

Writing Workshop

Inventions

Inventions are short pieces that you will write in the first half of the quarter. During the writing process, you should take the opportunity to work with peers in small groups outside of class.

In all of the invention assignments, you should choose subjects, characters, locations, objects, and themes that you think will help you to write your final project. You may end up revising these works for your project.

You can think of Inventions as an approach to drafting, but there's no guarantee that what you write will actually end up in your final writing project; also, if you focus too much on drafting through the inventions, you're likely to not enjoy it as much. Think of Inventions as something more like a "study" in preparation for a sculpture or painting. Before carving a stone, you might sketch. The sketch is sort of a draft of the sculpture but also very far from it. Each invention should feel like medium stakes writing (worth serious consideration, worth critique, but not your heart and soul) that could stand on its own.

You'll bring 2 copies of your finished work to class when the Invention is due. If you've already worked with some peers on the piece, you can choose whether to work with them in class or get some fresh readers. Except for the purpose of your final project, *Inventions* do not need to be revised.

Invention 1: LANDSCAPE (Due Tuesday Week 3)

There's a strong tradition in literature of a character acting as a *flâneur*. The flâneur is often a wanderer and is associated with urban tales & poems. But we're not limited to cities. A flâneur is that character who wanders somewhere and thereby gives the writer a chance to take in the surroundings—and really take them in. The flâneur isn't just a device for seeing; the flâneur thinks and feels about the world; the flâneur remembers and associates. For this piece, you'll create a character and a place for that character to wander and allow both to be revealed by the resulting narrative. I recommend a third person omniscient approach.

Invention 2: TRANSLATION (Due Tuesday Week 4)

For this invention, you'll begin with several short texts / excerpts from works of fiction that you choose (include copies of the originals when you bring these to class). Choosing these originals is how you begin the connection to your own work. Next, draft an *antonymic translation* of each piece (keep these drafts). Finally, revise as much as you like, creating new work that builds on the antonymic translation.

Invention 3: MAPPING (Due Tuesday Week 6)

You'll begin this piece by creating a pattern, design, or some kind of visual representation for the invention—a map. This does not mean an illustration or a symbol. It might resemble (or be understood as) a kind of plot diagram, or something like a mandala. The important piece is that it have an abstract structure to which various components of the invention (and perhaps your final story) can be attached. Once you've arrived at the structure, you'll draw 3 different versions of it, structurally the same but labeled clearly with different features of your idea mapped onto the structure. Each version represents one short piece (about 2 pages each, total of 6) that you'll then draft.

Final Project

We hope that your inventions give you something to build on for your final project.

Because of the limited time we have and the degree to which we want you to focus on your crafting of language, we are limiting the final writing project to FIVE pages (minimum 1.5 line spacing, 11 point font). Your piece should nearly or completely fill the fifth page but not go over. If this seems somewhat arbitrary, it is.

You'll bring drafts of your final project to class on Tuesday a number of times for critique, and we encourage you to form a group of peers with whom you enjoy working to do critique outside of class as well.

(Until week 8, Final Projects will be critiqued on Tuesday as conventional text pieces. In week 8 and week 9, you must bring your Final Project in properly printed Booklet form, with whatever design elements you've integrated.)

Exercises

Exercises will be in class on Tuesday, sometimes on Wednesday. Exercises do NOT become homework.

All exercises will be explorations of writing and reading, considering language as our medium (as opposed to stories), the visual, tactile nature of printed texts of great interest, and the whole point as the exploration of possibilities.

Critique

We'll spend some time in the beginning of the quarter practicing and discussing the critique of one another's writing and the critique of literature in general. We'll hone these skills throughout the quarter through both low and higher stakes processes and by reading creatively and critically.

The basis of critique is to support and challenge one another as artists.

Therefore, concerns with publishability, acceptability, or our own provincial tastes will not serve us as critical readers or as writers who wish to grow.

Readings

Reading for Wednesday will be short stories or excerpts from longer works. You'll need to read these before coming to class on Wednesday. Be prepared to discuss.