Lesson Plans and Resources for *Create Dangerously*
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    - Review of "Create Dangerously" by Amy Wilentz for The New York Times
    - “Country Without A Net” by Tracy Kidder
    - Haiti in Ink and Tears: A Literary Sampler

These resources are all available, both separately and together, at www.freelibrary.org/onebook

Please send any comments or feedback about these resources to Larissa.Pahomov@gmail.com.
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

The materials in this unit plan are meant to be flexible and easy to adapt to your own classroom. Each chapter has discussion questions provided in a later section. However, for students reading the entire book, there are several themes that connect the stories. Students should be introduced to the following key questions as they begin reading, and keep them in mind as they work through the book:

The questions address three central and interrelated themes in the collection.

- **What is the relationship between an immigrant artist’s personal narrative and that of their home country?**

- **How can art and literature illuminate a nation’s history, especially its dark times?**

- **What do we learn from injustice and catastrophe?**

Many of the reader response questions and suggested projects relate to these essential questions. Students are encouraged to ask these questions not only of the characters of the book, but of themselves.
IN-CLASS INTRODUCTION

This lesson is designed to provide students with a one-class introduction to the book. The lesson can be used to start off a class reading of the text, or to encourage them to read it independently.

As a recipient of One Book resources, the Free Library requires that you devote one class period to introducing Create Dangerously to students, either using this lesson or your own plan.

The library is providing TWO introduction plans. Classes that are looking to read more of the analytical and historical essays in the book should begin with “Create Dangerously.” Classes that are looking to read more personal narrative (and the easier, more accessible sections) should begin with “Walk Straight.”

“Create Dangerously”

1. Opening Prompt: Have students write down their answer to this question: “What true stories haunt you?”

2. Pass out or display the image of Marcel Numa and Louis Drouin (see next pages) without comment. Ask students: Where and when are we? What’s about to happen here? Why do you think it’s happening?

3. Read pgs 1-5 of “Create Dangerously” aloud, with the photograph still on hand. At the end of Danticat’s description of the execution, discuss. (Remember that she describes watching a short film of the execution, one moment of which is shown in the photograph.)

4. Read the 2nd half of page 5, which includes the “haunt and obsess” prompt. Why does this moment concern Danticat and other Haitians so much? How does the nation deal with such a dark moment in history?

Possible continuations of this lesson:

- Watch the 3-minute YouTube video of Danticat briefly discussing her inspiration for the book: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCkmLUQttsw&feature=player_embedded

- Continue reading “Create Dangerously” in class, aloud or silently, or have students read the rest at home

- View the map of Haiti (see next pages) and/or give students time to explore a short CNN slideshow about Haiti’s history: http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/01/13/explainer.haiti.facts/index.html

At the end of the lesson, have students revisit their journal answers from the beginning of class. What does their story show about them as a person, or the world that they come from? Would they be putting themselves in danger by telling this story? Would others be putting themselves in danger by reading it? Remember that this does not mean that you are “scribbling on prison walls or counting the days until a fateful date with an executioner” (19). Students should think about what essential story they need to tell, both to affirm themselves and their community.
“Walk Straight”

1. Opening Prompt: Have students write down their answer to this question: “What do you want to say to your relatives who have passed away?

2. Pass out or display the Haiti Map and the image of the hills around Beausejour (see next pages.) Discuss: What do you know about Haiti? Do you have any family that lives far away? Where? When do you get to see them, if it all?

3. Read pgs. 21-26. At the end of this section, discuss: What are the differences between Edwidge and her Tante Ilyana? What are the similarities? Have students make a Venn diagram chart, or map it out on the board.

4. Predict: Will Uncle Joseph and Edwidge be able to convince Tante Ilyana to move away from her distant home? What would it take to bring Edwidge and her aunt closer together? If there is time, read to page 31. What do you think of Edwidge’s declaration that she wishes to be buried in Beausejour? Does this make a difference?

Possible continuations of this lesson:

- Watch the 3-minute YouTube video of Danticat briefly discussing her inspiration for the book: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCkmLUQtsw&feature=player_embedded

- Continue reading “Walk Straight” in class, aloud or silently, or have students read the rest at home

- View the map of Haiti (see next pages) and/or give students time to explore a short CNN slideshow about Haiti’s history: http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/01/13/explainer.haiti.facts/index.html

At the end of the lesson, have students revisit their journal answers from the beginning of class.
If you would like to focus on one particular essential question, below are lists of pieces from the book grouped (roughly) by theme. Literary Logs and possible assessments are also recommended.

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<td>Personal Narrative*</td>
<td>Walk Straight&lt;br&gt;Daughters of Memory&lt;br&gt;I Speak Out&lt;br&gt;The Other Side of the Water&lt;br&gt;Flying Home&lt;br&gt;Our Guernica</td>
<td>“Walk Straight” introduction&lt;br&gt;Family members Log&lt;br&gt;Analytical - #5&lt;br&gt;Creative - #1, #3, #5</td>
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<td>Writing + Art</td>
<td>Walk Straight&lt;br&gt;I Am Not a Journalist&lt;br&gt;Daughters of Memory&lt;br&gt;Welcoming Ghosts&lt;br&gt;Archeiropoietos</td>
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<td>Haitian History + Current Events</td>
<td>Create Dangerously&lt;br&gt;I am Not a Journalist&lt;br&gt;Daughters of Memory&lt;br&gt;I Speak Out&lt;br&gt;Bicentennial&lt;br&gt;Another Country&lt;br&gt;Archeiropoietos&lt;br&gt;Our Guernica</td>
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*The essays featuring Danticat’s personal narrative are the most accessible and of the easiest reading level, and can easily be read as a collection unto themselves.

“Create Dangerously” and “I Speak Out” both contain graphic (but necessary) descriptions of violence.
Correlation to Common Core Standards for Grades 11-12

INTRODUCTION LESSON + DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Reading Standards for Literature
1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
2. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
10. By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Speaking and Listening Standards
1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
2. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

VOCABULARY
Reading Standards for Literature
4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

Language Standards
4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
6. Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

ANALYTICAL + CREATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Writing Standards
1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences
4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grades 11–12 on page 54.)
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
READER RESPONSE QUESTIONS

“Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work”
Why can creation be dangerous for the immigrant artist? Why might Danticat feel that it is dangerous for herself?

