

A Piñata of Theory and Autobiography: Research Writing Breaks Open Academe,

by Mark Shadle and Rob Davis (Eastern Oregon University)

We have no sticks, but would you like more carrots? If you liked our chapter, perhaps you'll enjoy incorporating some of the assignments below into your teaching. Or if you are a student, perhaps you will try some. Here's a list of what supplements our chapter:

1. A List of Multiwriting Projects
2. A List of Multiwriting Projects Showcasing Theory/Thinkers
3. A Sample Syllabus/Class Schedule for Writing 328: Writing Theory
4. Invention Strategy: A Three-Columned List of Personality Traits, Hobbies/Habits and Unusual Experiences
5. Invention Strategy: A Bodylore Assignment
6. Conceptualization: An Inventory of Student Forms
7. Research Strategy: Bookstore Tour
8. Transforming Traditional Research: "Grammar B" Forms
9. A Project: The Multiwriting Book Review

Enjoy!

1. Brief List of the Titles of Multiwriting Projects:

A Bosnian "Transnational" in America	A Country Doctor
A Journey to Vietnam	A Taste of Hawaii
A Postmodern Mexican Revolution	A Wal-Mart Ethnography
Adoption	Adrienne Rich
Aging Gracefully	Albania
Anorexia	Backpacking
Belly Dancing	Bill Cosby
Body Piercing	Bonsai
Bras	Bull Trout
Capital Punishment	Challah
Chicano Cooking	Chief Joseph
Childbirth	Chilean Literature
Chinese Cultural	Revolution Colors
Costuming	Cowboy Culture
Coyotes	Cryogenics
Dead Brothers	Disney World
Divorce	Doors
Dr. Seuss	Ebonics
Electronic Church of Elvis	Encryption
Empowerment Through Subversion	Spring
Enlightenment	Ernest Hemingway
Environmentalism and Timber	Eskimo Culture

ESP
Faces of War
Feminist Education
Fleas
Funerals and Rites of Dying
Gardening
Gravestones
Halloween
Harry Houdini
Horseshoeing
Honduras
Humans: Animals and Not
Islands
Jackie Robinson
Jazz Saxophone
Joseph Cornell
Leonardo De Vinci and the Body
Long Haul Truckers
Margaritaville
Mark Twain
Mules
My Mother
Nature and Art
Notepassing in School
Oral History of Women in World War II
Parrots and Clones
Post-9/11 Fears and Encroachments
Prime Numbers
Propaganda and Conspiracies
Raves
Restoration of an Olds Cutlass
Restoring Native American Heritage
Robin Williams
Runaway Kids
Setting Sun: Apocalyptic Visions
Sexism, "Lookism," and Capitalism
Siberia
Snow Survival
Spiritual Healing
Star Wars and the Hero Myth
Sun Ra
Tarot
Tea
Television Culture
The Azores
The Afterlife

Ex-Patriot Canadians
Faith and Doubt
Fire
Fragments of My Father
Garbage
Georgia O'Keefe
Guardian Angels
Hamlet
Hawaiian Pidgin
Health Care for the Poor
Horizontal Oil Well Drilling
Imprisonment
J.D. Salinger
Japanese American Internment
Joan Baez
King Solomon
Kurt Cobain
Lucille Clifton
Marine Science Center
Mexican Day of the Dead
Multiple Personality Disorder
Mysterious Cephalopods
Nature and the Senses
Orson Wells
Parrotheads
Population Growth
Preparing for a Career
Prison Literacy
Quilting
Restaurant Kitchen Banter
Richard Feynman
Roads
Rubber
Samuel Barber's Adagio
Scottish Heritage
Shepherding
Small Talk
Speech Therapy with Children
Stereotypes
Steven Jay Gould
Sylvia Plath
Tattooing
Teaching Natural Selection
Tetrahedrons
The "Mullet" Haircut
The Birth of Punk

The Dukes of Hazard
The Grand Canyon
The Number "10"
The Plastic Body/The Edible Body
The Separation of Church and State
Construction Crew Literacy
The Urge to Destroy What We Cannot Be
Theories of Love
The Literary Canon Debate
Monopoly (the Game)
Thurgood Marshall
Tori Amos
Truth, Reality, and Perception

The Forbidden Child
The Moon
The Shroud of Turin
The Spectacle of Fighting
The Utopian Writing Center
Theories of Beauty
Theories of Good and Evil
Theories of the Afterlife
Theories of the Soul
Things That Just Disappear
Toes
Windowbox Gardening
Wedding Lore

2. Partial List of Multiwriting Projects and Thinkers/Theory that Inspired Them:

- Encryption Theory (Foucault following Nietzsche and post-structuralism)
- Digital Surveillance (Foucault following Nietzsche and post-structuralist theory)
- Zen (theology and philosophy)
- Theory of Love (psychology and genetics)
- Bras (deconstruction and reconstruction)
- Torture (Foucault)
- Journey is Destination (art and photography)
- Painted Head (conceptual art)
- Tetrahedron (geometry and physics)
- Dinner House Literacy (ethnography)
- Notepassing (informal communication and pedagogy)
- The Urge to Destroy What We Cannot Be (psychology)
- Labeling (organization and communication)
- Cleaning (organization and communications)
- Setting Sun: Apocalyptic Visions (theology and literature)
- EmpTV Guide (Baudrillard on culture as simulation)

3. Writing 328: Writing Theory Syllabus/Schedule:

THIS CLASS USES PLUS/MINUS GRADING, IS
READING/WRITING/LISTENING/SPEAKING/THINKING-INTENSIVE
& PART OF A CELLPHONE-FREE, IMPROVISATIONAL ZONE

Eastern Oregon University Mark Shadle: Loso 150
Wr. 328: Writing Theory Office Hrs.: MW: 2-3 p.m.;
Fall, 2003: MWR 10-10:50 a.m. MTWR: 2-3 p.m. or by appt.
Zabel 106, Spiral Arms of Milky Way Phone: 962-3747 (message)
Email: mshadle@eou.edu

SYLLABUS / CLASS SCHEDULE

"But I'm not asking for that. I'm asking simply to be exposed to, and informed about, the full range of compositional possibilities. That I be introduced to all the tools, right now, and not be asked to wait for years and years until I have mastered right-handed affairs before I learn anything about left-handed affairs. That, rather, I be introduced to all the grammars/vehicles/tools/compositional possibilities now so that even as I 'learn to write' I will have before me as many resources as possible. I'm asking: that all the 'ways' of writing be spread out before me and that my education be devoted to learning how to use them (2)."

