

THE
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NORTON
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SAMPLER

Sixth Edition



SHORT ESSAYS FOR COMPOSITION

Thomas Cooley

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XX

THOMAS COOLEY

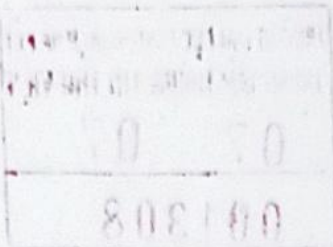
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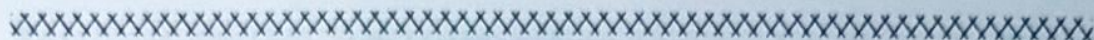
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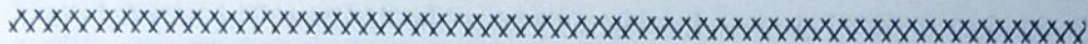
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Annie Dillard  THE DEATH OF A MOTH 4

And that is why I believe those hollow crisps on the bathroom floor are moths. I think I know moths, and fragments of moths, and chips and tatters of utterly empty moths, in any state. How many of you, I asked the people in my class, which of you want to give your lives and be writers?

Annie Dillard  HOW I WROTE THE MOTH ESSAY—
AND WHY 8

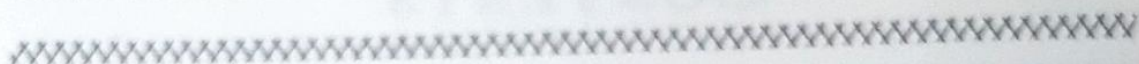
Walking back to my desk, where I had been answering letters, I realized that the burning moth was a dandy visual focus for all my recent thoughts about an empty, dedicated life. Perhaps I'd try to write a short narrative about it.

THE PROCESSES OF WRITING 16

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REALTIME WRITING / CATALOG DESCRIPTION 26

Alice Steinbach THE MISS DENNIS SCHOOL OF WRITING 28

Miss Dennis always wore a variation of one outfit—a dark-colored, flared woolen skirt, a tailored white blouse and a cardigan sweater, usually black, thrown over her shoulders and held together by a little pearl chain.

Can you see her? I can. And the image of her makes me smile. Still.

Cherokee Paul McDonald A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE 37

"He's mostly silver, but the silver is somehow made up of *all* the colors, if you know what I mean." I stopped. "Do you know what I mean by colors?"

Beverly Dipo NO RAINBOWS, NO ROSES 42

At the door to 309, I pause, adjusting my eyes to the darkness. The only light in the room is coming from an infusion pump, which is flashing its red beacon as if in warning, and the dim hall light that barely confirms the room's furnishings and the shapeless form on the bed.

Ann Hodgman NO WONDER THEY CALL ME A BITCH 47

As alarming as the Gaines-burgers were, their soy meal began to seem like an old friend when the time came to try some *canned* dog foods.

CHAPTER TWO: NARRATIVE 54

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REALTIME WRITING / OBITUARY 58

Thomas Beller ♣ THE ASHEN GUY: LOWER BROADWAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 60

At first glance he looked like a snowman, except instead of snow he was covered in gray, asbestos-colored ash. . . . A small plume of dust drifted off the top of his head as he walked, echoing the larger plume of smoke drifting off of One World Trade behind him.

Sebastian Junger ♣ THE LION IN WINTER 65

Dogs were barking in the distance, and a soldier shouted into his radio that the wounded were coming in and they needed more medicine, *now*.

Mary Mebane ♣ THE BACK OF THE BUS 72

Most Americans have never had to live with terror. I had had to live with it all my life—the psychological terror of segregation, in which there was a special set of laws governing your movements. You violated them at your peril. . . .

Richard Rodriguez ♣ NONE OF THIS IS FAIR 81

Affirmative Action programs had made it all possible. The disadvantages of others permitted my promotion; the absence of many Mexican-Americans from academic life allowed my designation as a “minority student.”

Kelly Simon ♣ FRANK SINATRA'S GUM 88

He leaned his elbows on the table. His face was inches from mine. His baby blues twinkled at me. I could smell the Juicy Fruit on his breath.

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REALTIME WRITING / GIRL SCOUT COOKIE BOX 99

The Onion ♣ ALL SEVEN DEADLY SINS COMMITTED AT CHURCH BAKE SALE 101

In total, 347 individual acts of sin were committed at the bake sale, with nearly every attendee committing at least one of the seven deadly sins as outlined by Gregory the Great in the Fifth Century.

