Blogging Assignment Sheet

Objectives:
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Write routinely over shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks and purposes
- Use blogging as a way to express ideas, analyze texts, and develop your writing skills

Instructions:
1. Follow the lessons in class to create your blog.
2. Once your blog is created, write your first post and complete the "Blog Created" assignment. Submit it to the dropbox.
3. Starting October 14th, you will post weekly to your blog.
   a. Posts are due Sundays by 11:59pm. You may post at any time, but that's the weekly cutoff.
4. At the end of each week there will be a dropbox assignment where you will let me know you have posted in your blog.

Types of Posts:
**See samples of posts here.
- passion blog (PB)
  - Write about something you are passionate about. Find something that you love or hate and share your passion with your readers.
  - Instead of simply gushing about (or bashing) your topic, your goal is to share your knowledge about the subject and perhaps persuade us to feel the same way.

- class-related response (CRR)
  - Respond to something that we are reading/discussing in class.
  - By "respond," I mean that you should present your understanding of, opinion about, or confusion about the topic.
  - You can discuss a literary text that we're reading, a language issue, or other topics we address throughout the year (typeface/design, social justice, etc.).

Try to stay current, or if you want to discuss something from earlier in the year, find a way to connect it to what's going on now.

- self-selected response (SSR)
    - Respond to a text of your choice. Texts can be blog posts, news articles, news broadcasts, videos, tweets, hashtags, or more.
    - By "respond to a text," I mean that you should discuss something you've seen or read outside of class and present your thoughts about it. The text could be something that made you think, confused you, made you happy, made you mad, interested you, or more.
    - Remember to provide a well-embedded link to your source text (preferably near the beginning of your post so your reader will have context early on).
    - Want a sample? Why, here ya go!
    - If you are needing some inspiration, you can use one of Mrs. Gross and Mr. Olsen's *New York Times* prompts. They post new prompts at this link almost every Friday. This is just an option; you are welcome to use whatever text you'd like, as long as it's school appropriate.

- free choice (FC)
    - Write whatever you'd like, as long as it's school appropriate.
    - If you don't like how open this option is, narrow it down by selecting one of the three types of prompts above.

- Interdisciplinary post (ID)
    - Write a post about something you're learning in any of your other classes. You can discuss concepts, articles, media, labs, etc. Writing is a thinking process, so blogging about a concept from another class can help solidify your thinking about it. You can see an example of what I mean here.

- Vlog (V)
    - Perhaps you want to present your ideas orally instead of in writing. Well, you can do that! Every once in a while, you may create a vlog post instead of a blog post. Vlog means video blog. You've seen examples from John Green and Lizzie Bennet.
    - If you select this option, you must upload your video and embed it in your regular blog (you can't just embed a hyperlink to the video). Here's how:
        - Go to the YouTube video and click "share."
        - Click "emebed."
        - Copy the HTML code it gives you (starts with `<iframe width=`)
        - Go to your blog and create a new post.

- ■ Click the "HTML" button (top left corner).
- ■ Paste the HTML code from YouTube.
- ■ Click "compose" (top left corner again).
- ■ You should see your video embedded.

