



Response Pieces

“Responses Pieces” come in a variety of types and forms. Predominantly, these writing pieces are generated early in your reading process with a text. In them, you will capture some of your first impressions, thoughts, and questions about a text. They are open-ended and much less formal than an essay (or even our “Think Pieces”).

Below are a number of things that you might discuss in a Response Piece

- Your likes or dislikes of the reading
- Your experience as you read the reading
- What this reading reminds you of or made you think of
- What you think the reading means
- What are key themes in the reading
- Questions or problems you have in understanding the reading (what is going on? What is does this mean?)
- Identify issues of interpretation—key questions and what they might be

Our Response Pieces might also at times be a summary of the reading or in the case of a poem a paraphrase of it. Also, I may provide a prompt to guide your response.

These response pieces don’t need to be revised for grammatical correctness (though it is a good idea to review them to catch obvious errors).

The length of these response pieces, unless otherwise specified, needs to be 1-2 pages (250-500 words).



THINK PIECES

Our think pieces represent a more advanced stage of the reading process, but they still represent a formative stage within our overall process of interpretation directed toward writing an essay. These pieces are meant for you to engage in “reflective thinking” as John Dewey defined it in his book *How We Think* (1910). In his book, he identifies five “logically distinct steps” to this method of thinking, and he believes practice in following this method of thinking helps to form “habits of mind” that lead to superior beliefs and understandings. He identifies these steps as: “(i) a felt difficulty; (ii) its location and definition; (iii) suggestions of possible solutions; (iv) development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion; (v) further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection; that is, the conclusion of belief or disbelief [confirmation or negation of the suggestion]” (72).

We will modify Dewey’s method of reflective (or critical) thinking, but still generally follow his sequence. Below are the sections you should include in your Think Pieces:

Part I: Summary of the Text

Following the guide for writing summaries found on page 22-23 in our text. Each summary should be 50-100 words (max.) and include: 1) title; 2) expression of the main idea (what it is about); 3) what kind of text it is? Principle formal features, class, genre?; 3) summary of what happens in the text.

Part II: Identify an Issue or Question

Focus on one (perhaps two) key “felt difficulties” that you have reading and understanding the text. Felt difficulties describe any question, issue, or problem you have understanding the text. The best issues of interpretation relate to central themes or meanings of the text.

Part III: Clarify the Issue/Question

Take some time to explore the nature of the question or issue that you have trouble understanding. What is the nature of this question? What is at stake? Where does it come from? How does it relate to other things in the story? What is its relative importance to the text?

Part IV: Identify Multiple Suggestions or Theories of Meaning

Identify at least two different possible interpretations that seem to reasonably explain or help you understand this issue or question you have about the text. Don’t evaluate the explanations/theories at this point—simply describe what this “reading” or interpretation is. Some interpretations may be farfetched, but include any that seem possibly true or valid to you.

Part V: Test/Evaluate the Varying Suggestions or Interpretations

In this section, you will “reason” out the “bearings” of each suggestion (as Dewey says). That means you’ll investigate through close observation of the text which interpretation seems to make the most sense and fit best with the text. You will need to clarify the grounds (evidence) within the text for this interpretation by pointing to (and even quoting) the text.

Part VI: Accepting/Rejecting Different Interpretations—Finding What is Most Plausible

State what you consider—based from your testing and evaluating of the different interpretations—which one seems most reasonable and plausible to you. You can comment on dependent factors for this accepting or rejecting various interpretations.

Think Pieces should be sharp, concise and clear—250-500 words.