

MLA Game!

Introduction & Context

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Example Assessment with rubric (gameshow) Outline due	“I Think” 1-page due (in-class thesis statement exercise); Example of zines	MLA game Bibliography due; partner workshop on MLA formatting	No class	First draft due; annotated bibliography due for honors students	Project Block: Class for 3 hrs First draft Peer review & conferences

Today students turned in their bibliographies (5 sources, 2 scholarly). They are preparing to write their first draft. Their bibliographies were required to be in MLA format so the refresh at the beginning of class will be a timely delivery of that information, which they learned in the previous class unit. They are familiar with works cited formatting and in-text MLA citations, but they have not yet written a research essay in this class. In a previous unit students wrote an analysis that required in-text citations but I noticed during assessment that students were not effectively fulfilling that competency. The lesson / game today is meant to illustrate the importance of this formatting system in academic writing. The purpose is to provide experience that will be used during the writing of their first drafts due on Friday.

Summary

When I first introduced MLA format and works cited lists to the English 3 class, I had one student ask “Why can’t we just have a list of links at the end of the essay?”

This is a valid question, mostly because it shows that I had not instructed the class on *why* MLA format is a requirement of this class, and for all scholarly publications. MLA format is a system that allows authors to keep track of sources and organize their writing, and it is a system that empowers readers to evaluate what they are reading, and find specific information quickly, ultimately MLA format is a system that optimizes research-based reading and researching.

The MLA game is a timed contest between students with different MLA formatted writing. Half of the students have a correctly formatted and cited essay excerpt, the other have an incorrectly formatted and cited excerpt (“a list of links”). These are in printed format, so they are

not digital—because then a list of links would seem productive. Students may use their computers for this game but they will have to type in each character of a URL.

The purpose of this lesson is to illustrate the necessity of a system that formats citations and source material. It should be obvious to the class that those with proper MLA citation and formatted excerpts can engage with the written work more easily, quickly and intelligently than those without. Students will see the purpose of the tedious MLA formatting that they are required to fulfill for the Bibliography, first and final drafts of their multimodal essay.

Standards Fulfilled

Independent School (CBE)

R2 Research / Search: I can find relevant and reliable sources from what is available to me (including but not limited to different databases and/or experts).

Eng 3:b I can fluidly integrate relevant evidence from a text into my own work, and I can use correct MLA format for my citations

Common Core

- Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
 - The research standards for this project outline number of sources, type of source, and the final written product is held to high MLA in-text citation formatting standards.
- 11-12 W. 8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

Materials

- Computer (teacher)
- Computer/phone (students)
- Projector
- Handouts: 4-5 of each; Improper and Proper MLA
- Pens & pencils
- The Contemporary American Essay book (a required book for this class, and one the students are familiar with) 2-3 copies.

Class Agenda

This lesson is for a 1-hr class and will take half the time.

MLA refresh / lesson	20 minutes
Lesson 5	30 minutes
Wrap-up	10 minutes

Lesson Agenda

Introduction (5 minutes)

MLA game time (10 minutes)

Discussion (12 minutes)

wrap-up (3 minutes)

Introduction (5 minutes)

I'm really impressed at everything y'all remembered about MLA formatting and in-text citations. I hope that you took notes during that refresh, and that you paid attention because not only will you use this citation method for your upcoming research essay, but now it's time for the MLA game!

[Begin to give handouts to students]

Okay, so you can have your computer open for this if you'd like, or your phone. You have been given a handout titled either A or B. The two handouts are different. The game works like this: there is an excerpt of writing on your handout, and there are underlined pieces of information, or sentences. See those?

You will also notice that there is a works cited section as well. Your objective for this game is to match the underlined piece of information with its correct source. You will be timed! This is a contest of who can match sources the quickest.

Write the correct source letter next to the underlined sentence, or draw a line between the two on your worksheet. *Get a piece of paper and write 1-6 down the side of your paper, which corresponds to the six quotes in the text. Next to each number write the letter of the corresponding source for the underlined text.

