Writing about Texts (6+ pages)

For the Writing about Texts essay, choose from one of the two prompts provided. In addition, you may choose to write an essay prompt from the “Common Reading Essay Contest” as provided in class.

Journeys and Quests (Chapter 12 of Creative Composition)

Pollack, Chamberlin, and Bakopoulos write, “One of the joys of a journey or a quest is the potential for learning by experience—leaving your house and discovering something you never imaged before you set out” (349). The author’s go on to write, “Although an account of a journey is in some sense a reflective narrative, a journey unfolds over space as well as time…a destination is not enough…you must find a way to interrogate your journey so that your experience will gain significance…As with any essay, you must create meaning by analyzing, connecting and reflecting on what is important” (Pollack et al. 350).

Piper Kerman’s text *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women’s Prison* is a journey, a quest. In this essay, you are being asked to create meaning for her year in prison. Make it worth something through analysis, reflection, and creativity.

Meditations (Chapter 13 of Creative Composition)

In Piper Kerman’s text *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women’s Prison*, there are many times that Kerman escapes into the world of her mind to try to discover meaning and calm in her otherwise chaotic world of prison. The purpose of this essay is to create that meaning through meditative thoughts using *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women’s Prison*.

Pollack, Chamberlin, and Bakopoulos write, “Often when you write a meditative analysis, you find that specific events, images, or feelings start grouping themselves together in your mind, even if you don’t know how or why these items are connected. Your role as you develop the meditative essay is to trust yourself to pursue and uncover the abstract idea that links the concrete elements that constitute your raw material (411).

Show the reader why certain events in the texts which perhaps have nothing to do with each other on the surface, once uncovered, give great meaning to the book. This essay is not about a linear analysis of the text; instead it is about meaning making of seemingly unrelated topics or occurrences.

When I grade your essay, I will be looking for the following:

 ✓ **A strong opening.** Give the reader reason to continue to read the essay.

 ✓ **A Clear, thoughtful thesis.** Are you addressing an issue that readers might have different opinions about? Are you taking a clear side—or arguing that the issue is too complicated for an either/or position? Are you making an interesting point? Have you avoided the simple thesis and created a unique perspective?
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✓ **Specific textual support.** Every claim you make needs evidence to back it up. Imagine a cranky reader who is ready to argue with every point you are making: do you have strong quotes and examples to convince the most skeptical audience?

✓ **Effective Structure.** I want to know where the essay is going after the first paragraph. I want information presented in a clear and logical way. If you chose to use linear organization, everything should follow the story’s timeline. If you are using non-linear organization, each paragraph should stick to the point.

✓ **Analysis, not summary.** Let your voice come through. Assume your audience has read the story; therefore, you do not need to summarize endlessly unless it is making a point. Guide me through your thoughts. Pay attention to important sentences in each paragraph—the first and last.

✓ **Clear, correct prose.** Pay attention to grammar issues.

Some hints:
- Use Kerman’s last name when referring to the author
- Provide background information in the opening paragraph (Title of book…)
- MLA Citation
- Work Cited page is required
- Never end a paragraph with a quote. End paragraphs with your analysis.
- If a block quote is needed, follow the four-line rule