

Sessions 2 & 3: Expert Essay

Reading: “[Dumpster Diving](#)” by Lars Eighner, “[The Inheritance of Tools](#)”
by Scott Russell Sanders

Writing: Write a two-page expert essay

Thoughts: Each of us is the expert on something, whether an uncommon profession (say, glassblowing) or a personal circumstance (the daughter of our specific parents). Still, might someone else relate to something about glassblowing, or about a family’s dynamics? As such, we have something to communicate about our experience, because even though it might be individual to us, it has larger applications—a broader scope that reaches far beyond one person. As we read Eighner and Sanders, remember this. We are hearing a personal, private story—but we are also implicated. To break into this, take a look at what each author does on the surface, how they craft these essays. In the expert essay, we tend to start very small and then open up to something much larger, something with which the reader will connect even though he didn’t experience the smaller, personal version. So when Eighner tells us that he picks through trash for food, that is his story and it helps us see him as an individual, but when he opens it up—when he shares his thoughts on those of us who don’t Dumpster dive—suddenly we readers are implicated. In writing your own expert essay, consider what small experience you have had that has larger implications.

Exercise: To get the wheels turning, try writing a list of 30 labels you can apply to yourself. Start with the obvious ones (I am short, I am an only child, I wear glasses), and branch out (I am lover of dark chocolate, I am a secret flower-arranger). If you hit 30 quickly, write 20 more. Once you do that, write down 5 things you love, and 5 things you hate. When you have all of this down, look over your paper and see what might make for an interesting write/read. Do not be discouraged if nothing stands out immediately; there are plenty of good topics before your eyes! Consider that you can write an expert-essay on almost anything. Maybe being short seems commonplace, and so what could I add to it? Well I might start with a story that details an interaction I’ve had where my height stood out to me, and then I might ruminate on how height affects our lives—how I am, in a way, always looking up to people, or how CEOs tend to be taller... how what is at grabbing-height for me is different for the majority of people, or what might be suggested in terms of evolution. Really get a little wild with it.

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