

## Essay as Hack

1. *In "Essay Hack," What's Ander Monson's problem with traditional essays and popular memoirs?*

When examining a traditional essay, Monson describes; "it felt remote. Isolated. Writ in stone and handed down. Unapproachable. The production of years of pristine thinking and immersion journalism. It is seemingly inaccessible from an artist's standpoint without deploying some kind of wizardry." Monson seems to think that traditional essays are dull and limit creativity or artistic visions. He views them as a result of strict and traditional ways of thinking passed down and minutely "improved" upon generation to generation.

2. *Think about the style of the essay. Where is Monson present personally in this essay so far? In other words, how do you hear his unique voice? Quote one example and explain what's unique about his writing style.*

Towards the end of the essay, Monson writes, "The memoir appears to try to understand but mostly it narrates. Airs action out, reveals it. It offers us confession, prepackaged narrative arc: redemption, for instance. It thinks it thinks but it does not quite get there."

I think this quote shows some unique properties of Monson's writing style, such as using little subtlety when personifying non-human subjects, or thought-like, almost incomplete sentences. It's almost as if the author is thinking out loud, writing his ideas down in the same way he thought them.

3. *According to Monson, what is the value of seeing the "essay as hack"? Support your response by explaining at least one quoted piece of textual evidence from the essay.*

The value of seeing the essay as a hack is that it allows both the reader and writer to tap into abstract ideas such as the nature of thought or how we perceive the passage of time. When describing the benefits of trying to draw meaning from the past, Monson states that "attempting rewires the brain. It moves the circuitry around, attaching a new conclusion to an action, reconstructing self. In a way, thinking about the self hacks it." Monson seems to believe that attempting to understand or assign meaning to your own brain, though impossible, encourages the mind to grow and rewire itself, benefiting you by changing the way you respond to the world around yourself (hopefully for the better).

4. *In what ways do you think Maggie Nelson embraces the "essay as hack" in "[Bluets](#)"? Support your response by explaining at least one quoted piece of textual evidence from Nelson's work.*

The essay as hack uses train of thought writing to allow the reader to experience the writer's thoughts as the author had felt them while writing the essay. *Bluets* employs the same tactic. Nelson effectively uses a string of writing resembling thought (one of the main characteristics of essay as hack) to convey her connections or lack thereof to the color blue. The quote, "The half-circle of blinding turquoise ocean is this love's primal scene. That this blue exists makes my life a remarkable one, just to have seen it" is an example of a connection Nelson makes to a shade of blue during her essay. By writing both her perception to the shade and the impact it has upon her life, the writer allows the reader to get a glimpse inside her mind in the moment that she was processing that turquoise. In this way, *Bluets* utilizes principles outlined in essay as hack to connect the reader directly to the author's thought process.

## If you knew then what I know now

*1.) Why does Van Meter use the 2nd person (you) narration in*

He uses the second person to avoid talking about the story directly as it had happened to himself. The use of second person narration displayed how the author tries to distance himself from the moment even while writing about it.

*What is the purpose of this essay, and who is the audience? If you were a student of Professor Van Meter, how do you think this essay would reflect his "Work with Students," as he describes in his Webpage?*

The purpose of this essay is to encourage the audience (his students or other young people, especially queer people) to explore themselves and their writing capabilities freely. It was likely also a form of therapy for himself, a way of processing an unpleasant experience from his childhood. I believe this strongly reflects his statements in his University profile, for example when he states, "I also want us to observe ourselves as writers." By telling a personal story, Van Meter encourages his students to express more of themselves in their writing.

*2.) Aside from his use of 2nd person narration, what are some other stylistic choices Van Meter makes that you find effective (such as sensory description/imagery, metaphor, tone, diction, syntax, characterization)? Record at least 3 quotations from the text, identify the technique he is using, and analyze how Van Meter's words work within the context of the story or point in the story in which they occur.*

Van meter uses dull and curt intonation when describing certain parts of the story to detach himself from the experience, giving an overall air of vulnerability. For example, he describes specific details about the text to show that it is a memory imprinted on his brain. Humans tend to remember emotionally charged memories way better than normal ones. Details like "Jared's glasses will be folded, shoved in the corner of the windowsill" are not something that someone would remember unless strong emotions (usually negative) were attached to that memory. In addition, he use phrases like "wet mouths" to match teenage Jared and Mark's sloppy physical state to their ugly and provocative actions. Finally, Van meter uses language and comparisons related to school/teenage years to keep the reader immersed in the time of his childhood. For example, Van Meter uses the simile, "as normal as note passing."

