

Read the following brief reading. You will then quickly answer some questions about it and spend at least forty minutes writing in response to the reading.

from "Do We Fear the Right Things?" By David G. Myers

Why do we intuitively fear the wrong things? Why do so many smokers (whose habit shortens their lives, on average, by about five years) fret before flying (which, averaged across people, shortens life by one day)? Why do we fear violent crime more than clogged arteries? Why do we fear terrorism more than [car] accidents—which kill nearly as many per week in just the United States as did terrorism with its 2527 worldwide deaths in all of the 1990s. Even with the horrific scale of 9/11, more Americans in 2001 died of food poisoning (which scares few) than terrorism (which scares many)....

In less familiar realms, vivid, memorable images dominate our fears. We can know that unprovoked great white shark attacks have claimed merely 67 lives worldwide since 1876. Yet, after watching *Jaws* and reading vivid accounts of Atlantic coastal shark attacks, we may feel chills when an underwater object brushes our leg. A thousand massively publicized anthrax victims would similarly rivet our attention more than yet another 20,000+ annual U.S. influenza fatalities, or another 30,000+ annual deaths.

As publicized Powerball lottery winners cause us to overestimate the infinitesimal odds of lottery success, so vivid airline casualties cause us to overestimate the infinitesimal odds of a lethal airline ticket. We comprehend Mario Gresso's winning \$197 million in a Powerball lottery. We do not comprehend the 328 million losing tickets that provided the jackpot. We comprehend the 266 passengers and crew on those four fated flights. We do not comprehend the vast numbers of accident-free flights—16 million consecutive fatality-free takeoffs and landings during one stretch of the 1990s. Dramatic outcomes capture our attention, [but] probabilities we hardly grasp. The result—we overvalue lottery tickets, overestimate flight risk, and underestimate the dangers of driving.

## Study the Reading: Preparing to Write

Do at least two of these questions before going on to writing your actual essay. (Answering these questions will give you support for writing your essay—but this is not necessarily an outline for your writing. It's closer to freewriting about it.)

1. What would you say is the main point of the reading? What about fear does Mr. Myers want us to question or explore? State it in a sentence.
2. What are three interesting ideas that are part of this reading?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
3. Which of the ideas mentioned in your answer to question #2 is one that you could actually relate to and write more about from your perspective? Go back to question #2 and circle it. Then use the lines below to talk about it, elaborate on it, from your perspective.
4. Think of the overall topic, as you stated it in question #1: Now what else do you have to say about it (anything that comes to mind that relates!)

Now write an essay in response to the reading. Go back to the criteria for CATW for reference to help you along. How might you begin? Start here and continue on your own paper.

---

---

---

continue. . .