Logistics:
- In general, posts should be between 300 and 600 words long. I am aware that there will be times when your posts will be longer or shorter. This is a general guideline to help you have an idea of what's expected.
- Format:
  - ○ MLA format, it's good practice for writing assignments in class ☺
- Embed links to further reading in your posts.
  - ○ In general, two or three links should be all you need (maybe even one or four). The actual number may vary, depending on the purpose of your post.
  - ○ Do not copy/paste long URLs into the text of your post. Instead, highlight the relevant words in your post and create a hyperlink right there. Need an example? Look above to where I linked Mrs. Gross and Mr. Olsen's prompts. Whoops, I did it again!
- Include acronym for type of post in each post's title or tag (PB, CRR, SSR, ID, V, CB, FC).
- Tone/voice
  - ○ You should write your posts in your own style. This might mean being witty clever, or it could mean being serious and straightforward. There is no one way to do this, as long as you remember to be school appropriate. This above all: to thine own self be true (you'll get that reference in a few months).
  - ○ Yes, you may use first person pronouns if you'd like.
  - ○ Your voice may change from post to post as you figure out what works best for you, and that is absolutely fine (even encouraged!).
  - ○ You may express your opinions in your posts, but remember that any time you take a side for anything, you need support for your argument. If you just sound off about something you don't like, it's not arguing; it's whining. :)
- Images
  - ○ Images are not required, but I do suggest using them from time to time. People are largely visual these days, and image/video helps to engage your audience.
  - ○ Please abide by all copyright rules when inserting images on your blog. This means you may only post your own images or those that explicitly give you permission.
    - ■ You can find lots of fair use images at Creative Commons.

- - ■ YouTube monitors its videos for copyright already, so you are welcome to use YouTube videos without fear. :)
    - ■ Learn more about copyright on blogs [here](#).
  - ○ If you do choose to include an image in your post, you should add a caption to cite the source and/or explain the image's significance.

Side Notes:
- Your first couple of posts will probably take longer, especially when you are trying a new type of post. It'll get easier as you go.
- If the requirements become too onerous for us, we'll revisit the schedule. This does **not** mean that if you whine about doing this, I won't make you do it anymore. :)

Assessment:

Your Posts:
- Your blogs will count as a grade for Standard 3 and Standard 4.
- Each post is worth 4 points like all our assignments.
- Missed posts will count as Unsatisfactory.
- You will get full credit if your posts:
  - ○ are written in your own personal style/voice
  - ○ are engaging
  - ○ are informative, persuasive, and/or reflective (depending on type of post)
  - ○ are well organized
  - ○ are free of grammatical/typographical errors (compositional risks are an exception)
  - ○ are formatted according to the directions (compositional risks are an exception)
  - ○ include smoothly-embedded links
  - ○ include the acronym for type of post in each post's title or tag

Making Blog Posts Scannable

Only 16% of people read word for word when they are online, and another study found that the average person only comprehends about 60% of what they read (Jakob Nielsen, How Users Read on the Web). Rather than read word for word – web users 'Scan' pages for information – looking for key words, phrases and visual cues.

Tips and Techniques you can use for **working with** your scanning readers and **not against** them:

- **Lists** –posts with bullet point lists in them get linked to much more than posts with similar topics written in essay style

- **Formatting** – Use **bold**, CAPITALS, *italics*, <u>underlining</u> to emphasize points and/or organize ideas. Don't go overboard, as you run the risk of frustrating your reader. Also consider changing font size, color and style to draw your readers' eyes to your main points.

- **Headings and Sub Headings** – Using headings midway through posts helps with post structure, but they also are great for drawing your readers' eyes down the page and helping them find the parts of your article that will interest them most.

- **Pictures** – clever use of pictures in your posts can grab attention, emphasize points and draw people down into your post. There's nothing worse than long chunks of text on a page – break it up!

- **Borders/Block quotes** – boxes around quotes and key points can get the attention of readers.

- **Space** – don't feel you have to fill up every inch of your screen – rather create spaces because they help readers not to feel overwhelmed and again tend to draw readers eyes to what is inside such space.

- **Short Paragraphs** – Web users tend to get lost in large blocks of text – break it into smaller bites, and you'll stick with it for longer.

- **Don't Bury your Points** – Make your main points as clear as you can. One technique to ensure this is to get your main point across in the first few sentences rather than burying it in your conclusion. You also might like to set your main point off with a one-sentence paragraph.

Source: http://www.problogger.net

11 Techniques for Opening Lines on Blogs

Do you want to discover how to make opening lines effective? How does one craft an opening line to a post that effectively engages readers and stimulates enough interest to get them to read your blog post?

