

FYS 16: First Essay

Ungraded

Due: Sept. 19 (Sunday) at 5:00 PM by e-mail

Length: up to 750 words

Rick Griffiths

Office hours: Tues. 2-4; Fri. 10-12

Editorial conferences: Feb. 16-18

Please e-mail drafts at least a couple of hours before the start of the block of appointments in which we are meeting.

War of Words

Douglass in his *Narrative* describes physical resistance, such as his fight with Mr. Covey and his escape north, as crucial to his passage to freedom and manhood, "Richard's" first lesson in "Ethics" concerns the lack of that option in the Jim Crow south.

>Using specific passages in the *Narrative* for comparison, discuss how and why Wright describes the use of words as weapons.

A related question, which you may or may not find helpful to continue on to: In writing "Ethics," how is Wright both freer and less free than Douglass in writing his *Narrative*?

Stylistic point: In self-narratives be careful to discriminate the author from his protagonist. In *Narrative*, Douglass for the sake of verification presents himself in 1845 as continuous with the "Frederick" he describes, but Wright may leave more mysteries about he developed from this "Richard."

General issues:

Aim:

Take up from where our class discussions leave off and work closely with textual evidence. What I'd like to see in action is your independent mastery of the *Narrative* and "Ethics" —not of every issue in the text, but of something substantial.

You are writing for me, not the general reader. Tell me what I do not know. That is, this essay is not a book review. Don't feel obliged to spend the first page justifying the project or restating the assumptions behind the assigned topic.

Organization:

It helps me to know early in the essay what your argument is going to be or at least how you are going to organize your answer to the question. In other words, give me a map.

Economy:

Waste no space summarizing plots or embedding extensive block quotation, which use a lot of space.

Intellectual honesty:

Please consult *Intellectual Honesty* on the course CMS page. Use of secondary sources, including the Internet, is not required or encouraged. All sources used should be cited. The reading questions, material from discussion, and e-mailed questions/comments can be taken as common knowledge and need not be cited. I refer any suspected plagiarism to the Office of the Dean of Students. When in doubt, please contact me.

Editorial conferences:

Please sign up in class for a consultation between September 16 and 18 so that I can give you feedback and find out more about your needs as a writer.

Feel free to come to office hours to consult as you are writing the essay, or set up an appointment at another time.

Writing Center:

Another pair of eyes can often be helpful, and sustained, systematic work with a tutor is a great way to become a better writer.