Winston Weathers, in *An Alternate Style: Options in Composition*

STUDENT OUTCOMES FOR THE COURSE:

- Students will "tame" their fear of theory as "abstracting from the already abstract" by practicing theory in writing assignments, especially their larger Multiwriting Project using theory, and through discussion of the ways in which theories are part of our daily lives.
- Students will learn to go deeper than before into the theories of their assumptions and those theories that passionately attract them and are part of their Multiwriting Project.
- Students will begin to have an appreciation for the way images, especially from books, websites and films critiqued in class, are non-verbal and represent/inspire "theory."
- Students will feel more comfortable and excited about creatively discovering a topic/theories through the mixing of genres, disciplines, cultures and media.
- Students will be more conversant in, and comfortable with, theorizing in all their classes and in their daily lives.

THE EOU HYPNO-BEAM: "You are getting sleepy. You are going to sleep. Wait: don't start that dream yet! Think of theories of the universe. That's right, picture the Big Bang. Wrap your mind around fractal or string theory! Peer into Boolean algebra and Riemannian geometry. Try to figure out why donuts have holes, and elephants trunks..."

OBJECTIVES: WHAT WE'LL BE DOING:

1. Getting more comfortable re-defining both "writing" and "theory"; our goal is less the survey of traditional theories about writing, and more the practice of writing and applying theory across the disciplines.
2. Reading, writing and thinking about theories that open up the topics students choose for their Multiwriting Project, and becoming more articulate about them through class discussion.
3. Creating a Multi-genre/disciplinary/cultural/media Writing Project that interests us personally and that we can be passionate about. This project is

both an exploration and enactment of theory in writing (see attached list of titles of former projects at the end of the syllabus).

4. Complicating the notion of text/research: multiple avenues of learning/logic will open up as we look at multiple genres, media, cultures, disciplines and “languages.”
5. Complicating the notion of voice/self: multiples voices/selves open up when we think of this plurality of intentions as a healthy or useful thing.
6. Juxtaposing and/or integrating the processes of speaking, listening, reading, writing, thinking and the senses.
7. Add your own here:

“People are ready for a college education when they appreciate a sense of contradiction.” Gary Snyder

A VOYEURISTIC INVITATION:

Sometimes I see the world through poetry: a bit of cadenced language, a striking image, a metaphor with extensions following close behind.

Sometimes I see the world through prose: a description that clarifies a vivid moment, a pointed narrative, a monologue marshaling all the points I should have brought up during an argument.

Sometimes I see the world through dramatic encounters: before a student arrives for a conference, I play the dialogue that might occur between us; I have talked with my father (dead now for twenty-five years) of things that were and things that might have been.

Each genre offers me ways of seeing and understanding that the others do not. I perceive the world through multigenres. They shape my seeing. They define who I am (109).

Tom Romano: “Melding Fact, Interpretation, and Imagination”

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS:

Bill Bryson’s *A Short History of Nearly Everything* is at the EOU Bookstore. (After that, it’s all about taking notes and jotting down hundreds of your own titles! See Bibliography below at end of Syllabus for Recommended Texts)

METHODS: HOW WE’LL BE WORKING:

1. Analogy One: Imagine that we are widely committed to mapping. The idea is that “mapping,” loosely interpreted, is what we do/make when we think. So theory is just another kind of map we make. This allows us, as we move toward our big, theoretical Multiwriting Project, to go from orientation (with no

destination and no route) through navigation (a destination, but no route) to pilotage (where we have both destination and route).

2. Analogy #Two: The class is an episode of trauma that moves from questioning into deeper crisis, until the comforting narratives we tell ourselves, about ourselves—and in this case about writing—come unraveled to reveal new perspectives/processes of expression and knowledge.
3. Analogy #Three: There are no disciplines: all kinds of knowledge and epistemologies are available for use. The multi-body is too complex for just one discipline or voice.
4. Analogy #Four: Your project is one long brainstorm that has both lightning strikes of great inspiration and the gentle mist of your detective work about who you are.
5. Nuts and Bolts: Reading, writing, discussing, viewing (films), listening (to music), conferencing with Writing Lab tutor, teacher and classmates.

STOP: ALLERGY ALERT:

THIS CLASS COULD CAUSE ALLERGIC REACTIONS, INCLUDING LATE-NIGHT SOUL-SEARCHING, MENTAL DISTRACTION OR EVEN HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE. WE WILL SOMETIMES FLY IN THE FACE OF “TRADITIONAL” NOTIONS OF WRITING, READING, SPEAKING, LISTENING AND THINKING. THIS CLASS IS FOR THOSE NOT SATISFIED WITH ANSWERS SO FAR RECEIVED, AND MORE INTERESTED IN QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS. IT’S FOR WANDERERS, EXPLORERS AND INSOMNIACS. LOSERS AND LOVERS. IF YOU DECIDE TO HITCH-HIKE THE MULTIVERSE WITH US, YOUR TEACHER SUGGESTS WARMING UP BY LISTENING TO BRYAN LEE PLAY “CROSS-CUT SAW” WHILE EATING CHERRY PIE ALA MODE, DRINKING COLUMBIAN SUPREMO HIGH OCTANE COFFEE, WATCHING A THING OF WONDER , SNIFFING HIGH DESERT SAGE AND TARWEED AFTER A RAINSTORM AND STROKING THE PRICKLY BRILLO-PAD FUR OF A KOALA—ALL AT ONCE TO HEIGHTEN THE EFFECT.
COMPUTER LITERACY:

Students are strongly encouraged to word-process nearly all writing, but the key papers must be word-processed to ensure an ethical treatment of texts. The Multiwriting Theory Project must be submitted as two copies each, as well as on data disk.

Students are strongly encouraged to incorporate a homepage and/or for their Multi-Project, or even submit their portfolio on WebPages (as well as word-processed hard copy) and/or in Powerpoint. Any student interested in setting up a homepage as part of this class is responsible

for beginning, early in the quarter, with Writing Lab tutors and students in the Multimedia classes who can assist them in learning how to use appropriate software.

EVALUATION:

A Revision/Editing Checklist will be negotiated and agreed upon for awarding points. Because this is an emerging class, and experimentally taught, it's hard to know what range of work will emerge. But close contact between readers and writers in our class should allow us to preview a range of developing expertise. A curve will probably appear in the point totals, but is not pre-set. Holistic assessment will occur, but the Revising/Editing Checksheet will be used where relevant, especially to assess sentence-level errors that are not intentional. Multiwriting Projects will also be assessed by considering:

1. Care and completeness of research
2. Number of genres, disciplines, media and cultures used
3. Appropriateness and cleverness of form and style
4. Number of errors in mechanics and grammar at sentence level
5. Overall organization, neatness and aesthetic integrity

Because no guarantee of grade can be given until the project is complete, students worried about a grade need to work steadily on their project and present significant amounts of it as soon as possible to get any idea of likely grade. It is up to the student to seek out the teacher during office hours or through appointment with questions about learning or assessment.

