

"I would advise you to read with a pen in hand, and enter in a little book short hints of what you find that is curious, or that may be useful, for this will be the best method of imprinting such particulars in your memory. -Benjamin Franklin

What is a commonplace?

AKA: commonplace book, silva rerum, locus communis, zibaldone

Since the 5th century BCE, students, scholars, philosophers, scientists and theologians have kept up the practice of integrating reading with writing to ensure they A) become masters of any topic and B) remember the particulars of a range of things.



Marcus Aurelius, Octavia Butler, Petrarch and Martin Luther King Jr. kept commonplaces. Napoleon used one while he was attempting to conquer the world (and almost nailing it). Bill Gates keeps one today. It's because of commonplaces that we know the interests of George Washington, Leonardo DaVinci and others. /namedropping

Commonplace books are divided into clearly defined categories based on the interests of the owner. When the owner reads a book (hears a speech/conversation) with interesting quotes in one of those clearly defined categories, **they copy the quote into their commonplace**, along with a short commentary. This has been described as the best book you'll ever own, since it is a book completely created with your interests.

What we write, we remember.

-Susan Wise Bauer, *The Well-Educated Mind*

The assignment.

You will be required to keep a commonplace notebook for this class.

- Get a separate notebook to be used only for commonplacing.
- Select at least 5 clearly defined categories to commonplace (two categories must be War and Religion)
- As you read a chapter, find 5 things (quotes/passages) to commonplace that fit your categories.
 - Write the quote in your notebook
 - Add a 3-4 sentence commentary on why it called to you. What made it interesting, crazy, sad, confusing...why did you chose it?
 - Date each entry and note the page number the quote came from.
- Each chapter has a section called Visual Record, Written Record or Global Record. One of your quotes from come from these in each chapter.

Truth

By the end of the semester, you will be an expert in these five categories.

Category examples:

Gender, music, art, ceremony, architecture, religion, marriage, nobility, criminal justice, sex, colonialism, racism, business and trade, literature, science, math, weaponry, clothing, astronomy, language, truth, children, education, poverty, classism, medicine...WHATEVER. Choose something that interests you. It's your book.



Grading:

Bring your notebook to each class. Every so often, I'll ask to see it. If I pick you and you don't have it, expect 5 points (each time) off your final commonplace score.

| Excellent | Good | Below Average | Poor/Failure |
|--|--|---|-------------------------------|
| Thoughtfully prepared, headings clearly marked. | Commonplace somewhat organized. | Commonplace appears thrown together/unorganized. | Failed to complete assignment |
| Minimum of 5 entries for each chapter with thoughtful commentary | Thoughtful commentary reflecting an understanding of topics and assignment, but fewer entries than required. | Far fewer entries than assigned, issues with basic grammar. Little to no thoughtful commentary. | |

Notes:

- Your commonplace should only include information from your textbook and assigned readings, unless told otherwise.
- Someone else will be reading this. Me. Make sure I can read your handwriting.
- Guys, this is not a journal. A journal records what happens in your life. A commonplace compiles your knowledge, genius and general awesomeness.