**Writing Your Intro/Thesis Statement For Monday’s Workshop**

This assignment counts for 5 points of your final grade. You’ll get full points if you:

Show up for the workshop (obviously)

Bring four (4) copies of your intro/thesis statement (one for me, and one for each of 3 possible reviewers)

Write an intro/thesis that, as much as possible, tries to follow the guidelines I’m giving you here and now.

**Your Introduction**

Avoid all generalizations. This means sentences that read like this:

“Since the dawn of time, people have worried about children’s media consumption.”

“Society loves to panic about television.”

“Media has been a problem in our society for some time now.”

Instead, pick something particularly significant and representative out of the primary sources that you’ve been reading for your paper—something that sums up what you found compelling about the sources or the topic. Something specific: a story, a scene, a detail, a character, a toy.

Present this particularly interesting piece of color to your reader in order to establish the compelling nature of your topic, before tying your introduction to your thesis and roadmap with an explanatory sentence or two.

I wrote a sample intro based on a class text we all know and love:

“In Katherine DeBrecht’s children’s book *Help! Mom! There Are Liberals Under My Bed!* (2005), the two child characters live in what looks like a prosperous suburban home, with a large lawn and a lemon tree bearing abundant fruit outside of their front door. The illustrations representing the interiors of this home show that the fictional family has decorated with a picture of Ronald Reagan, a cross above the children’s beds, and a portrait of a rocket ship zooming into the heavens. The overall impression is that these children live sheltered childhoods, filled with abundance, and enhanced by home instruction in patriotism and religion. In presenting these childhoods as normal, DeBrecht creates an opposition between liberalism and the ‘natural’ order of things, while invoking nostalgia for an imagined past.”

**Your Thesis Statement and Roadmap**

Then, move into the argument you’re going to make in your paper. Here, the reader wants to find out

* which primary texts you’ll be examining
* pertinent details about those texts (date or general time, author)
* how you picked these texts/why they belong together (explain, if it’s not obvious)
* your argument
* the steps you’ll be walking him/her through on the way to the argument (this is the “roadmap”).

Note: For the purposes of this class, don’t be afraid to use the first person (I) and to declare your explicit intentions for the paper (“First I will…Then I argue…”)

Here’s my example:

“In this paper, I will show how children’s literature written by conservative Americans during the 1990s and 2000s has used concepts of childhood ‘innocence’ in conjunction with references to the American past in order to mount an argument against liberalism. In so doing, I will examine the works of self-proclaimed conservative authors William Bennett, Katherine DeBrecht, and Tim LaHaye, comparing and contrasting the explicit and implicit references to American history in each of these authors’ books. First, I will provide context for the publication of these books by briefly reviewing the history of the ‘culture wars’ during the 1990s, paying particular attention to the role of education in American history in these ‘wars.’ Then, I will show how William Bennett’s republication of earlier texts of children’s literature constituted an explicitly nostalgic return to what he saw as ‘better’ children’s culture. I will move on to a discussion of Katherine DeBrecht’s subtle references to history, arguing that the use of iconic imagery within her illustrations meant that her partisan anti-liberal narratives were offset with a visual confirmation of the rightness of the conservative family. I will look at Tim LaHaye’s use of apocalyptic imagery and argue that this serves as a nostalgic extension of earlier American beliefs in ‘manifest destiny.’ “

Broken down by elements:

ARGUMENT: In this paper, I will show how children’s literature written by conservative Americans during the 1990s and 2000s has used concepts of childhood ‘innocence’ in conjunction with references to the American past in order to mount an argument against liberalism.

TEXTS/DETAILS ABOUT TEXTS/COHERENCE OF GROUP OF TEXTS/ARGUMENT: In so doing, I will examine the works of self-proclaimed conservative authors William Bennett, Katherine DeBrecht, and Tim LaHaye, comparing and contrasting the explicit and implicit references to American history in each of these authors’ books.

ROADMAP: First, I will provide context for the publication of these books by briefly reviewing the history of the ‘culture wars’ during the 1990s, paying particular attention to the role of education in American history in these ‘wars.’ Then, I will show how William Bennett’s republication of earlier texts of children’s literature constituted an explicitly nostalgic return to what he saw as ‘better’ children’s culture. I will move on to a discussion of Katherine DeBrecht’s subtle references to history, arguing that the use of iconic imagery within her illustrations meant that her partisan anti-liberal narratives were offset with a visual confirmation of the rightness of the conservative family. Finally, I will look at Tim LaHaye’s use of apocalyptic imagery and argue that this serves as a nostalgic extension of earlier American beliefs in ‘manifest destiny.’ “