

# Reflective Writing with the 2018 KU Common Book

## **Personal Narrative: Telling Your KU Story**

In *Create Dangerously*, Edwidge Danticat writes about how history, art, family, place, and identity frame how she moves through the world. The stories she tells are important to understanding who she is as a person, publicly and privately. Through these stories we understand more about the forces that shape her life and work.

Using *Create Dangerously* as a guide. Write a personal narrative that helps the reader understand something about you and your goals for college.

To help you get started, consider a few questions. Remember, your story doesn't have to answer all these questions. These are just to get you thinking.

- What is one of your (personal or professional) goals for college?
- What inspired you to set that goal for yourself? Was there a particular moment?
- What does that goal indicate about your values? How did you come to hold these values?

When you write your story, keep the moment small—just a little slice of time—and provide plenty of rich details to pull your reader in and help them understand your point of view.

## **Snippets to revisit as you consider your own stories:**

pp. 5-7 - Danticat discusses one of her “creation myths” that drove her to become a writer

pp. 27-29 – Tante Ilyana’s description of Danticat as a “*journalis*,” or journalist

pp. 48-51 – Danticat’s struggle with being labeled a “*diaspora*”

# Critical Thinking with the 2018 KU Common Book

## Critical Thinking: Creation Myths

In chapter 1 of *Create Dangerously*, author Edwidge Danticat recounts the stories of Marcel Numa and Louis Drouin, members of “Jeune Haiti” (Young Haiti) who were publicly executed for trying to overthrow the government of Francois Duvalier. Danticat writes, “all artists, writers among them, have several stories – one might call them creation myths – that haunt and obsess them. This is one of mine” (p.5).

- Please read chapter 1 “Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work” (pp. 1-20). We will discuss the chapter during our next class period. Please consider how Danticat characterizes and defines creation myth? How does Danticat’s story help her and others make sense of the world?
- Please bring an example of a historical or personal creation myth to class. You will share your story with the class, and together we will discuss the characteristics and meanings of our shared stories.
- Please read the article provided and consider how it functions as a creation story/myth? [Instructor presents a story/creation myth that is important to their discipline or subject. This could be presented as supplemental reading, or a class lecture or discussion.]

Please write a summary of the story/creation myth presented in the supplemental reading or class lecture/discussion and analyze how the story/creation myth shapes and influences your understanding of the discipline/subject. Consider the following questions as you write:

- What details of the story are most important in order to gain an understanding of its meaning and why?
- How has the story, even if it is apocryphal or is now discredited, shaped people’s understanding of the subject in question?
- What are the lessons of the story?

## Critical Thinking: Visual Art

This fall (2018) the Spencer Museum of Art will host “The Ties That Bind: Haiti, the United States, and the Art of Ulrick Jean-Pierre in Comparative Perspective.” The Museums’ [website](#) describes the exhibit as, “reveal[ing] the deep historical connections between Haiti and the United States through the lens of 20<sup>th</sup> century Haitian art.”

Students should visit the exhibit, choose 1 painting, and, based on their reading of chapters 1 and 7 in *Create Dangerously*, reflect on how Jean-Pierre’s paintings enhance their understanding of the relationship between Haiti and the United States.