On page 13, Danticat writes, “perhaps there are no writers in my family because they were too busy trying to find bread.” What is her meaning in this sentence? Why does this situation trouble her?

How can artists effectively memorialize the dead?

“Walk Straight”
What is the purpose of Tante Ilyana’s life?

Why did some people criticize Danticat for the content of her first novel? What was her response?

Why does Danticat avoid an honest goodbye with Tante Ilyana? Why does she regret it later?

“I Am Not a Journalist”

What is the “tenth department” (pg 49), and why does Danticat feel like she lives there?

Why does Jean Dominique refer to himself not as a journalist, but as an agronomist? (What is an agronomist?)

Why does Michèle eventually choose to leave Haiti? Do you think she made the right choice?

Do you think that Jean Dominique’s assassins were successful? Why or why not?

“Daughters of Memory”

Why did Danticat both resent and embrace reading in French? Why is her relationship to that language so complicated?

Consider Danticat’s statement on page 62: “our stories are the bastard children of everything that we have ever experienced and read.” Do you agree? Why or why not?

On page 65, Danticat asks: “But what happens when we cannot tell our own stories, when our memories have temporarily abandoned us?” How does this question relate to the immigrant artist in particular, and to all artists in general?
Why does Danticat choose to tell the story of fellow Haitian author Marie Vieux-Chauvet in this chapter? In what ways do you think Danticat might empathize with her? In what ways might Danticat feel differently?

“I Speak Out”

What shocks you about Alète’s story? How would you act in her place? How would you act in the place of her husband?

Alète is clearly worn out by the interview, but is also committed to speaking out more “if it helps Haiti.” What is the advantage of sharing her story? What might the personal cost be?

“The Other Side of the Water”

There’s strong evidence to suggest that Marius died of AIDS. Why doesn’t Danticat work to confirm this was the cause of his death? Why doesn’t she argue with family members who say it was something else?

Danticat writes that “the immigrant artist, like all other artists, is a leech and I needed to latch on” (95). Do you think she was right to tell this story, even with the names changed?

Why do you think Tante Zi won’t swim in the ocean? What changes her mind this one last time?

“Bicentennial”

What similarities are there between the independence revolutions of Haiti and the United States?

Why does the United States initially refuse to recognize Haiti as a nation? What is hypocritical about this?

Danticat writes that “had it been given a fair chance at its beginning, Haiti might have flourished and prospered” (100). What would the nation have needed for that fair chance?

Why would the embattled President Aristide use the words of Haitian revolutionary Toussaint L’Ouverture before he was exiled? (101) Do you find his choice inspiring or manipulative?

“Another Country”

What does Danticat mean when she refers to a “country within a country” in the United States? Who populates this other country?

After Hurricane Katrina, why did people say things like that happen in Haiti or Africa, but “not here?” What did the aftermath of the hurricane reveal?

What are some of the injustices that exist for people living in this invisible country? Why don’t their struggles get more attention?
“Flying Home”

Where was Danticat on September 10th, 2001? How did this experience influence her understanding of the terrorist attacks on September 11th?

Danticat quote Ralph Waldo Emerson: “The poet turns the world to glass, and shows us all things in their right series and procession” (124). What were some of the things that Michael Richards tried to show through his sculpture? What does Danticat herself try to show us about Richards by featuring him in this essay?

Why are humans both fascinated and terrified by planes and flight? If you have flown before, what has your own experience been like?

Do you worry about dying “too soon?” What would be the “right” time to die?

“Welcoming Ghosts”

What was Jean-Michel Basquiat’s relationship with Haiti? To what degree do you think he considered himself Haitian? Based on what you’ve read, to what degree do you consider him Haitian?

Basquiat states that “Our cultural memory follows us everywhere, wherever you live.” What does he mean by this? What is your cultural memory, and in what ways does it influence you?

Both Basquiat and Hyppolite died before reaching old age. Danticat wonders whether they had great work left to create, or if they had “fulfilled their missions.” Do you agree with her implication that artists have a mission? How does their work relate to their life?

“Acheiropoietos”

What inspired Daniel Morel to become a photographer? What subjects did he primarily focus on during his career?

Why did Morel document his own hospitalization and brain tumor so carefully? Why was he so “joyful” about this process?

Morel says that “when you make people pose for a photograph, you kill them” (145). What do you think he means by this? Do you agree?

What do you think is the purpose of photography? Do you think Morel would agree with your definition? Why or why not?


“Our Guernica”
How does Danticat deal with the earthquake’s aftermath while safe in the United States? How about when she visits Haiti?

Why are Jhon and Danticat so moved by the painting they see on the side of the tent? Jhon speaks of “Picasso and Guernica after the Spanish Civil War.” What is the importance of art in times of suffering or catastrophe?

The United States sends resources and aid works to Haiti, but they also block off the airport and patrol the coasts to prevent Haitians from leaving the island by sea. Danticat notes all this without explicitly stating her opinion. What do you think of the situation? What do you think her opinion is?

Danticat had several family members die in the earthquake. How does this influence her telling of the story? How does her report compare to someone who didn’t know any of the dead? How about somebody who wasn’t from Haiti?
VOCABULARY

CREATE DANGEROUSLY

Elapse (3) – Some time elapses, it seems, as the schoolchildren mill around.

Unction (4) – If this is Numa’s extreme unction, it is an abridged version.

Abridged (4) – If this is Numa’s extreme unction, it is an abridged version.

Scope (7) – Like most creation myths, this one too exists beyond the scope of my own life, yet it still feels present, even urgent.

Decrepit (14) – Perhaps there are no writers in my family because they were not allowed to or could barely afford to attend a decrepit village school as children.

Directive (14) – Perhaps there are no artists in my family because they were silenced by the brutal directives of one dictatorship, or one natural disaster, after another.

Diabolic (15) – Even without globalization, the writer bound to the reader, under diabolic, or even joyful, circumstances inevitably becomes a loyal citizen of the country of his readers.

Acclimation (19) – Self-doubt is probably one of the stages of acclimation in a new culture.

WALK STRAIGHT

Trek (22) - I have come to see just how far we have trekked in less than two generations, from Léogâne’s rural hamlet of Beauséjour to Miami and New York City, from the valley to skyscrapers.

Strenuous (29) – I was not allowed to do any work other than shell peas and sort corn kernels from the newly harvested corn because I was a city girl and the other types of work were considered too strenuous for me.