3.) *What are some questions or ambiguities Van Meter leaves you with? Write 2-3 questions you are left with. Then, explain why you think he allows these questions/ambiguities to remain.*

Van Meter never actually clarifies what his feelings toward Jared are at the end of the story, or what happens next. He seems to feel a mix of fear and comfort at the squeeze Jared placed on his shoulder in the final sentence. I think that he left these ambiguities because he is torn between empathizing with Jared due to the shame of that moment they both carry, and walking away from the conversation with his previous beliefs about that moment still intact.

4.) *Reflect: If you could write an essay addressing your younger self (or someone representative of your younger self, perhaps someone currently going through what you once experienced), what would you write about, and why? Explain. (Remember that this could lead you to a potential lyrical essay idea!)*

I would write about how not to self-destruct, how to live for yourself, how important chasing things you want is because those are things I wish I had known how to do when I was younger.

## IYKTIWIKN Exercise

5.) *Using your reflection from #4 of the "If You Knew Then..." Response (see previous assignment), write a letter to younger self. Use second person narration, just as Van Meter did. For this writing exercise, aim for about a page, typed and double-spaced. Feel free to write more if you are so inspired!*

You miss elementary school. You will walk away from it thinking so, will probably retain that thought throughout a large portion of your life. But when you first step foot into Graham Middle School in 6th grade, you don't realize the magnitude of the haven you just grew out of. Sure, you are a little nervous. After all, you are biking to school on your own now, a school with a lot more people and not a single friend. But all of this is secondary to the most important thing in your middle schooler life. You would think this all important, all consuming, ginormous purpose of life goal would be something like family, right? Maybe to grow up and become a vet. No. This totally-achievable, completely reasonable goal that will definitely not set you up for failure is this: to be the best. At everything. Because in your hormone-ridden, half-developed brain, to not be the best at whatever you decide to try is the hallmark of a complete and utter failure. Now,

you were smart enough to realize what utter folly your goal was. But, you see, there was a hidden objective to the massive amount of pressure threatening to break open your spine, the pressure that you put there. You, in all your 13 year old wisdom, thought that if you fought hard for your goal of being the best, then even if you failed to achieve it, you would still manage to be above average in that field. It was a distorted version of that saying, "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars." I'll tell you where you landed. Burnout. Crying until you couldn't anymore. In front of doctor after doctor after doctor, and none of them could figure out what was wrong with you. No one ever did figure it out. But I'll give you my best guess. I think they couldn't find any evidence of harm because there was nothing that wanted to hurt you. Nothing, no one, no one but yourself. Your brain was a snake eating it's own tail, chewing its skin ragged and tattered, all while choking on its own flesh. You were the same disease that was killing you. And that's not to say that it was your fault. Some would even say you were set up to fail. Set up to believe you could thrive in a society where nothing would ever be enough. Where you would never be good enough. In any case, you'll survive. You'll get better. It'll be a roller coaster ride, but you will learn. Learn to live for yourself. Learn that being selfish can be a good thing. Learn that tearing yourself apart just to appease someone else isn't what you want your life to look like. So. You'll heal. And that infection you planted in your own head like a cancer will always be there. But, you are stronger than it. You will get to curb stomp it with your old shoes that you refuse to throw out, with just the fact that you are alive, that you enjoyed something, that people love you. If that's not worth it, I don't know what is.

## Catalog of unabashed gratitude

*List things, moments, or people that you are grateful for, using specific images or sensory details to bring you gratitude to life.*

Remembering the carefree days of childhood

The sun on my skin, the way frost would form in the mornings as I wandered to school.

No thought spared for the stains on my shirt, the way I smiled, the way others would shine bright.

Lost in fictional worlds and my own imagination, nothing could touch me, ignorance was bliss

Thank you, for the freedom to love without feeling eyes crawling over my skin, eyes that only exist in my mind

Thank you father, thank you mother, for forgiving my trespasses,

And for teaching me to forgive those who trespass against me.

Thank to my sister, for being the fire that burns without me, so beautiful and bright and big, thank you for the light that you are, thank you for growing without me, growing despite me.

You are fallible and fragile and futile. You are human, and you showed me how to be, for better or worse.

## The Book of Delights

Read the [PDF of Ross Gay's The Book of Delights \(Selections\)](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)

Open **LastName\_FirstName-Lyrical Essay Notes** and check to make sure it is shared with [english@freestyleacademy.rocks](mailto:english@freestyleacademy.rocks). Turn in the URL to this Canvas assignment.

