

Daily Thoughts and DTRs

This year, two regular assignments by which you will progress in your Literacy skills are:

1. Daily Thoughts
2. DTRs (Daily Thought Responses)

Daily Thoughts are well-honed sentences written daily and designed to capture a thought, typically a belief you have about life, polishing it as best you can. For example, here are three Daily Thoughts I have written since first developing this practice for myself at the end of July:

1. Listen closely for habits softly crying to be pulled like weeds.
2. If ever your world should lack mysteries and miracles, look again through the eyes of a child.
3. Be early enough to pad every moment with breathing room.

At the beginning of each class, you will be given five minutes to write a daily thought in a Google document that you must share with me and maintain throughout the year, numbering each Daily Thought. You may wish to use some of your free moments (such as while waiting in line somewhere) to begin composing your Daily Thought in your mind, shifting the words around, questioning every word choice, making sure that your Daily Thought expresses precisely what you believe, sounds as poetic as possible and wastes no words. If you do not finish your Daily Thought in class, it must be finished as homework.

The purpose of the Daily Thoughts is to train your mind in the following:

1. Idea generation
2. Sentence variety and fluency
3. Word choice
4. Metaphorical thinking

DTRs (Daily Thought Responses) are written responses to your peers' daily thoughts. These will usually be Friday activities. I will choose a person, sometimes at random, sometimes intentionally, and that person will choose from his or her collection of Daily Thoughts which one to share with the class. Each DTR will require:

1. Understanding of the shared Daily Thought (reading)
2. Explaining the Daily Thought (thinking and writing)
3. Forming an opinion (thinking)
4. Explaining your opinion (writing)
5. Defending it with interpretation and evidence (persuasion)
6. Presenting it to the class (speaking)
7. Considering others' opinions with an open mind (listening)
8. And revising the original Daily Thought (revision)

All revised versions of a Daily Thought will be posted in the classroom. Note that this activity requires that you practice in each of the four areas of Literacy: reading, writing, listening and speaking -- which all depend on sound thinking.

Following is a sample quote (essentially a Daily Thought) and a sample response:

Daily Thought (Quote):

“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.”
- writer Henry David Thoreau, 1854

Response:

Thoreau suggests that most people feel depressed but hide it. The word “desperation,” a form of the word “despair,” is what today we usually call depression. Thus, Thoreau implies that most people (“the mass of men”) are depressed. Since Thoreau does not simply refer to desperation alone but to “quiet desperation,” he means that most people keep their problems quiet; they hide their dark sides from others. Society, Thoreau argues, is flawed because it fails to lead individuals to a sense of fulfillment.

In this case I don’t agree with Thoreau. I think there’s some truth to what he expresses here: everybody feels depressed from time to time; nobody is always happy; we all strive for perfect joy and usually fall short. But I don’t think it’s right to go so far as to say that most people are constantly concealing some degree of depression. Okay, some people must be doing that. Some are very unfortunate, yes. Some suffer through horrible circumstances. Even still, I have read about people in the worst environments finding joy and cultivating love. In the Nazi death camps of the Holocaust, for example, hope and love and joy persisted. Therefore I think that Thoreau exaggerates. If I could chat with the legendary transcendentalist writer, I would recommend to him that he revise his message to read, “The mass of men suffer through periods of quiet desperation.” Or, in my words: “Most people feel depressed at least sometimes.”

Notice how I’ve structured these two paragraphs. They reflect the following requirements:

- Two paragraphs:
 1. What you think the quote means.
 2. Do you agree or disagree? Why? Explain.Include in this paragraph your revised version of the Daily Thought
- Include at least five sentences per paragraph.

“Show those who push you down that when you get up, you soar.”- Tori

A few notes about plagiarism:

1. Plagiarism is never acceptable in school. In the work place, it can be grounds for firing and even for imprisonment.
2. I have written millions of words and read many millions more. I am very skilled at spotting plagiarism and verifying it on the internet, even when some of the words have been changed.
3. Plagiarism does nothing to help you grow as a writer and thinker. Do yourself a favor and set yourself to the hard work of improving by taking seriously this daily practice of writing and thinking. If you do, you will be surprised by how much focusing on crafting one terrific sentence per day will, over the course of a year, improve your thinking, your writing, and the speed at which you are able to write well. **Do not underestimate the advantage of being able to write well quickly.** In high school, in college, and in the workplace, this will pay off big time!!!
4. Be aware that I will contact parents anytime I encounter plagiarism.

Have fun expressing what you believe! :)