The purpose of the Assertion Journal is to strengthen both analysis and critical thinking skills. Read the given quote or passage and perform the following tasks:

In the first paragraph identify the writer’s claim. This means explain to the reader what the deliverer of the quote is really saying. This will be an exercise in analyzing the words and their arrangement so as to understand the overall meaning.

In the next two paragraphs, comment on the quote. Choose two of the following: relate the quote to similar personal experiences, refute the author’s claim, or explain how the quote pertains to the world in general. Use specific examples and reasoning to support your explanation of the quote, as this is not an “I cannot be wrong because it’s my opinion” assignment. The way to go wrong is to be vague and not support claims with specific evidence.

Responses will need to be at least one (1) page and no more than two (2) pages (typed) of polished, grammatically sound prose. This is not an informal assignment just because it is called a “journal.”

**RESPONSES MUST BE TYPED IN MLA FORMAT!!!**
EXAMPLE ASSERTION JOURNAL

Directions: In a polished response of 1-2 typed pages, identify the author’s claim and comment on its meaning for you or comment on its overall significance.

Quote: “I believe more in the scissors than I do in the pencil.” –Truman Capote

Truman Capote seems to be talking about school supplies, but he is really talking about his writing process. He places the emphasis not on a pencil, which one might expect when talking about writing, but rather focuses on scissors. By saying he believes more in the scissors, Capote proclaims that for him, writing is as much an act of revision as it is an act of creation. Scissors are used for cutting, so he means that he writes a great deal and then slices out the bad parts. This leaves only the good writing, and apparently, for Capote, the most important way to get there is to cut, or revise a great deal...

Capote is right. The writing process is not some mystical experience where a writer sits on a mountaintop and divines inspired writing directly from the muses. Most writers, myself included, have to get a draft on paper, however bad it may be, and then go about changing and honing it. I once rewrote a poem fifteen times in the course of one summer. The rewrites were all aimed at shortening the poem and compressing its ideas into as few words as possible. It was hard, but by the end it had gone from a page and a half to just under a half page. I had effectively cut it down and thus improved it...

As with many other endeavors, writing can be about starting with a great deal of material and shaping and cutting it into something much more worthwhile. Ice sculptures, the rotors on your brakes, even paper dolls. They all start with a large amount of something and cut it down to something better. Writing is the same; often the most important tool is not the pencil, but the scissors...

Comment [a1]: This paragraph identifies the writer’s claim. In other words it restates exactly what the author is saying in clear language.

Comment [a2]: This paragraph provides commentary on the both the personal meaning of the quote and a more universal explanation using specific examples.

Comment [a3]: This paragraph ties the piece together and serves as an effective wrapup.