Make a new entry titled "**The Book of Delights**".

When you've read the Table of Contents and Preface, stop for a moment and **brainstorm** 10 things that bring you delight. These could be very specific things or more general things that are often on your mind. Feel free to be quirky and even esoteric in making this list.

1. Cats and how warm and soft they are and how they purr and are cute
2. Watching people laugh genuinely
3. Cold beaches in half-moon bay when no one else is around
4. Putting my head out the car window and sticking out my tongue until it becomes dried out and I can feel my taste buds when they're dry (sorry to whoever had to read that it's a bit weird)
5. Seeing how long I can last with pins and needles before standing up and feeling the blood rush to whatever limb I have been depriving
6. Frog, salamander, and lizard watching

7. Food that tastes good and is not necessarily healthy
8. Actually being proud of something I achieve
9. Grass fields in the morning when it's cold and there's frost on the grass
10. Leopard geckos, they have the best smile

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eDkPh0PW2YL0o6qSIL8LMA-enYgHEiBV/view>

*Read the rest of the PDF, which features 7 lyrical essays (Gay calls them "essayettes"). Rank and **summarize in 2-3 sentences** your favorite 3 essayettes.*

1) Blowing it off:

After putting off writing an essay for a day, and then having to write two the next, Gay decides to write an essay about putting things off. He describes how despite having surgery and bad asthma, he had almost never missed school as a child. Finally, he ends the essay by saying that one of the last times he had seen his father, his father had said that he wished to be able to blow things off (namely his work). His father died of cancer soon after, and Gay says that he delights in blowing things off partly to love and honor his father.

2) Writing by hand:

Gay gives several examples of other intellectuals/authors explaining why it is better to write creative pieces by hand, and then explains why he chose to write his essayettes by hand. He details the materials he uses, and describes how scratching out sentences and making mistakes is a part of writing that is lost when writing on a computer.

3) Hummingbird:

Gay details several of his interactions with hummingbirds, with an added comment from a friend that believes hummingbirds may be Gay's spirit animal. He starts with a present-tense story of how a hummingbird sat still on a branch next to him for a long time, followed by a story of how he had gotten one to sit on his hand when he was in school. The final story occurs when he is visiting a friend, who begins recounting a serious and sad story when a hummingbird drinks from a flower next to her head.

*Then, using your favorite essayettes, go on a scavenger hunt for the following details/devices and **explain** their meaning:*

1. *Record a quotation featuring an image you find appealing to the senses. Note the page number and explain briefly how Gay's use of description/detail brings the image to life for you as a reader.*

“I was both mesmerized and a touch terrified by his mellifluous and curt voice, lilting like a beach rose, all fragrant and thorny” (page 31) Gay comparison of this man’s voice to a rose, and his description of how the sound is both melodious and intimidating, give the reader a greater sense of who the man is. It also gives insight to how Gay, or other people may perceive this man, implying that they both admire and somewhat fear him.

2. *Record a quotation featuring an allusion (reference to a work, event, or person outside of the text). Note the pg. #, look up/define the allusion, and explain briefly why Gay uses it in the context of the essayette in which it appears.*

“I love the story, apocryphal or not, of Derek Walcott asking his graduate poetry workshop on the first day if they composed by hand or on a computer” (page 31). Derek Walcott was a famous poet and playwright. In the story Gay tells about him, he tells students to leave a class he was teaching because they used a computer to write their poetry, instead of writing by hand. I believe Gay uses that story to apply the point Walcott was trying to make (writing by hand is better for poetry than writing on a computer) to his own mini-essays, to explain why he chooses to write them by hand.

3. *Record a quotation that exemplifies Gay's voice or his inventive use of language. How does his use of language diction, syntax, description, etc. work in this passage to draw your attention to his subject and his attitude towards it?*

When describing a hummingbird, Gay remarks how, “The bird sat on the spindly little branch that bounced in the breeze, twisting its little head and big proboscis this way and that, but mostly just standing still, looking out over the little traffic jam on the far side of the street, not moving even as I got almost directly beneath the thing” (page 55). This is an example of a run-on sentence that does not necessarily conform to standard English conventions. Gay uses a lot of run-on sentences in his essayettes. I believe he uses them to make reading the text feel like thoughts, so that the reader can experience the way the author was thinking when he had the experiences the viewer is reading. This also draws attention to how he is thinking about the subject because it shows his list of observational thoughts as he sees the hummingbird. It is very realistic to how he likely observes the hummingbird in real life.

