

A Muse
Engl 111
Fall 2007

What is your story?
**A narrative of your experience of reading *What is the What* and
working at Lincoln International High School**

While your *Handmaid's Tale* essay was an *argument*, this essay will be a *narrative*. That is, you will be telling a story. This is your own story, the story of your first semester at college, in which you worked with students at Lincoln International High School and read Dave Eggers' *What is the What*.

The essay *must* include three elements:

- A vivid description of Lincoln for people who have never been there. You want them to be able to experience it through you.
- Description of your experience of reading *What is the What* while working on a writing project with refugee and immigrant students at Lincoln. You want to convey your reading experience, how the novel affected you, and to reflect on the nature and practice of storytelling.
- Discussion of at least two specific scenes and direct quotation from at least two specific passages in the novel. This will ground you in the particulars and help you keep your narrative specific and lively. As always, work closely with Eggers' language.

You do not have to tell it in strict chronological order, but may employ flashbacks or a parallel plot, as you wish. Also, feel free to add dialogue, illustrations (photographs, artwork, maps)—anything that will engage your readers and enliven your story.

You have a specific **audience** for this essay: other first-year students at UST who have not had this kind of service-learning experience. They won't know anything about Lincoln or about *What is the What*, so you will need to provide details for them. Also, as Eggers knew, you need to appeal to where your audience is right here and now. What will interest other St. Thomas students in your experience? You might want to embed your narrative in your common freshman experiences, and/or to provide some background on yourself.

To get started:

Use your journals for drafting, but strive to go beyond them. Look for the following: *What are the key words, images, moments you would use to describe your experience at LIHS, reading of *WITW*, and your first semester at UST? What story is taking shape? How can you focus and describe what has been happening so that it is understandable, interesting, and meaningful for other student readers as well as for yourself?*

As always, we'll develop this essay in stages. I encourage you to talk with the consultants in the Center for Writing at any stage in the process. **What is different with this essay is that you and I will have a revision conference; you will bring your draft and your questions and ideas to me, and we'll go over it together and get you starting revising.**

See me for a revision conference by Wednesday, Nov. 28

Revised essays due Monday, Dec. 3 --- into my mailbox (JRC 333) by 4:00 p.m.

Format: 3-4 pages; typed, double-spaced, one-inch margins, 12 point font. Follow the MLA paper example in *Easy Writer* for your format. Submit the final essay and all drafts in a folder.

Note: Papers are due by 4:00 p.m. on Dec. 3. Papers turned in on the due date but after 4:00 will lose one-half letter grade; papers turned in after the due date will have a letter grade deducted, one grade per day late.