

image to
grievance handling.
finally to take seriously the
of schoolyard bullying.

The renewed focus surrounding mental health services, student "centeredness," and ensuring that faculty members do not abuse their power over the lives and careers of students (and graduate students in particular) are reasonable and responsible areas for change. Whether these improvements will prevent future episodes of campus bloodshed remains questionable; but they will likely enhance the well-being of millions of college students across America.

Finally, what about the ongoing contagion of campus bloodshed that seems to many Americans to be out of control? Like other so-called epidemics of decades gone by, this latest surge should eventually run its course; that is, unless we nourish it through anxiety, panic, and hyperbole.

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DISCUSSION/WRITING

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1. Write a summary analysis of Fox's essay in five to six sentences.
 2. Write a two- to three-page critical analysis of the essay. Put the idea on trial and ponder how you and other college students react to campus violence and the policies meant to stop it.
 3. If Fox is right, what are the implications for how we ought to approach violence in our society outside campuses?

WRITING SUGGESTIONS AND CLASS DISCUSSIONS

1. "If this were my last day alive, I would" Make a list of 10 specific things you might do. Then pick two or three and list specific details about them in note form. Be vivid, concrete, and honest. Don't write to impress people. Now, create a single unifying idea that best summarizes the philosophy of your last day. Write a short paper based on these notes.

2. What follows are some famous generalizations—ideas that need details. Pick one and use it for your core idea. Illustrate the idea with three or four concrete details and build it into a coherent paragraph. To sharpen your honesty skills, try to find an exception to the idea and work that in as well.

"Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads."

—Henry David Thoreau

"Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be."

—Abraham Lincoln

"Failure is impossible."

—Susan B. Anthony

"We see things not as they are; we see them as we are."

—Anaïs Nin

"The man who sees the world at 50 the same as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years."

—Muhammad Ali

3. The following generalizations are all about love. Pick two to work into a coherent paragraph. You'll need to supply details—examples, facts, stories, or descriptions—to make them more concrete. Some of the quotes go together easily, but you may find it more interesting to put contradictory quotations together. You may agree or disagree with the statements.

"Love is perhaps the only glimpse we are permitted of eternity."

—Helen Hayes

"Love is the delusion that one woman differs from another."

—H. L. Mencken

"It is impossible to repent of love. The sin of love does not exist."

—Muriel Spark

"A broken heart is wonderful five years later, when you see the guy in an elevator and he is fat and smoking a cigar."

—Phyllis Battelli

"Love is an act of endless forgiveness."

—Peter Ustinov

"Love is what you've been through with somebody."

—James Thurber

"The face of a lover is unknown—because it is invested with so much of oneself."

—James Baldwin

4. Quote a favorite line of yours from a song, and then explain what it means to you, giving specific details.
5. What follows are some health projects and inventions that scientists are working on. After reading the list, write a thesis sentence that makes a point that draws together some of the details.
 - Today, scientists have successfully implanted healthy, laboratory-grown bladders into dozens of children with defective bladders, using their own cells to clone the new ones.
 - Eyeglasses and contact lenses will soon be able to be fitted with miniature computer screens powered by the body's own motions or skin electricity.
 - Scientists are working on medical testing "labs" made out of paper the size of a postage stamp and costing ten cents each. These can be sent to remote regions and will test for basic diseases by reacting to urine or blood and can be interpreted via computer by doctors far away.
 - Bill and Melinda Gates have donated 28 billion dollars to help eradicate malaria and AIDS in order to save three million lives a year worldwide.
 - It is generally acknowledged that the world human population will increase from the current six billion to ten to twelve billion in the next 40–50 years. The U.S. population will grow 100 million.
 - Bacteria inside our bodies

- Some scientists predict that within 60 years, it will be possible to duplicate a person's personality, knowledge, and intelligence and transfer it to more long-lasting "machinery." Marvin Minsky of MIT believes that this will allow humans to achieve life spans of a thousand years.
6. For one of these topics, generate a list of details that can be used in a paper: quotes, stories, facts, descriptions. Also list ideas as they occur to you. Try for three ideas and list about 10 details on the topic you choose. Mark each item on your list as an I for idea or a D for detail.
- Teaching morals to today's children
 - Physical education classes
 - Halloween
 - War movies
 - Abuse of the elderly
 - Choose a topic yourself
7. Follow the instructions for number six. This time consciously start with ideas first, freely moving to details.
- An ethnic group to which you do *not* belong
 - Children's toys today
 - The last person you dated or were married to
 - Dentists
 - Thick pan pizza
 - Choose a topic yourself
8. Write down three *competing* ideas to explain one of the following:
- Why men under 25 cause far more automobile accidents than women under 25
 - Why bad things happen to good people
 - If teenagers today know more about sex than other generations ever did, why there are more teenage pregnancies than ever before
 - Why peace seems impossible between Palestinians and Israelis
9. **Idea to Details Writing:** Express in one sentence one of your guidelines for living: how to be happy, what is important in life, what is right. Now illustrate your sentence with three specific examples. To be more fully honest, also consider a competing idea or objection someone might have to your philosophy.
10. **Details to Idea Writing:** Describe a powerful dream you've had. Start with vivid details: who's in the dream, where it occurs, objects,

dream—look for symbols to explain how the dream relates to your awake life. Suggest *several* possible ideas before concluding.

- II. Write a funeral eulogy for someone you know well who has not yet died. What would be your thesis and what details would you use to support it? Imagine reading it at the funeral.
12. What is one idea you have mixed feelings about and would like to explore more deeply? Explain why you have mixed feelings and give a few details. (One of mine is how much freedom a teacher ought to allow students in writing assignments. One side of me says students should develop their own topics completely from scratch. It's democratic. The other side of me says students need to be shown they *can* write on anything and that in their careers they will most often be assigned topics. It's less democratic, but more practical.)
13. Evaluate the following list as potential paper topics. How hard would it be to come up with a fresh, complex idea and vivid, specific details for each? Also consider how these topics match your experiences, knowledge, and biases: What are your *personal* strengths and weaknesses in each?
 - What conservatives (or liberals) stand for
 - Concepts of beauty and ugliness
 - Stereotypes of grandparents
 - Exotic pets like pythons and ferrets
 - Lesbian parents
 - Your first encounter with violence
14. Write a letter to your boss asking for a promotion or raise. Present several reasons (ideas) why you deserve this reward and support each idea with specific details. For a sample student letter, see page 431.
15. Write about a children's game—tag, hide-and-seek, musical chairs. Create the feel of the game with vivid, concrete details, but also look for an idea beyond the fun that the game conveys. What subliminal message does the game convey? What does the game say about children's view of the world?
16. Write a brief criticism of a popular chat site or television talk show. Make an overall point about what you don't like, and then support it with at least three specific examples.
17. Convey a message through visual details. Cut out six to ten pictures for details and paste them into a collage. For example, find four shots of starving children and four of luxurious houses. Then write several

Writing Assignment Two: For this unit, your writing will involve several assignments from the end of the chapter, rather than a unified essay. Write, revise, polish, and submit the following short writings, for no more than 4 pages, no less than 3, total: Page 40, number 1; Page 41, #2, #3; page 42 #4; page 43, #8, #9; page 44 #11 OR 12 OR 13. Keep to the page limit—edit for succinctness. Be honest and enjoy these exercises and explorations.