4. *Locate from one of the essayettes a researchable topic and write it down. Is there any indication in the text of what Gay researched or read about? If so, copy it down. If not, what could you research to gather more facts about the subject at hand?*

“Susan Sontag said somewhere something like any technology that slows us down in our writing rather than speeding us up is the one we ought to use” (page 32). There is no indication of what specific text Gay used, but I was able to research more about Susan Sontag. She was an American writer and critic that made content focused on controversies like wars, politics, societal shortcomings, and more.

Make a new entry titled: "Delight-Write." Look back at your "Book of Delights" response #1 and choose one item from your brainstorm of 10 things that bring you delight. Write your own essayette focusing on that one delight. If you want to connect related delights, that's okay, but make sure there is a central focus.

## Delight Write

Humans often tend to carry an irrational fear of small critters that, in reality, barely begin to pose a threat to us. Creepy crawlies like spiders, snakes, insects, eels, and many more cause shivers to run up and down the skin of our arms, raising thin hairs as they travel. We can't stand them, spend an inordinate amount of money on poisons and pesticides in an attempt to rid our homes of the disgusting creatures, only for them to reappear a few months later. For many, conflicts between the humans of the house and the pests that invade it can carry on for years, a never-ending cycle of paranoid slaughter. Logically, small organisms with very little potential to harm us (such as ants) should not set off our cavemen brains so viscerally. And yet. However, there is one portion of the human population, a little larger than you may expect, for which goosebumps do not form on their arms the moment they see an unusually large spider or particularly creepy-looking insect. These individuals are the spider-get-ridder-of-ers, the saviors of insects, the people that delicately cradle captured insects in glass jars until they can be released safely outside, much to the chagrin of their family members. Say you are one such outlier, then you understand the fascination and absorbing qualities of these creepy crawlies, perhaps you have even from the age of 3. Maybe the discovery and removal of off-putting creatures from a home is not a necessity, but a delight. Is there not something so unique about the slippery squirm of a garden snake, the frantic scuttle of an arachnid's 8 legs, the roly-polly's enamoring ability to roll itself into a near-perfect orb? Tell me, beyond your goose bumps and paranoid palpitations, is it not... a delight?

## Citizen, Part 1:

Heads up: What you are about to read is the opening section of Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric*, an extended lyrical essay (or collection of related short lyrical essays) about racism. In your reading, you will encounter traumatic narratives and images that may be uncomfortable or triggering for you. The "n-word" appears in the text, and for the purpose of safety, we won't utter the word in its original form if it comes up in our readings/discussions. Rather, we will give the word a pause or use the euphemism "n-word." Please reach out before class if you feel the need to express any concerns or if you have questions. Copies of the book are available for anyone who wishes to check one out for optional extended reading.

Read [Citizen Part I \(pdf\)](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)

Open **LastName\_FirstName-Lyrical Essay Notes**. Please submit this file to Canvas again, here, when you have completed the assignment below.

Make a new entry titled **"Citizen, Part I" Analysis**.

Respond to the following:

1.) After reading Citizen Part I, what is the impression you get about Rankine's purpose and audience (to whom is she speaking, and why)? Why is Rankine relying on the second person as her main narrative perspective, and what effect does that stylistic choice have on you?

I think that Rankine is speaking to people in general, with a particular focus on black and white people. I think her purpose is to vent some of her frustration and hopefully cause people to act with increased thoughtfulness after reading her piece. I believe that Rankine is relying on the second person to emphasize the fact that the slights could have happened to any black person, they are not specific to her. It also puts the reader in her shoes and helps them sympathize with her.

2.) Choose one passage of 1-2 pages (one narrative or what could stand as a self-contained lyrical essay) and analyze it according to style. Paying particular attention to figurative language, poetic sound, sensory imagery, and/or narrative technique (characterization, exposition, narrative arc, etc.), explain how Rankine shapes the reader's experience.

Rankine uses a lot of figurative language, with particular emphasis on metaphors and similes. Her essay flows pretty poetically, and the writing is beautiful to read. She also has very vivid descriptions that help the reader picture the settings and situations clearly.

3.) On pg. 6 and 19, there are artwork images inserted into the text. Explain what you thought and felt about each image. Why is it there? How did it make you feel? What could it mean in relation to the lyrical essay text surrounding it? Is it in dialogue with the written text in any way? (In other words, how does the artwork connect to the written text?)

