



## ESSAY 2- PORTRAIT OF A WORD



In Essay Two, you will write a portrait of a word that is important to you, your community and the language of that particular community. This should be a word that many of your readers are somewhat unfamiliar with, not a word like “family” or “love,” but an **INSIDER** word, one that includes some people and excludes others. This word might be in a different language, or it may be a slang word. 1100 words.

## LANGUAGE AND AUDIENCE

We'll see some examples of this type of writing with Junot Diaz' “Fuku,” and Ta-Nehesi Coates' “In Defense of a Loaded Word.” These writers take different tactics to look at words that are important to them and try and express the importance of those words to potential outsiders. Coates writes in a formal, more academic way (for the New York Times,) Diaz writes in a foul-mouthed Dominican Spanglish slang (for his own novel.) They use different tactics to reach different audiences. **Who are you trying to reach?**



You are free to write in any way that feels natural to you and that you think best expresses the importance and meaning of the word you choose.

You may write in what you consider your own slang, if you like. You may write in formal English, if you like. Either way, (even if you wrote formally,) you should be able to explain why you've chosen the language you have. **Why is this language the best tool to reach your audience?**

As you read, pay attention to the ways these writers use up their space with personal information as well as with research. The research should be fun for you. Look up things you want to know. Coates looks at the NFL's attempt to ban a word and references news stories, while never losing sight of the ways the word functions in his own life. Diaz takes a word that many Americans won't know and talks about how it is still important to them—and also does a LOT of research. He goes into a huge amount of historical detail about various fukus in history and makes us feel like there might be a fuku coming for us.

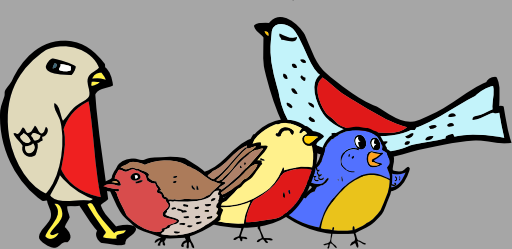
This research isn't just a random way for these authors to prove to their teachers they spent an hour on Google; it's a way for them to draw the reader in and teach them something!

Please note: their research is not solely about the words they have chosen, but also about **SUBTOPICS**. For example, Coates discusses other forbidden words. Diaz writes a great deal about Trujillo and Dominican history.

## RESEARCH!



## WHAT DO I MEAN BY "COMMUNITY?"



This can be any group of people that has a language (or slang, or jargon) or set of customs of their own. Any group of people with an inside group and people outside that inner circle. Your community might be Ecuadorian-Americans, people from a certain neighborhood in the Bronx, nursing students, football players, etc... “American Society” is not what I'm talking about here. That's just too big (and has too many languages and customs) to narrow it down.