Zealous (30) – He has zealously collected money from family members and friends to build it so that some of the children of Beauséjour, both boys and girls can learn to read and write.

Malign (32) – Maligned as we were in the media at the time, as disaster-prone refugees and boat people and AIDS carriers, many of us had become overly sensitive and were eager to censor anyone who did not project a “positive image” of Haiti and Haitians.

Subsequent (33) - …my note to Sophie was later published as an afterword in all subsequent editions of the book, becoming an addendum to the text.
Elixer (36) – What if such a thing did exist, an elixer against fading memories, a panacea to evoke images of spaces lost to us, to instantly return us home.

Panacea (36) - What if such a thing did exist, an elixer against fading memories, a panacea to evoke images of spaces lost to us, to instantly return us home.

Logistical (39) – The grief on my father’s face is clouded with logistical figurations.

I AM NOT A JOURNALIST

Autonomy (42) - ... being the owner and director allowed him a kind of autonomy that few hired journalists could manage in a volatile political climate.

Volatile (42) - …being the owner and director allowed him a kind of autonomy that few hired journalists could manage in a volatile political climate.

Multifaceted (42) – Of course, Jean’s life was too multifaceted and complex to make sense of in these very early hours so soon after his death.

Nomadic (44) - …many of the filmmakers, including Jean, had lost track of their own prints during nomadic lives in exile.

Flourish (44) – Perhaps this is why the visual arts have flourished in Haiti. Painters do not necessarily need to know how to read or write.

Treatise (45) – The film, which begins as a harshly realistic treatise on the restavek child labor system in Haiti, ends as a musical fantasy in which the child servant is rescued by a pale Haitian woman who becomes the girl’s fairy godmother.

Diaspora (49) - …he describes diaspora/dyaspora as a “term employed to refer to any dispersal of people to foreign soils.” But in the Haitian context it is used “to identify the hundreds of thousands of Haitians living in many countries of the world.”

Pretentious (50) - …members of the dyaspora would be classified—justifiably or not—as arrogant, insensitive, overbearing, and pretentious people...

Impunity (56) – “We need to end this climate of impunity and find justice now.”

DAUGHTERS OF MEMORY

Rote (59) – Reading in New York would not be like reading back in Haiti, where rote memorization was the primary method of learning for children my age and where I had memorized, then recited, and then quickly forgotten at least a million unsavored words.
Impenetrable (59) – …I had resented those forgotten words, their length and complication, their impenetrability, their occasional irrelevance to my tropical reality.

Paradox (62) – I was of course drawn to its paradoxical title. How can an amnesiac remember?

Predicament (66) – Claire Clamont, the main character of Love, equates her own unfortunate predicament as a thirty-nine-year-old virgin with the predicaments of D.H. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterly and Flaubert’s Madame Bovary…

Rebuke (69) – At first Marie Vieux-Chauvet resisted, insisting that the publication of the book might bring rebuke and shame to the regime, but then it became obvious that she would have to choose between the book and the people she loved.

Valiant (69) – Through the valiant effort of a devoted reader, the work of that book’s fictional writer manages to live on…

Atrocious (69) – Foreign investment flowed into Haiti, nurturing an atrocious sweatshop culture that added another layer of despair to the lives of a population that could not refuse to work, no matter how meager the pay.

Meager (70) – Foreign investment flowed into Haiti, nurturing an atrocious sweatshop culture that added another layer of despair to the lives of a population that could not refuse to work, no matter how meager the pay.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WATER

Abrupt (88) – …the obstacles to Marius’s flight had been abruptly lifted and he’d gone ahead on his own, before me, to be buried.

Euphemism (89) – The bad disease, a euphemism for acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or AIDS.

Mitigate (90) – Maybe he had some assets that could help mitigate the transportation and funeral costs.

Sanitize (94) – It was all so sanitized, so over-the-phone, nothing Antigone about it.

Denote (94) – In Haiti the same expression, lòt bò dlo, the other side of the water, can be used to denote the eternal afterlife as well as an émigré’s eventual destination.

Taunt (95) – But it was still sunny over the water, the waves glittering as though taunting the fogginess above.

BICENTENNIAL
**Insurgency (98)** – Thomas Jefferson, who had drafted the declaration that defined his own nation’s *insurgency* and who had witnessed and praised the French Revolution, knew exactly what revolutions meant.

**Downtrodden (98)** – Their essence was not in their instantaneous bursts of glory but in their ripple effect across borders and time, their ability to put the impossible within reach and make the *downtrodden* seem mighty.

**Nascent (98)** – So Haiti’s independence remained unrecognized by Thomas Jefferson, who urged Congress to suspend commerce with the *nascent* nation, declaring its leaders “cannibals of the terrible republic.”

**Evocative (101)** – After all, there has never been a more *evocative* moment in Haiti’s history—even though neglected by the world—than the triumphant outcome of the revolution that L’Ouverture and others had lived and died for exactly two hundred years earlier.

**Proliferation (102)** – …forcing his countrymen to experience “the rebirth of shackles, the *proliferation* of suffering, which the more resigned began to accept as proof of the uselessness of all revolt.”

**Disheartening (102)** – Though Ti Noël does not remain among the resigned for too long, he is certainly tested through his *disheartening* encounters with those who have shaped his country’s destiny.

**Mundane (103)** – The real marvelous is in the extraordinary and the *mundane*, the beautiful and the repulsive, the spoken and the unspoken.

**Evocation (104)** – As President Aristide’s opportune *evocation* of Toussaint L’Ouverture shows, for many of us, it is as though the Haitian revolution was fought less than two hundred days, rather than more than two hundred years, ago.

**ANOTHER COUNTRY**

**Dismal (111)** – After all, we do share a planet whose climate is gradually being altered by unbalanced exploration and *dismal* environmental policies…

**Render (111)** – …that may one day *render* us all, first and third world residents alike, helpless in the face of more disasters like Tropical Storm Jeanne and Hurricane Katrina.

**Nuanced (111)** – In the case of Hurricane Katrina, was it really a flood that washed away the *nuanced* privilege of deciding where one should build one’s life, or was this right being stripped away while we were already too horrified to watch?

**Facile (112)** – So too with catastrophes and disasters, which inevitably force you to rethink *facile* allegiances.
**Coup d'état (112)** - …a day that also marked the twenty-eight anniversary of a U.S.-sponsored coup d'état against her uncle, Salvador Allende.

