**2014 Expository Essay based on Reading**

**Assignment draft shared with peer partner for feedback by June 7th;**

 **four copies to be shared with peer group face-to-face on Saturday June 14th**

This writing will be based on any of the readings about the authors or historical figures mentioned in the textbook *A Dab of Dickens, a Touch of Twain.* Choose an author from the course resources page at http://surreyteachers2014.weebly.com, then choose one of the following five options created for your **expository informal essay**, which will be from two to five typed pages in Google Docs. According to *A Handbook of Literature* (William Thrall, Addison Hibbard & Hugh Holman), an informal essay includes “a personal element (such as self-revelation, individual taste and experiences, confidential manner), humor, graceful style, … unconventionality or novelty of theme, freshness of form, freedom from stiffness and affectation, incomplete or tentative treatment of topic.” Its purpose is to entertain and engage as much as to inform. It can interweave fact and fiction.

**No later than June 7th**, exchange your draft of this essay via email attachment with a peer partner (assigned in class) and use the Glatthorn prompts to respond to your partner’s draft while he/she responds to your draft. The Glatthorn prompts require a respond-as-you-go reading, and has the reader start and stop to respond to a piece of writing in 4 sections. After you receive response from your partner, revise this essay to be shared in peer response group in the next campus class **June 14th.** **Come with 4 hard copies for your peer group.** After sharing in the peer group and garnering more response, please post the final product on Google Docs and embed on your Weebly portfolio page with a link back to the document.

**NOTE: The authors chosen for each option below do NOT have to be the ones in the example provided. For example, with option one, you might use Jane Austen or some other English writer.**

**Option One: Explanatory Essay**

Dickens’ obscure collection of drawings, *Sketches by Boz*, became his unlikely stepping stone into the world of publication. Elliot Engel tells the story of how Dickens got his lucky break when two desperate and “rather incompetent publishers” (126) went searching for a no-name writer to help them take advantage of their opportunity to work with a famous illustrator. The publishers, Mr. Chapman and Mr. Hall, found Dickens’ book of sketches, tracked him down, and presented him with a chance to publish his first story.

Dickens possessed a genius for reinventing the media environment of his time. Write an essay describing and **explaining** how Dickens might exploit our 21st C. environment for his self-promotion. You might consider these questions to help you: How might he have created chances for himself in the age of the internet? Imagine whether and how Dickens might have made his breakthrough in our era, where social networking sites, personal web pages, and self-publication software create chances for large numbers of writers and artists to present their work to a global audience. What technologies would a young Dickens use and modify today in order to establish his writing career? What technologies might he reject?

**Option Two: Essay of Opinion**

Consider Jane Austen’s upbringing in a family that “loved to be entertained by such exercises of the mind as conversation and reading aloud to one another.” Elliot Engel writes that “Jane took up writing at a young age to contribute to the family entertainment” (51). By age 23, Jane had written three novels: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Northanger Abbey*. Write an **essay of opinion**. A familiar sort of essay of opinion is the letter to the editor. Such essays are a written statement of the writer’s (your) beliefs about an arguable subject, supported by evidence, and written to convince. The subjects are often controversial. In this essay, you will examine the pros and cons of transporting Austen to modern days, and you will form judgments about what is gained and what is lost in doing so. Defend your opinion in an essay based on the following question: How might the new media technologies of our time have enhanced, altered, or detracted from Austen’s development as a writer? That is, if you were to introduce the Austen family to new media technology, how would you do it in order to preserve the best of the Austen family’s intellectual life while adding the best elements of modern technology?

**Option Three: Exploratory Essay**

Dickens was renowned for being a self-promoter and salesman of his work. Most authors and artists today promote their work on their own web pages and social networking sites. However, women writers, such as George Eliot routinely concealed their true identities in order to establish themselves as authors. Write an **exploratory essay** (similar to the essay of opinion described in Option Two) in which you consider whether or not George Eliot or any of the other writers in your text would have used social media as part of his/her disguise, and speculate on what forms of social media—tweeting, blogging, podcasting, etc.—he/she might have embraced, celebrated, or rejected. As part of your exploration, you might want to create some of the postings that you think your selected writer(s) would make as well as the responses/feedback they might elicit from the public.

**Option Four: Extended Definition**

Select a complex term or topic that you apply to **at least** two of the authors in the Engel book. (For example, *wit*, *modern*, *progress, common sense, courage, love, intelligence*, *decorum, educated, proper, rule-breaker, etc.*) Looking across authors as sources, create an **extended definition** of this term as it applies to the writers you selected. (e.g.,What does *love* mean to Shakespeare and the Brownings? What does *wit* mean to Oscar Wilde and Thomas Hardy?) Following are some strategies that can be used in an extended definition, but all do not have to be used: use a dictionary definition, discuss the origin of the term or the history of the term, compare and contrast how one of more authors use/view the term, distinguish the term from others often confused with it, mention some exceptions to a common meaning of the term, use an anecdote to define the term, define the term according to certain authors by citing examples, define the term by telling what it is NOT. This does not have to be a deep, reflective, sober definition. **Have some fun with this!**

**Option Five: Argument using Causal Analysis**

The common types of argument are those from examples, generalizations, causal relations, analogy, and deduction. In this writing, you will create a **causal analysis** that illustrates the relation between the biographical details about an author, and his/her writing. Elliot Engel provides much of the background material on authors from his text. Use that material, and additional knowledge if you have it, to argue that one’s writing is highly influence by one’s background and life experiences. The influence is the cause; the effect is type of writing, tone, subject, nature of characters, lessons in the writing, settings, plot, etc.---whatever you choose. In this causal analysis, you will consider results/effects and find/create a causal relation among the parts of an author’s life and what he/she writes. You will start with posing this question to yourself: *How have the life experiences of Writer X caused an effect in tone, subject, morals, plot, etc. in the writings of Writer X?* Usually, when doing a causal analysis of a literary or historical figure, one cannot provide a definitive answer to such a question, and often has to settle for an answer which cannot be positively proved—only argued. **Your reader should end up feeling that, “Of course, given the life circumstances of Writer X, he/she just HAD to produce the kind of writing that he/she did!”**

The common stages of writing a causal analysis can be summarized thus:

* Introduction which provides a question concerning causes and their effects on the writing of Writer X
* Refutation of unsatisfactory or false causes

(Have fun with this!! You can make up alternative causes and then refute them!)

* Present your hypothesis about the real causes
* Support your hypothesis with examples (you can make these up! Or exaggerate)
* Further support your hypothesis by showing that it offers what seems to be sufficient cause(s) to explain something about the writer’s writing (subjects, tone, etc.)

**An alternative** way to write a Causal Analysis of a writer is to interweave anecdotes about your own life as a writer and how your background, teachers, life circumstances, etc. CAUSED your current attitude, confidences, skills, practices, etc. about writing. (If you have ever written a Writing Autobiography, you already have the raw material for this.) Then, interweave your story with the story of Writer X, or juxtapose the same logic in discussing one or more of the authors.