

## **Preparing a Writing Sample for the Literary Club Board of Management as part of the new member process**

No one should tell you what sort of Literary Club paper you should write, because it is your originality that we hope to see. But the question arises, again and again, about what sort of paper we expect as a sample from those who are being proposed for membership. The best papers seem to provide a learning experience, a touch of humor, and a little personal insight into the author. If you are a confident, experienced writer, feel free to stop here and produce a few pages of original work, or use work that you have already written for some other purpose, such as you might like to read before the club, the sort of thing you have probably heard in our hall as a guest. If not so experienced, you may want to read on.

Your paper does not have to be long. One thousand words (two or three pages) should do it, about half the length of a typical Budget paper that might be read on the last Monday of any month. The paper may be about almost anything, with the exception of an explanation of your work. The Club doesn't want to hear how to remove an appendix or an explanation of the clauses necessary for a valid contract.

The paper should be organized, with a beginning a middle and an end. For example, if your paper is about how to ride an elephant, it may have sections on getting aboard, hanging on, and, finally, getting off the damned thing once your ride is over. If the subject is historical, assertions should be as accurate as possible. A sentence that starts, "Napoleon, the famous Norwegian general ...." tends to strike a sour note.

Sentences should be complete, with subject, verb, and object. Paragraphs should be about a single subject. Grammar and spelling should be correct. Of course, all of these rules may be violated, if the violation fits the style of what you have written. Accidental violations of the rules, however, raise difficult questions, like "why?"

Many of us find it difficult to judge or to proofread work that we ourselves have written. Setting a paper aside for a day or two, then rereading it or even reading it aloud, often helps. Although the writing should always be your own, sometimes a reading by a spouse or a friend might help you to notice problems.

At this point, if you still feel unready to sit down to write your own sample, the next time that you are a guest at the Club, you may want to borrow from the Literary Club Library a packet of three budget papers that we think are good examples. Several copies of this packet are available there.

We look forward to reading your sample paper.

The Board of Management