Sins of Writing

**DO NOT LOSE THIS PAPER—BRING IT TO CLASS EVERYDAY!**

**Sin #1**: Do not refer to yourself in a formal essay or state the obvious. You are the author, therefore, the reader KNOWS the views/opinions are yours, “I think” and “In my opinion” are unnecessary. Also, NEVER begin an essay with “My name is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am going to tell you…”, “I am going to tell you…”, “I will prove…” or “This paper will show…” Just tell us!

**Sin #2**: Do not use contractions (isn’t, it’s, can’t, didn’t, should’ve, could’ve). Spell out the words—is not, it is, cannot, did not, should have, could have (not should of, could of).

**Sin #3**: Organization of the essay should include an introduction with the thesis statement in the introduction, body paragraphs that begin with topic sentences, a conclusion that refers back to your thesis and makes a broader statement. The title of the essay should NOT be the name of the assignment or the name of the literature being discussed.

**Sin #4**: Support your opinions and statements with evidence from the text or other sources.

**Sin #5**: When writing about anything published, ALWAYS include the title and author in the introductory paragraph. NEVER refer to the author by his/her first name—you are not friends! (For example: “According to Steinbeck, ordinary people’s lives merit investigation.” NOT “According to John…”)

**Sin #6**: Verb Tense/Verb Vividness—write in present tense when discussing literature. Always check for tense agreement. Do not switch time zones on the reader. Unless absolutely necessary, avoid dead verbs such as is, was, am, had, has, got, etc.

**Sin #7**: Check and correct for run-ons and fragments. A complete sentence contains a subject and a verb. Sentences that begin with because, but, and, or then are almost always fragments. Proofread for spelling, commas, comma splices and capitalization.

**Sin #8**: No “text speak” or slang. BEWARE of “text speak” infiltrating your writing (“u” is not a word, “I” should always be capitalized by itself, “cuz” is not a relative or a reason, and “b4” should only appear when referring to chemistry). The following are not real words: gotta, gonna, hecka, ya. When someone is paying you big money to read your opinions, you may use any words you choose. Until then, slang makes your paper sound sloppy

**Sin #9**: DO not use the same phrase or word over and over again. Use a thesaurus and vary your vocabulary. Do NOT use “a lot”. Find another word to use!! It is not in the dictionary (unless you are talking about a plot of land) and will only serve to lessen the impact of your writing.

**Sin #10**: Show, do not tell!! Remember to “paint a picture” for your reader through indirect characterization and figurative language when applicable. This will make your writing SO much more memorable and exciting for your reader!