I think that the Jim Crow street sign image was there to show that racism is still present in things as mundane as street signs. The socend image, I am not sure exactly how it ties to the image. I think the tone of the image does match the writing because racism is an ugly subject, and in my opinion, the sculpture is pretty ugly and disturbing.

4.) Look up at least 3 vocab words, terms, or allusions that are unfamiliar to you. Here are some examples: larynx, inexorable, retroactively, John Henry / John Henryism, physiological, affirmative action, assuage, affable, tenuous, transgression. For each word/term/allusion, provide a definition and an explanation of how it functions in the context of the passage.

Larynx - a part of your throat - is used to enhance a vivid description of the narrator's throat closing up in the text

Physiological - characteristic of or appropriate to an organism's healthy or normal functioning - used to explain that there are physiological consequences to suppressing stresses related to racism

Retroactively - extending in scope or effect to a prior time or to conditions that existed or originated in the past - "being retroactively insulted" I was not sure about how this was being used, because the conversation that the narrator was being insulted in was happening in the present tense when they had the thought that they were being "retroactively insulted."

5.) What are the top 3 questions or uncertainties you are left with, having read Part I of *Citizen*?

-why was the author attending therapy, is it related to the topic of the essay

-who was the author's intended audience for this piece

-how does the deer-human statue relate to her piece

## Lyrical Essay Subject Brainstorm

Make a new entry in your LastName\_FirstName-Lyrical Essay Notes titled "Lyrical Essay Subject Brainstorm"

1.) You have experienced a variety of lyrical essay subjects and styles from a small handful of contemporary authors. Now, brainstorm a list of 3-5 subjects you are potentially interested in representing in your own lyrical essay.

- 1) Day outside in the rain for reflection
- 2) Music and it's different purposes/uses
- 3) Moments where life feels more real than others
- 4) Animal metaphor for defensive mechanisms (thorny devil lizard?)
- 5) animal/symbiotic/parasitic relationship metaphor for and issue in society

Once you have generated your list, highlight your most interesting subject and complete one more task:

2.) Locate a lyrical essay from our unit (see past Modules for links) or find one on the web which does something you'd like to try to do. Note the title, author, subject, narrative perspective (1st, 2nd, 3rd person) and at least one creative element (imagery, metaphor, arrangement, etc.) you found effective. How could you emulate this narrative perspective and/or creative element in your own lyrical essay on your current most interesting subject?

Title: Consider the Lobster Mushroom

Narrative perspective: 2nd person

Creative Element: Using an animal/thing in nature as a metaphor for a topic/issue

I would also like to use a nature metaphor to compare with a topic/issue I am passionate about. I like the way the metaphor is not obvious, especially at the beginning, and would like to incorporate that into my own essay.

## Lyrical Essay Prewriting Exercises

*Make a new entry in your Lyrical Essay Notes titled "Lyrical Essay Prewriting Exercises." Perform 3 exercises from the [Prewriting Exercises](#)*

*[Links to an external site.](#)*

*handout. Your choice! Please label each exercise so I can clearly see that you did at least 3. Please remember to resubmit LastName\_FirstName-Lyrical Essay Notes to this Canvas assignment window when finished.*

- 1. Write a reflection about your interest and relationship to your subject. Why did you choose it? What did you learn from your first research sources that you didn't already know? What are the most challenging aspects of the subject you want to be able to show your audience? Who should care about this subject, and why?*

I chose my subject because I really liked how the lobster and consider the lobster mushroom creative essays (which I am counting as research sources in terms of how they are clear examples of how to properly utilize nonfiction facts in a creative essay) used organisms as metaphors for complex subjects. They were extremely interesting to read, both in the way that characteristics and behaviors of the creatures are likened to nonfiction creative writing, and in how the true topic the essays sneaks up on you as you get further into the reading. I also appreciated the way that the topics are deeper and more complex topics that people don't usually like to think about, and how the reader is sort of tricked into reading about them by the author. Finally, I liked that the creative pieces also conveyed the idea of not "judging a book by its cover" in how they appeared at first something different than what they actually were. After reading those two pieces, I chose to write my essay about a fusion/metaphor of a parasitic relationship in nature and of a societal issue. I also just really like science and animals, so that likely had something to do with my choice.

2. Write a rough poem about your subject. Then, review your poem for words and phrases you want to incorporate into your essay. Are these words/phrases sensory images? Metaphors for your subject? Does the language sound lyrical (musical / poetic)?

