

## WHAT IS A READING RESPONSE?

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A **reading response** is a specific kind of essay that asks you as a reader to engage critically with an assigned text. It is *not* asking you to state whether you like or dislike the text in question—instead, a reading response should:

- Demonstrate to the instructor that you have both read and understood the text
- Identify the main argument and the purpose of the text
- Engage critically with the text by using evidence from the text to support your perspective about the work

Although the length of a reading response may vary based on the assignment or on the text to which you are responding, but nonetheless, the reading response *is* still a kind of essay; as such, it should have a working thesis statement that guides your argument about the text as well as a clear organizational scheme that makes it easy for the reader to understand.

Ultimately, the reading response is more about **your** argument regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the text in question. You are making a claim about the text, and that claim needs to be supported with evidence *from* the text—whether you are agreeing or disagreeing, you need to include the pertinent text.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN COMPOSING A READING RESPONSE:

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The following are some questions that might help you clarify your reaction to the text and help you collect the textual evidence to support your claims:

- What are the most significant points in the text? Is it arguing for something in particular? If so, what?
- What can you leave out? What ideas are less important to the response you are composing?
- Is there anything important that the text has excluded or left out? If so, what, and why would including more information be important?
- Does the text have any relevance within the community, the nation, or the world? Does it address any historical or contemporary social concerns?
- Can you connect this text to other texts you have read before (either in your current class, or outside it)?
- What is the ethos of the text or the author? Is the work convincing, compelling, and credible?
- What parts of the text will act as the best evidence to illustrate the points you want to discuss?

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES:

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The organization will depend on the required length for your response and what your main points will be, but generally, a good organizational approach is to include an **introduction** that identifies the text to which you are responding and provides some brief context about the work, as well as including your thesis statement; a **body paragraph** that summarizes the text as a whole, focusing on the main idea or ideas; a **body paragraph** that contains your response to the text itself, including evidence from the text

to illustrate the points you are making; and a **conclusion** that briefly reiterates the main points of your argument and your thesis statement.

**FORMAT:**

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Like any essay, the reading response should conform to the style standards that your instructor requires or that govern your particular field, whether it's APA style, Chicago style, MLA style, etc. Don't forget a works cited section that cites the text to which you are responding! (See the handouts on those particular styles for more detail on each.) You may also want to check with your instructor regarding scholarly tone; most formal academic writing avoids first and second person perspective, so if you are unsure, ask!

**SOME DOs and DON'Ts:**

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- **DO** be sure to cite any quotes or paraphrase, conforming to the appropriate style of documentation (when in doubt, ask your instructor).
  - **DO** include a works cited/ bibliography page!
  - **DO** include brief quotes that are relevant to your analysis.
  - **DO** be sure to include a thesis statement!
  - **DO** consider the context of this piece—does it relate to other things you've read in the course?
  
  - × **DON'T** rely too heavily on long or block quotations from the text—one or two short quotes are okay, but more than that may signal an inability to summarize ideas efficiently.
  - × **DON'T** forget to use textual evidence to support the argument you are making.
  - × **DON'T** just say you like or dislike an aspect of the text—if you do, you must explain why and support your claim well.
  - × **DON'T** forget to properly cite quotes and paraphrasing, and don't forget a works cited/ bibliography entry!
  - × **DON'T** forget to leave time for revision and proofreading!
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**NEED MORE HELP? SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE WRITING STUDIO IN ROOM #2420, 25 PARK PLACE AT [HTTP://GSU.MYWCONLINE.NET/](http://gsu.mywconline.net/); FOR MORE INFO, VISIT WRITINGSTUDIO.GSU.EDU OR CALL (404) 413-5840**