

Writing Tasks Associated with *The Soloist*

Before Reading and Writing:

1. When you think of the word “homeless,” what images come to mind? List as many words as you can think of that are likely to describe a person who is homeless.
2. Why do you think that there are homeless people in the United States?
3. What can be done about the problem of homelessness?
4. Who do you think is responsible for dealing with the problem of homelessness?

Readings associated with this assignment:

1. Read “Stereotypes of Homelessness and How We Maintain Them” and “Myths and Facts About Homelessness.” Write a brief summary of each. Write a brief essay in which you discuss the extent to which the ideas in these essays support or complicate the message of the book. (other readings can be used as well)
2. Find four incidents in *The Soloists* that you find particularly important in terms of its message about homelessness and mental illness. Summarize each incident and indicate how they contribute to the theme of the book.
3. In small groups in class, compare incidents. Did you choose the same or similar ones? Different ones?

Writing Task:

Steve Lopez found his experience with Nathaniel meaningful on a personal level. But he published his book because he had a message he wished to convey to the public about homelessness, mental illness, and policies that address these issues.

Write a well-developed essay that addresses the following question:

What ideas about homelessness and mental illness are emphasized in *The Soloist*?

Support your position with specific references to the book and/or supplementary readings. If appropriate, acknowledge and argue against a possible counterargument.