You may use your computer or your phone for this. There is a book source and I have a few copies of the book here that you are welcome to use.

Any questions?

[Possible question: is there a digital version of this so I can click on links?]

No, there is no digital version. I know that we are on computers a lot, but as you may have noticed with the scholarly sources you submitted for your bibliography due today the works cited list isn't always hyperlinked; many of those sources are from journals that are also printed. Plus, you may use printed books as sources and you can't click on links in a printed book!

This exercise is meant to show you the importance of MLA formatting, something that I know you all doubt! It will also help you write your first drafts with proper in-text citations because I noticed that they were lacking in the analysis essays.

Everyone understand the rules?

[Address any questions]

Alright, I will have a stopwatch going on the screen, when you are done please write in the chat with your recorded time.

MLA game time (10 minutes)

Alright, ready, set, go!

[Have a stopwatch timer going on the projector screen. Play some game show music to create an atmosphere]

Discussion (12 minutes)

Okay! Time is up, we have a winner! *[Wait until all students have matched sources to sentence, although those with Improper MLA worksheets may not be able to complete the game. That is okay, that is the point! Wait until the energy has died down before calling the winner]*

Which worksheet did you [winner] have?

[B]

Who wasn't able to finish?

[students raise their hands]

What sheets did y'all have

[A]

Why could y'all not finish and match all the quotes with the sources?

[Have students speak up and share the difficulties they faced when trying to find sources. Possible answers: I couldn't type in the URLs by hand, and that was the only information in the works cited. I didn't know what page to look at in the book. I wasn't sure which Philip Lopate source I should look at first because his name is mentioned in the essay and I see his name in a URL and he's also the editor of the book]

[Pull up sheet A on the projector]

Alright, so sheet A was improper MLA citations if y'all can't tell. There are no page numbers associated with quotes, and there are no in-text citations with author names. Additionally, the sources are not in MLA format, see that?

Alright, to our winner and others who finished quickly. You had sheet B. What was your experience like?

[Pull up sheet B on projector]

[Have students respond with their experience. Possible answers: The source name and page numbers told me exactly which sources the information belonged to and even where to find it in that source. I didn't need to type in the URL because the MLA format gave me all the information I needed to know.]

Yes! MLA format means that you don't necessarily even need to look at the original source to know where the sentence or quote came from.

Can someone with sheet B explain their process for using the MLA formatting? How was it so easy? Take us through the steps.

[Discuss further based on student comments and questions]

Wrap-up (3 minutes)

I hope that writing your essays using MLA in-text citations and proper MLA source list formatting makes more sense and you see why it is so important! If you want to talk to me about your bibliography now that you've seen this lesson, let me know. Your first draft is due on Friday.

Handouts

Handouts are not labeled according to “improper” or “proper” so students are not clued in to which sheet they have. Split the class in half: half have proper and half have improper

A

Welcome to the MLA Game! You will be timed on your ability to match the quote, or information from the essay excerpt to the correct source in the works cited list. Use your knowledge of proper MLA citation and works cited format to help you win!

You must match the underlined information with the correct source from the works cited list. Write the correct source next to the underlined sentence, or draw a line between the sentence and the source from the works cited list. You may use your computer to find sources.

Essay excerpt

Which genre is the best genre? Many argue that fiction is the best because it allows a reader to escape to an exciting world. Others argue that poetry is the oldest art; a famous philosopher is known to have said, “Poetry is nearer to vital truth than history”. But, it is easy to establish that essays are the best genre. The essay has an “all-encompassing power” that contributes to it being one of the longest-lasting genres. I myself have been trying to write essays for a decade now and yet have I found a time when an essay cannot say what I need to say in a powerful way. One of the masters of the essay, Philip Lopate, said, “Instead of lecturing you, it invites you into the pathways of the mind of a writer who’s examining, testing, and speculating.”

