

Essay #1, Based on John Wideman's "Our Time"

For today (8/28)

1. Describe as thoroughly as possible the following characters. Bear in mind that some of them appear only in one area of the "Our Time," whereas others appear in several parts of the narrative: Garth, Robby, John, Robby & John's mother, John French.
2. "Our Time" includes several settings in the Pittsburgh area: the neighborhoods Shadyside and Homewood, and the Prison. How do the characters describe these settings and why?

For next Tuesday (9/2)

3. Construct a timeline of events described in Wideman's "Our Time." Circle the three events offered by Wideman as possible starting points for Robby's story. How does each starting point influence your understanding of the plot? Why do you think Wideman provides three different starting points? Why doesn't he just tell the story in the order as it appears on the timeline?
4. Throughout "Our Time," Wideman talks about the difficulties involved in writing the history of another person, especially a close family member. What are these difficulties? How does he overcome them? How is he implicated in them?

For next Thursday (Conference) (9/4)

5. Think about your memories of growing up in your family and neighborhood. Write down one or more important events or relationships you could write about. One of these could constitute a topic for your first paper.

6. Choose one topic, and write paragraphs about the settings and characters you would include, including details you will need to reveal about why the settings and characters that are important.

7. Construct a timeline of events related to the topic. How will you need to change the order of these events when you construct your narrative? Why?

The rough draft of Paper #1, based on your narrative of a family event or relationship, is due on **Tuesday, 9/9.**