**FLYING HOME**

**Affable (117)** – It turns out there were a few, among them an **affable** man with salt-and-pepper hair, who immediately took control of the situation…

**Arbitrary (118)** – Community, like family, is sometimes a result of **arbitrary** grouping.

**Luminescent (119)** – I am allowed a picture-postcard view of all the places that are lit in my arrival city, what combat fighters once called a “God’s-eye view” of the luminescent ground.

**Hapless (121)** – Control was wrested from your pilot’s hands, / And yours, mid-atlantic, **hapless** voyager.

**Metamorphosis (124)** – “For through that better perception he stands one step nearer to things, and see the flowing or **metamorphosis**… that within every creature is a force impelling it to ascend into a higher form.”

**Impel (124)** – “For through that better perception he stands one step nearer to things, and see the flowing or metamorphosis… that within every creature is a force **impelling** it to ascend into a higher form.”

**Ascend (124)** – “For through that better perception he stands one step nearer to things, and see the flowing or metamorphosis… that within every creature is a force impelling it to **ascend** into a higher form.”

**Existential (125)** – Richard’s work featured “men who were alienated and unacknowledged, using that for his own **existential** feelings as a black man, an artist, and immigrant.”

**WELCOMING GHOSTS**

**Primitive (127)** – “Haitian **primitives**? What do you mean? People? People nailed up on my walls?”

**Transient (130)** – The vèvè sketches are usually **transient**—they vanish underfoot at the ceremonies…

**Realm (130)** – …except when sewn on sequined ceremonial flags that have stepped so far out of their ritual **realm** that they are now used on trendy designer purses and clothes.

**Virtuoso (131)** – “**Virtuoso** is the province of divinity.”

**Province (131)** – “Virtuoso is the **province** of divinity.”

**Divinity (131)** – “Virtuoso is the province of **divinity**.”
**Moniker (135)** – Ginen stands in for all of Africa, renaming with the moniker of one country an ideological continent which, if it cannot welcome the returning bodies of its lost children, is more than happy to welcome back their spirits.

**ACHEIROPOIETOS**

**Dissenter (138)** – On the open paneled doors were enlarged photographs of Marcel Numa and Louis Drouin’s corpses, purposely put on display as deterrents for the country’s potential dissenters.

**Mutable (140)** – “To take a photograph,” Sontag continues, “is to participate in another person (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability.”

**Oeuvre (140)** – Children in quiet distress… often appear in his oeuvre.

**Provocative (143)** – “I’d like to take pictures with less conflict and tension, less provocative pictures,” he says.

**Keepsake (147)** – In that way, the heartbroken father was following a long-honored tradition, in Haiti and elsewhere, of taking a keepsake photograph of the dead as a way of keeping them with us, and at the same time allowing his loved one’s face to stand for many.

**Emblematic (147)** – To suddenly become emblematic of a problem, the “face” of ravaged Haiti, is its own rude awakening, its own culture shock.

**Manifest (149)** – So as news of Gran Brigit’s manifested presence spread, massive crowds filled the cemetery, trampling the mausoleums and graves.

**OUR GUERNICA**

**Abyss (158)** – Has two hundred and six years of existence finally reached its abyss? we wonder.

**Hasty (158)** – With thousands hastily and superficially buried or lodged in miles and miles of rubble, I said, Haiti is no longer just slippery ground, but also sacred ground.

**Superficial (158)** – With thousands hastily and superficially buried or lodged in miles and miles of rubble, I said, Haiti is no longer just slippery ground, but also sacred ground.

**Infuse (160)** – Dany is one of the funniest people I know and his sense of humor often infuses his work.

**Fervor (162)** – I will venture to say that perhaps we will write with the same fervor and intensity (or even more) as before.

**Insurmountable (166)** – …to watch your father die, and then nearly die yourself, all before your tenth birthday, seems like an insurmountable obstacle for any child.
Family Members Log

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<th>Family member + Details about them</th>
<th>What you learned from seeing/meeting this person</th>
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Works of Writing and Art Log

In this log, record any reference Danticat makes to artists and writers, as well as specific works that these people have created. Then, write a brief description of why you think Danticat mentioned this artist and their creation. How did mentioning this work support the argument or ideas that Danticat was presenting?

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<thead>
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<th>Artist/Writer and their work(s)</th>
<th>Purpose of this reference in the essay</th>
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1. Read the review of "Create Dangerously" from The New York Times (included in Print Resources) 
   Respond to the review: Do you agree or disagree with their statements?

2. Variation on #1 – Read the excerpt from the book review below:

   By the end of this section we are not sure what field we are in: Haitian history, personal 
   memoir, anthropology, comp lit or religious studies. But that is as it should be. What is 
   worthy is Danticat’s passion for her subject. What is revealing is the way she sees her 
   themes of exile, banishment, emigration and — most important — return, everywhere, 
   along with their implications and consequences. A writer truly and meaningfully immersed 
   in her work is like a paranoid person: every piece of experience seems to echo back to her 
   the subject of her work. So it is with Danticat.

   Choose one of the underlying themes listed and identify what you think Danticat’s central message 
   about this theme is. Support your thesis with ample support from the text. 
   Added prompt: Which literary field does Danticat rely on to present this theme? Explain why you 
   think she chose this literary field – how does it get her message across?

3. Read the Tracy Kidder article “Country Without A Net” (included in Print Resources). What ideas 
   about Haiti do Kidder and Danticat have in common? Identify their shared beliefs, and analyze how 
   their different styles of writing communicate those beliefs to the reader.

4. Danticat writes that those who are forced to live dangerously must also “create dangerously.” What 
   work of art (visual, written, musical, multimedia, etc.) do you think is an example of her claim? 
   Explain with support from her essay “create dangerously.”

5. Danticat shares many details about her own life and family in the book. Pick two moments to 
   analyze. Do you think her use of personal narrative is effective? Why or why not?
SUGGESTED CREATIVE ASSESSMENTS

1. In the essays “The Other Side of the Water” and also “Walk Straight,” Danticat deals with the news and aftermath of a family member’s death. Write a short essay about the death of a member of your own family. Danticat carefully tells an unsweetened version of her family’s story while still giving respect to both the living and the dead – think carefully about how you will do this in your own work.

