

Assignment 3.1

Interpreting visual and written texts

Read Lynda Barry's "Common Scents" (which comes from her 2002 book, *100 Demons*). For the next class, prepare three writings:

FIRST: NOTES

As when you have read other essays for this class, please read and take notes on Barry's essay: Make marks and notes in the margins or on a separate piece of paper. These notes should indicate what you find surprising, interesting, confusing, difficult, striking, or noteworthy. For example, you might note statements, terms, drawing style, arrangement of frames, her presentation of herself, or any other of Barry's textual choices you find significant. You can also compose questions prompted by Barry's essay, and generate initial responses to those questions.

When you are finished, also note for yourself what didn't stand out: What just seemed natural to you in the text, unsurprising, just how things are? Noting what you take for granted can also help you understand how and why you interpret a text as you do.

In taking notes, mark those places in the text that helped inform your initial observations. These references will help you participate in class discussions and compose your responses to Barry's essay.

SECOND: AN INITIAL INTERPRETATION

When you're done reading and taking notes, carefully read back over your notes and any markings you've made on the text. Based on your reading of the essay and your notes, what ideas or questions do you have about this essay? Given your initial interpretation, why do you think Barry might have composed this essay? What do you think she might have hoped readers would feel, think, or do after reading? Write a few paragraphs describing your initial interpretation of the essay.

THIRD: INTERPRETATIVE QUESTIONS

On a separate piece of paper, formulate one or two interpretative questions for you and your colleagues to pursue in class discussion. These questions should be focused and specific and relate to specific choices that Barry has made in composing "Common Scents." These interpretative questions will eventually lead you to a revised critical interpretation and analysis of your own.

Please post your interpretative questions to the Blackboard Discussion Board, in the "Common Scents Questions" thread of the "Weekly Response" forum.

BRING YOUR NOTES, YOUR WRITING, AND YOUR QUESTIONS, ALONG WITH THE REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS, TO OUR NEXT CLASS MEETING.