The percentages of the grade are as follows:

Class Participation/Attendance: 10%
Multi-Writing Project 0%
Course Evaluation 5%
Student-Teacher Conference 5%
20% Short Writings 20%
Total: 100%

ATTENDANCE:

We will be developing a dynamic discussion as a class and in small groups, so attendance is crucial and expected. Health emergencies and other excused absences should be reported before missing class, when possible. On the fourth unexcused absence, the 10% of the grade for class attendance and participation is lost (along with a decent chance at an "A"); on the seventh absence, the student will need to withdraw from class or be given an "F." Also, remembering that many of the class sessions will involve responding to each other's writing, it is essential that all assignments be completed on time with the appropriate copies for distribution. If you are absent or the work is turned in late, it will be of no use to the class and of little use to you; consequently, it will not be accepted. If you miss a class, see another member of class to see if anything has been added to or subtracted from the assignment.

WRITING LAB:

While regular attendance in the Writing Lab is not required beyond two visits, any student with difficulty reading or numerous mechanical and/or grammatical errors is **STRONGLY** encouraged to immediately set up regular, weekly appointments with experienced tutors in the Writing Lab. It is the student's responsibility to revise and edit such errors out of their work. Any student with documented Learning Disabilities must identify themselves immediately at the beginning of the quarter, so the best possible tutoring can be arranged.

ALL DEADLINE VERSIONS OF THE MULTI-WRITING THEORY PROJECT MUST BE INITIALED IN THE TOP LEFT-HAND CORNER BY A WRITING LAB TUTOR WHO HAS WORKED WITH THE STUDENT AT LEAST TWICE.

CITING SOURCES/AVOIDING PLAGIARISM:

Plagiarism, submitting another's work as your own, is strictly forbidden. See p. 17 of the 1997-98 EOU Student Handbook for more information on the Academic Honesty Code. To avoid plagiarism, attribute all information, arguments, and statements you take from a source within the text of your paper. For example, here's the way one would both quote and paraphrase writer Barry Lopez:

As Barry Lopez writes in "Mapping the Real Geography," "For as long as records go back, we have held two things dear: landscape and memory. Each infuses us with a different kind of life." Lopez argues that memory is our way of connecting to landscape, inhabiting it in a spiritual sense.

DISABILITY STATEMENT:

Students with documented disabilities need to contact the instructor at the beginning of the term to discuss any necessary accommodations during the class. Help with disabilities can be found in the EOU Learning Center in Loso Hall.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

September:

29-M Preview of course; (re-)defining "writing" and "theory"; self-introductions
Homework (hereafter HW):: begin reading A Short History of Nearly Everything, by Bryson;

October:

1-W Negotiation and revision of syllabus: discussing fears/expectations of/for course; begin discussing reading in;
HW: Keep reading and re-reading Bryson's book, or one of your choice on theory; prepare a question on reading for M;

2-R Brainstorming sources for topics together;

HW: Library Browsing: spend time in library and/or local bookstores searching for theories and Multi-Project (hereafter MP) topics;
Make list of possible theories and topics in library;

6-M Distribution of Syllabus; continue brainstorming topics;

- HW: prepare a list: 5 theories you know; 5 theories you don't know, but are interested in researching; five theories you are uninterested in; keep reading Bryson or your own book on theory;
- 8-W Former multiwriting students demo their projects;
HW: finish Bryson or theory book;
- 9-R More student demonstrations of multiwork, live and/or on video;
HW: Sign up with an experienced writing tutor in Writing Lab;
- 13-M Discuss lists of genres and forms;
HW: Study list of genres and write one to share on Wed., 10/15;
- 15-W Read genre pieces outloud and discuss;
HW: Revise first genre piece and begin another; write a one-page predictive Abstract for your multiwork project;
- 16-R Read Multiwriting Theory Project Abstracts outloud and discuss;
HW: Make a list of disciplines you want to include in project;
- 20-M Discuss lists of theories (from 10/6);
HW: Incorporate more theories in your project;
- 22-W Interactive Lecture/Discussion: Competing Theories for cross-disciplinary use in MTP, including Structuralism, Deconstruction, Post-Structuralism, Modernism, Post-Modernism;
HW: Explore any theories that sound interesting or relevant to your project; polish a genre to share on Mon.;
- 23-R Interactive Lecture/Discussion on finding form from content in project;
HW: continue adding/condensing forms for Theory Project with library and Internet research;
- 27-M Read another genre in small groups and discuss;
HW: Revise genre and write more;
- 29-W Interactive Lecture/Discussion on adding different kinds of media to MTP;
- 30-R Other faculty and/or alumni multiworkers join us to brainstorm MTP;
HW: Continue to add to MTP;
- November:
- 3-M Discuss Performance of MTP with handout;
HW: Add notes to MTP box on possible performance ideas;
- 5-W Watch film excerpts for ideas for genres and forms for MTP;
HW: Keep adding to, organizing and revising MTP; scan Winston Weathers' An Alternate Style: Options in Composition to prepare for "grammar b";
- 6-R Grammar B: Interactive Lecture on Alternative Grammars
HW: Build grammar b strategies into MTP; polish form or genre to share;
- 10-M Read and discuss another genre/form in small groups;
HW: Revise genre/form and create more;
- 12-W Discuss MTP with multimedia faculty and students;
HW: revise MTP to get it online;
- 13-R The Eleventh Hour: Strategies for Last-Minute Improvements in Theory Project;
HW: prepare excerpt of Theory Project to perform for class and sign up for time to perform;

17-M Perform excerpt from Theory Project;
 HW: continue preparing Deadline Portfolio;
 19-W Perform excerpt from Theory Project;
 HW: continue preparing Deadline Portfolio, including revisions of short pieces, like ought-to/want-to biography;
 20-R Perform excerpt from Theory Project;
 HW: continue preparing Deadline Portfolio with MTP;
 24-M Perform excerpt from Theory Project;
 HW: continue preparing Deadline Portfolio with MTP;
 26-W THANKSGIVING = NO CLASS
 27-R THANKSGIVING = NO CLASS
 December:
 1-M Perform excerpt from Theory Project;
 HW: continue preparing Deadline Portfolio;
 3-W Perform excerpt from Theory Project;
 HW: continue preparing Deadline Portfolio;
 4-R Fill out Student Evaluations and turn in Deadline Portfolios = DON'T MISS THIS CLASS!! MISSING THIS CLASS REDUCES GRADE ONE LETTER!!
 DEADLINE PORTFOLIOS, INCLUDING MULTIWRITING THEORY PROJECT, DUE IN CLASS ON FRIDAY, DEC. 5, 2003. THERE WILL BE NO TIME TO EVALUATE LATE PORTFOLIOS; IN OTHER WORDS, LATE PORTFOLIOS WILL FAIL. NO EXCUSES WILL BE ALLOWED FOR LATE PORTFOLIOS. THIS DEADLINE IS FIRM!
 Final Exam Week meeting is a chance to discuss portfolios with teacher, if necessary.

