



Reflection Papers

Reflective writing typically includes both **analysis** and **personal reflection**. Expectations for reaction/reflection papers might differ greatly, so always pay close attention to the prompt. While it's typical to express your opinion about a text (or your feelings about a topic) you should also include a **detailed exploration of your reasons for your opinion or reaction**.

Analysis: Use terms/concepts from a particular field to critically examine an object/text.

Personal reflection: Explore the connections between your own experiences/beliefs/assumptions and ideas in the text.

Analysis of the source (could be a text or video)

Closely examine the text and connect it to terms/concepts from the field. You might consider addressing some of the following:

Strengths of the text:

- What are some strengths of the text?
- Why is this text important in terms of the topic or message?
- What is effective about the author's evidence/message/choices/writing style?

Limitations/weaknesses of the text:

- What are some problems/limitations/weaknesses with the author's evidence?
- Are there any points the author makes that aren't logical?
- Does the author overlook any important factors they should consider?
- What assumptions does the author make?

Connections to the larger academic conversation:

- How do the author's ideas connect to ideas of other authors looking at the same issue?
- Were the author's ideas consistent with what others have found?
- Do the author's ideas challenge or complicate what came before?
- What does this author emphasize that others miss? What does this author ignore that others emphasize?

Practical Applications:

- Why is this text useful?
- What are some specific real-world applications for the ideas in the text?

Personal Reflection

Explore the connections between the concepts in the text and your own beliefs, assumptions, and/or ideas. You *may* also choose to include specific personal experiences (as a type of evidence) but you don't necessarily need to.

You can use some of these questions to generate ideas:

What resonated with you?

- Why did one idea/reading/concept stand out to you? Was anything surprising to you?
- Do you have any personal experience that is relevant to the issue?
- Did the author describe something you already knew or felt but hadn't been able to articulate clearly? What did you like about the way the author described something?

What did you feel resistance against?

- Were there some important ideas that the author left out?
- Did the author make any claims or observations that you disagree with? What evidence could you provide to support your opinion?

Did your perspective change?

- How, specifically, does your current perspective differ from what you thought before?
- Can you point to any specific moment/event/discussion that changed your way of thinking?
- Analyze your previously held views: Where did your views come from? Family? Cultural messages around you? Media?



Reflection Papers Continued: Tips

Reflection Essay Tips

1. Include specifics and limit generalizations

Develop your essay with specific details (for example, quotes, paraphrases, or summaries of key ideas from the text). Even when writing about your own experience, it's a good idea to be specific with your examples.

[Advice from Gina Bell:] Avoid vague impressions about a reading/issue as a whole; instead base everything you say on **something specific**, such as a quote, concept, or argument: refer to the specific details.

Generalization: Meditation is an important practice with many therapeutic applications.

Something specific: Some patients might be resistant to trying meditation because of the misconception that they need special training to meditate.

2. Ask your Teachers for Clarification:

You might want to ask your teachers about their expectations for content, tone, and citing sources. For instance, you may want to ask: How much personal experience can I include? How many readings should I refer to? Do I need to format my essay in a certain style? Do I need to cite in-text citations in APA/MLA?

3. Include a Guiding Idea

A Thesis Statement is a **claim** that your argument/evidence will support in a research paper. For a Reflection Essay, you might not need to support a claim, but you should still **preview the content** of your paper with a **Guiding Idea**, a sentence near the beginning that mentions your **central idea** or **main point**. Your guiding idea might describe:

1. How a text led to a personal realization, deepened understanding, or changed your perspective.
2. How a text has practical applications.
3. How a concept from class can be used to analyze a text, film, or situation.

Guiding Idea Examples:

Example: Reading "Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers" has made me more aware of how our bodies pay the price for our negative thoughts which trigger our flight or fight response.

This guiding idea focuses on how a class reading deepened understanding of a concept.

Example: The chapter gave me advice that will help me use visual media and cater to a variety of learning styles in my upcoming 4th grade classroom takeover.

This guiding idea is about how a reading or topic covered in class has practical applications.

Example: I used to think that mindfulness was useful for managing stress, but after reading the article I now realize that mindfulness can also help elementary school teachers create a communal classroom environment and manage behavioral issues.

This guiding idea is about how a reading or topic covered in class has practical applications.

Example: In most movies I have seen with a character that has a mental illness, the artistic nature of the film tends to soften the rawness that comes along with mental illness. Unless the film is a documentary, this is almost always going to happen. It must be very difficult to align what the director and writer wants to do, and at the same time portray the exact symptoms of a mental illness.

~Natalie Alderson, AUSB peer writing tutor

This guiding idea uses a concept from class to analyze a film