

Creative Writing: The Writer's Journal (I)

The journal is central to the writer's exploration of his or her inner-self. The exercises will engage you in a sort of self-dialogue, discovering your subconscious through free association. It is extremely important that you do not edit as you write in your journal. William Stafford states about his own writing, "I must be willing to fail." Learn to accept your thoughts and ideas as they come to you; do not judge or attempt to edit them. They are what they are. The editing process comes much later as you choose from your ideas and associations to create a poem. For right now, you need to lay a broad, expansive groundwork for your poetry by uncovering your thoughts and feelings and unlocking your subconscious.

You will need to keep a separate composition book to use exclusively as a journal. Your job is to use the suggested entries and fill at least one-two pages for each one. You have to push through the place where you've skimmed off the top of your thoughts and hit the metaphoric wall between your cognitive thoughts and your subconscious. It will take practice, and it's worth the time and work to get there! Some of your most surprising and best images and connections will come from this place. To unearth these treasures, though, you must dig with a shovel, not a teaspoon.

Journal Assignments

Remember to **fill 1-2 pages** for **each entry**; these exercises will provide you with the raw materials for your poems!

Self-Portrait Poem Entries

Due date: _____

1. Describe your bedroom and state how it uniquely reflects your personality.
2. Draw a picture of yourself. Scrawl lots of comments on it that reveal how you feel about yourself.
3. What are the differences between the ways people view you and the way you really are? What assumptions do you think others make about you without knowing you well? What do those who know you well think about you? What do they know that others don't? Do you speak and/or act differently around different groups of people? How? Why?
4. What bothers/annoys/agitates you about others? About yourself?
5. Draw and color a picture of your private face and then draw and color a mask of the face you wear outwardly. Are they the same? How are they different? When are they different? Why? Write a page about them.

Object Poem Entries

(see separate Object poem packet for specific entry assignments)

An object poem describes an inanimate object in detail, focusing on singular characteristics of an animal, natural phenomenon or manufactured good. A vivid description of the object's physical form, functions and potential is used as a literary device to personify the object. Employing straightforward and highly descriptive language, an object poem leads the reader to fresh perception of the subject. Ultimately, the reader senses the significance of the object as a metaphor for human interaction, emotional situations or spiritual truths.

Creative Writing: Journal Assignments (2)

Remember to **fill 1-2 pages** for **each entry**; these exercises will provide you with the raw materials for your poems!

Persona Poem Journal Entries

Due date: _____

Write all journal entries in the first person. Imagine you are this persona—do not write *about* him, her, or it; write as if you were him, her, or it. As you draw from your responses to prepare for your persona poems, expand your journal by placing your persona in a specific context and exploring. Let the story of each poem revolve around a **specific** incident, event, place, time, etc. Avoid broad, general contexts. And no riddles, please.

1. What would it be like if you were blind? How would your senses perceive things differently? How would you feel about your blindness? How would you navigate the world on your own?
2. Write from the perspective of your best friend.
3. Write from the perspective of your worst enemy.
4. Imagine being 95% deaf. How would you perceive speech? Music? How would you interact with other people? What challenges would you face? How would you deal with them? Initially? Eventually?
5. What would it be like to be your own mother or father?
6. Imagine you are a recycling bin or a trash can (pick one). Write.
7. Describe life as a retired _____ (insert occupation of choice).
8. Describe how you would view life if you were a man, woman, or child with an incurable disease.
9. Pick your favorite superhero and step into his or her tights for a day/night. Write.
10. Imagine you are homeless. Write.
11. Pick a famous (or infamous) celebrity and write from his or her perspective.
12. Become an American high school student from a different race. What is home like? School? Work? Friends? How do people treat you? What stereotypes about your new race? How do you act? How do you react?

Place and Person Poem Journal Entries

Due date: _____

1. Who has influenced your life the most? How? What is he or she like? Create at least three metaphors that capture some aspect of his or her personality.
2. Physically describe your favorite place or city.
3. Write the details of a distinct experience *in a specific place* in your memory.
4. Think of someone who frightens or intimidates you or makes you uncomfortable—a real person—not a character in a movie. Describe the different aspects of this person literally; then create at least three metaphors that capture those aspects concretely.
5. Close your eyes and imagine walking along the beach/in the woods/along a city street/etc. Write down as many images as you can from your walk. What do you see, hear, taste, smell, feel (touch)?
6. Where is the place where you feel most yourself? Why? In what ways?

Creative Writing: Journal Assignments (3)

Remember to **fill 1-2 pages** for **each entry**; these exercises will provide you with the raw materials for your poems!

News-Inspired/Social/Political Issue Poem Entries

Due date: _____

Pay special attention to the news this week—from newspaper, magazines, radio, TV, and/or Internet sources. You will need to respond to at least three different articles/stories, one each from

1. Local news (in and around Raleigh, NC)
2. National news
3. World news

Consider the following questions as you respond to each article/story in a full page of journal writing: Why did you choose this article in the first place? What about it struck you/caught your attention? What images remained with you after reading it? What possibly disturbed you about it? To what greater (larger—more universal) issue does this article possibly speak? In what ways?

Dream Poem Entries

Due date: _____

Entries 1-3: Record at least three dreams between now and the time these entries are due. Place your journal and pen beside your bed. Set your alarm ten minutes earlier than usual. As soon as you awake, try to retrieve and preserve your dream by jotting down exactly what you remember—striking images, sounds, colors, movements, etc. Do the same for dreams or nightmares the jolt you awake in the middle of the night.

Entry 4: Also write about any recurring dreams or nightmares—what are they? Is there any pattern to their frequency? Are they always the same? Any variations?

Art/Music-Inspired Poem Entries

Due date: _____

(Some will be in-class exercises; the rest are homework.)

1. Carefully make observations on a painting or photograph (art—not a picture of your neighbor’s dog) using only your eyes and mind. Then write down all the images and feelings that you experienced from the art without looking at it again.
2. Listen to a selection of classical music (instrumental only) and free associate a page of images while listening.
3. Close your eyes and run your hands over a statue or a piece of pottery; then write down as much detail as you can remember without looking at the piece—include all images and ideas/emotions.
4. Listen to a selection of jazz (instrumental only) and mind record a page of your thoughts while listening.
5. Put yourself inside a painting—imagine being a part of the scene/composition. What do you see, hear, feel, smell, taste? What are your thoughts and emotions about it?
6. While listening to a given musical composition, imagine a story behind it. Write all about it.

Portfolio Preparation/Reflection: In preparation for your portfolio, choose at least four of the following topics and write about your own poetry—be as objective as you can be and write in terms of craft or technique.

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| 1. Subjects | 4. Weaknesses | 7. Revision |
| 2. Rhythm | 5. Sounds | |
| 3. Strengths | 6. Images | |

****NOTE:** You may not write about #4 unless you also choose #3.