HAVE A PERFECT CHRISTMAS!

Deadline Portfolio Table of Contents:

1. Honest listing of days absent; include written doctor's excuse, if pre-approved.
2. Signed Blue Sheets from Writing Lab Tutor for minimum of Two Visits
3. Completed Self/Course Evaluation (No more than one page, single-spaced)
4. Notes from optional Student-Teacher Conference(s)
5. Short Writings:
6. 5 x 5 x 5 List of Theories That Interest You
7. Notes from Writing Lab sessions, multimedia students or classmates
8. Multiwriting Theory Project

Some Oxymorons that may help generate/draft your MTP by allowing the flexibility of complexity:

Act naturally	Found missing	Resident alien
Advanced BASIC	Genuine imitation	Safe sex
Airline food	Christian Scientists	Same difference
Almost exactly	Government organization	Sanitary landfill
Alone together	Legally drunk	Silent scream

British fashion	Living dead	Small crowd
Business ethics	Disc jockey	Naval intelligence
Microsoft Works	Soft rock	Butt head
Military intelligence	Software documentation	California culture
New classic	Sweet sorrow	Childproof
"Now, then ..."	Synthetic natural gas	Good grief
Passive aggression	Clearly misunderstood	Taped live
Peace force	Temporary tax increase	Computer jock
Plastic glasses	Terribly pleased	Computer security
Political science	Tight slacks	Definite maybe
Pretty ugly	Twelve-ounce pound cake	Diet ice cream
Rap music	Working vacation	Exact estimate
Religious tolerance	Reconstructed body	Symbolic logic

A Very Brief Bibliography:

Derek Owens: Resistance to Writings
 Jerome Bruner: Actual Minds, Possible Worlds, Acts of Meaning
 Gaston Bachelard: The Poetics of Space
 Greg Ulmer: Teletheory
 Mark Taylor & Esa Saarinen: Imagologies
 Belinda Recio: Blue
 James Elkins: The Object Stares Back
 Loren Eiseley: The Unexpected Universe
 Katherine Young: Bodylore
 Diane Ackerman: A Natural History of the Senses
 Richard Wilbur: A Brief History of Everything
 Patricia Harkin & John Schilb: Contending With Words
 Susan Griffin: The Eros of Everyday Life
 Werner Muensterberger: Collecting
 Ishmael Reed: Yellowback Radio Brokedown Mumbo Jumbo
 William Gass: On Being Blue
 Dan Eldon: The Journey is the Destination
 Lawrence Wechsler: Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder
 Peg Smith, Charles Daniel: The Chicken Book
 Robert Grudin Book
 Michael Ondaatje: The Collected Works of Billy the Kid
 Tom Romano: Writing With Passion
 David Bartholomae & Tony Petrosky: Ways of Reading
 Richard Feynmann: Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynmann
 John McPhee: Oranges
 William Calvin: The River That Flows Uphill
 Steven Millhauser: The Barnum Museum
 Donald Barthelme: Not-Knowing
 John Barth: Lost in the Funhouse
 Claudia Springer: Electronic Eros

Some Literary and Rhetorical Tropes:

Allegory
Antanacsis
Anthemoria
Antonomesia
Apostrophe
Auxesis
Erotema
Hyperbole
Irony
Litotes
Meiosis
Metaphor
Metonymy
Onomatopoeia
Parable
Puns
Personification
Paronomasia
Paralepsis
Rhetorical Question
Simile
Syllepsis

Some words/tropes with “syn” prefixes that help with integration across disciplines:

Word: Definition:

Sympathy:

Syncretism:

Synergy:

Synopsis:

Symptom:

Synesis:

Synecdoche:

Symmetry:

Synonym:

Syncline:

Syndrome:

Syncope:

Synostasis

Synaloepha:

Syncopate:

Synapse:

Synchronic:

Synthesis:

Symphonic:

Syntax:
Synesthesia:
Symbol:
Synchronicity:
Symbiosis:
Sympatric
Synecology:
Grammar B Forms:
Crot
Labyrinthine Sentence
Sentence Fragment
List
Double-Voice
Language Variegation: Orthographic Schemes and the Foreign Word

4. Invention Strategy: The Springwater of the Three-Columned List:

Many composition teachers and scholars talk about activities—including lists or free-writing—to generate writing or find a topic as “pre-writing.” This may seem a bit peculiar; as this sounds like writing we do before writing. But it does remind us that many of us think about a topic for a long while before writing, even when it might be better to just start jotting down ideas. Equally misleading is the common phrase “brainstorming,” for the thinking we do prior to, and during, writing is often more like water bubbling incessantly from a spring than a thunder and lightning storm that comes quickly and is gone. Yet the technique that often discovers surprising or thunderous results and leads to the best writing topics is a three-column list.