*Have you not pondered  
When your mind wanders  
Of what creatures may squirm in the dark  
In the black of moldy mulch,  
Or in damp rotten wood,  
Or in that not-quite cooked meat that you chewed  
When later you're hurling,  
choking up your guts,  
Eyesight swimming and swirling  
What was that sent you  
Sweating and squirming  
Into that state you so clearly recognized  
Was it a worm? A fly? Some single-celled virus?  
Some disease that ends in "itis" or "isis"?  
A parasite, you wonder,  
And your internet blunders  
They confirm it, tell you you're right,  
That blue glowing screen  
Tells you exactly what it means  
When a parasite eats your insides.  
You curse that rotten creature  
For the irritating procedure*

*Of sickness infection and disgust  
What could be worse  
Than that horrid creepy crawlie  
That thing that ate you alive  
Nothing could compare, you think  
Why did I search this  
What a waste of my time  
And yet you fail to see  
A much worse disease  
Of which you inflict on your own mind  
It consists of metal glass  
Reather than cells or slime  
And its entwined in your every hour  
Responsible for you hate, for your self deception  
That grows with each life it helps you devour  
Locked way from your future staring at a screen  
Comparing yourself to others  
A little metal box  
You hold in your hand  
Sucking you in like a black hole  
An infection much worse than any tapeworm or tick  
An obsession  
Flicking and tapping and chipping at whats left of you  
A puppet, thats what you are now  
A servant, a scullion, a steward  
A slave ... to the screen.*

*List these words and phrases and briefly reflect on why you found them interesting and potentially useful for your essay. How would this poetic language help your audience experience the subject in a distinctive way?*

*I liked the idea of using specific names for diseases or parasites for my essay, like in the line "Some disease that ends in "itis" or "isis"?" I think that using complicated names like: Fascioliasis (Fasciola Infection), Fasciolopsiasis (Fasciolopsis Infection), Filariasis (Lymphatic Filariasis, Elephantiasis), Giardiasis (Giardia Infection), Gnathostomiasis (Gnathostoma Infection), Guinea Worm Disease (Dracunculiasis), or Head Lice Infestation (Pediculosis)- could enhance the readers experience by grabbing their attention and helping them pay attention to what the words are trying to say. I think that the name shouldn't really matter for comprehension of the meaning of the sentence, but I could add a key with definition for them anyway, the thing with the numbers. I also like the line "A servant, a scullion, a steward, A slave ... to the screen" because I think the alliteration and synonyms help the piece flow with poetic language. I think they could be nice to listen to if I got the balance of syllables right when read out loud, which would enhance the reader's/listener's experience.*

- 3. If you were to tell a story about your subject to your audience, what would be the most appropriate narrative perspective (1st I/we, 2nd you, 3rd he/she/they), and why?*

I think that either 3rd or 2nd person could be good for this subject for different reasons. Doing the piece in 3rd person could help give it an air of detachment that seems clinical or scientific, which would match the descriptions of parasites and their behavior/the symptoms they cause. I could use it to make the author think more and draw conclusions from facts that are presented without having any particularly strong opinion attached to them. 2nd person could be good because it would drag the reader into the story more, and put them in a position to be more affected by the story. It could also help draw deeper emotions as the story develops and the reader realizes the real subject of the essay.

## Consider the Lobster

[Consider the Lobster](#) (Read from the beginning to the end of pg. 56, at least. You have access to the whole piece if you wish to read it all.) Remember to read the footnotes!

### [Consider the Lobster Mushroom](#)

1.) In "Consider the Lobster," how does David Foster Wallace use research, metaphor, and narrative techniques to represent his subject creatively? Why do you think he uses annotated footnotes creatively? Specifically, what kind of commentary does he communicate in the footnotes, and how does this technique change the meaning of the main text and/or add another layer of meaning to the piece?

*Research, metaphor, and narrative techniques:*

*-metaphors:*

- *lobster as a metaphor for nonfiction - originally was a peasants food and non-one wanted it, like it took some time for creative non-fiction to become popular*
- *Political and economic and ethical problems are hidden by fancy lobster festival, he is trying to challenge people who are reading for pleasure to think a little deeper, also can be seen as a satire piece*

*Annotated footnotes:*

- *Used to talk about how article is not going to be liked, and the way the writing makes readers think about things they don't want to will probably get it removed*

2.) In "Consider the Lobster Mushroom," how does Heidi Czerwiec build the lobster mushroom into a metaphor for creative nonfiction? How might this essay build upon or comment on David Foster Wallace's work?

