

Create Your Own "Geography of Bliss" Essay Contest

Sponsored by the Center for Writing Excellence

ESSAY PROMPT:

In his book, *The Geography of Bliss*, Eric Weiner documents his travels around the world as he attempts to discover and understand the relationship between happiness and geographical location. During his journey, Weiner visits countries such as Thailand, Iceland, and India in order to experience the way a person's happiness intertwines within her and his specific culture and community. Similarly, we can see how in our own lives emotional connections are often made to certain locations. Those happy places, which bring smiles to our faces, are the places where we prefer to spend our time and strive to return to as often as possible.

Take some time now to think about where your happy places are in the world. These locations might be in your mother's arms, or a three-block radius between a few houses and buildings, or they might span from New Jersey to Asia. Then, write an essay in which you thoroughly describe and convey the three locations that would comprise your own "geography of bliss," providing insight into the emotional connection you feel while there.

Some questions you might consider as you write the essay include:

- If there were one place you could spend most of your time, where would it be and why?
- Think of your fondest memories. Where do they typically take place? Are they in specific locations?
- What is it that makes these locations so special and memorable? What makes you happy when you are there? What people are associated with them? What is your relationship to these people?
- How do you spend your time at these places? Are they places you go to socialize or to be alone?
- When you need to relax or escape, where do you go and why?

ESSAY CONTEST REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES:

Length: Between 750-1000 words

Submission: Double space and use a 12-point font. Include a separate title page with your name, contact information, and essay title.

Evaluation criteria: Each essay will be judged based on the extent and effectiveness with which it:

- Engages audiences
- Communicates an argument effectively
- Uses persuasive evidence
- Exemplifies excellence in writing

Eligible contestants:

Open to all undergraduates enrolled at Montclair State University during the Fall 2011 or Spring 2012 semester

Prizes

1 winner will receive \$100

2 runner ups will receive \$25 each

Submission Deadline: April 2, 2012

How to Submit: Send an electronic copy to cwe@mail.montclair.edu and in the subject line enter "Montclair Book Essay Contest."