

Writer's Notebook: Assignment Details

Purpose & Audience: Your Writer's Notebook (WN) will serve as a chronological record of your thoughts, ideas, questions, and activities as we pursue answers to the course focus questions. It will also help you to document and reflect upon your work as a writer and scholar of writing. Any writing that you do for your WN is likely to be shared with your classmates and with me.

Requirements: Your Writer's Notebook will include two kinds of entries:

1. **Prompted Entries:** For some entries, I will give you specific instructions that are unique to that day's work. These entries will prompt you to write in preparation for, engagement with, or response to assigned readings and activities. Type entries composed outside of class. Entries composed in class may be handwritten unless your handwriting is illegible.
2. **Open Response Entries:** Occasionally, I will instruct you to turn in an Open Response entry in which you write about your reading. Open Response entries must address all of the assigned readings for that class period, total at least 500 words, and include references to specific examples from the assigned texts. Your Open Response entries should be thoughtful and thought-provoking but need not be written as formal, cohesive essays. Keep summarizing to a minimum (1-2 sentences); instead, focus on connections and critical thinking. Examples of appropriate topics include¹:
 - *Significant questions that you have before, as, and/or after you read the text, along with speculations about possible answers to those questions, and your thoughts about the various answers;*
 - *Your predictions and expectations about the text before and during reading, where and why they were/n't met; why this matters;*
 - *Important thoughts, feelings, and imaginings as and/or after you read, and where and how the text elicited those responses from you;*
 - *Ways that you are able to connect life and/or other texts to the text, and why they are significant;*
 - *Ways that your reading of the text changes, supports, or contradicts your understanding of life and of other texts—and why they matter;*
 - *Your process of reading the text—what you as a reader do to make meaning with the text, how the text itself influences your process, and your thoughts and feelings about your reading process;*
 - *Your observations about a particular element(s) of the text, the role it plays in the text as a whole, and its significance for readings of the text;*
 - *Your use of a particular critical lens to interpret the text;*
 - *Critical analysis of the author's craft and use of rhetorical and/or literary conventions;*
 - *Evaluation of the author's role in constructing and promoting values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors;*
 - *Critical analysis of the roles that the text implies the reader should take, along with discussion of the ways that you accept, question, resist, and/or reject those roles; and/or*
 - *Responses (based on your reading) in reaction to others' written or spoken comments about the text.*

Regardless of which of type of entry you are composing, the key is to incorporate critical analysis and evaluation into your writing and to make clear why your musings are important.

¹ Many of these topic examples are adapted from Jeff Wilhelm's dimensions of reader response as described in "You Gotta BE the Book": *Teaching Engaged and Reflective Reading with Adolescents* (Teacher's College Press, 1995).

Procedures: As you write your WN entries over the course of the semester, remember to:

- Print out** a hard copy of all entries, including those I ask you to post to the discussion board.
- Label** each entry with the date written and an identifying title (e.g., “WN #2, E-Mail Analysis”).
- Collect** all of your original entries in a folder or binder, keeping them in the order written. Because these entries are a record of your thinking progress through the course, you should not replace original entries with revised entries.
- Add** marginalia and/or endnotes to your entries when you want to rethink or expand your original ideas.
- Keep** ALL drafts of all your writings for this course in a separate section of your WN folder or binder. This will be helpful to you when you are prompted to write a final reflective entry and to me as I consider the development of your writing over the semester.

Grading: I will collect and grade WN entries in order to assess your work and provide feedback. Your final grade for your WN will be calculated by averaging your scores on individual graded entries. Your final WN grade counts for 15% of your final course grade.

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| <p>Quality WN <u>Prompted</u> entries will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Demonstrate your thoughtful, thorough preparation for, engagement with, and/or response to assigned readings and activities. ✓ Adhere to the instructions in the prompts. | <p>Quality WN <u>Open Response</u> entries will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Demonstrate your thoughtful, careful reading interactions with <u>all</u> of the assigned text(s) for the entry. ✓ Focus on connections and critical thinking, and make clear why your ideas are significant. ✓ Demonstrate your ability to critically analyze and evaluate texts. ✓ Include appropriate references to the assigned text(s). |
| <p><u>ALL</u> quality WN entries will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Demonstrate a developed & accurate understanding of the principles addressed in class, in the assigned readings & activities, and in my responses to your work during the semester. ✓ Use appropriate conventions of written English to support content and to facilitate purposeful communication with the intended audience. Because the entries will largely be single-draft efforts, grammar and usage will affect your grade if your choices show habitual carelessness or frequently interfere with communication. | |