*Czerwiec starts by explaining characteristics of the lobster mushroom, and how it infects other organisms, turning them orange-red. (she compares this to the shell of a cooked lobster, likely in reference to wallace's work). Then she explains how she believes creative nonfiction and a lobster mushroom are similar, detailing how they both infect*

*something other to create something new. For creative nonfiction, she explains that art infects nonfiction writing (or the other way around) to form creative nonfiction. Finally, after giving examples of how creative nonfiction pieces are not what you think they will be, she ends by saying that lobster mushrooms are more valuable than the mushrooms they infect. The final sentence implies that creative nonfiction can be more valuable than the sum of its individual (artistic/creative writing and nonfiction writing) parts. Czerwiec builds upon Wallace's work by further explaining the nature and value of creative nonfiction, which was the subject of his essay.*

*Lobster mushroom as a metaphor for creative nonfiction: Lobster mushroom- things are not always as they appear, and can have hidden depths/value*

### 3 Research Sources for Lyrical Essay

Please make a new entry in your **Lyrical Essay Notes** document titled "3 Research Sources for Lyrical Essay." Here are your instructions:

Gather and annotate 3 initial research sources for a potential lyrical essay subject. The purpose of this early phase of your research is to define the subject you are initially planning to write about and gather several different types of sources which will give you different kinds of information and perspectives on the subject. Like David Foster Wallace, you may find that what you initially planned to write about will shift as you investigate your subject and discover new and compelling facts, narratives, and potential metaphors.

**Here's what you need to prepare for Thursday's class:**

- **Gather and Annotate 3 Varied Research Sources:**
  - "Gather" means you will record the publication information / links of 3 sources for future reference (this will come in handy when you need to build your bibliography eventually).
  - "Annotate" means you take notes on each source. You may use any annotation method with which you feel most comfortable: an online annotation tool (such as Diigo), a Google doc w/comments,

or handwritten notes in your Writer's Notebook. (See Annotation Directions below)

- "Varied" means more than one type of source. Here are some different types of sources you may find useful for this project: news articles, original works of art, speeches, manuscripts, letters, historical accounts, music recordings, interviews, records, eyewitness accounts, photographs, autobiographies, poetry, other lyrical essays, statistical data, research articles (such as Gale or JSTOR database articles or articles from scholarly journals), clinical reports, case studies, textbooks, magazine articles, critical reviews, commentaries, encyclopedias...

- **Annotation Directions:**

- For each source, identify at least **one FACT** about your subject
- For each source, ask at least **three QUESTIONS** in response to specific facts or perspectives you find intriguing about your subject and want to learn more about.
- In at least one source, identify or imagine **an image (visual or other sensory experience)** that could serve as **a metaphor for your subject**.

Source	1 fact about subject	3 Questions	Image/Metaphor
<a href="#">national geographic</a>	“In parasitism, one species (the parasite) lives with, on, or in a host species, at the expense of the host species. Unlike in predation, the host is not immediately killed by the parasite, though it may sicken and die over time.”	<p>What so the other types of symbiotic relationships (mutualism, commensalism, parasitism, and competition) entail? Could I relate them to my subject?</p> <p>What are some examples of symbiotic relationships in other environments (outside of coral reefs/the sea)? Would one of these work better for my subject?</p> <p>How did organism evolve to form these relationships? What was the process like? Can that relate to how problems developed in</p>	I thought it was interesting how different organism can have different relationships with the same pair organism. For example, “though barnacles exist commensally with whales, they are parasites for swimming crabs.” I could use that relationship explain how an issue in society can affect different people differently, from helping some to harming others.

