Reaction/Response Essay

Preparing to Write Your Response Essay

Reaction or response papers are usually requested by teachers so that you'll consider carefully what you think or feel about something you've read. The following guidelines are intended to be used for reacting to a reading, although they could easily be used for reactions to films too. Read whatever you've been asked to respond to, and while reading, think about the following questions:

- How do you feel about what you are reading?
- What do you agree or disagree with?
- Can you identify with the situation?
- Have you had an applicable experience?
- Have you read or heard anything that applies to what the writer said in the article or book?
- What would be the best way to evaluate the story?
- Does the evidence in the article support the statements the writer made?

It is also very helpful to write down your ideas and answers to these questions as you are reading the article so you can use them later as you are writing your essay.

Organizing Your Response Essay

A reaction/response paper has an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction should contain all the basic information in one or two paragraphs. Your introduction should include a concise, one sentence, focused thesis. Your thesis will state a point that you want to prove about what you have read and will set up the organization of your body paragraphs. The body should contain paragraphs that provide support for your thesis. Each paragraph should contain one idea. Topic sentences should support the thesis, and the final sentence of each paragraph should lead into the next paragraph. In short, each paragraph should follow this structure:

- Topic Sentence
- Details, examples, and/or quotations
- Summary Sentence

Some suggestions to help you organize your response essay:

- Write the thesis statement first (this way you will know the point you want to make at the beginning, and will be able to prove it in your paragraphs).
- Decide on the key points that will focus your ideas. These will be your topic sentences.
- Develop your ideas by adding examples, quotations, and details from the reading to your paragraphs.
- Make sure the last sentence of each paragraph leads into the next paragraph.
- Check your thesis and make sure the topic sentence of each paragraph supports it.