

Suggested Writing Prompts After a Visit to South Union Shaker Village

Journaling: write a short journal entry on how you feel about visiting the Shaker Museum.

Option 1: describe your favorite thing and why.

Option 2: describe your initial thoughts, first impression, and then development of opinion through the day.

Letter Writing: During the time in which the Shakers lived at South Union, telephones were just being introduced so the best form of contact between people living apart from each other was to write letters.

Option 1: Practice letter-writing by writing to a friend or family member who lives far away from you. Describe the activities you have been doing, something interesting you learned, and/or something unexpected that happened to you.

Option 2: Imagine you were living in South Union when the first automobile was bought. Write a letter to your friend living in Bowling Green about what happened.

Autobiographies: Sometimes the only information we have about the past is what someone wrote about themselves. Begin writing the story of your life today!

Option 1: Write your name, your birthday, where you were born, where you live now, who you live with (describe your family) and some of your favorite things (what do you like to do, where do you like to go, what do you like to eat).

Option 2: Write down your first memory.

Option 3: Make a timeline of you and your accomplishments so far.

Option 3: Write down a short history of your family: where and how your parents met, when and where you were born, and include some family stories about you (like what your first was, how mischievous you were as a child, the time you got sick on a family vacation, etc.) As a further exercise, write down this particular family story from two different perspectives: yours and another person in your family.

Your Favorite Season: The Shakers were very busy all year: in the summer they were canning vegetables and taking care of livestock; in the fall they were harvesting wheat and corn and curing meats; in the winter they were spinning and weaving wool; in the spring they were planting new crops and shearing sheep. Describe your favorite time of the year and what you do during that time. Why is it your favorite time of the year?

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The Youngest and Oldest Person You Know: *The Shakers lived together in big groups with people of all ages working together. A 10 year-old child might have interacted with a 4 year-old during school hours, a 30 year-old while working on the farm, and a 70 year-old while in worship service. Who are the oldest and youngest people you interact with?*

Option 1: Describe the youngest and the oldest person you know: where they came from, what they do, what they look like, how you interact with them, etc.

Option 2: Interview the oldest person you know and record the interview. Ask them questions like: What did you do when you were my age? What kind of toys did you play with? What kind of movies did you watch? What kind of games did you play? What did you want to be when you grew up? What do you like to do now? After, write how you felt about your interview and what you learned about the person you interviewed and their history growing up.

Meal for your Family: *The Shakers cooked for lots of people who lived at South Union, as well as for guests who were visiting. If you could cook any meal for your family, what would it be? Describe how you would make the meal, how you would serve it, and why you would choose these dishes for your family.*

Home Sweet Home: *Since the Shakers depended on converts (people who choose to be Shakers and leave their lives in the world), many people left their first home to make a home at South Union. Have you ever moved homes?*

Option 1: Describe your home and what you like best about it. Do you have a favorite spot? Where is it and why do you like it so much?

Option 2: If you have moved in your lifetime, compare the house you lived in before and the one you live in now. What parts do you like better about one or the other? What is different/what is the same? Describe both houses in detail.

Brothers and Sisters: *The Shakers called each other “Brother” and “Sister” and didn’t live as husbands and wives. If you have brothers and/or sisters, describe them. Write about what they look like, what they like to do, and what you do together. If you do not have siblings, write about whether or not you would like to have one and why or why not.*

The Intrepid Journalist: *Some of what we know about Shakers now comes from reporters who visited the villages where the Shakers lived and wrote about their visit for newspapers. Imagine you are a reporter visiting South Union for the first time. Describe what you would have seen, the activities you may have watched the Shakers do, the types of food you may have eaten as a guest, and the overall feel of the place.*

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Maps: *Maps help us place where people lived and worked. Maps are drawn for a few reasons: 1) part of records for the community 2) to show visitors/new people how to get around.*

Option 1: Draw a map of your neighborhood or school

Option 2: Draw a map detailing how you get to school from your home. Include landscape details.

Option 3: Draw a map of your favorite place. (for example, if your favorite place is a treehouse, draw a map of your tree house and where it is in relation to your house.)

Option 4: Draw a map of the inside of your house, with notes of what goes on in each room. Include a key.