

Personal/Analytical Essay

Woman Warrior

American Literature

Minimum length: 4 pages

Below is a proposed writing exercise for teaching *Woman Warrior*. The objective is to interpret ideas from the book through deep reading, use textual evidence to support claims, and show students how essays can move organically from a formal to a personal voice without losing power and persuasion.

Directions:

Consider the passage from *Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston:

But America has been full of machines and ghosts--- Taxi Ghosts, Bus Ghosts, Police Ghosts, tree Trimming Ghosts, Five-and Dime Ghosts. Once upon a time the world was so thick with ghosts, I could hardly breathe; I could hardly walk... (96-97).

Choosing examples from the novel, explain how Maxine intends this passage to be read...literally? Metaphorically?

What is her mother's role in this, and how does it confuse her adjustment to American society?

Within your piece, enfold your recollection of a family "ghost story" or legend, told to you by your parents, or some other relative, and explain how it may have affected your growing up in the way Maxine's mothers' stories affected her.

1. Begin by addressing the passage and explaining your interpretation for a paragraph or two. Support your claims with textual evidence from *Woman Warrior*. Shift the essay, for the remaining paragraphs, to synthesize your personal connection to the passage toward a family story. If you have trouble recounting from memory as Maxine does, interview a family member or two over the Thanksgiving break.

2. Be sure to use an objective formal voice and MLA documentation for the discussion of *Woman Warrior*.

3. You may shift to a personal/subjective voice ("I") in the latter part of the essay.

4. For the story portion you may tell it through a 3rd person narrative, retell the interview through dialogue, or use the voice of the storyteller in first person.

