

Unit 2: Invention

Descriptive Essay

Purpose:

This assignment will help you carefully consider theories of invention we are studying in this unit by putting them into conversation with your own experience as a writer.

Instructions:

Using specific illustrative examples from your think-aloud protocol activity and drawing on unit 2 materials, describe how your ideas originate. Place particular emphasis on influence. Where do ideas come from?

If you're having trouble getting started, try using this template to get some momentum:

Nothing comes from nothing. This is evident in my own invention practices, and is confirmed by Bawarshi (2003), Carr (2007), and Rodriguez (2007)...

Writing Guidelines:

- 750-1000 words
- Font size 12; any Sans Serif font
- Any spacing you prefer (double spacing is not necessary)
- Use APA citation style when referencing sources
- You are permitted (though not required) to refer to additional outside sources not assigned in the course. You may need to supply some additional context.
- Use personal pronouns (I, me). You can't write a reflection in the third person!
- For this assignment, please write formally. To do so, use:
 - complete sentences (resource: [Crafting Readable Sentences](#))
 - punctuation and capitalization
 - precise vocabulary/words and proper Canadian spelling
 - paragraphing (1 main idea per paragraph) (resource: [Structuring Writing](#))

- signposting to guide your reader through the text (resource: [Harvard Writing Center](#))
- Feel free to use images, GIFs, hyperlinks, etc. where they help you communicate. Please include source information for all found resources (include a link and author name). Also, please do not include any potentially offensive content, and avoid GIFs that depict people or cultures different from you/your own as this can be considered inappropriate cultural appropriation.

Invention in Mayhem and Discouragement:

Getting to writing after “mom shifts”

The challenge faced by every writer is figuring out where to start. Already, I have started, stopped, thrown out whole paragraphs and again, for the fourth time, rewritten the beginning of this essay. I practically lived out Carr’s (2017) description of the writing process when she described it as starting a draft, getting frustrated or stuck, then “move to a clean sheet of paper and start again... until we’ve made something cohesive” (p. 79). The notion of using my own think aloud protocol activity as a method of determining how ideas originate seemed at once, both fantastical and formidable. Upon reflection though, I found the entire activity enlightening; as Rodriguez (2017) suggested, “one learns about oneself as one writes” (p. 133), and I believe that stayed true with me. Before starting my think aloud protocol activity, I was exhausted; after a full day of “Mom shifts”—the first at work and the second at home—the thought of starting shift three as a student was daunting. However, while searching for blank paper on which to write, I accidentally discovered a note scrawled in my deceased father’s handwriting, a note I hadn’t seen in several years. It was a random memo but it represented enough symbolism for me to interpret as a “sign” from him to keep going. This romanticized belief that he was somehow encouraging me through my reluctance motivated me to begin. And so I did — I began with him.

Through documenting my personal, evolutionary shift from hesitation to inspiration in my think-aloud protocol, I discovered that ideas can originate in the midst of mayhem and discouragement. Ideas are an apex of things that make sense only once they’re organized into words; they’re a literary translation of feelings that can be read and reread

until a level of relative understanding is reached. Bawarshi (2003) suggests that “beginnings” are actually “acts of departure from something” (p. 2), which I’ve found to be true. At the end of my chaotic day with still more to accomplish, the thought of sitting down and writing seemed impossible until one fortuitous discovery urged me on. From that point, as I started to search for connections between my readings and my self-reflections, I found that the more I spoke and the more I listened, the more ideas I generated. You might say that invention is noisy.

The readings also offered insight into the influences on my writing and made me more cognizant of how or why I tend to choose specific subject matter. One observation that I noted was that, as a child, I loved reading romantic novels with strong female protagonists and I recognized this to be the genre that I would probably be most comfortable using in my own writing. Bawarshi’s (2003) analysis of the interconnectedness between genres and invention allowed me to understand why and how I write what I write; he describes genre as “invention itself... that both organizes and generates the conditions of social and rhetorical production” and that “writers both invent and are invented by the genres that they write” (p. 7). Additionally, Rodriguez’ (2017) suggestion that one’s writing is influenced by other writers seemed very apparent since the stories I felt most connected to were written by female authors, all with similar underlying themes and styles. It became clear to me that I am never truly alone at the moment of invention. There are always other writers and genre conventions influencing that moment.

At the same time, however, the self is present in the act of invention. Rodriguez’ (2017) perspective reassured me that using writing as an experiential outlet is common

practice and that one's self is often where the source of inspiration begins: "the self is significant in the act of writing to make meaning, present an argument, and come into existence" (p. 132). The self, though, can inhibit both invention and following through with writing projects. The fear of failure is a common part of writing. Carr's observation that good writing, as with the mastery of any skill, results from years of repeated failure and "is learned slowly, over a long period of time, and with much difficulty" (p. 78), served to remind me that every edit represents an opportunity to improve. Carr validated my desire to return to university as a step in the right direction, negating my initial "failed" attempt many years prior. By formally honing my writing skills, I hope that the scholarly guidance will assist me in developing and legitimizing my writing, and that professional constructive criticism of my essays will provide me with a gauge of how I am progressing.

Great ideas are often accidental offsprings of failed attempts to create meaningful and desirable writing. The writing process can be a long, arduous, frustrating and confusing affair—one that can only begin once an idea has been conceived. The blank spaces they are born from can be transformed into practically anything; as Bawarshi (2003) said, "beginnings take place in the midst of things" (p. 3). From there, it can evolve into a masterful web of invention, genre, desire and creativity, all interconnected by the writer's social contexts, influences and experiences.

For me, the think aloud activity protocol provided a reflection into my personal influences that I had not considered before, allowed me to recognize affinities to certain subject matters and stylistic methodologies, but most importantly, affirmed my reasons for wanting to write — sharing personal stories of life experiences woven in a way that forges connection with others. As I reflected on the fact that it took twenty-two years for

me to return to school, I realized that I was beginning again by editing my life and changing its storyline from where I thought it was going, and I was overcome with emotion. I started crying, not out of sadness or weariness, but because I felt an overwhelming sense of self-affirmation that I had all but given up on. Starting this essay proved to be more difficult than I thought—I had too many ideas in my head, too many places I could begin, and yet no real concept or direction, until, while in the midst of searching for something to write on, invention came — an idea — sparked by some chicken scratched words written on an ordinary piece of paper by one of the most influential and extraordinary people in my life.

References

Bawarshi, A. (2003). Chapter 1: A meditation on beginnings. In A. Bawarshi, *Genre and the Invention of the Writer: Reconsidering the Place of Invention in Composition* (pp. 1-15). University Press of Colorado.

Carr, A.D. (2017). Failure is not an option. In C.E. Ball & D.M. Loewe (Eds.), *Bad Ideas about Writing* (p. 76). West Virginia University Libraries Digital Publishing Institute Morgantown, WV.

<https://textbooks.lib.wvu.edu/badideas/badideasaboutwriting-book.pdf>

Rodriguez, R.J. (2017). Leave yourself out of your writing. In C.E. Ball & D.M. Loewe (Eds.), *Bad Ideas about Writing* (p. 131). West Virginia University Libraries Digital Publishing Institute Morgantown, WV.

<https://textbooks.lib.wvu.edu/badideas/badideasaboutwriting-book.pdf>