

ENGLISH 101

ASSIGNMENTS

OPTION B

Observation – Option B

Using the “Techniques for Writing About Observations” in Chapter 3 of the *Prentice Hall Guide for College Writers* as well as the collecting and shaping strategies outlined in Chapter 3, write a **three to four-page** observation essay. The essays of Mowat (“Observing Wolves”) and Scudder (“Take this Fish and Look at It”) can be used as models, especially as regards to the use of detail. Notice that both authors shun the vague and emphasize the specific in all sensory details (sight, sound, smell, hearing, taste) to bring their writing to life.

For your observation essay, select a subject that you find of interest: a group of people, a place you frequent (the student union, the front steps of the library, the gymnasium), a park or zoo, a person, or a family pet or other animal. Consider the behavior of the people or creatures as though you were an outsider and search for details that you would normally have overlooked. For instance, at what times do the most smokers gather outside the Liberal Arts building on campus? How do the athletes on the basketball court pick teams? What does the local fishing pond *sound* like? Why does that monkey keep wandering around the cage in the same pattern? Look beyond the obvious.

Once you have finished your observation you need to consider what you witnessed and develop a thesis statement. What were you able to conclude from your observation? Is it that life around a simple fishing pond is far more complicated than it seems at first glance, or that the fishing pond is a restful place to visit? Is it that human behavior on the steps outside the library has predictable patterns? Whatever your conclusion, build toward it with the use of demonstrated details so that you can convince the reader of your point over the course of your paper.

Length: 3-4 pages

Due date: Draft 1 for peer review:

Revised draft for professor:

Draft 2 for peer review:

Final draft due:

Remembering – Option B

Using the essay in Chapter 3 titled “The Struggle to Be an All-American Girl,” Chapter 4’s “Lives on the Boundary” and “César Chávez Saved My Life” as models, create a **four-page** essay that describes an event from your past that you consider significant. It is likely that the event did not seem important at the time, but as you have grown older it has taken on much greater importance. Recall and then use specific examples and descriptive words to recreate the memory so that your audience can understand why it is important to you.

One idea might be to write of a childhood memory – the last time you sat with your grandmother, or the summer vacations you used to spend with your cousins, or that time you helped your older sister set up a surprise birthday party with your parents. Try to find a memory for which you can describe a changed understanding – your original understanding, and your new perception looking back as an older person.

Details are important in this type of writing. Rather than tell the reader something vague and broad (“I was poor,” “It was a hard experience”) show the reader the gritty details, for instance, how did being poor affect you, and *how* was it a hard experience? Use specific details to bring the scene to life, but be sure to make certain that the details in your essay are there for a reason – that they add up to a significant point.

Help make the connection between your personal experience and potential readers. (Ask yourself what your memory shows about humanity, American life, growing up in the Midwest, being a girl, being a tennis player, etc.)

Length: 4 pages

Due date: Draft 1 for peer review:

Revised draft for professor:

Draft 2 for peer review:

Final draft due:

Explanation – Option B

Revisit the essays in Chapter 8 by Steptoe (“Multiracialness”) and by Brosseau (Anorexia Nervosa). Both writers explain a label that has been applied to them, or that they have chosen. Using these essays as models, and the choosing/collecting/shaping advice in Chapter 8 to help generate ideas, develop a **four-page** essay that examines a label that you have chosen for yourself or that has been imposed upon you. Your essay should examine the label’s history, meaning, and how it affects your identity and self-perception. When did you first choose the label, or when was it first assigned to you? Explore the history of the word and its meaning to you. For instance, how did it make you feel when you were first lauded as being smart or pretty, or mocked for being skinny or poorly dressed? If you are Christian, when did you first become aware of the difference between your denomination and that of other Christians? When were you first labeled a worry-wart, and what does that word actually *mean*?

Sample labels: Avoid using especially broad labels like *man* or *woman*. Instead, consider words like handicapped, poor, jock, artist, Protestant, waitress, student, independent, Goth – words that have more specific application.

As always, strive for clarity and precision. Avoid broad terms and vague discussions. Choose a label that has been applied to you in a positive or negative way. When was it first applied? How has your understanding of that label changed? Has that label affected your relationships with others for good or bad? Has your own relationship to the label changed? For instance, did the label once embarrass you but you now look upon it with pride? Or did you once look upon the label with pride without understanding what it might mean to others? Have your feelings toward the label changed over time?

Using Sources: You may require a source for this paper if you intend to quote a definition of the label or its history from an encyclopedia or dictionary.

Length: 4 pages

Due date: Draft 1 for peer review:

Revised draft for professor:

Draft 2 for peer review:

Final draft due:

Persuasion – Option B

Find a topic that's important to you and do your best to convince the reader your point of view is the correct one in a **five** page essay. Try to balance the appeals that you use, and avoid logical fallacies. Back up your claims with information that can be tested and proven (avoid arguments that can only be proven through circular logic).

Arguable topics need not be black/white issues (topics which traditionally have two mutually exclusive sides). In fact, such topics (abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, legalizing marijuana, gun control) are often limiting because the positions are already set in stone. They should be avoided in this assignment. Rather than exploring such traditional argumentative topics, try to discover and generate an argument that is narrow and less typical.

Strive for a specific take, not something vague and broad. Find something that is important to you, or find a topic that you strongly disagree with and persuade us why your stance on the topic is the most valid.

Length: 5 pages

Due date: Draft 1 for peer review:

Revised draft for professor:

Draft 2 for peer review:

Final draft due: