

## HANDOUT FOUR: Reflective Writing

**Directions:** Read this passage from a Jon Meacham speech in the documentary, and answer the writing prompt:

“NATIVISM, XENOPHOBIA, RACISM, SEXISM, ISOLATIONISM ARE PERENNIAL AMERICAN FORCES. THEY EBB AND THEY FLOW. . . . THE SOUL OF THE COUNTRY IS IN FACT THIS ESSENCE, WHICH IS NOT ALL GOOD OR ALL BAD. YOU HAVE YOUR BETTER ANGELS FIGHTING AGAINST YOUR WORST IMPULSES. AND THAT HAS A RELIGIOUS COMPONENT, CERTAINLY. IT’S ALSO, THOUGH, A MATTER OF HISTORICAL OBSERVATION. OUR HISTORY IS SHAPED BY THE EXTENT TO WHICH THOSE BETTER ANGELS OR THOSE WORST INSTINCTS WIN OUT IN A GIVEN PERIOD OF TIME.”

In a one-page typed paper, respond to Meacham’s claim, “Our history is shaped by the extent to which those better angels or those worst instincts win out in a given period of time.” Do you agree or disagree? Support or refute his claim with clear evidence.