

Reflective essay: an effective learning experience essay sample

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I never have been confident with my writing skills. Although I have received above average grades in past writing courses, I have never been confident in the way I present my ideas on paper. The writing courses based on literary text that I have taken thus far at the college level have seemed to be an extension of high school in that they only have dealt with proper writing structure, such as MLA format. Introduction to Comparative Literature however has analyzed text in a far deeper manner than I have ever been accustomed to. The course has enabled me to see how the structure, themes, style, and mood of a text work as a cohesive whole. I have had the opportunity to use the information gathered on these elements and utilize them to develop my own writing voice.

Before taking this course I had never reflected upon my how my own values and criticism have played a role in my critique and analysis of a literary text. Other classes never seem to deal with the form of psychological depth that his course utilizes. I found that the third paper assignment was pivotal in tying together all that was absorbed and learned in the course. By revisiting the text of *The God of Small Things* as well as response papers, I came to the realization that I place importance on societal and cultural structures and fall in line with the Marxist school of Criticism. Being able to have the chance to take the time and analyze how my mode of critique falls in line with various schools of criticism has been important as I can draw upon Marxist Criticism in papers I write in the future. Through the process of writing the long critical papers, I have had the ability to gain a greater understanding on what my writing style lacks.

I have always gone through life with the motto that “ you always learn the most from your failures, not your successes.” This has proven to be true due to my ability to realize the errors of my writing style and better adjust to correct future mistakes. In the first two papers my word usage was sloppy and miscalculated, my structure did not capture the paper as one cohesive argument, and my inadequacy involving the correction of grammatical mistakes detracted from my overall argument. Through the comments left on my work, I have received a heightened sense of what is needed to make my paper a strong cohesive argument. Although I have not mastered the inclusion of a solid cohesive argument, the mere realization of what I need to work on to has been critical to my progress. For instance, through receiving comments on my second paper, dealing with Oedipus and Hamlet, I realized that I tend to confuse the reader with words which were used out of context.

I would use phrases such as “ Hamlet attains towards the tragedy of Oedipus the King” which confused the reader and hindered the progression of my argument. In past courses I have been told that the most important aspect of a paper needs to be your argument and the textual evidence to support your claims. On the contrary, if a paper is not clear and concise in its structure and word usage, then an argument no matter how strong will be hindered. Taking into account my need to simplify my writing style to emphasize and provide power to my arguments, I have attempted to write my third paper in a simplistic form similar to that of John Steinbeck’s work. By composing this essay in a simplified form I have provided a clear representation of my ideas and arguments, thus giving them increased strength and clarity. By adjusting my writing style to a simplistic form I hopefully have solved many problems

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stemming from the confusion involved in my early work in the course. A key element in my progress throughout the course has lied in the response papers.

For example, my understanding of the duality of vision within Oedipus would not be a strong if it had not been for my response paper dealing with the topic. This assignment enabled me to revisit the text after reading it and explore deeply the nature and implication of the loss of sight within the text. These exercises forced me to stop looking at a text in a superficial manner and to expand on my interpretation of the text. By looking closely at the duality of words and the social and mental connotation related to them I grasped an understanding of the multidimensionality of Oedipus' problematic character. Another response paper that was critical in my progress was my response paper #9, dealing with The God of Small Things. This paper gave me the ability to draw together the social, political, and cultural problems within India and use that knowledge to connect themes to the flow and structure of the text. By merely writing about these topics I was able to draw together the literary elements of the text and gain a firm understanding of how those elements work as a cohesive whole.

The inclusion of discussion within the class added to increased level of textual analysis in the class. Although I am a passive contributor within a classroom environment, an aspect of my learning that I am trying to change, I benefited greatly from the discussions in the class. These discussions have allowed me to draw upon and connect various aspects of the text and view how they relate to a cohesive whole. The discussions were critical in

clarifying questions and problems that I had with the text. The small group discussions especially allowed me to expand upon my readings of the text.

I tend to get nervous when talking in front of a class and the smaller environment put me more at ease. I can recall the discussion dealing with Oedipus and whether his search for the truth was courageous or sinful pride. I felt that in that small group discussion I added much to the clarification of the subject for those in my group. I was persuasive in my account of Oedipus' unconscious actions and the motives behind them. Although I may not have contributed much in quantity I feel as though I have contributed quality responses to the discussions taking place in the small groups.

One thing that I felt that distracted from my learning in the course was the abundant amount of religious references made in relation to the texts covered. I can recall many times while discussing *The God of Small Things* and *Hamlet* where religious scripture and fables were compared to the text. I have no problem with religious material as I am a moderately religious person. If we draw upon religious text it would be worthwhile to cover and discuss the religious examples in greater detail so that everyone may receive a better understanding to how they work in relation to the text being covered.

Through this class I have found a monumental jump in my literary technique and key realizations of the steps that I need to take further enhance my writing skills. This class alone has brought to my attention the problems that I have with organization, structure, syntax, and compatibility of texts. This

course although having minor hindrances has helped me to progress in terms of overall writing style and my effectiveness as a writer and critic.