

Getting Started: Doing the Illustrative Essay Invention Exercise

Instructions:

Do a FILE and SAVE AS and put this document onto your own diskette. Name it: illinvent-yourinitials (eg. Illinvent-Ili). When you are done, save the document. The copy and paste the text into our online learning environment.

1. Write down a number of things you know a good deal about. You don't have to be an expert, but you know about it from first hand knowledge. (Example: football, SAC, parking at SAC, smoking.)
2. Pick one of the items you are knowledgeable about, and make a couple of general statements about it that you consider to be true. Find one statement of truth that you think is best. Use this statement as your "illustrative truth" (it is your kernal proverb-also called you "point" or "main idea" or "thesis."
3. State your "illustrative truth" in a clear, declarative proverb-like sentence. Perhaps you will use an actual proverb or come up with your own. It is a general statement that you consider to be true.
4. Consider your "illustrative truth" to be your MESSAGE. WHO do you want to send this message to? You need to be specific (perhaps at the level of a group within a group or even to an individual). Describe your audience. Be specific as you can and as detailed as you can.
5. What does this audience already know about your subject? What is their attitude toward your "illustrative truth"? Why would it be important for them to hear or accept this "truth."
6. Why do you want to send your audience this message (illustrative truth)? What desired effect do you want to have on them as and after they read your essay?

7. What is the circumstance (or "exigence") surrounding your communication of your message to your audience? What are the circumstances that necessitate this communication?

8. Briefly LIST the stories you will use to ILLUSTRATE your point. In what ways will these stories help to achieve your desired effect you wish to have on this audience?