

# EN101 Journal Writing

- Put your name on the first page of your composition book.
- Reserve the first three pages of your composition book for your personal vocabulary log.

Each week:

1. Read something interesting to you that is a page or more long. It could be a book, a magazine article, an academic journal, a lengthy news article, etc. Please only read things that are appropriate for a Christian to read (no romance novels, Hollywood news articles, etc.). We are very much in favor of reading the Bible, but not for this assignment. For this assignment, you must read modern-day English rather than 1611 English. Also, you may not use the reading assigned in a different class for this assignment.

Pay attention to the author's style of writing. What are his paragraphs like? How does he organize and develop his thoughts? What kind of sentences does the author use? Is the author's writing effective? If so what makes it so? If not, why not? I would be delighted if you would share your thoughts about these things with me.

2. Write a journal entry in your composition book about the text you read.
  - a. Each entry should be on a new page. In the upper left include these things specifically:
    - The due date for the journal entry
    - Information about the text you read (that is, author, book name, etc.). Please present this information in MLA style.  
(Help for MLA formatting: <http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/workscited/> and <http://www.easybib.com/>)
  - b. Write 1¼ or more pages about what you have read. (Note: If you bought a composition book that is wide-ruled, you will need to write 2 or more pages)
    - 1) It should not be double-spaced.
    - 2) This writing will not be graded for grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Allow your thoughts to flow freely without being hindered by concern for correctness.
    - 3) Use this journal writing to experiment with phrasing what you want to say, to play with words and sentences. What are the different ways of saying the same thing? What impact does the different phrasing make? Does it “sound” better to say something one way instead of another?
    - 4) Do not retell what you have read; instead, think about and react to what you've read. For writing ideas, you may want to answer one or more of these questions:
      - What is the most interesting point in the text? Why?
      - What do you disagree with the author about? Why?
      - What do you agree with the author about? Why?
      - What kind of “linkage” does the text have? That is, does it relate to an idea or theory you've been developing, or does it remind you of something else? What does it link to in your mind?

