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Six-Word Memoirs

This assignment is worth 10 points

For this assignment, you will be writing a six-word memoir for one of the characters or authors we have encountered over the course of this semester.

The six-word memoir has recently enjoyed some popularity as an experimental writing technique. The aim is to concentrate as much meaning, insight, or wit—a very clear idea—into a short piece of writing. I've given you some examples that I particularly like below; they were published in a book whose title is itself a six-word memoir: *Not Quite What I Was Planning*.

In addition to composing your memoir, you will choose an image to serve as a backdrop. Your image should further enhance the impact of your writing. The finished product should be a Google slide, which you will submit on Canvas. The last day of class, we will take a look at some examples of your work. **Please do not put your name or the name of the character/author on the slide. We should be able to guess who it is!**

Here are some more detailed instructions:

1. Start by brainstorming about your subject. Review the reading, and write down a collection of words and images associated with the character or author. For example, when and where did they live? What were their most outstanding character traits? What were their most notable struggles and achievements? What makes them uniquely interesting? If they had to sum up their lives, what would they say?
2. Looking at the words you have collected, choose some of the most vivid and powerful of them: concentrate on nouns and verbs as much as possible. Write at least three different six-word memoirs for your subject.
3. Now evaluate your rough drafts. Which to you seems most concise (conveying a lot of information in few words)? Which best reflects a tone—your attitude towards the subject?
4. Once you have chosen the memoir you think is most effective, edit. Make at least one change in punctuation, word choice, or usage. If you decide the original was better, then use it!
5. Finally, find an image that you think goes well with your memoir. It can be anything at all, from something historical to something modern or contemporary. Experiment with different images.
6. Having completed your almost-final version, leave it alone for a while. Come back to it a bit later and see how you feel about it. Is it the best it can be? If you see a possible revision, try it out!

Some examples of Six-Word Memoirs from *Not Quite What I Was Planning: Six-Word Memoirs by Writers Famous and Obscure*:

Savior complex makes for many disappointments.

Nobody cared, then they did.
Why?

I asked.
They answered.
I wrote.

Time heals all wounds? Not quite.

Boy, if I had a hammer.

Followed yellow brick road.
Disappointment ensued.

Bad brakes discovered at high speeds.

Nothing profound,
I just sat around.

The shit invariably
hits the fan.

Infinite calm beset with emotional
architecture.

Quite undecided, yet hopefully
unsatisfied, generally.

No words can describe my life.

I wrote it all down somewhere.

Struggled with how
the mind works.

Thought I would have
more impact.

Anything possible—but I was tired.

Followed dim shapes through narcotic haze.



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