

Assignment #1

- 1) WRITE a letter to me introducing yourself to me as a writer: What's your relationship to writing? What are your hopes (and fears?) for this class? What happened with you and writing in high school, or elsewhere? Anything else about you & writing you want to tell me? –e.g., is English your second language, writing you've done on your own, what you like to read . . .

➤ *1-1½ pages, word processed, single-spaced with space between paragraphs(i.e., letter format)*

- 2) READ our first two essays:

- William Zinsser's "Science, Technology and Nature," a chapter from his popular book *On Writing Well* (now in its 7th printing). Zinsser has been a journalist, nonfiction writer, and writing teacher. He writes about writing well from the point of view of a journalist, not an academician.
- Robert Kanigel's "The Science Essay." Kanigel, who taught at MIT until this year, has written several nonfiction books, including lives of the mathematician Ramanujan and the efficiency expert Frederick Winslow Taylor.

IMPORTANT: Read these and all homework assignments actively—that is: Notice who wrote it, and her or his background. Mark passages you like, that puzzle you, and that you think contain the essay's core ideas. Ask questions in the margin, summarize points, and talk back to the writer. Leave time to read each assignment thoroughly—and ideally, more than once.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION: We will take time to look at the main ideas in each reading, the examples Zinsser and Kanigel use, and also Z.'s & K.'s own writing. So read actively, and come with questions about their points.

- 3) **LOOKING AHEAD:** Make sure to buy the book for the class if you haven't already done so. If you want to read ahead, begin reading the group of essays for our next homework assignment.. You might also scan the list of books for our Book Review assignment.

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