

Eng 110 – Dillard Essay Assignment

This essay assignment is part diagnostic assessment of your writing (for me) and part “acclimatization” to the type of writing you’ll be doing in this class (for you). I need to see your sentence and paragraph building skills here, as well as your ability to make and follow a strong, central literary argument through extended discussion, as these are the skills you’ll need to rely on from the very start of this course. And then I’d also like to get you used to the idea of always looking at *the writing*, at the underlying rhetorical rules that govern our written communication, and not just the “surface story” of the things you pick up and read. Good stories, songs, poems – they’re all about the quality and the success of the writing – it is the structure of the writing that makes something good and meaningful in every instance. There are many ways to go about having his discussion in more concretely literary ways – that is the purpose of this class, and this paper is designed to begin to get you doing that in your own analytical work. So, In a **4 page (minimum)** essay, do one of the following:

Describe how and then why Annie Dillard relies on one particular image or set of images in the writing selection. What function do these images have in the essay? How do they contribute to the overall meaning of the piece? Do her images gradually become metaphors to help her explore and explain some of the larger, thornier questions she's wrestling with in the selection? How does her specific use of imagery contribute to our understanding of the underlying themes, messages, etc. that run through the selection?

OR

Look at the several quotations of various people she inserts at the end of the excerpt. How, specifically, do these help to explain or illuminate the main argument or point(s) that structure the rest of the excerpt? Why has she chosen to allow these voices to speak for her – what do these particular people represent for her?

Some general tips for this assignment:

- Use academic language throughout your discussion: write only in the 3rd person (e.g. he, she, it, they, the text, the author, etc.), do not use “I” or “you” anywhere in your writing, and write only in the present tense
- Keep your focus very tight and narrow: don’t feel like you have to say everything there is to say about the Dillard excerpt: focus on one primary point about one little piece of the selection you think reveals something important about Dillard’s motivations in writing this piece
- Introduce and summarize the selection before you begin your analysis
- Be specific in your argumentation: posit a sound thesis statement in your first paragraph that revolves around a single point you wish to make about the selection as you attempt to answer either the first or second set of questions above
- Develop your body paragraphs according to the model you have already learned: state a topic point, introduce and insert textual support, analyze this textual material, link your discussion back to the main point of your paragraph and to your thesis
- Cite quotations and paraphrases with a page number in parentheses, and follow all other formatting guidelines outlined in my syllabus, on the Sample Format page, and on The Rules (all available on your course website under the "Resources" tab)