember: ***Your topic must be approved by me!***

***Process:***

1. Choose an event that interests you and relates to your major/area of interest.
2. Research the event to learn more about it.
3. Analyze the time following the event, discussing what happened as a result.
4. Explain to the audience how this event ***still*** impacts the world.

The first, more straightforward, aspect of the project involves analyzing the nature of the world in the time of the event in question. Look for situations that caused the event in question, and situations that were the result of the event in question. **Describing the events that occurred during the event should take up no more than 1 page of your paper.**

For example, if you were studying The Black Plague, at the start of your essay, you would briefly describe the events that unfolded during the plague. Your research would also reveal that major changes in the English economy and loss of authority for the Catholic Church were two major effects of the plague. You would describe the different aspects of one these events and clearly relate them to the plague, illustrating how they are related. **Describing the effect of your event should take up 2-3 pages of your total paper.**

You will then need to synthesize the different aspects of the event, parsing out areas of life in the modern world that may have been impacted by this event. Think about effects that this event had on population, laws, policies, inter-group relations, beliefs (of certain groups or of a population as a whole), knowledge, practices, controversies, or the physical aspects of the planet. In other words, how are we still affected by this event? **This should be the longest section-at least 3 pages.**

Going back to the example of the Black Plague, you could focus on the effects of the plague on the economy. With so many people dying in the plague, there were fewer workers. This gave workers, particularly those with skills, more say in the workplace. Using this information, you would research modern workplace relations and economics. Synthesizing your information about the plague and your information about the modern workplace, you would analyze how the two are related, explaining to your audience how the plague still impacts the modern world.

Through your work on the annotated bibliography, you will be well-positioned to integrate your research into your essay so that it reflects the complexities of the event you have chosen. Once you have determined the major aspects of the situation, you will need to determine how to best organize the content of your essay (i.e. first analyzing the immediate impact then discussing the impact on the modern world; or, by issue, discussing and analyzing each cause and effect in context of its impact on the event in question ***and*** the modern world.)

**Annotated Bibliography Assignment**

Your annotated bibliography will help you prepare to write Essays #2 and #3. To complete your annotated bibliography, you will research and write about AT LEAST 10 sources that will help you learn more about the event you are analyzing. **Consider pieces by from a variety of disciplines as you compile your sources for this bibliography.**

For a complete list of MLA citations, see the section beginning on p. 127 in *PSM*. In each annotation you should:

(1) Cite the text of your choice in perfect MLA format.

(2) Summarize the text.

(3) Evaluate the credibility of the text.\*\*\*

(4) Explain how you will use the source in your paper.

*You will most likely use Reference Numbers 6 (book), 10 (anthology), 28 (short work from web site) 31 (work from a database), 32 (article in an online journal), and 33 (article in an online magazine or newspaper).*

\*\*\*Keep in mind that “being in the database” or “in the library” is not enough of a reason to consider a source credible. Ensure that you are basing your decision to use the source on more than one standard.

Of the ten sources in your annotated bibliography, three may be web sites. At least one source must either be print-based (i.e., a book or pamphlet) or a documentary/radio show. You might consider a possible interview (three at most) as well. *(Of course, you may have additional sources by the time you finish your paper; it is acceptable if one/more of these is part of the five.)*

If you have trouble determining which citation entry to model, explain your confusion in your annotation so that I can understand why you followed the method you did.

**Wikipedia—or any other general encyclopedia—can NOT be considered one of the 10 sources in your bibliography/one of the five you cite.** You can look at it initially for background/ideas.

**Persuasive Essay Assignment**

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* Your final essay should be 5-8 pages (only go over by a paragraph/two)
* Include the works cited page with 5+ sources you cited in the essay (on a separate page after the essay’s conclusion, not included in the page count); you cannot pass the paper if you omit this part.

***Description:*** In Essay 2 you researched the various issues surrounding the effects of an event. Now that you are well informed on this event, your objective is to choose a specific group involved in that what you researched; you will write an essay critiquing their actions, persuading an audience that they should do/not do something. You might critique the group’s methods, neglect of the opposition’s interests/concerns, lack of support in making their decisions. \*\*If you are having trouble thinking of a way to apply your topic to this prompt, please schedule a conference with me and we will find a way to make it work!

Your essay can take any of the following three forms:\*\*

1. A letter addressed to a specific group.
2. A more traditional essay that persuades a general audience that your position is the right one.
3. A “modest proposal” in which you present a satirical solution to the problem.

\*\*You can choose groups from either the past (at the time of the event) or from the present, as long as the past event is discussed.

***Process:***

Use evidence from your research to persuade the audience that their actions were faulty. Remember that you can only use evidence that the group would have had at the time when they made their decisions. In other words, hindsight is 20/20. Put yourself in their position and critique their behavior based only on the evidence that they would have had *at the time*. However, more general sources from the modern day are acceptable.

You should also present an alternative course of action that you believe the group should have taken and persuade the audience that your plan is the right one. Again, use information that would have been available and relevant to the group in question *at the time* of the event.

Returning to the example of the Black Plague, you might consider the behavior of the rich toward the poor prior to the plague era. During the Great Famine of 1315-1322, the rich in England hoarded what food they had, refusing to share it with the lower classes. This detrimentally impacted the health of the lower classes, making them more susceptible to the plague.

In the essay, you would begin by explaining to your audience why this is a bad way to interact with the lower classes. You could appeal to them on the basis of justice and equality; of empathy for their fellow human beings; of fiscal prosperity (more healthy workers=lower wages). Remember to appeal to the audience in ways that will show them how ***they*** will benefit from changing their behaviors***. In this scenario, it would be unacceptable to use the upcoming plague as a defense for why they should listen to you, because they would not have known that it was coming.*** However, using a source such as a modern medical article discussing the effects of malnutrition would be acceptable. Next, you could present them with a plan on how they could more effectively relate to the poor. Remember to relate a plan that would be feasible to them. You would need to give several reasons why your method will be more effective and beneficial than theirs. Remember to appeal to how this plan will benefit ***them***.

You might consider thinking of this essay as if you were a contemporary of the group that you are critiquing, and that you and the other group are each presenting possible courses of action for solving a problem. You need to convince those making the decisions that your plan will be in their, and everyone else’s, best interest. Remember that the group would not have been likely to appreciate your input; therefore, be careful how you word your arguments. (You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar!) Do not berate your audience; appeal to them in a way that could possibly bring them over to your way of thought.

How you organize the essay is up to you. You could first point out the deficiencies of the other group’s actions/plans and then present your own. Or, you could go through point by point, pointing out reasons why the opposition’s plan is faulty, using the same points to defend your own plan. In either scenario, you must use evidence from your research to both condemn your opposition and defend yourself.

Remember that establishing your credibility is essential when trying to persuade. Much of the research that you did in Essay 2 should carry over to this project. You will probably find, though, that as you consider your position, audience, and argument, you will need to return to the library to consult more resources. A return trip to the library is encouraged, if not expected. Consulting more sources and integrating these sources into your essay will only invigorate your argument and help you earn credibility with your audience. You’ll also want to use appeals, avoid fallacies, and utilize the methods that best suit your purpose. While you probably do not want to cite all of the sources you have collected for your paper, you will not want to cite fewer than **five**.