*Read the stories “Forever Overhead” by David Foster Wallace and “How to Be a Writer” by Lorrie Moore. Both stories use the second person voice. This means that the main character is referred to not as “I” or “he” or “she” but “you.”*

“Happy Birthday,” begins the narrator of “Forever Overhead,” “Your thirteenth is important. Maybe your first really public day. Your thirteenth is the chance for people to recognize that important things are happening to you.” Although the “you” here is very specifically a thirteen-year-old boy, somehow the story moves through the portal of the specific to touch a universal memory of adolescence. This “you” has a “rich scratchy voice” that moves between octaves “without any warning.” However, even the female reader is familiar with this scratchy voice – she heard it in the voice of boys growing up around her. A well written “you” is, in the end, all of us. The second person is specific and general *at the same time*. This lends the second person a feeling of intimacy, as if the narrator is whispering in your ear. As with Wallace’s beautiful story, the second person adds an allegorical quality to whatever commonplace rituals it describes. The boy in “Forever Overhead” is only jumping off a diving board. However, he is also jumping into the future, jumping into adulthood, and he appropriately frightened. Remember to *read this story first*.

Next, I would like you to write about a HABITUAL RITUAL in second person. Using the “you” voice, describe a holiday, ritual, or routine in specific and significant detail. Let the details accumulate. Let them be funny, sad, and honest. I am not concerned if your “you” character is non-fictional, or based on your personal experience. A lot of fiction is. However, we will discuss this exercise as fiction.

Here are some examples of possible rituals to describe. Feel free to steal one of these!

* Piano recitals
* Visits to a non-custodial parent
* Thanksgivings
* Valentine's Days
* Going to church
* Visits to the grandma in a retirement home
* Your chemotherapy treatments
* Your child’s birthday parties

Write 500-750 words. Work hard, have fun.

It is a beautiful morning. The view of the snow-clad Alps from the hotel’s window is breathtaking. You feel so blissful and happy simply by looking at it. Your boyfriend is still asleep, probably tired after the flight. The room service just delivers the hot chocolate you have ordered a while ago. With a cozy quilt wrapped around you, you sit by the window and sip the hot chocolate mug that was delivered. You feel so lucky and blessed. You have a perfect job, you write books, your business is thriving, you have a steady boyfriend, you are on a holiday in Switzerland. What more can you ever possibly ask for?

It feels like a couple of minutes, but an hour has passed. The bags are unpacked. Soon the guide would arrive to show you around. You wonder if you should wake your boyfriend. Looking at him sleeping peacefully, you decide against it. You open your bag, take out your journal, and start writing. You always write. Especially when the moments are so beautiful and blissful, how can you not write about it? You try and capture the breathtaking view, the content, and gratitude within, in words. The sound of the ink pen scratching against the paper and the silent breaths of your boyfriend are the only sound there is. You write for a while and then stretch yourself. Your boyfriend hasn’t moved yet.

Going near him, you stroke his hair and kiss his forehead. He shifts and turns and pulls you into bed. You smile and kiss his cheeks, he cuddles you and puts his legs around you. You lie down with him for a while and gently move him aside. The scene out is pleading you for a stroll out.

Tearing a piece of paper from your journal, you write, “Honey, strolling around, will be back soon.”, and place it on the table. You put on your gloves, get your jacket from the hanger, and tiptoe out of the room.

The roads are covered in snow. It looks like it might snow again. It is so cold. Strangely, the cold wind is very sweet and fragrant. Walking a few more steps, you spot a florist at the end of the road. From daisies, lilies, orchids to roses, the florist has a wide range of beautiful flowers. The day has been spanning out so well. You wonder if you should get flowers for your boyfriend. No one but your boyfriend could have put up with your goofiness. He made your awkwardness seem cute. He made your mess seem tolerable. He kept himself in such a good place that you wanted to be a better person and you did. He is a huge part of your happiness and success.

You ruminate between buying an orchid bouquet or a single rose with a long stalk and decide to go with the rose since that would seem more romantic. You buy the rose and walk towards your hotel. When you reach your room, your boyfriend is up. He is by the window, at the exact spot where you were looking at the breathtaking Alps.

You remove your shoes, gloves and put the coat back on to the hanger. He turns around and looks at you and yawns.

“Honey! I bought something for you.”, saying so, you extend the rose.

He smiles and says, “It is a beautiful baby. Thank you. Come here, aren’t you feeling cold?.”,

He leans forward and reaches for the flowers but instead pulls you closer into a hug. He kisses you at the cheeks and then at your lips. You blush, lean against his chest, and wrap your hands around his waist.

“ I have something for you as well”, he says.  
With his one arm around your shoulders, he reaches for his pajama pockets with his other hand and takes out a ring and puts it on your fingers.

“Aren’t you going to ask me to say yes?”

“Are you going to say no?”, he smiles and asks me back.

“You know I love you.”

“Yes, I do.”, he says and smiles even broader.

“I tie your shoelaces, massage your feet after legs day at the gym, I don’t have to go on one knee to show that I respect and love…” he goes on.

You stop him with a kiss and say, “Don’t ruin the moment, let’s get married.”

**Does the writer use significant detail, enough to make this ritual feel specific and vivid?**

**Lisa Storm**

Yes; I there are details that provide visual and auditory clues to the characters' thoughts.

**Fernanda Rafaela Ortuño Caero**

Yes

**Mariana Martinez**

Yes, the Alps landscape is very well described as well as the situation.

**Name one of your favorite details or descriptions. Explain why.**

**Lisa Storm**

The sound of the ink pen scratching against the paper-I felt I could hear this noise.

**Fernanda Rafaela Ortuño Caero**

The final part, definitely. It was so romantic, I love it.

**Mariana Martinez**

"Strangely, the cold wind..." I loved this sentence because is was very well described and I got the feeling I was really there.

**What is the tone of the piece? Tone is much like voice, and can be described in the same ways: angry, bitter, mournful, nostalgic, frank, sarcastic, comic. If the tone is hard for you to “hear” or interpret, then say why. Remember that a piece can contain several tones.**

**Lisa Storm**

The tone is bliss. It was hard for me; a little too "happy" with no sense of tension or conflict.

**Fernanda Rafaela Ortuño Caero**

Romantic

**Mariana Martinez**

The tone is cheerful.

**Could you imagine the “you” to be yourself, in a different body? In other words, did the second person voice serve to make you feel closer to the character and his or her experience? Why or why not?**

**Lisa Storm**

I think the character may be too perfect and too perfectly happy for me; I did not feel close.

**Fernanda Rafaela Ortuño Caero**

I could cearly imagine the whole scene in my mind. It blowed my mind. Totaly unique.

**Mariana Martinez**

Not really, I couldn't imagine myself in a different body maybe you could work on it. I didn't feel so because I felt like you didn't turn to the readers very much.

**Did the learner complete this assignment as directed? Meaning, was there specific detail used in writing about an event using the second person?**

3/3