

ENGL 3160 Narrative Techniques

Instructor: Jody Brooks

Creative Exercise Eight: Unpacking Manuel's

For our last creative exercise before workshop, we will be taking part in the [Unpacking Manuel's Tavern project](#). Each of you will be choosing an artifact from one wall of this iconic pub, and then composing a piece of flash fiction inspired by the item (max 1000 words). I'd like to submit your work (with your permission, of course) to the curators of Unpacking Manuel's for possible inclusion on the site.

As you compose your Manuel's text, think about the [Significant Objects](#) project, which has shown us that objects, when attached to meaningful narratives, take on both sentimental/subjective and monetary/objective value.

Creative Exercise Details

You will each choose one object from the [Main North Wall](#). Once you've chosen the item you want to write about, post your choice on our Manuel's discussion board. Grab one early—no two people can write about the same item. Once you've chosen an object from the wall and claimed it on our discussion board, zoom in as close as you can on the [high resolution gigapan of the wall](#). You'll want to study it closely.

The Prompts

While I will not require a *3am Epiphany* prompt for this creative exercise, feel free to refer to one of the following for inspiration:

- **NO IDEAS BUT IN THINGS** (14): Write a story told only in "concrete, simple, visually efficient" details. No need to eliminate people, per se, "just watch what they do and what objects they crave and caress rather than what they say or think about these objects."
- **FOUND HISTORY** (106): Use these "actual artifacts from history" as inspiration. Can you imagine "a piece of history in the margins of this sort of material"? The key to this approach is to keep "an open mind and a sharp eye for telling details."
- **TALISMANS** (85): Imagine the "emotional history" that may be behind this "ordinary and functional" object. Write a story that incorporates the talisman, without using the actual history of the talisman.
- **RESEARCH** (87): Most fiction-writing involves research. It's essential. We "circle around our subject, studying stray parts of it, following leads that lead to other dead-ends or useful and useless information." After you've chosen your object, research it. "The only rule to follow in this exercise: Do not let the reader feel the research. Massage the material into your story so it feels natural, an organic part of the experience."

We will review these in our critique groups, as per usual. Then we will probably want to revise and edit before submitting to Unpacking Manuel's, but let's discuss that once you've written and critiqued these as exercises.

Works Cited

Kitley, Brian. *The 3 A.m. Epiphany: Uncommon Writing Exercises That Transform Your Fiction*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest, 2005. Print.