

Thanks very much for coming along to Grand Central and the New York Public Library on Wednesday. Would you please bring to class next week just a sentence or two on any aspect of the visit? Was there anything that caught your eye or interested you or, even, that bothered you? It could be a brief overview or a focus on a detail. It could connect to a topic or theme—or a particular photograph—that we covered in class. Or, say, a quick observation about midtown Manhattan. The impression could be positive or negative; I'm just looking for a brief impression.

You could send it along by email or bring it on paper to class. We'll talk at the start of class about our next field trip, as well, then dive into the "Roaring Twenties" in New York City.

Take care—

1. The intention with this low-stakes assignment is to prompt the idea of making connections, which is part of the semester-long course theme of history as an effort at connecting facts across time and discipline. To me, this kind of assignment makes it easy for students to practice that effort and to articulate the connections they're learning to make.
2. A challenge: Developing and wording such assignments in a way that will engage both advanced students, who are also knowledgeable about the city, and newcomers to the city who are also new to English. I help them navigate by presenting a range of potentially interesting topics and allowing them to decide their own subjects from among that range. If they choose a topic that interests them, they'll push themselves toward a more reasoned and articulate piece of writing.
3. Writing challenges beyond the classroom: LaGuardia has such a variety of students, who are fulfilling very different responsibilities outside the classroom. Those other responsibilities can make it harder to seek and find the connections that the field of history aims toward. My own response to that challenge is to try to be as flexible as possible on deadlines and to encourage students to be in touch with me in any way.