2. Danticat writes extensively about art that portrays catastrophe, and how it can be a healing process for both the artist and those who view the work. Take some time to view and learn about “Guernica,” the painting by Pablo Picasso:
   Treasures of the World: Guernica
   http://www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/a_nav/guernica_nav/main_querfrm.html
   Brief overview and investigation of Picasso’s painting commemorating the Spanish Civil War.
   Large image of the painting available here:
   http://www.oneonta.edu/faculty/farberas/arth/Images/110images/sl24_images/guernica_details/guernica_all.jpg

   Take a look also at the photojournalism of Daniel Morel:
   Showcase: This Isn’t Show Business

   What needs to be witnessed and memorialized today? Create your own visual representation of a catastrophe of our time.

3. In the essay “Daughters of Memory,” Danticat describes the books that inspired her to become an author – and also her frustrations with learning to read French in class. Write a personal essay that connects to one or both of these experiences. What has inspired you to learn, and what has turned you off from learning?

4. In the literary compilation “Haiti in Ink and Tears” (see Print Resources), several different authors had excerpts based on nine different themes. Pick three to read and reflect on, and then write companion pieces that reflect your own life and community. Your works can be narrative, dialogue-based, poetic, fictional or true – just like the different pieces in the compilation. Variation: Use a photo gallery of Haiti (see Online Resources) to find further inspiration on the themes.
ONLINE RESOURCES

LITERATURE

Edwige Danticat’s Facebook Page
http://www.facebook.com/edwignedanticat
A place where students can view some basic info about Danticat and post to her wall directly.

Edwige Danticat at Bucknell College
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCkmLUttsw&feature=player_embedded
A 3-minute video made in 2011 where Danticat briefly talks about her inspiration for the book, the 2009 earthquake in Haiti, and also gives some advice to aspiring writers.

Haiti in Ink and Tears: A Literary Sampler

Permanent Exile: On Marie Vieux-Chauvet
A lengthy but engaging article describing the work and life of the Haitian author mentioned in the essay “Daughters of Memory.”

ART

Artist in 60 Seconds: Michael Richards
http://arthistory.about.com/od/namesrr/a/Michael-Rolando-Richards.htm
A brief biography of the artist featured in the essay “Flying Home.” Includes an image of his sculpture.

Treasures of the World: Guernica
http://www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/a_nav/guernica_nav/main_guerfrm.html
Brief overview and investigation of Picasso’s painting commemorating the Spanish Civil War. Large image of the painting available here:
http://www.oneonta.edu/faculty/farberas/arth/Images/110images/sl24_images/guernica_details/guernica_all.jpg

Street to Studio: The Art of Jean-Michel Basquiat
Interactive website featuring the art and life of Basquiat. Timelines, video clips, audio, and online discussions all make for an enjoyable website for students to explore and learn more about the artist.

Hector Hyppolite
http://haitianartsociety.org/photo3.html
A few images of his paintings.

**HAITI**

**Haiti Snapshot**
Six-Slide presentation on the basics of Haitian history, with text descriptions on each slide. Great for an in-class crash course and/or direct student use.

**Haiti Timeline**
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1202857.stm
A more extensive by-the-year timeline of Haitian history, with a focus on the last twenty years.

**Migration Information Source: Haitian Immigrants in the United States**
http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?id=770#top
An interesting compendium of facts and figures, with short paragraphs describing different aspects of the Haitian immigrant population.

**Showcase: This Isn’t Show Business**
A collection of photographs by Daniel Morel, featured in the essay Acheiropoetis. Powerful images taken immediately after the earthquake, accompanied by an equally powerful short interview with Morel.

**From the Archive: Haiti, Alive**
http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/16/archive-9/?ref=weekinreview
A collection of photographs showing Haiti pre-earthquake. A necessary companion to the photographs in by Daniel Morel.

**Haiti Earthquake Multimedia**
A comprehensive collection of all multimedia reporting done by the New York Times on the earthquake in Haiti. A wealth of topics and focus points to choose from, with sort slideshows and videos that make great journal prompts and conversation starters.

**An Infographic for Haiti**
http://www.good.is/post/design-an-infographic-for-haiti-submissions/
A collection of infographics visualizing many of the different facts and figures affecting Haiti after the earthquake.

**Additional Guides and Resources**

**Teaching about Haiti**
http://www.teachingforchange.org/publications/haiti
NYTimes: 5 Ways to Teach About Haiti Right Now
http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/14/5-ways-to-teach-about-haiti-right-now/?partner=rss&emc=rss
An excellent compendium of resources put together shortly after the earthquake, including links to video, maps, infographics, photos, and aid organizations on the ground in Haiti.

Danticat Reading Group Guide
http://press.princeton.edu/releases/m9262.html
Thirteen discussion questions published by Princeton University Press.
The figure of the Haitian living abroad is one that evokes bitter comedy and, often, envy among Haitians living in Haiti. Haitian Haitians can quickly spot someone from what is called the diaspora visiting Port-au-Prince. A Haitian friend once told me that the big difference, aside from a visible discrepancy in wealth, is that someone from lòt bò dlo (or the other side of the water, which means “abroad” in Haitian Creole) walks with purpose and studied intent, as if he or she has a destination in mind at every moment. Island Haitians can find such goal-oriented behavior strange, unreal, even ridiculous, since the poverty of life in Haiti means that goals are often unachievable.

Edwidge Danticat, who was born in Haiti and has lived in the United States since the age of 12, has been trying to bridge this divide. More than a million Haitians live in the diaspora — in New York, Florida, the Dominican Republic, the Bahamas, Montreal, France and other places — and the remittances they send home help keep the Haitian economy afloat. It’s estimated that about 80 percent of Haiti’s professionals live outside Haiti. In 2008 alone, diaspora Haitians sent as much as $2 billion back to Haiti to support family and friends. Yet although they are essential to their relatives’ well-being, diaspora Haitians often feel un-Haitian, unacknowledged and distant. Best known for her story collections, like “Krik? Krak!,” and for novels like “Breath, Eyes, Memory,” Danticat confronts this problem head-on in “Create Dangerously,” her new collection of essays, adapted and updated from the Toni Morrison Lecture she gave in 2008 at Princeton University, and expanded with her writing for The New Yorker, The Progressive and other publications.