Here’s how it’s done:

1. Take a sheet of paper and turn it sideways, then divide it into three columns.
2. In the right-hand column, list the “Ten Most Unusual Things” or “Accidents” that have happened to you. Then label the middle column “Hobbies and Habits,” and the left-hand column “Personality Traits.”
3. Rather than start with the left-hand column, the way many forced inventory preferences in psychology do, go straight to the right-hand column and blurt out the unusual things that have happened, and which the urge to conformity in high school may have suppressed. Turn to that column now, and fill it in with your experiences.
4. Here are samples of things students have put in this column; put a check mark by any that have occurred to you, or add those that the ones below remind you of. For example, you may not have had 300 bee-stings in two days, but this entry might remind you that you did get many mosquito bites and malaria as a high-school exchange student in tropical China. Similarly, you may have won a bicycle rather than a car, or saved someone’s life in quicksand, rather than in the ocean. See, hear and discover your own stories for your right-hand column in the entries below:

Unusual Things or Accidents

saw a ghost
met the President
saved a life in ocean
bitten by a rattlesnake
ran Boston Marathon
hiked Pacific Crest Trail
built an igloo
witnessed a robbery
caused a fire
tipped over in a sailboat
had out-of-body experience
danced with Bruce Springsteen
ate a worm
got 300 bee-stings
rode a camel
surfed naked
drank snake blood
attended a homebirth
met father at age thirty
won a car
climbed Mt. Shasta
sky dived
learned to fly
swam with dolphins
scuba dived
got stuck on Splash Mountain
became lost in wilderness
held a cobra
saw a UFO
survived a plane crash
bunji jumped
had an abortion
won a championship
survived an earthquake
had three step-mothers
went on Jerry Springer show
attended thirteen schools
bred ferrets
rode rodeo bulls
cut a music CD
was an extra in a movie
had a worm ranch
dug graves
rafted the Colorado River

hiked Pacific Crest and Appalachian Trails
painted elephant toenails

5. When you're ready, choose several of your most interesting incidents and free-write in any way that comes to mind for twenty minutes or so on each. Have you ever written on the experiences in your list before? If so, what was the occasion?
6. Show your list to classmates, friends or family members; which entries do they find most interesting? Would you agree that reaching your audience is a matter of negotiating a definition of what is "interesting" with them?
7. Now it's time to fill in the other two columns of the list. For each unusual experience in the third column, try to think of a hobby or habit that might have led to that event, then ask if there is a personality trait that set up that hobby. For example, in the first entry in the three-column list below, it might make sense that someone who "likes danger" would choose the hobby of "bunji jumping."

But this list is different from many social science forced inventory preferences, which attempt to first delineate a personality portrait, then remember events and habits that represent it. The importance of starting with the unusual experiences is that they are often buried treasure precisely because they do not seem explicable in terms of habits or personality. For instance, in the fourth entry in the list below, it doesn't really follow that a shy person who just happened to be walking to school would be as likely to witness a robbery in progress as a student who takes a job as an attendant in an all-night parking garage on weekends. Similarly, it may at first seem surprising that a macho hunter ends up painting an elephant's toenails in the sixth example below. It may be that there are no hobbies/habits or personality traits that explain an entry in the third column of unusual experiences; such entries may be the most interesting ones to pursue in a research project.

Sample Three-Column List

Personality Trait:	Hobbies/Habits:	Experiences/"Accidents":
likes danger	mountain climbing	falling on Mt. Shasta
brave	playing truth or dare	eating a worm
open-minded	playing after dark	seeing a ghost
shy	walking to school	seeing a robbery
fearless	entering rodeos	breaking neck on bull ride
macho	hunting	painting an elephant's
toenails		

Have you already found a few interesting topics for your project? Make a list of the three that most interest you.

5. Invention Strategy: Discovering a Topic Through Bodylore

The human body is a personal thing to all of us, yet it is also a perennial theme for intellectual thought and cultural critique. At times, Western culture has tried to get rid of the body, asking us, for instance to be “rational beings” who take the fact that we think as proof that we exist and use only our minds to relate to the world. This is, of course, a limited way of understanding ourselves, and it discounts a large measure of our lives. One might say, for instance, that non-rational, or not solely rational, experiences or states of being—such as hunger, anger, love, heart-break or mourning—show us that we exist and color, even dictate, our actions in the world. Such experiences cut through mind and body, connecting us as one.

Perhaps even more interesting are those body events outside the mind’s control. We may be in a hurry, but that doesn’t mean we don’t need to use the restroom. Few people want their hair to fall out, yet it does. On a positive note, there is nothing quite like the fresh smell after a rain. It can cut through thought and show us that we are alive.

In popular culture, the body is not dismissed, but obsessed over. Weight loss plans, steroids, skimpy swim suits, breast implants, Viagra, hair weaves, piercings, tattoos, sexual freedoms, Puritanical reactions, pornography, Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, the Playboy Mansion, sexual predators, pedophilia—the body, and what we do with it, is everywhere! The body becomes:

- a shrine to be worshipped;
- an evil entity to be reviled;
- the site of “abnormalities” that make the tabloids;
- the beginning of sin, and redemption;
- the sign of our freedom;
- a revelation of the ways we are controlled;
- the private treasure we call our own;
- a commodity constantly on display.

The body spreads through the culture as a meme or theme, as we speak of “muscle cars,” “the body of texts,” “the brains of the operation” or a company which has laid off a multitude of workers as one that is “lean and mean.” What other metaphors or phrases stemming from the body and senses can you think of? You may want to work as a class to add to the list below:

- I see what you mean
- I hear you
- head above shoulders
- no brainer
- a touch of class
- a leg up
- broken-hearted
- leg-breaker
- heart of stone
- I can’t stomach that
- seeing is believing
- I feel it in my gut

- Finger-tight
- in the palm of my hand
- well-armed
- back-asswards
- elbow my way through
- keep your chin up
- turn up your nose
- neck-in-neck
- put your back into it

What would you say that our culture tells us about our bodies? Here is a top-ten list of favorite responses:

1. Be thin
2. Look young
3. The body can be fixed through technology
4. The body can be fixed with drugs
5. People will judge you by your body
6. Indulge yourself; you deserve it
7. If you have indulged yourself, you should feel guilty
8. If you feel guilty, we have a plan to help
9. The body is big money
10. The body can be used to sell anything

Now make a list of body experiences that nothing can cheapen, or explain away:

- Being in love
- Giving birth
- Smelling a pine forest
- The first taste of coffee in the morning
- Eating your favorite food
- The runner's high
- The pain of a hard workout
- Heartache
- Dying
- Jumping into clean sheets

Comparing the two lists—that are hard to integrate—we conclude that, despite all the chatter, the culture doesn't understand the body in any holistic or final way. That opens the door to further research.

Writing Assignment: The Multi-Body

Here is a prompt for starting to rethink the body. Perhaps the thinking and writing you begin now can be developed into a larger "body of work"—even a research project for this term! This prompt will also let you practice the analytic and associative consciousness of a research writer.

1. Gather an example of a "body message." There are many possibilities here: an image of movie star from a magazine or poster, a medical journal article,

an ad for jeans, love poems, resurrection stories, country music songs, coverage of a political scandal, a music video, a film, a photograph. It should be something tangible, not a broad category or something that “always happens.” For instance, choose a particular episode—like “Children of Dwarves and Giants”—of Jerry Springer, not “talk shows” overall (although you may analyze your example as part of a broader trend and cultural phenomenon).

