

Introduction: Reacting to Writing

In academia, we often are expected to engage with others in a sort of argument game in which we either agree or disagree with another's viewpoints. Whether we agree or disagree, we have to follow certain unspoken rules:

- 1) We are expected to remain polite and respectful. We should never criticize people directly, just ideas. We should acknowledge that even if we disagree with others, all are entitled to have their own opinions.
- 2) Whether we agree or disagree, it is important to JUSTIFY our opinions by citing specific evidence, such as facts, examples, or stories.

For the next two essays, you are going to be working on one form of argument, called a REACTION. A Reaction is a general type of argument that is more an academic writing skill than a specific type of paper. When you react to something, you are expressing your feelings about it at a personal level.

So, as you are writing these essays, please keep in mind the fact that an "Argument Essay" is a very specific type of academic paper that you may be asked to write for certain classes. However, what I want you to do, a "Reaction Essay" requires more general academic writing skills. If you can develop a good Reaction to an issue, then you will be able to critically examine topics, discuss them critically with others, use your personal experiences, use research references, AND write an Argument. At least, that's what I hope. Let's see how it goes.

Reaction 1 Essay Instructions

Your next major writing assignment of the semester is to write a 1-2 page Reaction Essay to **THE** major theme discussed in the first half of the article *Social Problems and the Schools*, from pp. 31-42 of your main textbook.

Your Reaction Essay must follow standard American academic guidelines for formatting and structure, which are provided on pp. 42-43 in *Keys*. Review these guidelines carefully so that you understand my expectations. Note that, as I've discussed in class and in feedback, I expect your name and other essay info to be located in your paper's HEADER (see *Keys* p. 230 for directions). 10% will be deducted from essays that do not follow these standard guidelines.

Additionally, when I say "1-2" pages, I mean *at least* 1 FULL page of properly formatted text and *no more* than 2. 10% will be deducted from essays that are not at least 1 full page or are more than 2 pages.

To write your Reaction Essay, you must first determine **THE** main theme of this portion of the article: What is the author really talking about in this section of the article? What is his common message? Once you have determined this theme, you should briefly summarize it in one, or at most two, paragraphs at the very beginning of your Reaction. This section provides the background, or basis, for providing your own opinions.

Somewhere at the end of your summary of the main idea, you need to provide your opinion: do you agree or disagree with the author's main idea? Your opinion here is your **THESIS** for your Reaction Essay. The rest of your paper will follow from your thesis. Next, you must support your opinion with additional evidence about the general theme of the original article. Unless you happen to know quite a bit about the main idea and can use information from your memory, then you will have to do some Internet research to provide support. NOTE: You DO NOT have to cite or reference any of your research material. You'll do that at the end of the semester in your final research paper.

I advise you to limit your supporting ideas to perhaps three things that can help you support your thesis. Use **GENERAL**, as opposed to specific, ideas discussed by the author of the original article. If you get too specific, then you will have a hard time trying to support your thesis, which is that you either agree or disagree with his general idea in this section of the article.

Make sure that your Reaction has a conclusion that restates the author's main idea, your thesis, and your supporting ideas, and makes a general concluding statement.

If you have problems trying to figure out how to write your Reaction Essay, you can try looking up this type of paper online, but keep in mind that each teacher's idea of a reaction varies according to the original text and the specific task. Also, keep in mind that a Reaction is a type of Argument, so you may get an idea about structure and approach from the *Keys* textbook section. Lastly, the best thing to do is just to try it out: write and await my feedback.

On this **FIRST DRAFT**, I will be reading your paper for content (your ideas) and giving you feedback on the content and on the structure (formatting, paragraphing, unity, cohesion) of the essay. You must read my comments after I give your essay back to you so that you can complete your **SECOND DRAFT** revision, which will be an assignment at the end of the week.

Finally, submit your Reaction Essay to **Smarthinking** for feedback. Please submit your paper to Smarthinking at the same time that you submit it to me in class. Don't wait to get my feedback before you send the essay to the tutor. After you get feedback from the Smarthinking tutor, you must read the comments so that you can revise your essay for your **SECOND DRAFT**. In this way, you will have three sources of feedback on your **FIRST DRAFT**- one from me, one from your classmate, and one from your tutor. Also, don't forget to submit an original version of the Smarthinking tutor report to me along with your second draft of your paper. Note that I will check your Smarthinking report for the tutor's advice and compare your essay drafts to see how well you used the tutor's feedback. 50% will be deducted from the Smarthinking feedback points for failure to use the tutor's feedback.

Reaction 1 Essay. Due Date: (_____), in class Value: 35 Pts.: 25 for the essay + 10 for Smarthinking feedback. Estimated Time: 3 hrs.