

# Writer's Journal, Fall 20 15 pts./15%

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“Language leads to more language.” —Kim Addonizio

DUE DATES FOR CHECKS AND FINAL HAND-IN WILL BE OUR SCHEDULE



## **About**

Your journal is a creative space for ideas, jottings, drafts, notes, experiments, quotations, dream records, pastings, scrap-booking, reflections and more. Most writers claim great success with a notebook of this sort, which often becomes a springboard to developed and finished work. It is a little like your mind unwinding on paper—your mind as it considers possibilities, makes connections, jumpstarts new drafts, stews and brews, plays with words—and from such craziness comes amazing things.

Even if this really isn't your cup of tea, it's important to make a good-faith effort. It simply doesn't work unless you put yourself into it.

The journal is something to accompany you wherever you go, something easily accessed and used when any question or idea hits you. You can set aside a very brief time every day—maybe upon waking or going to sleep, for example—or you can fit it in whenever the moment feels right. Whatever you do, no matter how silly-seeming, is good as long as you are writing. If you miss a day, just do a little more the next time.

The journal can also contain drafts of the mandatory projects as well as your own independent work. Independent work can spin out of the multitude of tips and exercises in *Wild Mind*, ideas offered in class and *Harmonious Confusion*, and anything you find on your own.

NOTE: you will occasionally be given a mandatory entry to complete.

## **IMPORTANT**

It may seem, to some people, that doodles and musings and such are kind of pointless, “soft” writing. But it's incredibly important that you just WRITE, every day. Studies galore show that some of the best and most creative ideas come to writers when they are simply moving their pen or typing on their keyboard—ideas that would not come to them otherwise.

It's amazing to me how interesting student journals can be. In fact, I often see

entries that read like nearly finished poems or stories! And the entries are often fresher, less uptight, and more interesting than the other material students write. So: I ENCOURAGE YOU TO ACTUALLY CONSIDER ANY ENTRY, AND ANY KIND OF ENTRY, AS A POTENTIAL POEM OR STORY. Don't necessarily aim for that, but look back on your entries from time and you may be surprised at the gold mine you find.

### ***Instructions***

Create an electronic journal in Word. Simply start a new document, and title it something like, *My Journal*. You will type all of your daily entries in this document.

**All entries must be dated, and you should indicate where you were when you wrote the entry. If you are doing an assigned journal entry, give it an assignment header.**

You are expected to write in your journal working every day of the semester (i.e., five times per week). You may miss a day or a few now and then, and that's ok. Simply write a few more developed entries the next time to make up for it.

If you're ever in doubt about whether you are writing enough, just ask.

You should vary the types of entries you write. I.e., don't write only diary-like personal reflections, or only daily record of activities, or only drafts of your coursework. Change it up. Write an occasional informal essay on politics or religion; describe your nightly dreams; quote writers you are currently reading; etc. You can always discuss our course readings too.

### ***Audience***

Your instructor and your classmates will be able to read your journal, but you are actually the main intended audience.

### ***Purpose***

To practice "thinking on paper," the kind of free association and day dreaming mixed with hard reflection which can ultimately lead to solid ideas and products. The journal also trains you to keep an eye out always for writing which you want to collect and later read: poems, articles, snippets, quotations.

### ***Types of Possible Entries***

- Drafts of any and all coursework.
- Class notes.
- "Hard" reflections on and analysis of serious topics, both personal and public.
- Research notes.



- “Soft” entries that include brief thoughts, interesting and illuminating quotations, questions for instructor or a general reader, character sketches, plot outlines, dream records, etc.
- “Very soft” entries that include doodles, jokes, shopping lists, etc.
- “Serious” visual pieces (more than doodles), though not in excess of the writing.
- Anything you can come up with that is relevant to the course and its aims.

### ***Due Dates and Scoring***

Your journal will be checked about three or four weeks into the semester to see how you are doing, and possibly again at about 9 weeks. You will hand in the completed journal at the end of the term for scoring.

A = Outstanding = 14-15 pts.

B = Good = 12-13 pts.

C = Ok = 9-11 pts.

D = Poor 6-8 pts.

### ***Grades Explained***

A—the journal meets and often exceeds all expectations and criteria laid out in this assignment. It is vital and engaged, frequently inspired, and easily demonstrates the art of journaling. It is also legible and organized helpfully. It includes one entry per “working day” of the semester, or five entries per week with very few gaps. If there are gaps, they can be made up with extra well-developed or a few somewhat lengthier entries after the missed ones. Your journal balances light material with serious or “hard” entries, and explores a variety of entry types. The journal represents an exceptionally plugged-in and curious mind which is always seeking ideas and asking questions.

B—the journal meets all or virtually all expectations and criteria. It is a good-faith effort to practice the art of journaling, is legible and helpfully organized. It includes an entry for every day, with gaps (about 4-7). Or it may show fewer gaps for no lengthier entries written later to make up for them. It may rely a bit too much on just one type of entry. The journal represents an engaged mind at work.

C—the journal meets one or two of the stated criteria and/or comes close to some. It may be adequate but perfunctory, may show some effort in spots but primarily be uninspired. It may often include less than five entries per week (roughly 8 or more skipped dates, and no lengthier entries to follow up). It may be somewhat difficult to read, either because mechanics are especially troublesome, print or type is not always legible, or organization is weak. The journal demonstrates a mind inconsistently and minimally engaged, but engaged nonetheless.

D—the journal meets almost no criteria but is saved by acceptable performance in one or possibly two areas. It may seem like a very minimal effort, mechanically performed, with mostly less than five entries per week, possibly much less at times. Sentence errors or disorganization may seriously impede reading. The journal does not demonstrate an active and engaged mind at work.

## TIPS

Try setting aside a specific time to write every day.

Look at student samples: very personal; more philosophical; Game of Thrones med.

Can include:

- Snippets of poems and quotations
- Class notes
- Responses to any of the readings; talk to the authors; ask questions; research
- Responses to whatever you are reading on your own
- Daily goals, reflections, reminders
- Drafts of new work
- Freewriting, brainstorming, mapping
- *Harmonious Confusion*
- *Skittish Libations*
- Whatever is on your mind
- How do you feel

Get used to this idea: **I must write every day.** Have I done some daily writing. Did I brush my teeth. Did I use deodorant. Did I study for Chem exam. Did I text Fred. Did I buy milk. Did I write in Journal.

