

Personal Archive Prompt: Written Correspondence

This prompt asks you to identify an item that is an example of written correspondence to include in your PA. This item could be an email, a letter, a card, a note, a social media post (like a Tweet), a text, a message in sidewalk chalk, etc. The item you choose should be either written *by you* or written by someone else and intended *for you*. **Mark for yourself (and your viewer/reader): how do I communicate with others?**

[Be sure to scan/take a photograph of the item to include as the item in your papers.]

Why Written Correspondence?

Living in quarantine or under Stay-at-Home orders has many of us evaluating the ways in which we communicate with the outside world. Perhaps, unable to have regular contact with friends, family members, co-workers, and fellow students, you have sought to communicate differently or using a different mode of communication. In short, this prompt asks you to consider if/how you are adapting your modes of communication given the present-day restrictions on in-person contact.

With these ideas in mind, think carefully about what item you choose that communicates your experience with the protests, etc. Consider the following to help you choose and describe your item:

- Why was this item sent/received/written?
- What language is this item written in? Is this the same language I typically use to communicate verbally with others?
- How often do I communicate with the person/people this item to to/from?
- Is this item representative of a typical way that I communicate with this person/people?

The answers to these questions should help you compose the description of the item.

After you create/identify your image, follow the directions under the heading [How to Complete Personal Archive Prompts] in the document [Introduction for Students: The Personal Archive Assignment].

Example from the Archives

Instructor's Choice: *insert an example from an institutionally affiliated archive or archive of your choice. Alternately, use the example below.*

Examples below come from the [March on Milwaukee](#) digital collection.

The March on Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project supports understanding of the struggle for racial equality by helping users discover primary sources and other educational materials from the collections of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries and the Wisconsin Historical Society. The digital collection includes the selected papers of individuals representing a variety



of positions on the civil rights issue, photographs, unedited footage from the WTMJ-TV news film archives, and oral history interviews capturing the recollections and perspectives of individuals who participated in the movement. The collection also includes contextual materials, such as brief explanations of relevant people, places, events, and organizations; a timeline; a bibliography of relevant published sources; and maps highlighting important locations. (Description from the ["About"](#) page on the project website).

- [Fan Mail to Alderperson Vel Phillips](#)
 - [Transcription of note: Dear Mrs. Phillips, Accolades to you for the stern stuff of which (Thank God) you are made! Don't give up the fight on Open Housing! Though I live in W. Bay (?), my heart has always belonged to Milwaukee! Please accept a citizen's thanks! -Raymond V. Nortman]
- If you would like to see more examples of written correspondence from this collection, I encourage you to explore [Media Type: Documents](#) further. **However, please take care:** letters sent to Alderperson Vel Phillips and Father James Groppi, in particular, are rightly categorized as 'hate mail.' Many of the letters contain threats, violent language, and racial slurs. If you would like further assistance navigating this digital archive, please be in contact with your instructor.

