

Paper 1: The Chunky Mosaic (5-7 Pages)

This paper will seem strange to you; you've probably never written anything like it before. We're going to write using "crots." A crot is a flash – a segment – a chunk – a fragment. It's any and all of these things. Crots don't use transitions. Crots are for creative people like you. I want this paper to be life flashes – significant experiences in your life that make you who you are. The essay will function as a mosaic – a bunch of crots cobbled together to construct a whole vision of who you are. These reflections can be from childhood, adolescence, your high school careers, first impressions of college and people whom you've met or would like to meet, visions of your future. They can be fictional – they can be real. And when I say they can be fictional, I mean they can be a composite sketch of someone or something. They can be false – only their essence has to be true. In high school, you wrote five paragraph essays about nonsense. Forget high school. Forget everything you learned in high school. In this paper, I want your life experiences. This is your biography.

Here's how we'll work it. Together and apart, we will write short scenes. They could be as long as 500 words or as short as 100 (or 50 or 10 for that matter). Does it matter? Doesn't matter. You'll need enough crots to fill 5 pages, the minimum for this paper. We'll sketch people and places and ourselves using vivid detail. I mean vivid detail. So much detail you'll want to scream.

Write with fragments. Use slang if you want. Write poetry. Write a short, short story. Write a song. Write an exposition. Imitate a style. Parody something. Run-ons, anyone? Adopt different voices. Pretend you're someone else. Switch from first-person to second-person to third-person. Don't get lazy. This is more work than a regular essay. When your scenes are done, we'll arrange them to form a narrative. Can it be chronological? Of course. Can it not be chronological? Of course.

The purpose: what will this paper actually do for you? It's my aim to show you that creativity and writing in college can go together. It's my aim to show you that a worthwhile and interesting piece of writing does not need to have a concrete beginning, middle, and end. My aim is to show you that using vivid detail enhances your writing immeasurably. My aim is to show you that you can tell a story by indirectly telling it. My aim is for you to realize something important about yourself and your writing. My aim is for you to actually enjoy this.