**The Hermit Crab Essay Assignment**

The hermit crab essay, a term coined by Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paola, adopts an already existing form as the container for the writing at hand, such as the essay in the form of a “to-do” list, or a field guide, or a recipe. Hermit crabs are creatures born without their own shells to protect them; they need to find empty shells to inhabit. Similarly, you write about yourself, maybe even something particularly personal or vulnerable, by finding the shell of a form to protect yourself.

The hermit crab essay may use literary elements of fiction or poetry, depending on the form you choose. Part of the fun is to look at the conventions of the genre, the form, you choose and trying to incorporate it. For example, if you write in a recipe you might use measurements and language such as mix, stir, gently fold in ingredients, etc. If you write a WebMD entry, you might use medical terms such as symptoms, treatment, rest, ice, elevation, watch for swelling, etc. You can blend the language and style of the form with imagery and your own descriptions.

Some forms to consider:

Medical Brochure

Travel Guide

Syllabus

Lesson Plan

Rejection Letter

Marriage Vows

To do list

Recipe

Survival Guide

WebMD Entry

Wikipedia Entry

Dictionary Definitions

**Assignment:**

Write a hermit crab essay of no more than 1000 words that is based on true, personal experience. Try to use this opportunity to explore something personal that you might not feel comfortable writing about in a traditional memoir form. Try to use the language, format, and other conventions of the form you are borrowing.

**Formatting Considerations**:

Title your essay

Space as appropriate for the form

Include word count in your heading on page 1

Include last name, title, and page number on all pages