2. Write a brief (one or two page) analysis of this message:
 - How and where is the body presented? Why is it presented this way?
 - How are we to understand our bodies after experiencing this expression? What are we to feel and think? Read the expression as argumentation: What is it trying to convince us of? What is it arguing against?
 - Consider the composition of the piece as well as its content. How is the message of the piece made?.
3. Next, write, draw, construct, record or perform a message that responds to the one you've just analyzed. Perhaps what you make will resist the message you started with, or maybe you'll want to make something the first message can't tolerate or which would cause it to break down. Perhaps you want to go along with the original message, but break through its limits with your message. Maybe you will make something that will reside in a space the other was headed toward, but didn't quite reach. Perhaps you can construct a parody of the original.
4. Show your work to your classmates and talk about the relationship between the message you found and analyzed and the one you made.
5. With their help, step back from the process and ask: Is there a research question or subject hidden in this transformation? For instance, one student's project on bras began with the realization that this item of apparel symbolized the contradictory nature of society's expectations for women: that they be perfectly functional and highly sexy, simultaneously, at each moment.

6. Car Jumps, Bird Cages and Circus Posters: A Catalog of Student Forms:

Many of our students who begin researching a subject and creating genres eventually find a form inside their topic. Rob's project on Zen Buddhism included paper scrolls wound on pieces of wood cut from tree branches, while Melanie decided to display her project on the language of flowers in the shape of an enormous flower whose petals opened in long pinwheels of blossoms, each carrying various kinds of texts. As mentioned earlier, one high school student actually housed his texts in the his car, which he was researching, and Neva put her project on the Mexican Days of the Dead, reproduced on p. ___, in a casket that opened to display various texts, graphics and artifacts. Projects on the Egyptian pyramids have been housed in replicas of the pyramids, while students

researching dream trip multiwriting projects for an exploratory writing course sometimes turned in their work inside the backpacks they were taking with them. A student working on the media hype for marijuana in films fit his project into the kind of small “stash” box that pot smokers often have, while a rodeo bull-rider put his inside a saddle bag.

Here are some additional forms emerging as part of, or containers for, student projects:

Car Jump, for a project on The Dukes of Hazard and pop culture
TV Guide, from EmpTV, a project critiquing television culture
Barbie Backpack, for a project on Gender Education
Message in Bottle and Board Game—for a project on the Virgin Islands
Bird Cage, for a project on Imprisonment
Giant Wheel Installation, for a project on fire
Elk Rattles, for a project on Chief Joseph
Bottles containing Messages, for a Castaway Multi-autobiography
Showbills and “Circus”-Style Posters, for a project on Houdini

[Photo Gallery of Additional Student Forms:] WE ARE WORKING ON THIS

Writing Assignment: Creating an Inventory of Forms

1. Start by taking out your inventory of separate genres and media in your project created in Chapter Five (p._).
2. Make new shorter lists of items that seem to go together. For example, you might group songs together, or put all paintings you’re using in a separate list.
3. Looking at these separate lists, can you think of a way to integrate them into a larger pattern? For example, if you are working on a history of your family’s perfume business, perhaps you will decide that you can create a scrapbook or family photo album that moves either in chronological order or mixes photos of different times. Or perhaps the photos have accompanying genres like annotations or a running research essay on each page that explain the step-by-step operation of the perfume business.
4. Are there any categories of genres or media in your Customized Multi-List? For example, is it mostly photographs, journal entries, letters or poems? If it’s mostly photographs, perhaps it wants to become a photographic research essay or coffee table book. If you wrote a synthesis essay as you worked through Chapter Five, consider how this might be turned into, or combined with, a how-to manual, an installation, a website or a magazine.
5. Consider your topic. If you’re working on the American explorers, Lewis and Clark, who kept journals, should your research on their route and accomplishments also be in the form of a journal? If you’re working on a famous early American car, like the Pierce Arrow, would you link the various genres and media of your project as an advertising brochure that could be used to sell this car, or an archeological re-creation of the car for some future museum? Could a project on bees or honey be housed in an open hive

created to hold various artifacts and texts in the separate compartments of the honeycomb? What forms are especially likely to be useful for your topic? List these.

6. Can your project be organized somehow by different layers? For instance, if you're researching deep-sea scuba diving, should your texts be housed vertically in an aquarium, with genres about the ocean floor or extreme water pressure housed at the bottom? Historical phenomena (and current affairs) often have multiple layers: wars, for instance, seem on the surface to be about battles and attempts to conquer enemies or defend a homeland. However, they are also about the flow of money and resources into new configurations, the reshaping of personal lives, as people take on new roles and face terror and death. They are also about our species, its evils and strengths. Perhaps your research project will include several layers, or only one, which will be informed by, and made in relation to, the others that touch it. Write down any potential visible or even hidden layers you can see in your project.
7. Can the five senses provide further forms for your project? If you're researching open air markets on the island of Grenada in the Caribbean, how might your genres and media be organized around the senses? Will you have photos you took there of the market on your vacation, or got off the internet, arranged next to a poem about eating fresh fruit and a little bag of ground nutmeg the viewer can smell and taste? Will your whole project be housed in a box made of palm fronds the reader or viewer can touch? What form might the senses take in your project?
8. Write a paragraph that explains how you are (so far) using forms in your project, and share this with your instructor, classmates and a writing tutor (if available). Discuss the addition or subtraction or transformation of these forms to better suit your topic.

7. Flatlanders, Mosquitoes and Peruvian Birdmen: Bookstore Research

Sunflower Books is the little bud of a bookstore in our hometown of La Grande, Oregon. Nationwide, small independent bookstores are having trouble, but Sunflower seems to be thriving. Perhaps we are too far away from the city for it to be affected by mega-stores like Barnes and Noble.

Sunflower is a small yellow house near downtown La Grande, Oregon. Inside, it offers a well- chosen collection. Owner Lani Schroeder and her staff have excellent tastes. Today, we concentrate on non-fiction, hoping to find a sudden inspiration for a research project.

We see a great book for you math-heads—Ian Stewart's *Flatlands*: Like *Flatlands*, Only Better. *Flatlands*, Stewart's previous book, questioned the concept of three dimensions, while *Flatlands* takes on the idea of dimensionality itself. Stewart is quite a writer, in the "multi" way: *Flatlands* is a strange brew of letters, dialogues, diary entries, trenchant analysis, charts and

cartoons. He explores the imaginary land of Tropologica, where imaginary creatures bring and embody mathematical theories.

