

A. Freewriting: 5 mins

Think about what you've heard, tasted, smelled, seen, and touched today before this class. Write down as many of these images as you can, the best way you can, in the English words you know. Don't worry about making proper sentences or following standard grammar. Imagine you are trying to make someone else feel exactly the way you felt, and write the words that you think will do that.

B. Share models - grps of 3.

Describe the essay you brought to share. Why do you like it?  
Do you plan on "stealing" any formal elements from it for your own essay?  
Which ones?

C. Peer review of proposals - groups of 3

- Read your classmate's proposal.
- Write your name. Underneath, write:
  1. one question you'd like to ask them about their essay
  2. one suggestion/idea you have which might help them as they continue writing

Discuss in groups.

Schedule for your essay project:

Rough draft of essay due: Nov 8

Second draft due: Dec 13

## Third draft due: Jan 17

HW for next week (31 Oct 2017):

Listening/Reading:

This week I'd like to focus on a different genre of essay: a music review. I'd like you to read Lester Bangs' review of the Van Morrison album *Astral Weeks*. It's one of the most famous album reviews ever written, probably because it's very passionate, subjective, and personal—qualities we don't usually associate with art criticism.

Before you read the review, you should listen to the Van Morrison album, which many people consider to be one of the greatest rock/pop albums of all time. I've uploaded the audio tracks to IS, so please download them and listen to the 8 songs in order. It's best if you sit down and listen to the whole album at once. It was released in 1968, and maybe it will sound old-fashioned to you. But I hope you enjoy it (I have to admit it is one of my favorite music albums, and you could even argue that an album like this is itself an essay). If you want to read more about the album itself, I've posted a link to the Wikipedia article, which is actually very well-written (but this is only optional).

After you've heard the album, read Lester Bangs' review here:

<https://genius.com/Lester-bangs-astral-weeks-annotated>

Lester Bangs was a very influential but unconventional music journalist who wrote and edited for such magazines as *Rolling Stone* and *Creem*. I think his essay on *Astral Weeks* is valuable to us as readers and writers for a couple of reasons. First, I like that he doesn't pretend to explain or analyze the music on any objective level, but he dives very deeply into his own personal attachment and interpretation of just two of the songs on the album. He says: "I haven't got the slightest idea what [the song] 'means,' though on one level I'd like to approach it in a manner as indirect and evocative as the lyrics themselves. Because you're in trouble anyway when you sit yourself down to explicate just exactly what a mystical document, which is exactly what *Astral Weeks* is, means." Next, I like

how Bangs lets the free-form jazz style of Van Morrison's words and voice "possess" the style of his own writing, which leads to long, flowing sentences like this: "You can say to love the questions you have to love the answers which quicken the end of love that's loved to love the awful inequality of human experience that loves to say we tower over these the lost that love to love the love that freedom could have been, the train to freedom, but we never get on, we'd rather wave generously walking away from those who are victims of themselves."

## Writing

I'd like you to write a short review of your favorite song or musical work (or if you don't want to write about music, you can write a review of your favorite painting, sculpture, photo, or other artwork). Shoot for about one page. You don't need to give an overall introduction to the song or artwork. Bangs doesn't really do this. He just jumps right in, and describes his personal connection to the artwork in detail. I want you to try the same. Think about the feel and style of the song or artwork, and try to SHOW that style in your own writing.

If you want more models for personal essays about music, try this webpage:

<http://www.thers500.com/>

As always, read the About page so you can understand the concept of the page. Each of the essays is about one famous album, and each is written by a different author, in a different style. I contributed an essay to the page; it's here if you want to read it:

<http://www.thers500.com/albums/332-richard-linda-thompson-shoot-out-the-lights-1982/>