

¶1: Context

Let's return to Paul Graham's "Age of the Essay," specifically his claim that

if you want to write essays, you need two ingredients: a few topics you've thought about a lot, and some ability to ferret out the unexpected. What should you think about? My guess is that it doesn't matter — that anything can be interesting if you get deeply enough into it.

During these first two months of school, one topic you've thought about a lot is *yourself*. Certainly our course focuses you on introspection, with reading and writing on everything from your work ethic to your empathy, but this focus goes beyond grade abatement in Room 210. The high school has brought in motivational speakers, launched a Brewster CARES initiative, and ask you to read *Enrique's Journey* — events that ask you to look within yourself as much as anything else.

You are also in your junior year. You have begun thinking about college and your future, about who you are and what you believe. Your world is no longer quite as limited as it might have been in the past, and you are now closer to graduation than you are to your first day of high school.

¶2: Prompt

Write an essay about your journey.

Define the first noun in that sentence through the readings of this course, but take care to define the second noun in a way that makes sense to *you*. "Journey" has its roots in the word for "day," and it can be made to fit almost any approach you want to take to an essay about your path in life, the events that have shaped you, your nascent beliefs, and so on.

Remember: You know more about yourself than anyone else, just by virtue of having spent every moment of your existence in your skin and in your mind. Do what Graham and Didion suggest – observe yourself and your life, looking for what is interesting and surprising. Then write.

¶3: Directions

You will start this process on your own, using what you've learned from our coursework over these first two months. Philosophically, you will want to look back at our collection of quotations on writing, at Joan Didion's thoughts, and at Paul Graham's approach. Keep the pillars and profiles of grade abatement handy, too; the process — how you grow, how you work with others, how you monitor that process — is far more important than any finished product. (We will discuss later what Graham calls "the golden age of the essay," especially the ease with which you could publish any finished work online.)

Practically, you will then receive a toolbox for writing that we can use to hammer out an essay in full. This toolbox is *bishop composition*, another iterative and modular component of what we do. You can see the current version of it by perusing our main website; with some luck and a lot of coffee, however, I will have an updated version for you by the end of the week.