Malcolm Browne ♣ THE INVISIBLE FLYING CAT 106

The reasoning techniques of thought experiments are not necessarily difficult. To test the statement that the world is infested by invisible flying cats which invariably avoid human beings, we would consider the consequences of such a situation.

Richard Lederer ♣ ENGLISH IS A CRAZY LANGUAGE 110

Sometimes you have to believe that all English speakers should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane. In what other language do people drive in a parkway and park in a driveway? . . . In what other language can your nose run and your feet smell?

Nat Hentoff ♣ JAZZ: MUSIC BEYOND TIME AND NATIONS 116

I was eleven when I first heard jazz. Walking down a street in Boston, I was stopped by the sound coming out of a public address system attached to a record store. I was so exhilarated that I yelled in delight—something I had never done before on the proper streets of Boston. The music was Artie Shaw's "Nightmare."

Janet Wu ♣ HOMEWARD BOUND 123

My grandmother has bound feet. Cruelly tethered since her birth, they are like bonsai trees, miniature versions of what should have been.

CHAPTER FOUR: CLASSIFICATION AND DIVISION 127

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REALTIME WRITING / WWW.DAILYCANDY.COM 130

Amy Tan ♣ MOTHER TONGUE 132

I spend a great deal of my time thinking about the power of language—the way it can evoke an emotion, a visual image, a complex idea, or a simple truth. Language is the tool of my trade. And I use them all—all the Englishes I grew up with.

Eric A. Watts ♣ THE COLOR OF SUCCESS 140

“Hitting the books,” expressing oneself articulately, and, at times, displaying more than a modest amount of intelligence—these traits were derided as “acting white.”

Isaac Asimov ♣ WHAT DO YOU CALL A PLATYPUS? 146

All the mammals are divided into two subclasses. In one of these subclasses (“Protheria” or “first-beasts”) are the duckbill and five species of the spiny anteater. In the other (“Theria” or just “beasts”) are all the other 4,231 known living species of mammals.

Freeman J. Dyson ♣ SCIENCE, GUIDED BY ETHICS, CAN LIFT UP THE POOR 154

We all know that green technology has a dark side, just as gray technology has a dark side. Gray technology brought us hydrogen bombs as well as telephones. Green technology brought us anthrax bombs as well as antibiotics.

Jeff Jacoby ♣ THE RISE OF THE BLENDED AMERICAN 159

The population of blended citizens is soaring, and with it the realization that racial divisions are only skin deep. Tens of millions of Americans have learned to think outside the racial box. It's time the government followed suit.

CHAPTER SIX: COMPARISON AND CONTRAST 200

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REALTIME WRITING / BASEBALL STATS 204

Deborah Dalfonso ♣ **GRAMMY REWARDS 206**

Our daughter, Jill, has two grandmothers who are as different as chalk and cheese. One grandmother taught her how to count cards and make her face as blank as a huge, white Kleenex when she bluffed at blackjack. . . . The other grandmother taught her where to place the salad forks.

Debi Davis ♣ **BODY IMPERFECT 209**

Children, in contrast, found my appearance clearly fascinating. One small girl came up to me and stared with unabashed curiosity at my empty pantlegs.

Bruce Catton ♣ **GRANT AND LEE: A STUDY IN CONTRASTS 212**

No part of either man's life became him more than the part he played in this brief meeting in the McLean house at Appomattox. Their behavior there put all succeeding generations of Americans in their debt. Two great Americans, Grant and Lee—very different, yet under everything very much alike.

Gary Soto ♣ **LIKE MEXICANS 218**

But the woman I married was not Mexican but Japanese. It was a surprise to me. For years, I went about wide-eyed in my search for the brown girl in a white dress at a dance.

Deborah Tannen ♣ **GENDER IN THE CLASSROOM 224**

Male students are more likely to be comfortable attacking the readings and might find the inclusion of personal anecdotes irrelevant and "soft." Women are more likely to resist discussion they perceive as hostile, and, indeed, it is women in my classes who are most likely to offer personal anecdotes.

David Sedaris ♣ **REMEMBERING MY CHILDHOOD ON THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA 233**

Certain events are parallel, but compared with Hugh's, my childhood was unspeakably dull. When I was seven years old, my family moved to North Carolina. When he was seven years old, Hugh's family moved to the Congo. We had a collie and a house cat. They had a monkey and two horses named Charlie Brown and Satan.