The diaspora conflict is particularly painful in the case of writers and artists who live elsewhere but use Haitian material in their work. In “Walk Straight,” the new book’s second essay, Danticat recalls overhearing a Haitian say, about her work, “The things she writes, they are not us.” She points out, too, that she has often been called a “parasite” who exploits her culture “for money and what passes for fame.” In response to such criticisms, Danticat writes that the only alternative for an emigrant writer is self-censorship or, worse, silence. Nonetheless, she describes herself as “anguished by my own sense of guilt.” For Danticat, the burden of responsibility and indebtedness is dreadful, her escape from the world she writes about fraught with emotion and self-loathing. Her guilt is the worst kind: survivor guilt. The book begins with a matter-of-fact retelling of the executions of Marcel Numa and Louis Drouin, which Danticat recounts from a documentary film she watched. Both men had left their hometown, Jérémie, on
Haiti’s southern peninsula, to study and work in the United States in the 1950s. In New York, Numa and Drouin became part of Jeune Haiti, a C.I.A.-supported group of 13 men plotting to overthrow Papa Doc Duvalier. They landed in Haiti and fought sporadically for three months before 11 of them were hunted down. The grand finale of Jeune Haiti was the execution of Numa and Drouin, which took place at the national cemetery in Port-au-Prince in 1964. Numa was in his early 20s and Drouin in his early 30s when they were put before the firing squad.

This dark story is the creation myth of Danticat’s Haiti, although it took place five years before she was born. The story of the two martyrs is woven through the book; people speak of them, remember them, mention them in section after section. Danticat herself goes looking for the site of their execution and reimagines it. One of the pleasures of reading this book is the way that Danticat self-consciously shows the intertwining of experience; this enduring connection is especially important to her as a writer exploring an opposing diaspora theme of distance and disconnection.

With characteristic creativity and charmingly knotty logic, Danticat compares Drouin and Numa’s mini-rebellion against Duvalier to the refusal of Adam and Eve to obey the command of another dictator who, we must hope, is more benign. From this, she goes into a short discussion of Camus’s “Caligula.” The logic continues to bounce as we follow her reasoning. Camus’s emperor, Danticat writes, believes it doesn’t matter if one is executed or exiled, but only that one have what she calls “the power to choose.” Drouin and Numa had already lived in a comfortable exile from which they nonetheless chose to return, Danticat writes. She then seems to compare them to Jesus Christ, saying they “were patriots who died so that other Haitians could live.” So Drouin and Numa are like Adam and Eve, but also like Jesus. Finally, Numa and Drouin remind Danticat of one other person. “They were also immigrants, like me,” she writes. As such, they were vilified and dehumanized by Duvalier. “He labeled them not Haitian, but foreign.”

By the end of this section we are not sure what field we are in: Haitian history, personal memoir, anthropology, comp lit or religious studies. But that is as it should be. What is worthy is Danticat’s passion for her subject. What is revealing is the way she sees her themes of exile, banishment, emigration and — most important — return, everywhere, along with their implications and consequences. A writer truly and meaningfully immersed in her work is like a paranoid person: every piece of experience seems to echo back to her the subject of her work. So it is with Danticat.

She expresses feelings of shame throughout, because she writes from the diaspora and is therefore not sharing the pain and misery (and now disaster) that the people she fictionalizes have suffered. Danticat has lost many relatives and friends to the harshness of being Haitian, one or two to unacknowledged or unrecognized AIDS, another in detention as a hopeful refugee, one to assassination, two more to the recent earthquake. As a true humanist and dedicated fiction writer, she suffers with these victims, always empathizing, always wondering: What if that had been me?
Danticat is at her best when writing from inside Haiti. It’s a miracle, the way she captures the textures of a reality she was a part of for only the first 12 years of her life. The section in which she and her cousin and uncle climb a mountain and visit an aunt in a remote village is filled with small wonders. There is, for example, a description, poetic and plain, of how upon arrival at her aunt’s tiny, tidy house, Danticat and the others collapse onto a sisal mat and drink water while her cousins grind corn and the hens and roosters squawk.

She lovingly reproduces the back-and-forth of conversation among relatives who have not seen one another in more than 20 years, and who live in different worlds and different eras. She notes the spatter of gunfire nearby — the village chief’s way of announcing he has returned to the village and is ready to see anyone who might need him. She describes the slow process of making coffee in the cooking shed near the stream, a cousin’s three-tiered turquoise mausoleum in the garden, the night sounds of the profound countryside. Most vividly, she captures the unremarked quality of the lives lived in these unheard-of places, so close to Miami. “I remember collecting dandelions as we passed the gardens of people who had known our fathers and grandfathers when they were our age,” Danticat writes of a childhood visit to this same place, “people who called us by the names of our aunts and uncles, people of whom there is no longer any trace. . . . I don’t remember my Aunt Ilyana’s house looking so isolated.”

Although she knows she need not, Danticat, for all her success as a writer, still feels bad about making up narratives about people whose real-life stories are already so gripping. She admires exiles like the photographer Daniel Morel, who at great personal risk has documented the brutal political struggle in Haiti for decades. She looks up to Jean Dominique, the éminence grise of Haitian journalism, who lived in New York for a time and who later returned to work for a better Haiti. (He was assassinated in Port-au-Prince in 2000.) Yet as Danticat’s recollections show, her singular achievement is not to have remade the actual Haiti, but to have recreated it. She has wound the fabric of Haitian life into her work and made it accessible to a wide audience of Americans and other outsiders. Through her “made up” stories, she has brought Haiti to life for countless readers who otherwise would have understood nothing. Danticat’s tender new book about loss and the unquenchable passion for homeland makes us remember the powerful material from which most fiction is wrought: it comes from childhood, and place. No matter her geographic and temporal distance from these, Danticat writes about them with the immediacy of love.

Amy Wilentz is a professor in the literary journalism program at the University of California, Irvine, and the author of “The Rainy Season: Haiti — Then and Now,” reissued in April.
THOSE who know a little of Haiti’s history might have watched the news last night and thought, as I did for a moment: “An earthquake? What next? Poor Haiti is cursed.”

But while earthquakes are acts of nature, extreme vulnerability to earthquakes is manmade. And the history of Haiti’s vulnerability to natural disasters — to floods and famine and disease as well as to this terrible earthquake — is long and complex, but the essence of it seems clear enough.

