Encyclopedia Entry #1—Name

For your first encyclopedia assignment (and your first writing assignment of the year!) you will write a pastiche of Cisneros’s vignette “My Name” or Amy Rosenthal’s entry “Amy.” ***A pastiche is an artistic work that imitates the style of another artist or work***. In other words, you will write your own vignette about your name—about what your name means, what it means to you, how you believe it defines you or affects how other people see you. Your final pastiche should be about the same length as the sample pieces, and it should mimic the writing in its style and narrative voice. ***Write this entry under the letter “N.”***

Here is a brief sample I wrote about my own name to help you get started:

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| Three days before I was born, my mother watched a soap opera and found my name. It was a husband-stealing villain’s name and now it is mine. As a child, I always felt it was too long, too clunky, too harsh. When others looked up the definitions of their names, they found beautiful meanings like “song bird,” or “flower,” or “strong hunter.” My name, however, means “from the court.” I found it too formal…and uninspiring. I dreamed of changing my name to something more exotic, something I thought sounded more sophisticated. Brittney, or Stefanie, or Savannah maybe. Names that were in abundance in every pre-teen ‘80s sitcom and young adult novel. A name that could be shortened to something cool and catchy—there is no fun, quirky way to shorten “Courtney” into a legitimate nickname. But now, as an adult, I have learned to embrace my name. I look back at my earliest school work and kindergarten art projects, and I see the letters of my name scrawled at the bottom of the page in my tiny hand so many years ago. And I realize that I have written those letters—that name-- thousands of times, over the years, and that name belongs to me. |

Here are a few questions to consider before you start writing. These are all ideas Cisneros and Rosenthal include in their own writing, so you should try to include answers to as many of them as possible in your pastiche of their writing. Remember that your audience is your fellow classmates (and me!) and we want to learn as much as we can about you throughout your exploration of your own name.

* Explain what your name means. Does it have a special meaning in a foreign language? How did you get your name?
* Do you have a nickname? How did you arrive at that nickname? Do you like it? Why or why not?
* If you could change your name, what would you change it to? Would a name change make you feel differently about yourself? Why?
* Try to include a personal anecdote about your name. Has your name ever gotten you into trouble? Have you had others assume something about you because of your name?
* Do you know why your parents chose your name? Who chose it? Were you named after a particular person? Why were you named after him or her? Are you like that person or different from him or her? How?
* Has anyone ever commented on your name? What did he or she say? How did that comment make you feel?
* Do you think your name causes people to treat you in a particular way? How? Cite an example or two.
* Try to add metaphors to your writing; consider what your name would be if it were a color, a day, a car, a tree/flower, animal, or feelings and sounds you associate with it.
* Review how Cisneros creates a name that conjures up meanings beyond the surface to reveal the character’s personality.