Here is Andrew Spielman and Michael D'Antonio's *Mosquito: A Natural History of Our Most Persistent and Deadly Foe*. A student of ours, Shirley Crabtree, wrote a similar project on fleas—creatures that have thrived despite our many attempts to exterminate them.

As we continue to study the books, we put together a list of readings on travel. For instance, Tahir Shah's *Trail of Feathers: In Search of the Birdmen of Peru* takes its title from the Spanish reports that Incas could fly, and the predilection toward tales of flying in Peruvian folklore. Rita Golden Gelman's *Tales of a Female Nomad: Living at Large in the World* is becoming a cult classic. Like a true pilgrim, Gelman sold her possessions in midlife and set out into the world.

The reissue of Eric Newby's description of travels in northern Afghanistan, *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*, originally published in 1958, attracts us. Is the Afghanistan Newby found like the one we hear of today and see on the news? We're also drawn to Caryl Phillips' *The Atlantic Sound*, which retraces the African slave trade, examining how life in these places has been shaped by this history of kidnapping and murder. It would be interesting to read Phillips and Newby side-by-side and see how history, morality and politics interrelate in these texts and the places they describe.

There are other books of interest, tangentially related to travel, such as David Cordingly's *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and Reality of Life Among the Pirates*. While we're on ship, we might want to consider Amir D. Aitel's *The Riddle of the Compass*, which discusses navigation before the compass, as well as the invention of this important device.

Book store browsers don't have to buy. Instead, they can write down the authors and titles of interesting books and check them out from the library or call them in through interlibrary loan. Today, however, we buy the Newby and the Phillips, planning to study these as travel-theory. Our basic questions include: What is travel? What is it for? Why do it? Our hypothesis is that travel is a way of searching. If so, what do travelers hope to find, or lose?

Questions and Prompts: Chasing Your Tale—Your Bookstore Tour

Head to at least one local bookstore for some serendipitous research and intellectual pleasure.

1. What is the place like? What are some of its best features? What books or magazines of interest do you see?
2. If you find a text that seems appropriate for the research you are doing, examine it carefully to see what's in it. Would you like to read this more carefully? Be sure to make a note of the author, title and publisher. You might want to also briefly write down some of the contents you see, so that you'll later remember why you found this book interesting. Check the text for other cited works of

interest and make a note of these. Sometimes, you can build a quick reading list from just one source!

3. In addition to researching a subject you know you are interested in, you may also want to note any subjects, themes or questions that emerge from the selection in the store. Maybe another project will suggest itself.

4. If your class made a group research list, like the one described on p. __, be sure to look for sources for your classmates. See if you can find a perfect gift.

Writing Assignment: Gathering a Bibliography to “Remember that You’ve Forgotten”

As you begin to find sources of interest, it is time to begin recording information about them, so that you can find them again and recall them more easily. You should begin to gather a bibliography.

The word comes from two Greek roots: bibli (books) and graphy (map). So, bibliography is a mapping of books, or other sources. There are many ways to make such a map, but we would like you to make the kind of bibliography most often required in academic writing, using one of the documentation styles suggested in Appendix A on p. __. You may want to consult with your instructor to see which documentation style will be best for you to use.

Eventually, your project will include a list of works cited. It may seem smarter not to make such a complete list now, but simply to jot down the titles of sources, with perhaps their authors’ names as well. Why do more if you aren’t sure what sources you will use in the end?

We suggest, however, that you go ahead and note all the bibliographic information for each of your sources. Soon, some books will be returned to the library. If you are like us, you’ll get confused about who wrote what and you’ll no longer recall the title of that purple book you will later need. So record everything right away. Then, making your list of works cited will entail deletion, rather than addition—a simpler chore. Therefore, our instructions are:

1. Develop a list of Works Consulted, correctly using an accepted citation style, such as the MLA or APA styles, featured in Appendix A.
2. Format the list as shown in the sample lists of Works Cited on p. __. Be sure to alphabetize the items on the list, according to the author’s name.

Put your list in a computer file, save it, then back it up carefully, or stick it on a safe web server.

8. Brief List of “Grammar B” Forms from Winston Weathers:

- The Crot: Something mysterious and unsolved, that reappears, asking the reader-viewer for help in interpreting it;

- Labyrinthine Sentence: The kind of long and winding sentence favored by writers like Donald Barthelme in his “Sentence” (twenty pages that are all one sentence);
- Sentence Fragment: Usually frowned upon, the fragment can usefully embody fragmented thoughts;
- List: The lowly list also finds a home as talisman for expansion in research;
- Double-Voice: More than one narration often aids a project;
- Language Variegation: Orthographic Schemes and the Foreign Word: Sometimes ESL students twist language in creative and poetic ways that can be employed;

9. Writing Project: A Rhetorical Leatherman’s Tool: The Multiwriting Book Review

If you are enjoying thinking about how theory and story can work together, you may want to put your insights, and questions, into action, in a Multiwriting Book Review. You have probably read book reviews in magazines or newspapers, and you probably have completed your own book reviews, or book reports, as part of your pre-college schooling. A Multiwriting Book Review moves beyond reviews as you have known them, by responding to a book through a variety of texts that grow into a meaningful project of their own. Composing a Multiwriting Book Review builds you repertoire as a writer, as you practice different kinds of writing and begin to build links between them. It also can jump-start your research project, as you write pieces which may become part of the project, or lead to others that will be. We compare this review to a Leatherman’s tool or Swiss Army knife which includes a number of blades and devices, preparing you for many tasks and occasions. Composing your review should also help you read more thoroughly and at greater depth. We often think of these reviews as re-views that help their authors view the source again and see it differently, while presenting the book in a rich field of meaning.

Your review should be about a book-length source concerned with your research subject or questions. This project works best when you choose a book you like, or find intriguing or even difficult (rather than mundane, boring, or off the subject).

1. Pick a book you will enjoy writing about, and especially one that you think you can learn about by writing.
2. Read this book carefully, first for its basic contents, then to examine its arguments, theories, and forms.
3. Then, turn from reading to writing, first by considering the following questions:
 - What basic things would you like to tell your reader to help them immediately understand why you value this book?
 - What is this book about? What does it tell us about this subject?
 - What information in this book do you find especially intriguing or surprising?

- What would you see as the essential claims or arguments made by this book?
- What questions does it begin to explore without fully answering?
- What memorable quotations in the book would you want to point others toward?
- How would you describe the book's organizational structure? What logic, for instance, is used to distinguish each chapter?
- How would you describe the writer's voice? Is it informal or formal? Hard or soft? Intelligent? Kind? Funny? Provocative? Wise? At this point, you may want to locate a sentence or two that illustrates these qualities.
- Can you judge this book by its cover?
- What would you ask this author if you had the chance?

