

21W731

First Writing Assignment

Fox Spring 2002

**Preparation:** Brainstorm and freewrite in class, talk with others, and fastwrite an idea draft before making it “reader-friendly.”

**Due Date:** Class #3 at the start of class. Revision: Class #5

**Length:** 3-5 typed, double-spaced pages. Bring three copies to class.

**Audience:** The class now; eventually, readers of a magazine like *The New Yorker* or, to create one, *The Culture-Crosser*, *Cultural Crossings*, *Crossing Cultures*, or-?

**Purpose:** To explore and reveal something about your experience as a reader and writer, especially your negotiation of cultural models. You will include examples of stories you heard or read early in life as well as those that influenced your family members (not just Dick, Jane, and Spot, but stories parents read or told you—*Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne, nursery stories, Grimm’s Fairy tales, ?). Ideally, you will (re-)discover early influences and use current perspective to relate ways that they shaped you.

**Topic:** Describe yourself as a reader and writer in several significant phases, from early in life to the present. You may include family members, teachers, friends, and others whose reading and writing you imitated, identified with, or reacted against. Include any physical and mental sensations as well as the particular feelings they created: mastery, frustration, power, curiosity, addiction, escape, and so on.

OR

Tell a story about a relative and examine the influence of the story and/or relative on your life. For example, your parents may have said you were growing up to resemble someone who had great musical talent, became schizophrenic, left home for a wild life of adventure, or never married. Relate this to “cultural” crossings, roles and beliefs (i.e., the engineer uncle whom you took after who embodied “macho” traits whose example you can only partly follow).

OR

Tell your “Origin story,” as Silko puts it. What do you know about your birth, conception, and infancy (first year of life)? What effect has this Origin story had already in locating you culturally, and what other associations come to mind

as you explore the details of the story, perhaps asking parents for more? (Are you a first-born, youngest, or only; a Rabbit, Horse, or Dragon; a quiet, obedient daughter who is expected to succeed financially?) Consider the cultures you entered and crossed: national, ethnic, professional, scientific-humanities, educational (first to attend college), etc.