

charity singleton craig

LIKE YOUR ESSAYS

WRITE

prompts
to
inspire!

from the author of The Art of the Essay

Like Your Essays

prompts to inspire!

from the author of The Art of the Essay

charity singleton craig



T. S. Poetry Press • New York

T. S. Poetry Press
Ossining, New York
Tspoetry.com

© 2020, [Charity Singleton Craig](#)

Cover image by L.L. Barkat



Liking Theirs, to Like Yours

Want to *like* your essays more tomorrow than you do today? Try using great essays as your guide, by reading them and imitating their techniques.

Below you'll find links to five recent essays by some great essayists of our time. After you read them, spend some time uncovering what it is that makes them great. For instance, most of them use personal stories, real life characters, and a little serendipity, like we discussed with "The Crane Wife" [over at Tweetspeak Poetry](#).

Others tap into the tensions of a current event, the interest of a recent food trend, or the timeliness of a fairy tale. Still others are structured in the form of letters or with the conceit of an essay not written.

After you've done your own analysis, try writing the beginning of an essay based on the prompts below.



Prompt 1: Find Your Proximity

*“The Crane Wife”
by CJ Hauser for The Paris Review*

In “The Crane Wife,” we learn from the first line that Hauser embarked on a scientific expedition just 10 days after she called off her wedding. Two unrelated events become intricately connected by their chronological proximity.

Write about a time when two seemingly unrelated events happened close together in your own life. How did their chronological proximity change how you think and write about each? If you’re having trouble coming up with some ideas, create a quick timeline of your own life and then fill in major events happening in your community or the world (i.e. this year’s senior class might notice that their high school graduation happened during a global pandemic).



Prompt 2: Against the Trend Odds

“Learning to Make Lasagna in Kyrgyzstan”
by Jia Tolentino for Bon Appetit

In [this essay](#), Tolentino turns the trend of “seasonal and local” food on its head.

Think of a current trend and write about an experience in your life that puts you at odds with that trend. Alternately, you could think of a common saying, like *hard work always pays off*, and write about a time in your life when the opposite seemed true.



Prompt 3: Looking for a Tale

*“Fairy Tales and the Bodies of Black Boys”
by Sabrina Orah Mark for The Paris Review*

In [Sabrina Mark’s essay](#), she starts with an encounter at the grocery store with her son, one that she sees mimicked in the life of other mothers, and then she goes looking “for a fairy tale about the bodies of boys.”

Think of an encounter you’ve had recently. Now, find a fairy tale that matches the encounter in substance, complexity, or themes and connect the two in your writing.



Prompt 4: Writing Around “Can’t”

“The Purpose of a House”

by Emily Bernard for The New Yorker

In “[The Purpose of a House](#),” Bernard begins with her intention of writing an essay that would be “a sort of homage to nonessential touching.” And she ends by saying, she “still want[s] to write an essay about intimacy, a stranger’s touch,” as if that’s not what she ended up writing about at all.

Think of a topic you would like to write about but don’t think you can. Begin your essay by writing about *why*—and see where you end up.

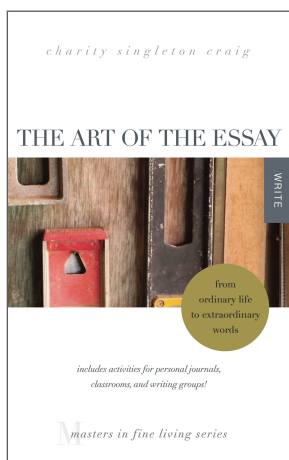


Prompt 5: **Letter to Get You Through**

“A Letter to the Professor Whose Name I Carry”
by Malcolm Tariq for The Paris Review

In [this essay](#), Tariq writes about his response to current events, in the form of a letter to a professor who first taught him about the issues at hand.

Choose something you’ve read about in the news over the last few days and write an essay in the form of a letter to a mentor or elder about what they taught you that will help you see your way through.



The Art of the Essay: From Ordinary Life to Extraordinary Words

What kind of writer are *you*? asks Charity Singleton Craig, as she opens you to a journey of discovery about the art of essay writing that explores both practical and reason-for-writing concerns.

From a near hummingbird disaster to a secret foray into hilarity, you'll find yourself inspired alongside the author—to reimagine the simple stuff of your life as a starting point for thoughtful, sometimes amusing, always voice-infused writing that's your very own ... as well as being a true gift to the world.

A great title for personal writing journeys, classrooms, and writers groups.