

American Culture, Values, Creed

Reading and Writing Rhetorically

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to be an American? Remember this perspective might be from a citizen from the United States or someone living or visiting the USA or someone from another country.
- What is American culture? Consider how responses are influenced throughout history and today.
- What are our American values?
- What is an / our American creed?

In our class, we've spent a lot of time exploring these essential questions, as well as ways to refine our reading and writing practices. A few reminders of what we've already engaged in as critical readers and writers follows.

Exploring the essential questions:

- Discussion forum: What does it mean to be an American?
- Independent Reading Shorter texts: Choice articles, poems, images, etc. that help you think about ways we can define American culture or American values
- Common reads:
 - ["What Does America Stand For?"](#)
 - "The Transformation of the American Dream"
<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/08/04/upshot/the-transformation-of-the-american-dream.htm>
 - "Superman and Me" by Sherman Alexie
 - Preamble of the Constitution of the United States
 - Founding documents
- Sacred Writing Time: Forming ideas, using texts to situate ourselves in the conversation
- Taking our own stance: What are American values, beliefs, or creeds?
- Independent Reading Book Choice with responses related to critical reading questions and essential questions

Reading and Writing Practices:

- Marking a text as a way to take notes and engage in conversation with the text
- Ways to outline and take notes while reading
- Writing summaries
- Writing collaboratively
- Setting goals for our own reading and writing
- Attending to author's purpose, audience, and craft
- Critical questions readers ask: text, author, audience, purpose
- Considering perspectives
- Reading with a critical focus or lens
- Critical observing practices in our reading of various types of texts (print, visuals, movies, etc.)

Pulling it all Together! Responding to the Essential Questions

Now, it is your turn to pull of this work together in one final composition.

Steps for this final response:

1. Determine a focus area based on our course essential questions. You could explore one of the questions or narrow it down based on content covered in your book, independent text reading, your own “American stories” or the *American Creed* documentary.
2. Research. Find at least five other texts that address the question or topic. The purpose is to support and further your thinking around this topic.
3. Compose a response connecting ideas across your thinking and reading.

Mode & Media: You will determine the best way to respond to the essential questions. You’ll need to explore the modality and media options to make sure you are clear in your approach.

A few ideas: photo essay, letter, video, visual, etc.

Audience: Yourself, your classmates, the Youth Voices community, PBS community (you have the opportunity to share your work with a global audience!)

PBS community: We have been invited to respond to *American Creed* to offer our responses to the ideas in this documentary, in order to share student responses in a public forum. The documentary will be released in January 2018, and we have a unique opportunity to share our work to be published through PBS as supporting materials that are also released with the film.

Purpose: Synthesize and analyze a variety of texts related to our essential questions. Offer a response to the *American Creed* documentary.

Project Proposal

1. **Focus area:** What aspect of the essential questions would you like to explore? Why?
2. **Research:** What outside resources have you read about this issue? You need to enter into a conversation knowing background knowledge. Identify at least five reliable sources and conversational pieces about your topic.
3. **Evidence & Possible Solution:** How will you be sure to provide appropriate evidence to support your ideas? Is it appropriate to offer an idea for a solution to the issue you address in this work?
4. **Composition:** What would you like to compose? What modality would work to share your message? Why? (video, letter, audio, image, other media ideas or modalities)
5. **Teams:** How would you like to pursue this work? Would you like to collaborate with someone else (in your class or even someone writing about a similar topic on Youth Voices?)
6. **Steps / Process:** What steps would you need to take to complete this project?



7. **Assessment:** How do you want this work to be assessed? Are you interested in process or steps in evaluation? A final response?
8. **Rhetorical Situation:** Identify the MMAPS for your work

Mode: The type of writing. All of the elements of the text/genre that the writer intentionally uses to communicate his/her point (see definition of “rhetoric”).

Media: The format of communication. How does the media impact the composition?

Audience: To whom the writer is communicating. The intentional audience the writer intended to reach out to at the time of writing, as well as any secondary audiences that have since developed. This includes literary lenses and exploring text through multiple perspectives.

Purpose: Why the writer is writing. This is the writer’s intended purpose of the piece, but could also be a perceived purpose from an alternate lens.

Situation: Two parts: situation of the writing and situation of the writer.

Situation of the writing: Everything the author needs to make the writing possible—task identification, researching, due dates, citations, format, timeline, materials

Situation of the writer: The writer’s awareness of him/herself as a writer in order to create the preferential writing environment/routines within given constraints—location, time, noise level, nourishment, method (typing vs. writing by hand), preparedness

Deadlines:

1. Project proposal due
2. Working draft of ideas due
3. Draft 2 for review
4. Final project, ready for publication