

Tuesday, October 14, 2014

Name of Reviewer:

Name of Person Whose Essay is Being Reviewed:

Peer Review: Responding to First Drafts of Essay #1

[Part I – Argument: Thesis and Purpose]

1. Does the essay begin in an engaging/focused way, or do you finish reading it unsure about what the point/argument of this essay is? Does it give an overview of the essay's argument as well as the text/author to be discussed? Is it specific enough (engaging with the text) or is it too vague/general? Write a paragraph below to explain your (specific) impressions of the essay's opening.

2. In the space below, explain your thoughts on the essay's thesis. Do not simply write that the thesis is "good" or "bad" or "specific" or "vague." Tell your group member "why" the thesis is this way and offer suggestions for revision (based on your understanding of how the essay as a whole works/develops). Make sure to address the "so what?" issue and to consider the follow questions:

- Is the position of the author clear and specific (or is it a vague generalization)? Why or why not?
- Is the thesis engaging and more than an obvious statement of fact (is it new and interesting)? Why or why not?
- Is the thesis supportable (or does it seem farfetched or irrelevant to the topic)?
- Is the thesis directly related to a close reading/analysis of the text/topic chosen?

3. Does the essay specifically address the purpose of this assignment (to write an argumentative essay with based on a close reading/critical analysis of the text/s)? Below, explain why or why not (don't just write "yes" or "no")

4. Finally, consider the essay's title (this should be a title specific to the argument of the essay, not a generic one such as "Essay #1" or "What is Happiness?") Is it appropriate for the essay? Is it specific enough in describing the essay's particular argument? Below explain why or why not.

[Part II – Paragraphs: Content, Organization, and Development]

*For any of the following questions, feel free to write a paragraph (on this sheet) explaining your thoughts if you feel there is a general trend occurring through the essay (and you are able to synthesize your feedback).

1. Go through each body paragraph and in the margins write the claim presented there (jot down just a few words ... maximum one short sentence). If there is more than one **main** idea (claim), number them and write them down as well.

2. Then, go back and read the first sentence of each body paragraph. Does this topic sentence adequately represent the claim of the paragraph **and** explain the **significance** of this idea (why these details are important)? Does it answer the "so what?" question? On the draft, write "yes" or "no" next to each first sentence and then explain why or why not.

3. Is each paragraph clearly linked to the author's thesis? Or does your peer ever stray from her main point? On the draft, indicate paragraphs/sections that are not connected to the essay's main argument (are not relevant) and explain why.

4. Does each paragraph build on the previous one (develop the argument further), or is the argument repetitive (stating the same thing over and over again in slightly different words)? Provide comments (with explanations) in the margins.

5. Are there effective transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and ideas? Does the essay flow smoothly from beginning to end? Is the essay's progression logical and coherent (do you feel that, as a reader, you get the information you need, the order you need, to understand the essay's argument)? In the margins, indicate any places you feel that the writing is disconnected (and explain why).

6. Are there any points in the argument where you can honestly say, "so what?" (are they irrelevant, boring, obvious, or not specific enough)? Does your peer simply present facts/information and summarize her source? If so, indicate these areas in the margins of the draft and offer suggestions for improvement.

[Part III – Sources: Comprehension, Analysis, and Incorporation]

1. Does the essay demonstrate a strong knowledge of the text/s? Comment on the quality of your peer's use of the text. Does s/he show a good understanding of the text's arguments/ideas (and, if relevant, the way it uses logos, pathos, and ethos)? Are there any places where you think your peer misunderstands or distorts the meaning/content of a text or doesn't address important aspects of it? Explain your thoughts in the space below and make comments in the margins to address specific cases.

2. How well does your peer incorporate examples/summary/quotations from the text into his/her own writing? Is this material well-integrated into the body of your peer's essay (introduced and then explained), or is it awkward and out-of-place? Are they relevant to your peer's argument (do they support a point he/she makes)?

In the margins of the draft, indicate whether examples/summary/quotes are appropriate (do they support the argument being made in that paragraph?), relevant (for quotes, is it necessary to use the author's exact words here or is the point already clear?), introduced (not just thrown into the essay abruptly/without warning), and explained (does your classmate provide sufficient analysis of the example?). If the quote/detail is just fluff (thrown in to fill up space), please indicate so. Make suggestions for revision.

Also, if possible, provide a comment below synthesizing your thoughts on the incorporation of sources.

3. How well (if at all) does your peer incorporate his/her own experiences into the essay? Is this discussion specific (with concrete details) and relevant to the overall thesis (does it support a larger point)? Is it put in dialogue with the text/s? Comment (as above), in the margins and provide a synthesis response below.

4. Is the use of the text (either direct quotations/examples or summary/paraphrase) balanced with your peer's own ideas and analysis (does the source occupy too much – or too little – space in the argument)? Explain your response below.

5. Does your peer cite this source correctly (both parenthetically within the essay and in a separate "Work/s Cited" page) in MLA format? If not, offer suggestions for correction on the draft itself.

6. Does the essay provide possible opposing viewpoints/counter-arguments (or does the writer simply provide one side of the story)? Are these counter-arguments adequately answered/dealt with by your peer within the course of her essay or are they presented in a way that undermines your peer's own position? Please explain below and offer suggestions for improvement.

[Part IV – Conclusion]

Consider the Conclusion (final paragraph). Does it provide a sense of closure to this essay? Does it adequately sum up the essay's argument or do you finish reading it feeling unsatisfied? Does it present any new information that confuses you (new information should be developed into its own body paragraph)? Explain your specific thoughts below.

[Part V – Tone: Style and Diction & Sentence-Level Issues]

1. Describe the tone/voice of the essay: is the tone appropriate for both the assignment and the audience? Why or why not? (Consider which "person" your peer writes in – 1st, 2nd, or 3rd). Make specific comments on the draft and explain your thoughts below.

2. Is the essay written in the present tense (it should be!)? If not, please circle/highlight the incorrect use of tense on the draft itself and in group discussion in class discuss possibilities for revision

3. Are there any words/phrases that seem awkward or harsh to you (that might insult/alienate/confuse readers)? Please address these diction (word choice) issues when they occur on the draft itself and, if necessary, make a synthesis comment here.

4. Pay particular attention to the "authority" and credibility of the writer throughout the essay. Does the essay seem over-confident/one-sided (too much like personal opinion rather than close analysis and logical argumentation)? Or does the essay seem too neutral (doesn't really take a stand or support the thesis)? Explain below and offer specific suggestions for improvement on the draft itself.

5. Are there typos or sentence-level errors (spelling, grammar, syntax, word choice, etc.) that you notice? If so, please circle/highlight them on the draft itself and in group discussion in class discuss possibilities for revision. Sentence-level errors are particularly important when they interfere with the writer's ability to convey his/her meaning.

[Part VI: Overall Impression]

1. What did you take away from this essay (what is the author's main point)?

2. Have you learned anything new from this essay? If so, what?

3. Finally, below you should write a “terminal” (end) comment of **at least one full paragraph of 7-10 sentences**, addressed to the writer. Make sure to start off by stating the positive aspects of the essay (what you think is done successfully). Then, pick three main points that you think your peer should focus on as he/she revises this essay. Make sure to be as specific as possible. It is not necessary to repeat every comment you have made already ... streamline/synthesize your feedback here to best help your classmate. **You will need to read the whole essay through again (and look over the comments you have made) to figure out how to effectively/concisely sum up your responses.**