# Essay Writing ENGL 20133Sample Journal Post Prompts

## General Instructions for Journal Posts:

Respond to the prompt or instructions for each week's journal in at least 300 words. The purpose is to give you writing time and direction outside of class, and also provide pieces of writing that may contribute to the major essay assignments. The more you write, the more comfortable and capable you'll be to achieve the goals you set for your writing and to apply the skills and techniques we discuss in class.

Journal Posts are due Sunday night by end of day (11:59 pm CT). And each Sunday night, the prompt for the next lesson will open. So you'll have a week to schedule in your journal writing.

## Grading:

You can earn up to 100 points for each post, and for most responses you will earn full points. These are graded on effort to respond appropriately to the prompt and produce a piece of writing of the required length. Go ahead and take risks, experiment, try new strategies. I will NOT be grading on any arbitrary criteria of excellent writing. We're all working to improve. I just want to see the effort. All journal posts will be averaged together for the final grade which will be a maximum of 100 points.

### Journal Post for Week #1:

Write at least 300 words in response to "Try It" #1, in Tell It Slant (TIS) p. 115:

Write a short piece of memoir using a particular event. Write quickly and then examine the piece. Where do you speak as though the reader is a friend, listening at your side? Do you need to reveal more of yourself, of your feelings? Where is the universality of your experience? Make notes about these observations at the bottom of the journal entry. Revise if you feel inspired to go further.

### Journal Post for Week #2

Write at least 300 words in response to "Try It" #2, on TIS p. 188:

"To get a feel for writing scene, recreate an event that took place in the last week--one with characters you can delineate and dialogue you can remember. It doesn't have to be important--it probably will help if it isn't. The point is simply to write 300 words or more, even 2 or 3 pages, in which a location is established through description, people are characterized and talk, and something happens."

### Journal Post for Week #3

TIS p. 17 #1 and #2:

1. Write a scene of a memory from your memoir draft, or an early memory, perhaps your first memory. What calls out for further examination? What in this scene seems to matter to you? What are you leaving out? If you get stuck, keep repeating the phrase "I remember" to start off your sentences; allow this rhythm to take you further than you thought you could go.

2. Once you have written down your memory, go back with this checklist and see how many more sensory details you can include. Don't worry about going overboard or making things up.

What did this memory look like? (Details of color, clothing, people, objects, space, etc)

What did this memory sound like? (What might you have heard in the background? What did voices sound like?)

What did this memory smell like? (Odors of cooking, perfume, nature, city, laundry, etc.)

What did this memory taste like? (Taste in your mouth from food or emotion--dryness, bitterness, sour taste.)

What did this memory feel like? (Tactile sensations on the skin, textures, temperature, etc.)

What kind of intuition does the character experience? (A new understanding, a sense of what is really going on, a prediction of what will happen, etc.)

### Journal Post for Week #5

Write a 300 word description of your plan for the braided essay. This will serve as a proposal, so that we can give direction or redirection if necessary.

### Journal Post for Week #6

Write out a list of questions that are so far unanswered, or topics unaddressed, in your Essay Two draft. Then, identify the types of research you could pursue to handle each question. After this list is made, write out a plan for the topics that you choose to research and how you will go about it, and why. What will it contribute to your essay? You will not need to pursue every topic you’ve identified—choose the research you think will most enhance your essay.

### Journal Post for Week #7

Choose a personally significant image and write about it as a metaphor for some larger concept. The challah bread in "A Braided Heart" is an example, representing the braiding together of strands in life and in essay writing. Or perhaps an image of sun on lake water always means peace to you. Identify some image like this and use it as metaphor, representative of the abstract concept it calls up for you.

The challenge here is to write a few paragraphs using the image, the metaphor, to provide understanding of the larger concept without spelling out for the reader all the connections you want them to make. Show with some scenes from your own experience or information about the image itself how it represents this larger concept. Give it a try. You don't have to master this, just attempt it, as practice in describing the abstract with the concrete. Look at "A Braided Heart" as an example of how to balance showing and telling, of how much to explain your metaphor.

FYI, here is a definition of metaphor from grammarly.com:

A metaphor is a figure of speech that describes an object or action in a way that isn't literally true, but helps explain an idea or make a comparison. ... A metaphor states that one thing is another thing. It equates those two things not because they actually are the same, but for the sake of comparison or symbolism.

### Journal Post for Week #9

Propose a topic for your journalism project and outline a research plan for that topic.

Consider activities or organizations or people who you are interested in, but not expert in, topics that allow for various types of research.

Write a few sentences explaining the topic, and the scope of your coverage. Keep it manageable and "local," in other words one club of enthusiasts or one small business or group of local businesses or one artist, rather than the wider category.

Then make a plan for your research and write that out as a schedule or outline. Will you immerse yourself in the activity, interview someone who participates, read articles and news stories on the activity? When will you do these things, and why?

### Journal Post for Week #10

Practice interviewing, on family!  *TIS* 3rd ed. p. 95 exercise #5.

### Journal Post for Week #11

Search the library databases or the Internet either for publications likely to publish articles like one you are drafting, or for topics that are similar, and find an article that can serve as an example in some ways for you to follow. (Not all aspects or strategies, but a few, or even one.)

Then post the title, author, and link to the publication here (or attach the article as pdf). Write a brief explanation of why you chose it and in what way it can serve as an example of this type of writing and for the article you are writing.

### Journal Post for Week #12

Choose one of these exercises:

1) Select a past journal entry, cut it in pieces (cut and paste in Word!), rearrange and connect the pieces with transitions, deletions, additions, if needed, to make a new piece with new meaning: a collage.

2) Identify a brief genre of writing: recipes, instructions, to do lists, text messages, Tweets, product review. Think of a topic or memory that would not typically appear in that genre, and communicate it while adhering to that genre's expectations. For example, you might write about the process of parenting toddlers as a recipe, or your memory of the frist week at college as a to do list. Your selected genre will serve as the hermit crab protecting the vulnerable content of your memory.

### Journal Post for Week #14

Please reflect on your work for this Essay Assignment, and look back over the semester and consider what you've learned and how your writing has progressed during this semester. This will be your final journal entry so take the opportunity to assess the course, your participation in it, and whether you've so far achieved the outcomes we set out to accomplish. Your sharing what worked well for you and what did not will help me make the course better, but really this is for you. Taking the time to reflect on the specific practices, techniques, or processes you've learned will clarify and solidify that learning. So do this for both of us.