**Six-Word Memoir Assignment**

Ms. Jensen

Due: Friday, Sept 27

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) was a Nobel Prize and Pulitzer Prize winning American author and journalist. His spare prose is simple and understated. He explains his “Iceberg” theory in Death in the Afternoon:

“If a writer of prose knows enough of what he is writing about he may omit things

that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a

feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The

dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above

water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes

hollow places in his writing.”

Legend credits Hemingway with the first six-word story. Though debated, Hemingway composed this story on a napkin to win a bet with his contemporaries. The story was simple in appearance, but understated: “For sale: baby shoes, never worn.”

In 2006 SMITH Magazine and Twitter reinvented the six-word story as the six-word

memoir. They have had over 11,000 submissions.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Your assignment:

* Create three six-word memoirs: one from the perspective of a fairy tale or cartoon character, one about yourself by yourself and one about yourself but from the perspective of someone else.
* Bring your memoirs to class next Friday.
* Each memoir must be true and tell a story.

Mark Tredinnick writes in The Little Green Grammar Book, “Every piece of writing, no matter how flat and useful, is a crowd of stories, and each of them is a sentence. Every sentence tells a tale: it names someone (or something) and tells you something about them- what they did; what they are; or what happened to them” (19). Let’s see what story you tell in exactly six words.

Here are some tips:

* Force yourself to be creative.
* Make revisions. Put the six best words in the best order.
* Remember Hemingway’s ice-berg theory, sometimes understated is best, some times not.
* Tredinnick defines a sentence as something that names someone or something else and tells you their stories.
* Have fun, write a few memoirs, and then choose the best.
* Check out the reverse of this page for some famous examples

Examples

* “Break down my walls, discover me.”
* “I am a Muslin, not a terrorist.”
* “Things don’t have to be complicated.”
* “I let Facebook ruin my life.”
* Friends come and go. Stay true.”

• “Her blue eyes capture the distance.” –Sonya Cheuse

• “Straight jacket on the gentle cycle.” –Stewart Rudy

• “dern smart- never lerned to spel.” –Rachel Ehrlich

• “Awkward girl takes chances. Fun ensues.” –Charlotte Riley

• “Losing your identity can be fearsome.” –Robyn Crawford

• “Impoverished black male. Harvard Law bound.” –Robert Young

• “Hard to write poems from prison.” –Ellen Goldstein

• “The militant who became a monk.” –Mike Adams

• “Found true love, married someone else.” –Bjorn Stromberg

• “Bad breaks discovered at high speed.” –Johan Baumeister

• “Savior complex makes for many disappointments.” – Alanna Schubach

• “Lucky in love, unlucky in metabolism.”

• “Born with big nose. Pursued comedy.” –Andy Borowitz

• “Straight-A student, now flunking judgment.” – Miranda Kaplan

• “Normal person becomes psychotic on Twitter.” –Robin Slick

• “Was bored, went skydiving, now quadriplegic.” –Daniel Van Werkhoven

• “Insomniac dreamer; a thousand times goodnight.” Elisa Shevitz

• “My dogtags dangle in the dirt.” –Marcus Nogueira

• “Goth girl. White dog. Lint roller.” Megan Durham

• “I ran with scissors and lived.” –Rienne Smith

• “Heart in SF, arm in Vietnam.” –Harlan Stanton