

ENGL 442: Assignment 1: Wordless Biography
Due Tuesday 25 February.

The assignment: Create a biography of a famous person using NO words, i.e., construct a visual narrative that tells us about the person in question.

- Must not be someone in your family, and you'll probably find it easier to use someone who's dead ;-)
- If it's in a paper format, i.e. multiple pages, there should be a minimum of 8 pages. If you want to be nonlinear, you can choose to do it on posterboard. Sculpture or models are also OK. Or, if you're technologically savvy, you can do it as a video, web or multimedia piece. Caveat: no Powerpoint/slideshows.
- You can use posterboard, slides, paper, cardstock, string, Photoshop, buttons. You can use collage, digital or physical. Cut and paste, whatever.
- No words. The exceptions to this are that you can use a "key" to describe symbols (e.g. in Rebecca Goldstein's Nelson piece, the "cannonball key"). No voice-overs if you use video.
- I'm looking for *conceptual* originality and sophistication, and your ability to "follow through" on an idea. That means complexity and depth. You may find Edward Tufte's "dimensionality" notion useful.
- Stuck? Think of all the ways you can "wordlessly" tell a story, and go from there -- comic books, IKEA instructions, international sign systems, silent film, airline safety cards...
- No dance or mime. Unless you turn in the notation, which case you get a good grade *and* a cookie.
- Technical competency and professional finish will be considered.
- Projects containing Taylor Swift will be consigned immediately to the dustbin of history.

The final part: write a 1-2 page detailed, formal description of your piece (this is called an *ekphrasis*). The assignment is not considered complete without this paper.

Wordless Biography Evaluation Sheet

Name:

Subject:

1. Format

What is the metaphor being used & how effective/original is it?

What materials are involved/how is the project constructed?

How does the viewer interact with the work/ what cues are used to guide the viewer?

How well is the idea executed in practice?

2. Chronology/Dimensionality

How is chronology represented (linear? nonlinear? interactive?)

How do other dimensions (if any) work?

What is the relationship between chronology and the other dimensions of the work?

How comprehensive/complete is the chronology?

3. Ekphrasis

Does the ekphrasis adequately describe and explain the work?

Are there specific insights in the description that enhance the viewer's understanding of the piece?

4. Student feedback

Notes from student feedback sheet:

5. General comments

What's most effective:

What needs improvement:

Questions I was left with:

6. Grade

ENGL 442 Typography Assignment

Purpose An exercise partly in research/ writing and partly in typographic interpretation.

Assignment Step 1: Choose a document or object and analyze & evaluate the typographical choices made by the designer. The *minimum* requirements for this analysis are:

- 6 pages of double-spaced text, not including bibliography; and
- at least 4 external, reputable sources to back up your analysis.

Step 2: Find a way to re-present your paper in a compelling way, utilizing typography & images where appropriate. Could be 3D, a poster, a pamphlet, or other format.

Guidelines Analysis means a thorough description and discussion of the choices made by the designer. Evaluation means making a thorough and critical judgment of the effectiveness of those choices. *Do both.*

In step 2, the typography you use should honor the integrity and content of the text, i.e. don't use fonts for their own sake - they should be part of the message! Pay attention to important typographical details such as leading, kerning, and font combinations.

Use a consistent citation format (MLA or Chicago), but feel free to experiment with the placement/ marking of citations/ footnotes in step 2 (for example, the "Tufte model" of placing notes in sidebars).

Meta Include a colophon for part 2 as a separate page at the end of your paper. A sample colophon is available here: <http://timisarobot.com/colophon.php>. Include some brief justifications for your reinterpretation of the essay. The colophon is *required*.

On the due date, bring your project to class and be prepared to discuss it. Turn in your original, unformatted essay as well as the final project.

Grading Criteria See over.

Due Date 05 November.

Grading Criteria

Effectiveness of Argument Are you convincing in your evaluation of the object / text?

Comprehensiveness of Analysis How thorough & detailed is your analysis?

Written Expression How careful is your attention to mechanics & fluency of written style?

Use of Sources What are the sources used for, and how well are they integrated into the paper?

Final Project Concept & Follow-through How have you chosen to re-interpret your essay for visual display, and how thoroughly is the concept carried out?

Quality of Presentation/ Materials How much attention & care have you paid to detail/ use of materials in the final project?

What Works Well

What Could Be Improved

Overall A = *exceptional*. In addition to "B" standards, the project stands out in the class as being of substantially higher quality and exceptional conceptual insight.
B = *above average*. Detailed & comprehensive analysis, effective use of sources, error-free written expression, and a competently executed final product.
C = *average*. A basic analysis with all required components but may have issues with written expression, comprehensiveness or quality of interpretation.
D = *poor*. May be an earnest attempt but be missing one or more required components, lack critical awareness, or be sloppily executed.
F = what were you thinking?