

Essay 2: James Baldwin “Sonny’s Blues” and Alice Walker’s “Everyday Use”
ENWR 106: College Writing II
Instructor: Gerrie Logan

This essay must be 4-5 pages in length. Do not forget to identify all drafts in your heading, insert page numbers, and provide an appropriate title for your paper. Clearly identify your audience, the purpose of your message and enough examples, illustrations, or evidence to support your point. In this essay, you have a choice of various topics to write about. I have also provided some supporting material that should be included in your essay. The purpose of incorporating an outside source is to demonstrate that you are able to blend other opinions with your own without overwhelming your individual voice and still giving credibility to your point. If you would like to develop your own topic and outside source, please feel free to do so; but first, have this topic and source approved by me. A works cited page is necessary and should contain a minimum of two sources cited.

Topic One: In both Walker and Baldwin’s short stories some characters experience a significant change; what, if any, are some of the realizations or epiphanies that occur, and why? How does deracination and heritage play a part in your analysis of the characters? You may choose to write about one or both of the stories, either way, you are required to read the supporting article and incorporate this outside source to refute or support your point of view.

Topic Two: Explore the cultural theme of gender and/or race. How is either of these themes significant to your understanding of the characters? What message do the writers suggest about our society, the time period, or the cultural influences of setting and how it affects the interpretation of a specific audience?

Topic Three: James Baldwin uses music as a metaphor for the racial and cultural struggles represented in “Sonny’s Blues.” Do an analysis of this metaphor and explore how the roots of “blues music” lends a richer interpretation to this short story. Draw on specific facts about the history of blues and show, through textual support, how Baldwin weaves this thread throughout the portrayal of Sonny’s becoming.