

GUIDE TO WRITING A REACTION PAPER

1. SUMMARY/SYNOPSIS – To what are you reacting?

Goal: Show that you understand the thesis, main ideas, and supporting ideas in the piece you're writing about.

- Identify all of the "basic information: about the book that you can, including:
- The author of the piece, the title of the piece, the title of the book or journal from which it was taken (if relevant), the publisher, and the year of publication (if you're piece is a movie or documentary that is embedded in the electronic classroom, identifying the title is sufficient)/
- The topic or subject of the piece; tell what the piece is about in a word or a phrase;
- The author's purpose or motive for writing the piece—for example, "to expose the dangerous conditions factory workers in the United States faced prior in the early decades of the twentieth century" or "to show how residents can unite to improve their neighborhood"
- The author's thesis statement (might be similar to the purpose, but not necessarily);
- The author's primary supporting ideas.

2. ANALYSIS/EVALUATION – What are the strengths and weaknesses of the piece?

Goal: Show that you understand what the author does well and what he or she does not do so well.

- Answer the "w" questions, like why, why not, what, what if, what for, where, why there, who, how, when . . .
- Was the piece convincing? Why or why not, specifically? Is it well-researched? Are the sources the author uses reputable? Why or why not?
- Did the author overlook or leave out anything important? What?
- Did the author overemphasize anything? What?
- Is the author one-sided (even if he or she takes your side), or does the author presented a balanced view?

3. YOUR REACTION--How do you react to the piece on a personal level? How does the piece relate to your experience?

Goal: Share your own impressions and your own experiences with readers.

Here are some questions you might consider answering:

- Did the piece hold your interest? Why or why not?
- Did the piece bother or annoy you? why or why not?
- What would you ask, or tell, the author of the piece if you could?
- What did you realize as a result of reading the piece?
- What questions does the piece raise for you -- about the material, about other things?