

How to Write a Reaction Paper

This document is a guide for the **Honors English students** who must submit a reaction paper for the Honors level English course.

DO NOT use the standard approach of just writing: "*I liked this book (or article or document or movie) because it is so cool and the ending made me feel happy,*" or "*I hated it because it had nothing at all to do with my life and was too negative and boring.*" In writing a response, you may assume the reader has already read the text. Thus, **do NOT summarize the contents of the text at length.** Instead, take a systematic, analytical approach to the text.

---First of all, be sure to mention the **title** of the work to which you are responding, the **author**, and the **main thesis** of the text, using *correct English* for the first sentence of your paper!

Then, using **one or more** of the followings questions **as a guide**, craft your reaction to the book.

a. What does the text have to do with you, personally, and with your life (past, present or future)? It is not acceptable to write that the text has NOTHING to do with you, since just about everything humans can write has to do with every other human.

b. How much does the text agree or clash with your view of the world, and what you consider right and wrong? Use several quotes from the text as examples of how it agrees with and supports what you think about the world, about right and wrong, and about what you think it is to be human. Use quotes and examples to discuss how the text disagrees with what you think about the world and about right and wrong.

c. What did you learn, and how much were your views and opinions challenged or changed by this text, if at all? Did the text communicate with you? Why or why not? Give examples of how your views might have changed or been strengthened (or perhaps, of why the text failed to convince you, the way it is). Please do not write, "I agree with everything the author wrote," since everybody disagrees about something, even if it is a tiny point. Use quotes to illustrate your points of challenge, or where you were persuaded, or where it left you cold.

d. How well does it address things that you, personally, care about and consider important to the world? How does it address things that are important to your family, your community, your ethnic group, to people of your economic or social class or background, or your faith tradition? If not, who does or did the text serve? Did it pass the "Who cares?" test? Use quotes to illustrate.

e. What critique can you provide? Reading and writing "critically" does not mean the same thing as "criticizing," in everyday language (complaining or griping, faultfinding, nit picking). **Your "critique" can and should be positive and praise the text if possible,** as well as pointing out problems, disagreements, and shortcomings.

f. How well did you enjoy the text (or not) as entertainment or as a work of art? Use quotes or examples to illustrate the quality of the text as art or entertainment. Of course, be aware that some texts are not meant to be entertainment or art--a news report or textbook, for instance, may be neither entertaining nor artistic, but may still be important and successful.

g. To sum up, what is your overall reaction to the text? Would you read something else like this, or by this author, in the future or not? Why or why not? To whom would you recommend this text?