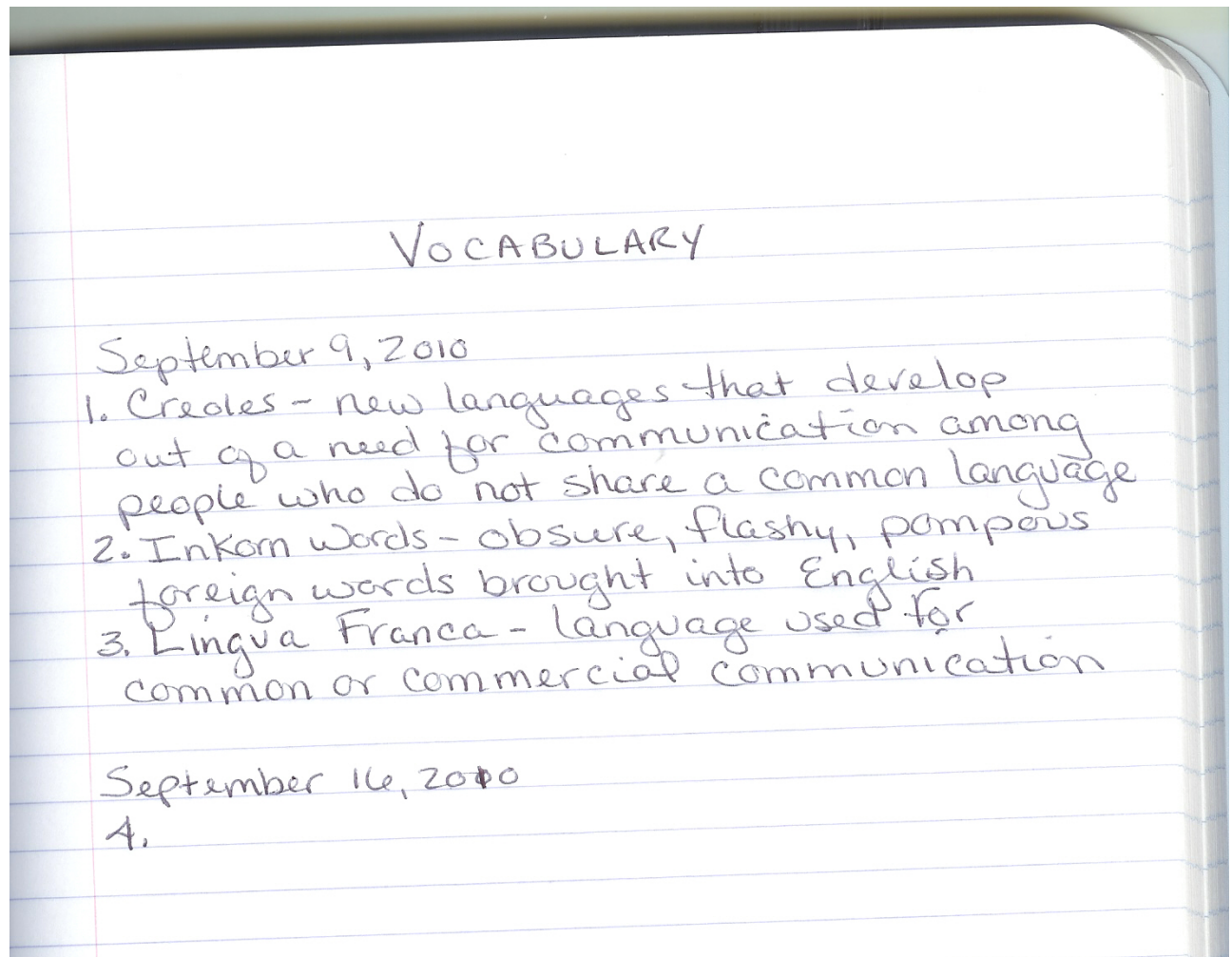
- What is confusing or muddy about the text? What do you think it means? Why?
  - What do you find useful in the reading? How would you use it?
3. Find at least three vocabulary words in your chosen text that are not a part of your working vocabulary. If you know all the words, select words that fellow students would likely not know. If you cannot identify three words like this, the text you've chosen is too elementary for this assignment; choose something else.

Date and record these vocabulary words AND their definitions on the first pages of your composition book. Keep adding to this page every week when you do a reading journal entry.

4. Bring your composition book to class every Friday. A few times during the semester, it will be collected and given a grade based upon completeness.

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## Sample Vocabulary Entry for Journal



## Sample Journal Entry

September 9, 2010

Nunberg, Geoffrey, "The Persistence of English."  
Forward. Norton Anthology of English  
Literature; New York: W.W. Norton, 2000.  
xli - lv. Print.

Nunberg apparently thinks that Narayan and Rushdie are widely read authors, though I confess that I am not aware of reading any of their works. And they apparently write in English. But to really understand their works, which we must do if we want to keep English cohesive, we must absorb enough of the Sanskrit classics to keep their thoughts and our thoughts all part of the same mental culture.

Do I really believe this? Well, it is obvious that background knowledge plays a great role in understanding difficult texts; and to some degree, a cultural identity exists when people share similar experiences, ideas, and even books. But I see here (perhaps wrongly) a sinister move away from biblical and traditional roots to something far less Christian.

So if I refuse to learn the Sanskrit classics, am I participating in the demise of English as a universal language? Or am I valiantly crusading for cultural norms closer to Christianity?

than to Hinduism?

Another thought here is that there is, apparently, some linguistic basis for thinking that everything we do and say affects the direction of society.

As people speak more and more of, say, gay rights, society is less like it was twenty years ago. I am reminded that we Christians need to keep our voice.

We need to keep saying things like

Jesus saves, righteousness, atonement, sin, and forgiveness.

When such terms disappear or become diluted in the great vat of language, new writers will, to use Nünberg's phrase, "ground their works" in a way that is foreign to our Christian heritage.