1. Identify a Need

Identifying a reader's need and solving it is a key to writing successful blog posts. You don't have to solve the need or problem in the opening line, but an effective way to get readers to read deep into your post where you do solve it is to tell them that you will in the opening line.

2. Ask a Question With Only One Answer

This is a technique that copywriters have been using for a long time and it works. To do it, ask a question in the opening of your post which leaves your reader little room to answer anything but 'yes'. I did it in line three of this post ('Do you want to discover how to make opening lines effective') but it could also effectively be used as the very opening to this post.

Asking this type of question does a couple of things. For starters you're communicating what the post is about and the need that it will fulfill in the reader – but secondly (and more importantly) you're drawing out a response in your reader and one which puts the need that your post will solve squarely in their mind. Anyone reading and answering 'yes' to my question above enters into this post having just said that they want to discover how to write engaging opening lines – this 'buy in' helps in the communication process that follows.

Asking 'yes' questions can actually be something you use more than once in a post. Ask a series of them scattered through your post and you can actually take your reader on a journey that leads them to your call to action.

3. Ask an Intriguing Question

Another type of question that is effective at getting readers interested in reading further into a post is one that leaves them hanging and wanting to know the answer.

'What does Bill Gates and Martha Stewart have in common?' – 'Is the Nikon D700 the best Digital SLR Camera Ever Invented?'

All of these questions will appeal differently to different audiences – but all leave readers wondering what the answer will be and give them a reason to read on further into a post.

4. Say Something Unexpected

Attempt to do something a little different or surprising to grab readers' attention by sharing something personal and at a first glance off topic.

Of course – the unexpected opening line should relate to your post's topic on some level.

5. Tell a Story or Share an Analogy

Building on my last point – I find that telling stories to open posts can be one way of snapping people out of their ho-hum, eyes glazed over state that many of us have while surfing the web.

This is particularly true on a blog that is more serious or formal in nature – to share a story means you're switching genres for a moment or two, which can be enough to grab your reader's attention.

Stories can be short (a one-liner like I did above) or longer (although you probably won't want to go too long). They can be your own personal stories or stories of someone else. They can be true or even fiction.

6. Make a Claim or Promise

Sometimes a simple but bold claim is the most effective way to get people to read deeper into a post.

'Today I will teach you how to give up smoking.' – 'In this post you'll discover the secrets to taking the perfect portrait.'

These sorts of openings simply tell your reader what they'll get if they read on. They are short, sharp, to the point and effective.

You'd better be able to back up the claim or promise in the post itself or you could have some angry readers on your hands.

7. Make a Controversial Statement

There's nothing like the hint of controversy to grab people's attention and cause them to stop in their tracks and take note of what's going on.

Strongly state your opinion on a company, product or even another person and you'll find people will want to read on to see why you've said it and to let you know if they agree.

8. Paint a Picture

This is a technique used a few times in public speaking that can translate across into writing effective blog posts. The basics of it are to get your reader using their imagination to picture some kind of scenario.

This can be used in both positive and negative ways:
- *Positive* – get them to imagine a scenario when they achieve some success or overcome some problem.
- *Negative* – alternatively get them to picture the consequences of a problem left unsolved or a failure that they might fear.

Engaging the imagination of your reader is a powerful thing which can evoke emotion, help them to get in touch with fear and feel needs but also give them real motivation to make change.

9. Use Statistics

Using a statistic that packs a punch can effectively communicate a need and grab attention.
Example –Opening Line – "Only 1 out of every 100 Readers Comment on your Blog"

10. Start with a Quotation

This is one that can be quite effective – if you use the right quotation of course.

Using the words of someone other than yourself can bring authority and credibility to your post. It can also grab attention if you choose the right person.

There is one caveat with this one, though. Avoid clichés like "John F. Kennedy once said," and "Merriam-Webster defines courage as…" *cue eye roll*

Source: a BTHS grad's college professor (original source unknown, but any typos come from there and not Ms. Lamp) :)