Haiti is a country created by former slaves, kidnapped West Africans, who, in 1804, when slavery still flourished in the United States and the Caribbean, threw off their cruel French masters and created their own republic. Haitians have been punished ever since for claiming their freedom: by the French who, in the 1820s, demanded and received payment from the Haitians for the slave colony, impoverishing the country for years to come; by an often brutal American occupation from 1915 to 1934; by indigenous misrule that the American government aided and abetted. (In more recent years American administrations fell into a pattern of promoting and then undermining Haitian constitutional democracy.)

Hence the current state of affairs: at least 10,000 private organizations perform supposedly humanitarian missions in Haiti, yet it remains one of the world’s poorest countries. Some of the money that private aid organizations rely on comes from the United States government, which has insisted that a great deal of the aid return to American pockets — a larger percentage than that of any other industrialized country.
But that is only part of the problem. In the arena of international aid, a great many efforts, past and present, appear to have been doomed from the start. There are the many projects that seem designed to serve not impoverished Haitians but the interests of the people administering the projects. Most important, a lot of organizations seem to be unable — and some appear to be unwilling — to create partnerships with each other or, and this is crucial, with the public sector of the society they’re supposed to serve.

The usual excuse, that a government like Haiti’s is weak and suffers from corruption, doesn’t hold — all the more reason, indeed, to work with the government. The ultimate goal of all aid to Haiti ought to be the strengthening of Haitian institutions, infrastructure and expertise.

This week, the list of things that Haiti needs, things like jobs and food and reforestation, has suddenly grown a great deal longer. The earthquake struck mainly the capital and its environs, the most densely populated part of the country, where organizations like the Red Cross and the United Nations have their headquarters. A lot of the places that could have been used for disaster relief — including the central hospital, such as it was — are now themselves disaster areas.

But there are effective aid organizations working in Haiti. At least one has not been crippled by the earthquake. Partners in Health, or in Haitian Creole Zanmi Lasante, has been the largest health care provider in rural Haiti. (I serve on this organization’s development committee.) It operates, in partnership with the Haitian Ministry of Health, some 10 hospitals and clinics, all far from the capital and all still intact.

As a result of this calamity, Partners in Health probably just became the largest health care provider still standing in all Haiti.

Fortunately, it also offers a solid model for independence — a model where only a handful of Americans are involved in day-to-day operations, and Haitians run the show. Efforts like this could provide one way for Haiti, as it rebuilds, to renew the promise of its revolution.

*Tracy Kidder is the author of “Mountains Beyond Mountains,” about Haiti, and “Strength in What Remains.”*
Today is a good day to remember that in Haiti, nobody ever really dies. The many thousands who've had the breath crushed out of their bodies in the earthquake, and the thousands more who will not physically survive the aftermath, will undergo instead a translation of state, according to the precepts of Haitian Vodou, some form of which is practiced by much of the population. Spirits of the Haitian dead — sa nou pa we yo, those we don’t see — do not depart as in other religions but remain extremely close to the living, invisible but tangible, inhabiting a parallel universe on the other side of any mirror, beneath the surface of all water, just behind the veil that divides us from our dreams.

That extraordinary spiritual reservoir is the source of the Haitian religious view of the world — as powerful as any today. As often as it is misunderstood and misrepresented, Haitian Vodou, with all it carries out of the cradle of humankind’s birth in Africa and combines with Roman Catholicism, has enabled Haitians to laugh at death, as they have too often needed to do.

During the decade-long Haitian revolution that began in 1791 — the only event in human history where African slaves won freedom for themselves by force of arms — a prisoner of the French was awaiting execution by burning. Come, he is supposed to have said to his companions, let us show these people how to die. He climbed onto the pyre himself and stayed there, without uttering another sound, until the fire consumed him.

The energy of souls not lost springs back into the living world, not only through one of the few surviving religions that allow believers to converse face to face with the gods, but also in an extraordinarily rich, fertile and (in spite of everything) optimistic culture. Haiti offers, keeps on offering, a shimmering panorama of visual art and a wealth of seductive and hypnotic music, much of it rooted in the rhythms of ceremonial drumming. For the past 50 years a remarkably vivid and sophisticated Haitian literature has been flowing out of Creole, an ever-evolving language as fecund as the English of Shakespeare’s time. The Haitian world is not all suffering; it is full of treasure. Here are a few of the many voices, native and not, inspired by Haiti. —Madison Smartt Bell

LIFE
I live in Haiti.
The other day in the midst of Port-au-Prince, the great degraded capital city that is my home, I saw a car, an old battered car, a jalopy, falter and sputter and come to a slow halt. It was out of gas; this happens often in my destitute country, where everyone and everything is so poor that the donkeys and horses are starving and even the cars must try to get by on nothing. The man who was driving the car got out and
looked at it, stuck there in the middle of traffic, helpless. Then I saw another face, the passenger. A woman. She looked out of the back window with tears in her eyes, and the driver looked around the street at the unemployed loungers who are always there, and said to them, "She is going to have a baby right here." He told them that he had taken the woman from her home because the midwife was unable to help her. The pregnancy was difficult, and the woman needed to go to the hospital to have her baby. Now the tears were coming down the woman's cheeks. "If we do not get to the hospital, she will die," the man told the loungers. "Her baby will die, too."

The loungers - hungry young men who had never had a job and who will never have a job if my country goes on as it has done for the last half century - looked at the car and heard the man's voice and saw the woman's tears. Their backs straightened, their cigarettes fell to the ground, their eyes cleared. They approached the car, eight of them, leaned over, and put their shoulders to the chore. The driver steered. The woman lay back. Down one long dusty road, a left turn, and down another, through the green and white gates of the State Hospital, and she had arrived.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former president of Haiti, "In the Parish of the Poor" (Orbis Books, 1990).

DEATH

Whenever I have nightmares
It's the tonton macoutes I'm dreaming about
The other night I dreamed
They made me carry my coffin on my back
Everyone on all the Port-au-Prince streets was laughing at me
There were 2 or 3 boys not laughing
The other night I dreamed
They made me dig my grave in the cemetery
Everyone on television was laughing at me
There were 2 or 3 girls not laughing
The other night I dreamed
A macoute squad was getting ready to shoot me
Everyone was laughing
There was an old woman who wasn't laughing
Those little boys and girls there -
If I say more the devil will steal my voice
The old woman
Is Shooshoon Fandal
They brought her to see the macoutes shoot
Her 5 sons on a street in Grand Gosier.

