

The 2016 Griz Read Essay Contest

Louise Erdrich's book *Love Medicine* chronicles the multigenerational stories of two Chippewa families over the course of a half-century. Several narrators weave together stories of cultural loss and persistence, tragedy, spiritual survival, and familial ties. Together, these stories reveal beauty, suffering, faith, and despair, prompting one character to explain, "I was in love with the whole world and all that lived in its rainy arms."

As part of the events and activities surrounding the Griz Read, we invite first-year students to submit 750-1250 word essays in one or both of the following categories: (1) the analytical essay or (2) the personal reflection essay. Cash prizes of \$125 will be awarded to two writers of the best, most compelling essays in each category; the essays themselves (with the authors' permission) will be posted to the Griz Read webpage. Students are limited to one entry per category.

The DEADLINE for entries is MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14.

Category 1: The Analytical Essay

Submit a critical essay in response to your reading of *Love Medicine*. A successful essay will engage the book's themes and/or contexts in a meaningful way, will advance a critical argument that may be grounded in any disciplinary perspective, and will move the discussion beyond mere summary of the book. The winning essay must directly analyze the book in a critical, clear way and must present a coherent and compelling argument that provides insight into some significant aspect of the book.

Your task is to provide an analytical argument for your unique point of view. For example, your essay might draw a conclusion regarding:

- the social, political, cultural, or economic factors the book reflects.
- the role of religious and spiritual belief as portrayed in the book.
- the contrasting images of beauty and suffering throughout the book.
- the effect of multiple narrators' varied perspectives.
- the impact of government policies on social and cultural conditions.
- the role of familial bonds.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The primary evaluation criterion will be the intellectual engagement of the student writer with the ideas presented in *Love Medicine*. The essay also will be judged on the originality of the writing, the clarity of presentation, the attentiveness and logic of its argument, and the cohesiveness of its structure. Essays should be carefully edited and proofread.

The committee will be guided by a rubric based on the following criteria:

- **Comprehension:** *The essay reflects a thorough and nuanced understanding of the book.*
- **Organization:** *The essay follows a logical, coherent, and easily understood progression that builds toward some unified idea. Evidence supports the essay's main point(s) and is adeptly woven into the argument.*
- **Development:** *The student's ideas are clearly explained and developed through examples and critical analysis of the book, ultimately advancing a meaningful argument.*
- **Insight:** *The essay presents an inquiry into the book that moves beyond mere summary and offers other readers a unique insight into and understanding of the book.*
- **Language Use:** *The writer displays skill in word choice and sentence structure, using correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.*

Category 2: The Personal Reflection Essay

Submit a reflective essay analyzing your experience as a reader of *Love Medicine*, answering the following question: how has your experience reading this book caused personal reflection? Your essay should move beyond mere reportage in that it should demonstrate the impact of the book on you. Creativity in essay approach is encouraged.

For example, your essay might:

- explore a personal experience that illustrates one of *Love Medicine*'s significant themes.
- reflect on your cultural identity and the challenges to that identity.
- demonstrate the role family stories play in your life.
- describe how the book has inspired you, challenged you, or provoked you.

A successful essay will develop a *specific, distinctive claim* that defines the nature and importance of your reading experience and will demonstrate this claim through a meaningful discussion.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The primary evaluation criterion will be the intellectual engagement of the student writer with the ideas presented in *Love Medicine*. The committee will especially value personal reflective essays with a compelling and specific discussion of the reading experience, essays with an engaging and distinctive voice, essays that contain a reflective and instructive dimension, and essays that demonstrate the writer is invested in exploration and contemplation. Essays should be carefully edited and proofread.

The committee will be guided by a rubric based on the following criteria:

- **Comprehension:** *The essay reflects a thorough and nuanced understanding of the book.*
- **Originality and creativity:** *The writer is resourceful and creative in conducting the discussion; the writer reveals a flexible, open, exploratory sensibility, and is not afraid to take chances.*
- **Development:** *The student's ideas are clearly explained and developed through a coherent and easily understood progression; ideas ultimately advance a meaningful point about the individual reading experience.*
- **Insight:** *The writer not only describes the reading experience, but also strengthens that discussion with insight, reflection, and interpretation regarding the impact of that experience.*
- **Personal voice:** *The writer exhibits a distinctive sense of voice in presenting the material.*
- **Language Use:** *The writer displays skill in word choice and sentence structure, using correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.*

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS FOR ESSAYS IN BOTH CATEGORIES:

- The contest is open to all first-year students enrolled for the first time at The University of Montana—Missoula, beginning in Autumn, 2016.
- Submissions should be limited to one entry per category.
- The essay should be from 750 to 1250 words in length.
- Essays should be given a title. Below the essay title, on a separate line, please indicate whether the essay is an "Analytical Essay" or a "Personal Reflection Essay."
- ***The student's name should not appear on the essay. Attach a separate sheet with a brief biography (100 words maximum), the word count, and the appropriate contact information: name, active email address, phone number.***

How to submit an essay: Send the essay as an e-mail attachment (in Word document format) to kelly.webster@umontana.edu. Please type "Griz Read Essay Contest" in the message subject line.

Contact Information: Kelly Webster, Director of The Writing Center; 243-2470; kelly.webster@umontana.edu