

February 20, 2001

Dear Expository Writing Students:

Tomorrow you will pick up from my office a packet of four essay drafts to review for Tuesday's writing workshop. This workshop has a dual purpose: (a) to provide feedback to four of you and (b) to help other class members with similar writing concerns, as they prepare to revise their own drafts.

Your assignment for this workshop is to review each draft (and its ad) twice, **carefully and critically**, and type a one-page **letter** to each writer. (Bring **two** copies to class, one for me and one for the writer.) This task should take about three hours; it's often best to split up the assignment, reviewing two essays at a time. You can also make marginal comments on the draft, in addition to the letter. If you are one of the writers, your work load is reduced!

Your letters should let your fellow students know two or three **specific** strong points in this draft, and two or three **specific** things that you think need work or that you have questions about. We are primarily focusing here on argument and how it might be strengthened, rather than more minor problems of "polishing" (e.g., grammar, punctuation, etc.).

What we're aiming for here is constructive criticism that will help your peers revise the draft. Since most writers learn more from constructive comments rather than being "slammed," it's best often to acknowledge first what you like about a draft, before identifying its more problematic areas.

Here are some questions for you to consider:

1. What's most interesting to you as a reader about this draft?
2. Does the **introduction** work to draw you into the essay? Does the writer establish a clear **thesis** or promise of an argument in the beginning of the essay?
3. Does the close analysis of the ad work well to support the writer's argument? From looking at the ad, are there any other elements that you wished the writer had analyzed?
4. Is the draft clearly **organized** so that you can follow the movement of thought? Are there any sections or paragraphs that would work better if reordered?
5. Does the conclusion dynamically wrap up the argument or open up new ways of thinking about the topic?

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In class, we will spend equal amounts of time on each essay. Since we can't possibly cover all suggestions in 20 minutes, these letters are critical in providing feedback. At the end of the class, you'll return the essays with your letters to the writers, and copies of the letters to me.

Thanks in advance for your hard work. I look forward to reading your comments on one another's work. See you in class Tuesday.

Andrea Walsh