

Tom Robbins from a 1994 essay "Why I Live in Northwest Washington"

I'M HERE FOR THE weather.

Well, yes, I'm also here for the volcanoes and the salmon, and the exciting possibility that at any moment the volcanoes could erupt and pre-poach the salmon. I'm here for the rust and the mildew, for webbed feet and twin peaks, spotted owls and obscene clams (my consort says I suffer from geoduck envy), blackberries and public art (including that big bad mural the authorities had to chase out of Olympia), for the ritual of the potlatch and the espresso cart, for bridges that pratfall into the drink and ferries that keep ramming the dock.

I'm here because the Wobblies used to be here, and sometimes in Pioneer Square you can still find bright-eyed old anarchists singing their moldering ballads of camaraderie and revolt. I'm here because someone once called Seattle "the hideout capital of the U.S.A.," a distant outpost of a town where generations of the nation's failed, fed-up and felonious have come to disappear. Long before Seattle was "America's Athens" (The New York Times), it was America's Timbuktu.

Getting back to music, I'm here because "Tequila" is the unofficial fight song of the University of Washington, and because "Louie Louie" very nearly was chosen as our official state anthem. There may yet be a chance of that, which is not something you could say about Connecticut.

I'm here for the forests (what's left of them), for the world's best bookstores and movie theaters; for the informality, anonymity, general lack of hidebound tradition and the fact that here and nowhere else grunge rubs shoulders in the half-mean streets with a pervasive yet subtle mysticism. The shore of Puget Sound is where electric guitars cut their teeth, and old haiku go to die.

I'm here for the mushrooms that broadcast on transcendental frequencies; for Kevin Calabro, who broadcasts Sonics games on KJR; for Dick's Deluxe burgers, closing time at the Pike Place Market, Monday Night Football at the Blue Moon Tavern, opera night at the Blue Moon Tavern (which, incidentally, is scheduled so that it coincides with Monday Night Football - a somewhat challenging overlap that the casual patron might fail to fully appreciate); and I'm here for the flying saucers that made their first public appearance near Mount Rainier.

I'm here for Microsoft but not for Weyerhaeuser. I'm here for Longacres Race Track but not for Boeing. I'm here for the relative lack of financial ambitions, the soaring population of bald eagles and the women with their quaint Norwegian brand of lust. Yes. Ya. Sure, ya betcha.

But mostly, finally, ultimately, I'm here for the weather.

From E.B. White in *Charlotte's Web*:

A fair is a rat's paradise. Everybody spills food at a fair. A rat can creep out late at night and have a feast. In the horse barn you will find oats that the trotters and pacers have spilled. In the trampled grass of the infield you will find old discarded lunch boxes containing the foul remains of peanut butter sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, cracker crumbs, bits of doughnuts, and particles of cheese. In the hard-packed dirt of the midway, after the glaring lights are out and the people have gone home to bed, you will find a veritable treasure of popcorn fragments, frozen custard dribblings, candied apples abandoned by tired children, sugar fluff crystals, salted almonds, popsicles, partially gnawed ice cream cones, and the wooden sticks of lollypops. Everywhere is loot for a rat--in tents, in booths, in hay lofts--why, a fair has enough disgusting leftover food to satisfy a whole army of rats."

From Andrew Kafoury, graduate of Jefferson High School

When [the admissions officer] asked me to tell him why I was interested in the College of Santa Fe, I froze up. It must have been the way he was looking at me, doubtful and unimpressed. I sort of mumbled and stumbled on sentences, trying to find 10-letter words to impress him, when I should have told him the simple truth:

I love acting. I love putting on costumes and becoming creatures I am not. I love my skin sweating as bright lights send heat soaking through my body. I love getting to know my cast, watching the drama behind the drama. I love the quick change, the blackout, the dry ice and stage combat. I love cranky stage managers and quiet co-stars. I love watching ego-stricken actors fall into decline while a new face emerges from the shadows. I love the monster special effects that steal the show, and that oh-so-precious moment when you, the actor, send the audience head over heels with laughter. I love the call sheet with my name on it, and the director who calls to say I'm perfect for the part. I love the shows that I wish would go on forever, and even the ones I can't stand till they're over.

I love sitting backstage, exhausted from the matinee, and knowing in another two hours I'll go out there and do it again. I love to play the bad guy, and I love getting that killer role I've always wanted. Hell, I love it when they toss a spear in my hand and say, "Go stand in the corner." I love classical and contemporary, tragedy and comedy, romance and swashbuckling! I live for the moment when I run on stage for curtain call and the applause gets just a little bit louder. I love the smooth feeling of steady memorization, and those intense moments when something unexpected happens, like an actor not showing up two minutes before curtain, so the stagehands have to make a split-second decision because, damn it, man, the show MUST go on.

From Toni Morrison's *Beloved*:

"Here," she said, "in this place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in the grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they'd just as soon pick them out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face 'cause they don't love that either. You got to love it, you! And no, they ain't in love with your mouth. Yonder, out there, they will not heed. What you scream from it they do not hear. What you put into it to nourish your body they will snatch away and give you leavings instead. No, they don't love your mouth. You got to love it. Feet that need to rest and to dance; back that need support; shoulders that need arms, strong arms I'm telling you. And O my people, out yonder, hear me, they do not love your neck unnoosed and straight. So love your neck; put a hand on it, grace it, stroke it and hold it up. And all your inside parts that they'd just as soon slop for hogs, you got to love them. The dark, dark liver-love it, love it and the beat and beating heart, love that too. More than eyes or feet. More than lungs that have yet to draw free air. More than your lifeholding womb and your life-giving private parts, hear me now, love your heart. For this is the prize." Saying no more, she stood up then and danced with her twisted hip the rest of what her heart had to say while the others opened their mouths and gave her the music. Long notes held until the four part harmony was perfect enough for their deeply loved flesh." (88-89)

"I Love" Assignment

New Window

This assignment is to **write a piece of prose that sings with the details and honesty of your experience.** You are an insider in your world, give us a guided tour, rich with descriptive detail, about something you love.

Take direction from the authors above to craft a piece of writing that uses some of their same techniques, like list making, repeating line, etc.

I Love Lesson

New Window

This assignment is to write a piece of prose that sings with the details and honesty of your experience. You are an insider in your world, give us a guided tour, rich with descriptive detail, about something you love.

1. We are going to take a slight break from poetry about our past and we are going to write some prose about our present.
 - a. In order to get an idea about how I want us to do this, like with the last poems, I have some inspiration to share with you. Quite a bit of it in fact.
 - b. Share Robbins piece: Look at list, repetition, lively language.
 - c. Look at EB White's descriptive lists.
 - d. Look at Toni Morrison sing the details of self love.
2. As an example, now, look at Kafoury's piece.
 - a. Highlight repeating words or phrases in one color.
 - b. Highlight the vocabulary of the theater in another.
 - i. What language does he use about the theater.
 1. He is an insider in this world, and he gives us a guided tour.
3. Make a list of things of you love.
 - a. Choose one item from your list and brainstorm specific evidence.
 - i. Write all of the verbs in one column. (If you love baseball, what verbs would you use? Baseball: hit, run, slide, catch, strike, throw, bunt...)
 - ii. Now, list vocabulary in another column. (What are the things of baseball: glove, uniform, bat, home plate, bases, mound, dugout...)
 - iii. Return to Kafoury's piece for structure. Read aloud again.
 1. Listen to the rhythms.
 2. Count the words.
 3. Items in a series to move the sentence.
 4. Sentence variation.
 5. Somewhere in your piece, I want you to include a line that lists.