

Assignment #2: Encomium (“Essay in Praise of...”)

Perfecting Eloquence: Jesuit Pedagogy in the First-Year Writing Classroom

DUE DATE

Assignment Background:

In this assignment, you will experiment with the ancient genre of the **encomium** by composing an **essay in praise of some person, place, or thing**. Encomia, while ancient in origin, are used quite frequently in everyday life: funeral eulogies, wedding speeches, birthday texts, Mother’s Day Cards, and more. While these contemporary variations show the possibilities of the genre, traditionally, encomia would’ve been speeches or written works composed in seven parts:

- I. Prologue introducing the setting and purpose of the speech
- II. Announcement of the class of person, place, or thing to be praised
- III. Consideration of the person’s origins (nationality, native city, ancestors, parents)
- IV. Education and interests
- V. Achievements (virtue, beauty, athleticism, power, wealth, popularity, etc.)
- VI. Comparison (or the inability to draw a comparison)
- VII. Epilogue concluding the piece

By extolling the goodness of a chosen subject, writers are invited to **1.)** Analyze a person, place, or thing that interests them **2.)** Provide written context about that person, place, or thing, and **3.)**

Develop their comfort and familiarity with the creative essay form.

Jesuit Inspiration:

In the Jesuit tradition, *gratitude* is everything. Indeed, in *The Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius goes so far as to say that all joy comes from gratitude and that all sin is, in essence, a lack of gratitude. That's why, every single day, twice a day, Jesuits are asked to reflect on and offer praise for the good that God has placed in their lives through a prayer called *the Examen*. By centering their lives around gratitude, Jesuits strive to forge a deeper relationship with God, gain a better understanding of creation, and build the foundations of a moral life. Simply put: Jesuits profess that we find fulfillment by offering praise for the good things in life and that we make our lives darker and more difficult by failing to acknowledge these good things at all.

Prompt: Taking into consideration the traditional structure of the encomium, compose an essay that praises some person, place, or thing with the goal of inspiring gratitude within your audience toward that particular subject.

Assignment Goals:

After completing this assignment, students should be able to...

- Identify people, places, and things in their life for which they are grateful
- Conduct research on a topic that interests them
- Articulate their gratitude for these things in the form of an essay
- Write persuasively to inspire emotion and goodwill towards a particular subject