How Should You Write Your READING RESPONSE?

I’m looking for ideas, reactions, and honest responses. If you loved the book (or a section of the book), explain why. If you hated it, explain why in simple, clear language. Pay attention to grammar and punctuation in your writing.

The reading response gives you an avenue to invite yourself into the written text and to make a connection with it. In many college courses you will be assigned to write papers about subjects with which you have no personal interest. Reading responses help to generate connections between the reader and text.

The key to writing a compelling academic paper for any college course is being able to forge a personal connection on some level with your subject. You must care in some way about your subject, or else your writing will be lifeless, and your instructor, a human being, will have read a re-hashing of the facts of his/her course a million times before. Or, forget about writing for a college course. What about writing a report in the workplace? What about proposing a new idea to your boss? Such careful awareness of audience and tailoring your writing to a specific audience is an aspect of successful writing we’ll work on in this course. However, you can’t even get to the point of getting someone else to care about what you are writing if you don’t care yourself.

That doesn’t mean you should only write about subjects that interest you. On the contrary, half of the battle in writing a successful paper is coming up with an idea on a topic which is usually of little interest to you—finding an angle or connection through which you can approach or examine the text. What does it remind you of? Why do you respond emotionally? Or why do you not respond? Ask questions to find avenues into a piece of writing. The creativity involved in continually forging such difficult connections will help you develop into a writer who can grab a reader’s attention by approaching a topic or subject through your own unique personal lens, that is, by looking at something through an angle no one else can see.

Through active responding to reading, and examining your responses, you can learn to practice new approaches of interpretation to common themes. Many of the ideas you generate in the reading responses will prove useful when you sit down to write the short essays (or maybe even your research paper).

READING IN THREE KEYS: How to Write a READING RESPONSE

Active reading involves looking at the text in more than one way. For your reading responses write using these three “keys,” or methods, of analyzing what you have read:

* Personally: What is your emotional or gut reaction to a certain portion of the book? How does the passage make you feel? Does it connect to or remind you of anything from your own experience? What, if anything, does the story remind you of from your own experience -- by this I mean have you ever heard of or met anyone in a similar predicament, or can you imagine how you might feel if you were in his/her position. How would you have reacted?
* Intellectually: What ideas come to mind as you read this? What questions does this passage or book raise about its topic, you, human beings, life, the state of the world, etc?
* Writerly: What do you notice about the way this passage or book is written? About the language? Theme?

Each reading response must be a minimum of 250 words. For example, the combined word count for paragraphs 3 and 4 of this instruction sheet is 267 words—those are the paragraphs that start with “The key to writing…” and “That doesn’t mean….”

You must also post a 250 word response to one of your classmate’s postings. You may respond in any of the three “keys.” A sample response building on a previous posting might start off with a sentence like this: “I agree with David that advertising objectifies women by portraying them as dehumanized objects, but I wonder whether women benefit from that objectification in any way?” You can build your ideas on comments others have made. And feel free to keep chatting with each other.

Point Breakdown of READING RESPONSE Scores

Points are awarded as follows:

10 points

--- if writer’s response is thoughtful, reflective, and demonstrates the writer’s serious engagement with the text or a fellow student’s response.

10 points

--- if the writer demonstrably strives to push beyond a surface level examination of the subject, such as straight description (“the ad shows a cute baby which made me feel happy”) or summary (“the story is about a woman who feels guilty over how she raised her daughter”).

10 points

--- if the writer uses specific details/quotations to explain and support claims or generalizations (not just “seeing good looking people in advertisements makes us want to buy stuff.”)

10 points

--- if the writer’s response is substantial, well-developed, and meets the minimum length requirements of 250 words (1/2 page single spaced).

10 points

---just for doing the work. (:>)

TOTAL: 50 Points possible for each reading response and each response to a classmate.