

Texts: “Seeing Dignity in Poverty” and essay by Julia Baird, “Migrant Mother” a photograph by Dorothea Lange, and “I Stand Here Ironing” a short story by Tillie Olsen.

This is a low stakes writing assignment that asks students to integrate a photograph, an essay and a short story. I use the same technique for a wide range of topics and with a wide range of materials. For this particular assignment, I have also used poetry (“Woman Work” by Maya Angelou, “Out, Out...” by Robert Frost, “Every Blessed Day” by Philip Levine and “Working Mother” by Kathleen Aguero) and Studs Terkel’s interviews from *Working*.

I use a 4x6 index card often for low stakes writing. For my struggling students, the limited size of the card makes the assignment more manageable and it also pushes them to keep writing more than just a few sentences. For honors students, it “manages” their time for them and asks them to spend a little time thinking about a focus or two before they write.

Prompt for the students: “Seeing Dignity in Poverty” an essay by Julia Baird about Dorothea Lange’s work and about its effect on America’s view of poverty. After you’ve read the essay, reflect on it, on Migrant Mother and on the ideas presented about the images of poverty then and now. Draw on your own experiences (think particularly about the image you have in your head about poor people and how the media feeds that) and on what you’ve learned in this class and others about poverty in America. Fill the front of the card.

Tonight, read “I Stand Here Ironing” by Tillie Olsen. As you read, keep in mind our exploration of work (particularly the Terkel interviews and the poems) and Lange’s photograph and her work. **On the back of the notecard** reflect on the connections between the mother in the short story, Lange’s *Migrant Mother* and Baird’s essay. Make specific connections from the story to each of the other pieces (remember that you need to prove to me that you’ve read).