4. Now look more closely at the kinds of writing the book contains. Examine the multi-lists of genres, media, disciplines and cultures on p. _____. Study the text again to see which of these it includes. You may have to look closely. For instance, a text that appears to be unified can include several different genres of writing: personal narratives, interviews with others, syntheses of reading sources or descriptions of places and people, to name a few. A text that has no apparent media beyond writing may include prose writings about other media, such as descriptions of paintings or music. Multiple cultures and disciplines may also be present in the text, as information, or perspective.

5. Next, consider some of what could be added, cooperating with the form and spirit of the source. For instance, a stark writing voice and a text organized to have multiple scenes could be enhanced by a series of black and white photographs. You can also other works that could extend or complement the source. A book about Mardi Gras in New Orleans, for instance, might have been part of a series of books about carnivals in world cultures; you could imagine and describe another in the series. A humanistic study of the oddities of cats could lead us to questions, and works, about the science of cat behaviors.

Your multi-writing book review allows you to describe the book that is, imagine the book that might be, and extend your thinking beyond the book. As you work, you will move from reviewing the book to writing a source-based project that begins with the book, then gathers a momentum of its own. Here is a list of pieces to try, to explore and extend your book's meanings. Keep in mind that you do not have to write your pieces in any particular order. Many writers find introductions are the last things they write, when they know the rest of their material well enough to understand what they are introducing.

A piece that introduces the book

1. An opening essay is fine, but you can also try another kind of introduction, like the letters of introduction that often accompanied travelers years ago, an introduction for a speaker, or a welcome. Different, multiple introductions might also be appropriate and interesting to experiment with.

2. The use of other media may work well in your introduction. For instance, perhaps your project should begin with an image which figures prominently in both the book and your review. Perhaps instead you want to establish a certain kind of “feel” or tactile quality suggestive of the book through the use of a fabric. Pieces of writing which describe, analyze, or explain these additional media can show why they are there and how they relate to your overall message.

Pieces that take us into the heart of the book

1. For instance, if you see the book as an argument, you may want to stage a debate between it and some of your other sources on a set of questions or issues. Or, you may want to re-write the book’s message in argument form, with a thesis and support, and then write your own argument that challenges, counters or supports the book’s.
2. Many other options are also possible, including a list of key questions the book raises, or a dialogue or essay that combines your interests and fascinations with those described by the book. For example, if you are learning to be a brick mason, you might review a book on laying bricks by describing some of your experiences on the job, especially as they relate to anecdotes or other materials in the book.
3. Other media can enhance this portion of your project as well. For instance, you may want to create map that shows the intellectual movement or progress the book makes as it goes. Perhaps a clever game or puzzle can best show us what you see in this book. Writing about the Umberto Eco novel *The Name of the Rose*, our student Gabriella Nava designed a maze showing us the spiritual life of a medieval monk, with vices and shortfallings becoming dead-ends and virtues and grace pointing the way to success.
4. If you’ve written a theory summary of the book, such as the one prompted on p. __, you may want to include that in this part of the project, too.

Pieces that extend the book or recast it in a different context

1. Think again about what could be added to the book, or how it might be enhanced or recast. You might try, for instance, to cover some of the same ground as the book, but using different media. What would be the book’s soundtrack? How could you film some of its scenes?
2. You may also import or the message of the book into another genre of writing. For instance, as part of his project on John Joseph Matthews’ *Talking to the Moon: Wildlife Adventures on the Plains and Prairies of the Osage Country*, student Chet Sater turned parts of Matthews’ experiences into a feature article on Matthews, for a magazine like *Outdoor Life*. If your book is a work of

science writing, why not begin to rewrite it as a mystery novel? If it is a mystery novel, perhaps its haunting qualities can be captured in a poem, an autopsy report, or a journal.

3. You may want to import the book into a different disciplinary or cultural perspective: If you examine a book about water use in the western United States from a Mexican perspective, what would you see? What might a politician think of the book you've read? An anthropologist? A psychic? Consider how the various perspectives of the courses you've taken might be brought to bear. What does the unit on photosynthesis you just completed in biology have to do with the study of black holes in the book you read? How can Karl Marx, whose theories you have studied in economics, comment on the novel about the American south you are writing about? You may want to brainstorm with some of your professors, or students in your other courses, to see what emerges.

Pieces that extend your research in relation to the book

1. These may be particularly useful for helping you begin to see how the multiwriting book review can lead to a longer research project. For instance, you may want to write an essay or question-and-answer piece that shows how other sources respond to some of the themes your book raises or to questions it explores.
2. Perhaps you want ask a knowledgeable interview source to read the book and then interview her about it. Even more ambitious would be to interview the book's author directly, or send questions via e-mail, which ask about the parts of the book that remain unclear, or the things you wonder about which the books does not cover.
3. See if you can identify a source that covers the same subject as your book, but from a different disciplinary or cultural perspective. For instance, a scientific study of snakes could be extended by reading and writing about Gloria Anzaldúa's account in *Borderlands/La Frontera* of snakes in the cultures of the regions that straddle Mexico and the United States. You may choose to write a synthesis essay relating the two sources, or make a chart showing the differences and overlap between the sources.

A reflective piece about your project

1. You should end your mini-project with a reflection in which you re-view your work. This is a chance for you to speak directly to your audience not only about your book, but about the work you have done in relation to it. For instance, you may want to describe and discuss the organizing themes or

links that tie your pieces to one another, or about what you continue to see in this book, or how your view has changed as you worked.

2. You may find that working on your reflective piece will help you find the unity of your project. As you begin to glimpse this unity, be sure to revise your other pieces to better build in, and bring out, these common thoughts, dynamics, or motifs. Writing, we and other teachers like to point out, is a circular and potentially infinite process. Reaching the end, we are often prepared with the insights and stronger sense of purpose we need to re-compose from the beginning.

[Image:] Mosaic Pattern

As you work, you may find that these categories begin to blur, or that you want to add other pieces that don't seem to fit any category. This shows that you are beginning to shape the project for your own purposes, beyond the terms of the assignment. If you find you are getting lost, it may be time to take a step back to breathe, or to show your emerging project to a friend, classmate, writing tutor or your instructor, to see how they respond. Remember that this project should gradually turn from a multi-faceted response to a book to a unified project of its own that takes the book as a starting point.

See the *Building a Mystery* website for Gabriella Rava's complete Multiwriting Book Review on Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*. Notice how she draws the themes of religion and faith from this novel, and writes about them in varied, but related, ways. (direct URL)