Félix Morisseau-Leroy, "Shooshoon." Translation from Creole by Jack Hirschman and Boadiba.
SONG
I relaxed and let my body vibrate to the sound of the drums when suddenly my eyelids became heavy: I
was sleepy. I tried to resist, I threw some cool water on my face, but my eyes closed of their own accord. I
fell into a deep sleep with a jug of water clasped in my hands. Yet, I was not completely asleep. I could
hear everything that was happening under the arbor. I had the strange sensation that my hands and legs
were swaying. I wanted to see them. I put my left arm close to my face. I couldn't see it. It was very, very
dark. I tried harder, I eventually saw saffron yellow, then white. When I focused my eyes I realized that I
was on my feet dancing before the drummers, still holding the water jug in my hands. Then I stopped
paying attention, I let myself go in the dance. At one moment, I said to myself: "My God, how can I stop?"
But I couldn't retain this thought: the dance, the sound, the rhythm were all too strong. They led my body to
move in a crazy circle. I could hear everything despite the deafening noise of the drums. ... I experienced
pleasure in that state between two waters: profoundly asleep and fully conscious of myself.
*Mimerose Beaubrun, "Nan Domi" ("In Dreaming"), to be published by Vent D'Ailleurs, France. Translation
by Dolores J. Walker.

LONGEVITY
Hold on, it can't be yesterday. Yesterday we weren't open because the mother of one of the girls died.
Days and years get scrambled in my mind. I remember everything all at the same time. Us old folks, can
we ever mix up places and happenings and memories! We live in a long night with no need to see things in
detail since words and actions are constantly melting into elusive colors and sounds. Our night stretches
out, unfolding in vagueness, a vast and melancholy mockery of a place outside all chronological constraint,
where each fact is a particle on the move. Old people have a special way of celebrating how matter goes
on forever, through the baroque art of do-it-yourself, every wound closing and opening again and again.
The pathos of capital punishments and last-minute reprieves having lost both charm and glory, the honesty
of old age turns out to be the lucid confession of relative values. So, monsieur, perhaps she didn't arrive at
that precise moment, but years earlier, during the reign of the great dictator Deceased Forever-Immortal,
during the youth of the Prophet, or on that eventful day itself, but a bit earlier or later, when the street
already smelled of charred flesh, when the bodies, metals, mud, fire, plastic, and death mingled in a harsh,
moist odor of filth, amalgam, and heartbreak.
*Lyonel Trouillot, "Street of Lost Footsteps" (University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

GLOOM
From the four corners of the city the fires rise from the heaped refuse and burn our eyes. At the end of
dusk, the fire-bugs crucify the misery of Port-au-Prince to shut it up. We walk on, subdued, half blinded by
an untrustworthy fog. It is at this moment that night descends over the visage of our Mother. This
incomparable face which will never leave you, in spite of the storm fallen into your life, in spite of the fire
which devours it.
*Yanick Lahens, "La Couleur de L'Aube." Translation by Mr. Bell.
GRACE
There's something surreal about seeing an old friend when we know it's for the last time, a shameful gap between the reality right before our eyes and the kinds of facts our minds can absorb. ...He'd been my keeper, tutor and guide... never complaining, talking us out of tight spots, patiently schooling me in the business of life in this place. To say he was Virgil to my Dante would be stretching it-just a little-and yet he did show me something of hell, and where to look for grace and mercy in the midst of that.
If he ever thought badly of me for needing something from Haiti, this place where so many people already needed so much, he never let it show.

Ben Fountain, "Impasse Tempête" (Ecotone, 2008).

RESOLVE
He arrived at Sans Fil (home for the dying) gaunt, febrile and coughing from tuberculosis. Two months later, the tuberculosis was under control. He had gained 30 pounds and was confident that he could now make a living. There was a problem, however; he had no place to go. Undaunted and sporting a huge smile, he left anyway, thanking all of us for helping him. His only possessions were a snapshot of himself taken by a generous visitor, a Liberty Bowl T-shirt, trousers, and a Minnesota Twins baseball cap. Two days later he was back. Day found him lying at the front door, tears streaming down his face, clutching his now tattered picture.
Day was prepared for anything; he was used to Haiti. Louis's shirt was filthy, the trousers torn and the cap, long gone. His eyes were sunken deep into his head and he had lost at least five pounds. He could barely respond to my questions.
"Do you have a family?"
"No."
"Friends?"
"No."
"Did you have a place to sleep?"
"No."
"Where did you sleep?"
"Under the tables in the market place with the crazy people."
"Did you eat anything?"
"No."
"Did you drink anything?"
"No."

There was no way he could survive in the real world of Haiti. This is why so many roamed the streets begging, looking for cars to clean, trying to do odd errands, or becoming prostitutes; it was that or nothing. Many Haitians could not get enough money together to buy food or rent a place to sleep. They forever roamed around, until some social organization helped them, or, more commonly and tragically, they lay down and died.
**TENACITY**

There is a Haitian saying which might upset the aesthetic images of most women. Nou led, Nou la, it says. We are ugly, but we are here. Like the modesty that is somewhat common in Haitian culture, this saying makes a deeper claim for poor Haitian women than maintaining beauty, be it skin deep or otherwise. For most of us, what is worth celebrating is the fact that we are here, that we against all the odds exist. To the women who might greet each other with this saying when they meet along the countryside, the very essence of life lies in survival. It is always worth reminding our sisters that we have lived yet another day to answer the roll call of an often painful and very difficult life.

*Edwidge Danticat, "We Are Ugly, But We Are Here" (The Caribbean Writer, Volume 10, 1996).*

**MISERY**

"It was a sad song - I mean to say that she was sad and that she didn't know any other kind of song. She didn't sing loud and it was a song with no words, her mouth shut the song sticking in her throat like a moan... so what do you want? She sang as the black girls do, as if you're smothering a sob, and this song always ends by beginning again because it is made in the image of misery, and tell me, will misery ever end?"

*Jacques Roumain, "Gouverneurs de la Rosée" ("Masters of the Dew") Translation by Mr. Bell.*

*Madison Smartt Bell teaches writing at Goucher College and is the author of a fictional trilogy about the Haitian revolution as well as a biography of the revolution’s leader, Toussaint Louverture.*