

Prologue: A First-Year Writing Journal

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Front Matter

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Editorial Policy:

Prologue is an annual journal of academic essays created to showcase first-year writing at Denison. The journal provides many of these students with the opportunity to have their works published for the first time. The selection process began with many first-year students submitting their essays anonymously during this spring semester. Next, the editorial board carefully reviewed the collection of pieces submitted and selected five pieces for publication. Decisions were difficult because the board received many quality essays. Then each of the five Writing Center consultants on the editorial board reviewed one of the selected essays and met with its author to discuss how the paper could be improved. These sessions with the authors and the strengths of each essay are surveyed in this journal's introduction.

Editorial Board:

Carolyn Raymond

Jane Haines

Holly Burdorff

Tori Couch

Joshua Rager

We would like to express our thanks to the following people:

- o Dr. Brenda Boyle, for her role as Staff Adviser of the journal
- o Dr. Susan B. Kanter, for her technological assistance with the online publication of the journal

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Dear Writers,

During your first year at Denison, you will be asked to write many different types of papers, from personal essays to research projects. At one point, you might receive a prompt that asks you to write an essay in a format or genre that you have not written in before. Rather than allowing this to be a frustrating and futile struggle, turn it into a rewarding learning experience and emerge a better, more versatile writer. The five essays featured in this year's journal each display exemplary technique and style in different types of writing. Use these essays as examples for writing the various sorts of papers your courses ask you to compose during your first year – and don't forget, the Writing Center is always here to help you plan, produce and polish your essays!

- Carolyn Raymond, *Prologue* Editorial Board

1. **Poetry Analysis:** “The Gift of Immortality: Man, Nature, and Human Nature in Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*” by Danny Persia

Points to Consider:

- *Think of something to say about the poem, like patterns of metaphors in the language that connect to a large-scale theme. This is your thesis.*
- *Use quotations to support the claims made in your thesis, not to summarize what happens in the poem.*
- *Always explain textual quotations with your own words and connect the quotes to your thesis.*

2. **Group Essay:** “Radio Frequency Identification Biochips and Tracking Purposes” by Elizabeth Steenkiste and Rebecca Imboden

Points to Consider:

- *Make sure that you and your group members are clear on what the assignment is asking and fully understand citation rules.*
- *Complete the entire assignment together, from brainstorming and outlining to drafting and revising, to ensure a consistent voice and tone throughout the paper.*
- *It’s okay to disagree on ideas about the paper at first! This can help you build a stronger argument because you’re addressing questions that readers might have.*

3. **Strong Thesis-Driven Essay with Guiding Transitions:** “Unity on the Surface” by Laura Spinelli

Points to Consider:

- *For an in-depth, structurally mature essay, focus your essay on a specific element of your topic, rather than making a broader, more general claim.*
- *Use transitions to your benefit! Restate previous ideas and tell readers how they relate to the main point of your next paragraph.*
- *Transitions aren't just for the beginning of a paragraph. Make sure that all of the sentences within each paragraph connect and flow.*

4. **Compare and Contrast Essay:** “Hopelessness: A Byproduct of Femininity, and Chopin and Dickinson’s Struggle Against It” by Stetson Thacker

Points to Consider:

- *Organization, organization, organization! Before you begin writing, make an outline or draw a web to help yourself work through the various ideas you want to write about and the similarities and differences you will highlight.*
- *Center your thesis on a specific theme, like the portrayal of animals in two short stories. Don't simply say that two (or three, or more!) texts are similar in some ways and contrasting in others.*
- *Transitions are important to guide your readers through the different texts you are analyzing. Also, don't forget to use quotes to make your comparison claims even stronger!*

5. **Synthesis Essay with Balanced Description and Analysis:** “Roman Representation from Stockholm to Peru” by Sarah Smith

Points to Consider:

- *Provide your readers with just enough description to give them a sense of what you are analyzing. Always provide more analysis than description.*
- *When bringing in many sources, know when to summarize, when to paraphrase and when to use direct quotations. Avoid letting your voice get lost in a sea of quotations and make sure that your voice is prominent throughout the paper.*
- *Build your essay on a strong thesis, or observation about your topic, to give the paper unity and originality.*