

Ode to an Essay

Writing is something I just have to do
It's part of the way that I think things through
My letters are legion; long narrative tomes
My pen simply follows where e'er my mind roams

I'm famous for lists – I'm a list-making fool
Groceries, Errands, (To Do lists are cool)
They're bulleted, doodled on, items crossed out
Every room in the house has some lying about

And then I keep journals of all different sorts
My gardens, my travels, my daily cavorts
Philosophic or reverent, petty or proud
My pen often writes what I won't say out loud

Writing is natural – it's easy for me
I just pick up a pencil and set myself free
I love the whole process – the whole ball of wax!
But when it's time to write essays...
I'm dead.
In.
My tracks.

I hate those darned essays, I whine and complain
I fret and I itch and I frazzle my brain
With an intro., a thesis, citations and facts
With this sort of writing I just can't relax

I ramble and pace to come up with a topic
Lost in my thoughts I'm perceived as myopic
Puzzled and squinty, (I frown as I stray)
When I'm writing an essay the kids stay away

This pre-writing phase sometimes goes on for days
But due-dates remind me to break through the haze
I have to start writing; the thing that I dread
But by now I have so many thoughts in my head

So I open up Word and I dump out the wealth
A brain-storming session I have with myself
No rules apply, every thought carries weight
Even the ones that may not relate

I go on this way for one page or two
It's almost enjoyable but then when I'm through
The hard part comes where I have to compose
But wait! I remember I must fold some clothes

I amble to fetch them, I pace as I fold
Neat little stacks, what a joy to behold

I iron the wrinkles of jumbled –up prose
from my brain-storming pages, as I iron the clothes.

With another load in I go back to my task
“What’s my thesis about,” I begin to ask
An introduction now must be made
So into my topic I finally wade

Beginnings are tough but I make myself do it
My thoughts rush ahead before I am through it
I don’t often tarry – I know I’ll revise it
(With hap-hazard intros. like mine, I’d advise it).

Into the essay I forge on ahead
Paragraphs take shape from what I have read
I develop my thoughts and reference my source
Noting the page and the author, of course

At this point in the process my thoughts are in chunks
Untidy but relevant disorganized hunks
I’ve something to say – “What’s my thesis, again?”
I stop all my typing and reach for a pen

I print out my notes and I scribble things out
‘til I figure out what I am writing about
A pen in my hand seems to help with my focus
I circle my thesis – I now have a locus

I review what I’ve written, making it neat
I scramble the order, re-write and delete
It’s only half done, but I know where I am going
So I go fold some clothes- how those piles are growing

But once I’m on track I can’t stay away
I have to resume – I’ve got something to say
Details are added, transitions appear
I read it aloud: I don’t like what I hear

I revise as I go, trying to make the thing flow
I hate this whole process, trying to get it just so
I stink as a writer- My argument’s weak
So I push and I pull and I rip and I tweak

I work my way through and write a conclusion
But I know I’m not done, it is just an illusion
I put it down for at least a full day
All thoughts of this essay I let slip away

With fresh eyes I greet this thing I created
Have I said what I meant? Is it clearly stated?
I look for typos and check for tense
I re-write the intro. so it makes better sense

I formalize references and do a works cited
(Resisting the urge to completely re-write it)
Producing a title causes real agitation
One last little flourish - the pagination

The marathon ends when I push the “print” key
From this effortful process I’m finally free
But I still sit in judgment, I can’t let it go
My thoughts are still churning, to and fro

These post-partum musings don’t change things one bit
It is what it is and I writ what I writ
Will my audience like it, will there be a reward?
Will it meet with rejection, will they be bored?

The thing is: I’ve learned and I’ve read and connected
(Even if my writing is not yet perfected)
This essay’s enriched me – it may not be great
Content with new knowledge I relent.....and I wait.