Possibilities for Diagnostic Essay Prompts

Possible Narrative Essay Prompts:

Retell a childhood experience that made an impression on you.

Recall an early experience with writing (or reading) that changed the way that you perceived of yourself as a writer (or reader).

Describe a time in your life when the culture in which you were raised complemented or clashed with a culture outside of the familiarity of your home or community.

Possible Guidelines:

Because this is your story, you should feel free to employ the first person “I” in recounting your story.

Imagine your audience as your classmates who may or may not share your background, culture, or other life experiences.

Try to be as descriptive as possible in the retelling of your story.

Attempt to “show” your reader the story you are telling by using vivid and specific details. Include such sensory information as sight, touch, smell, taste, and sound.

Feel free to incorporate believable dialogue that may have taken place among the various characters in your narrative.

Attempt to structure your narrative so that it makes sense, intrigues, and enlightens your readers.

Possible Reflection Queries:

In the remaining time provided, write a letter to your instructor explaining why you chose the prompt that you chose.

What is the most important message you want your reader to understand after reading your essay?

What do you like least about your essay and what do you like best about your essay?

What challenges did this writing assignment present?

If you had more time to work on this essay, what would you do to make it better, more interesting?

What is the one aspect of your writing you would like to focus on and improve this semester?
Persuasive Essay Prompts:

Imagine that you have 100 days and unlimited resources with which to change the world. What is the one cause that you would take on, what would you do in order to implement your cause, and what would the world look like should your actions prove successful?

Consider that you have the power to influence legislators at the state or national level. Write a letter to a political leader, urging him or her to make to make a specific policy change that would affect people, the environment, business practices, or industry in your state or in your nation.

Consider that you have the power to influence change at the University of Hawai‘i. Write a letter to the school newspaper explicating the change that you would like to see, explaining why the change you propose is necessary and how it would benefit students, instructors, professors, the image of the university, etc.

Possible Guidelines:

Before beginning your essay, focus on your imagined audience. Who are they? What might be their thoughts about your subject matter?

How can you present yourself through your writing as an individual who is ethical, passionate, and rational?

How might you best convince your audience to take up your cause without alienating them, especially if they already disagree with your stance?

What kind of evidence might you need to present in order show that you are knowledgeable about your subject matter?

What kind of solution might you need to provide in order to appear as though you are offering answers to the problem you have identified?

Possible Reflection Queries:

In the remaining time provided, write a letter to your instructor explaining why you chose the prompt that you chose.

What is the most important message you want your reader to understand after reading your essay?

What do you like least about your essay and what do you like best about your essay?

What challenges did this writing assignment present?

If you had more time to work on this essay, what would you do to make it better, more interesting?

What is the one aspect of your writing you would like to focus on and improve this semester?