Fall 2016 English 100W **Benchmark Essay**

**Goal:** This is just to see what you can already do with literary analysis and the quality of your prose (under pressure).

**Procedure**: Analyze both the poem and the passage. Your analysis should make some point (thesis) about what ideas the two poets share and where they differ. Support your idea with evidence from the poem and passage—specific words and phrases. In addition to discussing the theme(s), you should also discuss the writer’s methods of conveying the theme(s), such as imagery, word choice, tone, point of view, pattern of organization, etc.

**Details**: Please SKIP LINES and write as legibly as you can. The essay should have an introduction, body, and conclusion, with clear paragraph breaks, but you don’t need to produce a 5-paragraph essay. Do your best with grammar, but don’t agonize.

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**The Passage:** From a treatise called *The Hatred of Poetry* (2016) by Ben Lerner (a poet and novelist), after he describes memorizing Marianne Moore’s poem called “Poetry,” which begins, “I, too, dislike it.”

“*I, too, dislike it* has been on repeat in my head since 1993; when I open a laptop to write or a book to read: *I, too, dislike it* echoes in my inner ear. When a poet is being introduced (including myself) at a reading, whatever else I hear, I hear: *I, too, dislike it.* When I teach, I basically hum it. When somebody tells me, as so many people have told me, that they don’t get poetry in general or my poetry in particular and/or believe that poetry is dead: *I, too, dislike it.* Sometimes this refrain has the feel of negative rumination and sometimes a kind of manic, mantric affirmation, as close as I get to unceasing prayer. [. . . .] I, too, dislike it, and have largely organized my life around it (albeit with far less discipline and skill than Marianne Moore) and do not experience that as a contradiction because poetry and the hatred of poetry are for me—and maybe for you—inextricable.”

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**The Poem:** From the collection *Sailing Alone Around the Room* by Billy Collins (a poet and a professor of poetry), published 2001.