

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

21W.777 The Science Essay
Spring 2008

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

Homework #2

Due for class T 2/12

- 1) READ the 2nd set of essays, on “doing science”:
 - Excerpts from Rob Kanigel’s *The Man Who Knew Infinity*, a biography of the mathematician Ramanujan. Prof. Kanigel heads the graduate science writing program here at MIT and has written books on various subjects (he is not a mathematician). [e-Reserve]
 - Oliver Sacks’s “Remembering Francis Crick,” which first appeared in the *New York Review of Books*. We will learn more about Sacks, a neurologist and prolific writer, when we read his memoir of childhood in a few weeks. [E-reserve]
 - Aaron Hirsh’s “Signs of Life.” Hirsh was a research fellow at Stanford and is a co-founder of the biotech company InterCell. This essay first appeared in *American Scholar*. [e-Reserve]
 - Elizabeth Kolbert’s “Crash Course,” a *New Yorker* article on CERN’s Large Hadron Collider, its current particle physics experiment, and the personalities involved in the work. [MIT Library→Vera→New Yorker→May 14, 2007→this article]

Note: Please print out all articles and essays that you access on-line or via e-Reserves so that you may mark them up, and bring them to class.

- 2) FOR CLASS DISCUSSION: Think about the contexts the writers create for their essay topics, and also about the ways the writers get—and keep—the reader’s attention. What writerly techniques do they use? Think also about the personal realm of science—for example, the question of “who does science?” and why it matters (or doesn’t?); the network of relationships involved in doing science; the role of teaching and inspiration in moving scientific knowledge forward.

#