

## Professional Writing 500-Word Written Piece Requirements:

Note: The written piece is required of all applicants to the program, in addition to the academic requirement of 70% in Gr. 12 English. Respond to all four components for your written piece, bearing in mind that you must not exceed 500 words. Please note that we cannot finish your application process until this has been completed. Space in the program is limited, so we encourage you to submit this promptly.

Please complete and submit all four sections of the written piece as outlined below:

1. What are your personal reading habits? For example, how much do you read beyond what is required for school or work? Do you regularly read books, magazines, and/or newspapers? What genres do you enjoy most? (Please limit your response to 100-120 words.)
2. Write a concise, reasoned two hundred word response to the following statement: "The Internet is damaging North Americans' literacy levels, in particular, their ability to read and write well." Your response should contain a clear opinion supported by a logical argument. If you quote other sources, please cite (identify) the source.
3. Reduce the following paragraphs to two to four sentences which still convey the essential information. Your total précis should not exceed sixty words.

### The Unreliable Witness

Our tendency to confabulate – to believe a fictitious story or memory – is a serious concern when it comes to trusting an eyewitness.

How easily do our made-up stories become false memories? Maria Zaragoza of Kent State University in Ohio showed people an event on video and then asked them leading questions. When they did not have an answer – because the information just wasn't on the tape – she encouraged them to make one up. People are very uncomfortable doing this, she says. They say they don't know, and are just making up an answer, but a week later, more than half of the subjects report their false statements as true events.

Another experiment reveals that children behave in the same way in a real eyewitness situation. When asked to report how a maintenance man they had seen in a waiting room had broken something that he had not in fact touched, they said he didn't break it, or that they didn't see. They were then asked to make something up. A week later, many of the children believed their lies and would now willingly confabulate about

the false situation. As with the adults, the effect was strongest when the questioner gave positive feedback, telling the person that their made-up answer was correct.

Zarazoga says these findings have worrying implications for the way forensic interviews are conducted, and particularly of the credibility of forced confessions.

Another controversial forensic technique is hypnosis. Its reliability was tested experimentally in the 1980s by psychologist Jane Dywan of Brock University in Ontario, Canada, at a time when hypnosis was increasingly being used, with little opposition, to refresh eyewitness memory. She showed people pictures and then tested their recall over the following days. After a week, she hypnotized the same people and asked them again what they could remember. They all “recalled” more, but almost all the newly volunteered information was wrong.

Dywan says that hypnosis increases the focus of our attention and so increases the vividness and ease with which information comes to mind. This may give us the sense of confident familiarity for false memories that we would normally only get with true ones. Hypnosis seems to interfere with our ability to judge what is real and what is not. Combine this confidence with increased recall, and you have set up a very dangerous situation, she says.

**Source: Phillips, Helen (2006, October 7). Everyday Fairytales. New Scientist, pg. 34.**

4. Consider two or three contract or fulltime jobs you would consider applying for as a successful graduate of the Professional Writing program in private industry, government, nonprofit or other organizations. (Suggestion: check job-search sites using search terms like “writer” or “communications” and see what junior or entry-level positions you find.) For each job, note:
  - a. why you would be interested in the job,
  - b. aspects of the job you might find difficult or challenging, and
  - c. how this job would promote your personal career goals as a professional writer.

**Please send your complete written piece, with responses to all four of the above areas, as an email attachment to [media@algonquincollege.com](mailto:media@algonquincollege.com). Alternately, you can mail it to the attention of Nadine McInnis, School of Media and Design, 1385 Woodroffe Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K2G 1V8, or by fax to (613) 727-7707. Please note that we are not responsible for submissions lost or delayed when sent via regular mail.**

*Revised May 2009*