

MIT Inside, Live; Fall 2013

One Writer's Beginnings **Assignment #1**

For this first assignment, I'd like you to give an informal account of your own writing (and reading) life, recalling it as specifically and truthfully as possible. Here are some ways you can do this:

Ground your writing in real experience. Recall some **actual moments** in which writing and reading featured. Can you associate sensory memories with these experiences—the scene out the window, the annoying kid next to you, the teacher's voice, the pictures in the book, the lap you read in? Do you remember actually learning to read or write?

Recall real people. Are there specific characters who played a role in your writing and reading life? Did they encourage you or turn you off? Try describing them as you experienced them.

Ask yourself, if you had to present the plot, or trajectory, of your writing life thus far, how would it go? Were there moments of breakthrough or downfall? Do you remember particular writing projects that engaged you or discouraged you? How?

How did it end up? What have been some recent experiences with writing, in high school or at MIT? When do you dread or look forward to writing? Do you have specific kinds of writing you particularly like or dislike, or particular anxieties or difficulties related to writing for classes? How have you experienced these? Do you ever write outside of assignments?

Can you describe your writing process? How tortuous is it? Have you found any ways to get yourself going—taking a walk, listening to music, writing random thoughts, telling someone what you want to say, outlining, drinking? What writing habits or rituals have you developed to help you keep going? Do you write in special places? Long hand? On computer? Do you write one version and call it quits? Do you revise, and if so, how?

Since the flip side of the writer is the reader, describe your reading life. Did you read much as a kid? What books have made a significant impression on you in one way or another? Do you read much now? What reading do you have to force yourself to do? What, for you, makes something a “good read” or worth reading? What is the last time you remember enjoying a book?

Finally, do you have hopes for yourself as a writer? In particular, what would you like to get out of this class? What do you expect from me, from the other students, from yourself? Do you see yourself writing in the future? Where, how, and why?

This is an informal essay. It doesn't need to be finely polished. However, do format as laid out in the Syllabus. NOTE: Find your own title specific to what **you** write that distills your experience in some way, in addition to the title of the assignment.

Before our next class, I will excerpt anonymously from your essays and compile the excerpts for a class discussion.

DUE: Friday, Sept. 6th, midnight.

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

21W.021 Writing and Experience: MIT: Inside, Live
Fall 2013

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.