ESSAY 4: Annotation

For this “essay” you will follow the format a section in *Harper’s Magazine* called “Annotations.” Note that the format consists of an image (or set of images) surrounded by blocks of text (i.e., paragraphs). These text blocks, for the most part, represent researched information that answers various questions suggested by the image (for example, what is its history?; how does it work?; what controversies has it sparked?; what does it represent about the way we live?; what audience does it appeal to and how?)

The purpose of this assignment is two-fold: to introduce you to the basics of the research process (asking questions, finding information, integrating that information into yr own writing, and appropriately citing sources) and to focus closely on issues related to paragraph structure (in particular, unity and coherence).

SELECTING AN IMAGE: *Harper’s* has used a variety of types of images in this section, from Zoloft-sponsored notepads to ATM receipts, microwavable soup cans to advertisements for FTD flowers, Army gear worn in the Iraq War to a website for people in search of psychotropic drugs. Your image may be an advertisement, a document, a photograph of some sort of object or artifact, or a webpage (it should be in electronic format so that you can print it as page 1 of yr project). I suggest that you start with yr personal and academic interests; look through magazines that you read, surf through yr favorite websites, look around yr house and in yr cupboards. A google image search might be helpful if you have thought of a topic but need an image. A good image will be resonant, rich with cultural or historical or scientific associations and suggesting many sorts of questions.

ASKING QUESTIONS: Brainstorm a list of possible research questions and post these, along with yr image (or link or description of the image) on yr blog. Try to go beyond he immediate questions about that particular object to more general questions that the object suggests. (A facebook page, for example, may raise questions not just about that individual but more significantly about the rise in social networking platforms, the psychological effects of social networking, its potential hazards for the job-seeker, and so forth.) Aim for about half a dozen good, rich, provocative questions.

FINDING ANSWERS: Do an Internet search using search engines such as google, metasearch engines such as metacrawler or dogpile, and subject indexes such as the Librarians’ Internet Index or the Internet Public Library (More suggestions can be found here). Make sure to consider the four criteria for valuable research sources: relevance, authority, objectivity, and currency (here's a useful link). Post the Internet links you find on yr blog.

In addition, search BCC’s research databases for journal and newspaper articles that relate to the questions you have posed. (During the course of yr research, you may wish to modify yr list of questions, depending on what information you discover.) And, of course, you may want to consult the online catalog for book sources as well.
You will need at least four sources; two or more must have originally appeared in print (from research databases or “hard-copy” book or magazine.

**PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER:** Look through yr sources for usable material. I *strongly suggest* that you do some sort of note-taking to digest and organize yr material. You may want to take one page for each question and collect up facts, statistics, quotations that relate to that question. Be very selective about what you choose to quote; if you choose to paraphrase rather than quote, make sure in yr notes to vary both words and syntax (sentence structure) used. In either case (paraphrase or quote) be sure to track yr sources by listing the last name of the author or coding the sources in some way (you may use letters, numbers, symbols, or code by writing each different source in a different color).

Remember that in any of the following cases you must provide proper documentation:

* You used a direct quotation from one of your sources
* You mentioned some fact not considered to be common knowledge that you obtained from one of your sources
* You refer to some idea or theory that you learned about in one of your sources

In MLA format proper documentation means that information about your source must appear in two places:

1) Within the text itself abbreviated information (normally the author’s last name and the page number) should appear in parentheses at the end of the sentence where the cited material appears. For example, In her influential study of 1984, noted expert argues that leopards do not have spots (Anderson 73). Click here to find more explanation and examples.

2) Complete bibliographic information for each reference used must appear on your Works Cited page at the end of your paper. You may wish to refer to this handout from BCC’s Writing Lab, or you may use one of the online citation-making sites such as EasyBib, citation machine, or NoodleBib.

Your completed draft should include the following:

- on the first page a standard MLA heading and a copy of yr image
- on subsequent pages, about half a dozen well-developed paragraphs (target length about a half a page); you may have as few as five (if yr paragraphs are all “meaty”) or as many as seven (if several are somewhat “thin”). Use some visual indication that the paragraphs are distinct units, not a connected essay (perhaps a line of asterisks or another symbol between paragraphs or a box around each paragraph).
- a Works Cited page at the end (it should start a new page)

**CRITERIA FOR GRADING:**
• the thoughtfulness, depth, creativity, range of yr questions
• the quality of yr sources (at least four sources, at least two of which be non-webpage-either from research databases or in print)
• the unity and coherence of yr paragraphs (be sure to use strong topic sentences and transitional devices, consider the order of information in yr paragraph, and make sure there are logical links between each pair of adjoining sentences)
• the accuracy and care with which you follow MLA citation guidelines