

Cultural Self-Assessment

Introduction

Developing our perception of our own unique and personal relationship with the written word is a crucial aspect of learning to be better communicators in any environment. This importance is rooted in the necessity of understanding how our own cultural experiences influence our perception of our communications environment, and how we approach the work of interacting with others.

The nine questions below are designed to get you thinking about how you have developed as a communicator, and what values and habits you have developed over the course of your upbringing and education. Your reflection on these questions are one, initial way to begin thinking of yourself as a communicator who already has a long history of writing, and who now must reconsider how one writes in a business environment.

Directions

Please read the questions below. Choose the four questions that you feel that are most relevant to your own individual experience. Write one well-developed paragraph in response to each question. The most important part of this assignment is providing thoughtful answers to the questions below. Please combine your paragraphs into one document that you have printed out for class.

Questions

Family Cultural Communication Practices

1. What value did your parents/grandparents/guardians place on reading and writing? At home? At school? What were their thoughts about education? What kinds of reading/writing did they do? What stories did they tell you about reading/writing?
2. How important did/do your parents think reading and writing was? What kinds of values did/do they place on reading and writing?

Formal School Cultural Communication Practices

3. How did you feel about the reading/writing in middle and high school? For what purposes did you write and to what kinds of audiences?
4. What teachers particularly influenced your writing development—either positively or negatively? Now that you look back on these experiences, do you perceive them differently than you did at the time?

Current School Cultural Communication Practices

5. What kind of reading/writing/speaking activities do you do in college? (e.g., passing notes, writing essays, reading novels) What kinds of reading/writing activities are your favorite? Your least favorite?
6. How do you write? Pen and paper? Computer? Has the way you write changed over the years?
7. Describe how/why you use computers for any of the following purposes. Identify *how often* you do these activities (e.g., not very often, occasionally, pretty often, frequently). Can you tell any stories about this:

- a) reading and writing e-mail or letters (To whom? How often?)
- b) programming (For what purpose? How often?)
- c) conducting research on the web (For what purpose? How often?)
- d) downloading music from the Internet (From where? What kinds of music? How often?)
- e) designing web-sites (For what purpose? How often?)
- f) playing computer games (Which ones? How often?)
- g) completing multimedia/new media design (For what kinds of projects? How often?)
- h) visiting chatrooms (Which ones? How often?)
- i) taking digital photographs or manipulating photographs (For what kinds of projects?)

Historical/Social/Familial Cultural Communication Practices

8. What important historical/political/social events were happening in your state, country, or around the world when you were a child growing up? When you were a teenager? Please list as many of these as possible—especially those that shaped your literacy practices/values.
9. How did your perceptions of writing—yours and other people’s—change over time?