

YOUR FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

Please submit the results by the end of week 2

— THE 20 RITUALS —

Your task here is to create a very particular writing experience for yourself and repeat it at least four times on consecutive nights.

Some of the impetus for this assignment comes from a reading we'll have in a couple weeks—Samuel Beckett's *Texts for Nothing*. Though it's subtle in the text, one gets the impression that each of the 14 or so "Texts" was probably begun and ended around the same time of day each day over two weeks. While it's unnecessary to believe that Beckett really did that, the point of such a structure seems clear: the writing becomes an empty ritualistic act, one that must be done but has no desired outcome or function. This pursuit, somewhat like the pursuit of deep meditative state, is often derailed or disrupted by recurring themes and images and requires an effort of peeling away layers of consciousness, anxiety, obsession, and so on. The process of peeling away becomes Beckett's theme and his ritual.

Your work needn't display such themes, of course. But I am interested in you practicing a ritual of writing with no particular goal in mind (and no specific function: for instance, recording your thoughts and experiences of the day).

The other impetus to the constraints of the assignment is the familiar notion that writing demands a specific ritual.

Your "20 rituals" needn't all be major steps or processes. You may detail any aspect of the time, place, conditions, and writing process for your writing. Please avoid using the rituals to make it easy on yourself... like: "Write five words then go watch a movie and pass out on the couch." Use these as an opportunity to push yourself into a rich, serious, playful, demanding creative process.

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