		society?	
<a href="#">CDC</a>	<p>There are three main classes of parasites; protozoa (single celled, multiply), helminths (multicellular, usually worms) and ectoparasites (blood-sucking arthropods/buglike)</p>	<p>How can I relate different types of parasitic behaviors to different societal issues?</p> <p>For example, what issues could be compared to parasites that take blood and leave vs. parasites that stay underneath the skin for a while?</p> <p>Could I incorporate multiple different parasites/parasitic relationships into my essay? I don't think I have to choose just one to focus on.</p>	<p>What issues would relate to parasites that come into the body as larvae and grow inside of it, vs. parasites that travel from host to host. Maybe negative self-image/worth could be compared to a parasite that you have for a long time/from a young age, because it is often a learned behavior from when you are younger.</p>
<a href="#">Britannica</a>	<p>"Social issue, a state of affairs that negatively affects the personal or social lives of individuals or the well-being of communities or larger groups within a society and about which there is usually public disagreement as to its nature, causes, or solution. The term social issue is frequently used synonymously with social problem."</p> <p>Social Issues Include: child abuse, civil rights, crime, criminal justice, disability rights, domestic violence, gambling, hate crime, health care (see medicine),</p>	<p>What metaphors could I use/how could I describe that fact that people don't really agree on what exactly are social issues, or how people often have different definition on what a social issue is?</p> <p>What do people agree is the distinction between social issues and social problems? The article mentions a bit about it, but I'd like to get more than one perspective.</p> <p>What are the pairs of specific parasites and specific social issues I want to make?</p>	<p>Maybe I could find a parasite comparison for multiple of the social issues listed, and then say that the biggest parasite that gives birth to all of them is human nature itself. That sounds depressing, so after I could use cleaning products and surgery and other ways to get rid of parasites as a metaphor for living for yourself despite ugly human qualities that can surface. How to take care of yourself in a world full of parasites.</p>

	homelessness, immigration, mental illness, obesity, police brutality and corruption, pollution, poverty, underage pregnancy/birth, illiteracy, climate change, drought, alcoholism, drug addiction, unemployment		
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Additional Sources:

[brain eating amoeba video](#)

[Neglected Tropical Diseases video](#)

## Rough Annotated Bibliography

Open LastName\_FirstName-Lyrical Essay Notes and add a new entry titled "Rough Annotated Bibliography." Submit your file to this Canvas assignment window when finished with this entry.

The purpose of this exercise is to discover new and compelling ways of representing your subject creatively (through narrative, personal reflection, metaphor, insightful connections to other texts, and even poetry). This is where your annotations from the previous assignment (3 research sources) will come in handy.

The purpose of doing this rough version of the Annotated Bibliography for your Lyrical Essay is to critically reflect on each source by **describing what it is, what kind of information it contains, and how you might use facts, perspectives, questions, and images from the text or inspired by your reading of the text to investigate your subject.**

Since this is a rough attempt at the Annotated Bibliography, don't worry about format. Keep track of some basic identifying info for each source (title, author, etc.) but **focus on writing out your thinking about the value and purpose of each source.** See the assignment guidelines for samples and other resources.

### 1. CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) "About Parasites"

I believe that the value of this source lies in its breakdown of the three different types of parasites, and what characteristics separate them. This gave me lots of ideas for what specific characteristics I could compare to my societal issue to further enhance the metaphor I want to create. It also focuses on the danger of parasites to humans as a disease/health risk, which is helpful to me because I want to use them as a metaphor for something that harms humans. I chose this source to get a better understanding of how parasites affect humans, so that I won't state untrue facts when writing about them.

### 2. National Geographic "Symbiosis: The Art of Living Together"

I liked this source because it explored alternative relationships between organisms that aren't necessarily parasitic in addition to the parasitic ones. This helped me isolate the factors of parasitic relationships that I wanted to focus on, and aided me in choosing what social issues to focus on. Compared to other relationships like competition and predation, parasites are a particularly gruesome concept because they don't immediately kill their host, but the eventual death is a long and painful one. This reminded me of how some negative societal values can be ingrained in people since birth, and cause them problems later in life because the toxic values society imposed upon them when they were naive and impressionable had become indistinguishable from their own core values/beliefs as a person.

### 3. Encyclopedia Britannica "Social Issue"

This source was very helpful because it gave me lots of context and ideas for social issues. It gave me a large list of all different types of social issues that I would not have been able to come up with on my own, and gave me context about some of the discourse involving what constitutes as a social issue or not. I liked how despite the fact that each issue had different physical and mental effects, each stemmed from some negative aspect of human nature, like obsession, hatred, fear, greed, etc. For example,

global warming is very different from sexual assault, but both stem from the human characteristic of greed (Global warming was formed because people continued to sell oil/fossil fuels for money, despite the damage to the environment. Sexual assault exemplifies greed because it involves taking from and hurting another for pleasure, without concern for how the victim is affected.) All in all, this source was extremely valuable for understanding how varied and muddled social issues are, in addition to providing inspiration for what parasites resemble which social issues.

## Link to Project Outcome

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1\\_Mv1T7VAsttI-ZjlrkTSqISfkuwqEEwnLRGINrhCdI/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_Mv1T7VAsttI-ZjlrkTSqISfkuwqEEwnLRGINrhCdI/edit)