

Appendix 2: Low-Stakes Writing Prompt

“Low Stakes” Writing on Blackboard: Discussion Board Writing Prompts

Ice Breaker

For our first writing task, I'd like you to first introduce yourselves to the class. What is your concentration in English? What are your academic and non-academic interests? What is a goal that you have for yourself (school or life) for this semester?

Then, I'd like you to consider the articles I asked you to read:

- From *NYT* Opinion: Gurinder Bhambra, “A Statue Was Toppled. Can We Finally Talk About the British Empire?”: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/12/opinion/edward-colston-statue-racism.html?referringSource=articleShare>
- From *NYT*: Claudia Rankin's poem “Weather”: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/15/books/review/claudia-rankine-weather-poem-coronavirus.html?referringSource=articleShare>
- Sara Sahil's Introduction to *Mary Prince's History of Mary Prince*

What resonated with you from the above? How do you think history should be preserved and memorialized? Through statues? Other forms of memorialization (in-person or digital)? What line or two from Sahil's introduction to *Mary Prince* struck you as interesting? What do you want to know more about?

Mary Prince

For HW you read Mary Prince's *History of Mary Prince* (1831) here: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/prince/prince.html> and listened to my Podcast Lecture. I also would like you to read/scan through the *Supplement to the History of Mary Prince* (this begins after her narrative is over on "page 24" of the website). Here, we read letters about testimonials that confirm Prince's veracity, and we get a sense of the heightened legalities that arose when this narrative was published due to its sexually explicit material and the legal liabilities associated with this print restrictions of the nineteenth-century.

Prince dictated her life story to Susanna Strickland, a friend of Thomas Pringle, Prince's benefactor, employer, publisher, and Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. Therefore, we have a text that can be read in multiple registers: Prince inhabits both the private and public worlds; Prince as narrator of her life-story and also documentarian of a lived historical reality of the nineteenth-century British/West Indian slave; Prince's recounting her life and simultaneously reflecting on her life. Where do you see these modes of authorship at work in this narrative? Prince also crafts a narrative focused around her body: embodying her history; the body's West Indian/Caribbean and English places; the trauma her body endured; her body's resilience. How do you read Prince's body and her embodiment in and *of* this text?

Prompt adapted from “Appendix 2: Low-Stakes Writing Prompt” by Gabrielle Kappes published in *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2021.

Mary Seacole in Jamaica and Panama

For HW you read an excerpt from the modern introduction by Sara Salih and the first five chapters in Mary Seacole's *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole*, found here:

<https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/seacole/adventures/adventures.html>. (This week we will focus on Seacole's travels to Panama and next week we will read excerpts of her travels to the battlefield of the Crimean War in Russia.)

Wonderful Adventures, published in 1857, was an overnight success in part due to how Seacole, conscious of her audience's expectations, crafted an autobiographical narrative where she was her own heroine. How does Seacole make herself the heroine (likable, capable, and resilient) of her travel narrative? What kind of persona/identity does Seacole assume and what are some of the storytelling/narrative devices that she uses to craft a compelling tale? From the first five chapters, what were your favorite moments and why?

Mary Seacole in the Crimean War

For HW you read Chapters 8, 9, 13, 15, 17, and the Conclusion to *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole*. How does Seacole challenge mid-nineteenth-century societal assumptions about gender, race, or class in order to become a "doctress," nurse, and placeholder mother to British and French soldiers at the front lines of the Crimean War? How does Seacole assert her personhood? What moods or tone does Seacole strike with her war stories? What are some examples? What three adjectives would you use to describe Seacole in these excerpts?

Una Marson's Poetics

Choose two or three of Una Marson's poems to analyze in response to the following questions: What images in Marson's poems highlight the themes of Black nationalism and feminism? What images in Marson's poems demonstrate an anti-colonialist argument? Which poem did you find the most emotionally affective and why?