Critical Reading Guide for Workshops: Concept Essay

1: Audience: Who are your readers and how do you expect them to react?

Writers: Include the following information on the top of your typewritten workshop drafts:

2: Purpose: What do you want your readers to learn from your story?

Readers

Write a brief (four sentence) paragraph on each section to help give critical comments on the essay being workshopped. For more detail, see page 189 of the text.

Essay Title:

Author:

Reader’s Name:

1: First Impression: What’s the dominant impression you get from the first quick reading? Is the concept focused, informative, easy to follow?

2: Assess whether the concept is clearly explained and focused: Restate in one sentence what you understand the concept to mean. Indicate any confusion or uncertainty you have. Is the focus too narrow or too broad?

3: Consider whether the content is appropriate of the intended readers: Does it tell them all that they are likely to want to know what questions remain unanswered?
4: **Evaluate the organization.** Look at the way the essay is organized, outlining it briefly. Is the information logically divided? If not, suggest a better way to divide it. Does the order work? Find the obvious transitions; are they helpful? Is the ending effective? Does it frame the essay?

5: **Assess the clarity of definitions.** Are any definitions likely to be unclear to the readers? Point out any terms that may need to be clarified.

6: **Analyze how appropriately writing strategies are used.** What writing strategies has the writer used? Are they effective? Mark examples of Process narration, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, or classification, and identify items that need to be improved. Suggest ways to improve them.

7: **Evaluate the use of sources.** Review the list of sources cited. Does the list seem balanced, and are the selections appropriate? Are there places where summaries or paraphrase would be preferable to quoted material?

8: **Give the writer your final thoughts.** Which part needs the most work? What did you like best about the essay?