The other reason that essays are the best is because they are published in places that are easily accessible, like the newspaper, magazines, and even blogs. While many people don’t realize it, the essay is around us and we’ve all read them. While essay collections used to be one of the least popular books for publishing companies to sell, they have now become a favorite among younger readers.

The essay asks big questions about life, death and love, such as, “Why are we all eventually orphaned and heartbroken?..Why are we not all immortal?”. These big questions are not always answered in essays, which is the final reason why essays are the best genre: just like life, there aren’t always straight answers. In other words, as a scholarly article says, while it might be a confusing genre to categorize, it is not a futile task to attempt to understand it.

Works Cited

- A. <https://www.brainyquote.com>
- B. JSTOR
- C. <https://magazine.columbia.edu/article/phillip-lopate-celebrates-personal-essay>
- D. An essay book we use in class
- E. Essay in book, not the whole book

B

Welcome to the MLA Game! You will be timed on your ability to match the quote, or information from the essay excerpt to the correct source in the works cited list. Use your knowledge of proper MLA citation and works cited format to help your team!

You must match the underlined information with the correct source from the works cited list. Write the correct source next to the underlined sentence, or draw a line between the sentence and the source from the works cited list. You may use your computer to find sources.

Which genre is the best genre? Many argue that fiction is the best because it allows a reader to escape to an exciting world. Others argue that poetry is the oldest art; a famous philosopher is known to have said, “Poetry is nearer to vital truth than history” (Brainy Quote). But, it is easy to establish that essays are the best genre. The essay has an “all-encompassing power” that contributes to it being one of the longest-lasting genres (Glennon). I myself have been trying to write essays for a decade now and yet have I found a time when an essay cannot say what I need to say in a powerful way. One of the masters of the essay, Philip Lopate, said, “Instead of lecturing you, it invites you into the pathways of the mind of a writer who’s examining, testing, and speculating” (Glennon).

The other reason that essays are the best is because they are published in places that are easily accessible, like the newspaper, magazines, and even blogs. While many people don’t realize it, the essay is around us and we’ve all read them. While essay collections used to be one of the least popular books for publishing companies to sell, they have now become a favorite among younger readers (Lopate xi).

The essay asks big questions about life, death and love, such as, “Why are we all eventually orphaned and heartbroken?..Why are we not all immortal?” (Lynch 425). These big questions are not always answered in essays, which is the final reason why essays are the best genre: just like life, there aren’t always straight answers. In other words, as a scholarly article

says, while it might be a confusing genre to categorize, it is not a futile task to attempt to understand it (Chadborne 134).

Works Cited

A works cited page does not provide letters in a list of sources, but for the sake of this activity numbers are provided to make matching easier

- A) Brainy Quotes. https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/plato_105747.
- B) Chadbourne, Richard M. "A Puzzling Literary Genre: Comparative Views of the Essay." *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1983, pp. 133–53. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40246392>.
- C) Glennon, Lorrain. "Philip Lopate Celebrates the Personal Essay". *Columbia Magazine*, Spring 2016, <https://magazine.columbia.edu/article/phillip-lopate-celebrates-personal-essay>.
- D) Lopate, Philip, editor. *The Contemporary American Essay*. Anchor Books, 2021.
- E) Lynch, Thomas. "Bodies in Motion and at Rest". *The Contemporary American Essay*, edited by Philip Lopate, Anchor Books, 2021, 423-427.

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Answer key:

1. https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/plato_105747 / Brainy Quotes.
 2. Essay Book / Lopate, Philip, editor. *The Contemporary American Essay*. Anchor Books, 2021.
 3. <https://magazine.columbia.edu/article/phillip-lopate-celebrates-personal-essay> / Glennon, Lorrain. "Philip Lopate Celebrates the Personal Essay". *Columbia Magazine*, Spring 2016, <https://magazine.columbia.edu/article/phillip-lopate-celebrates-personal-essay>.
 4. Scholarly article / Chadbourne, Richard M. "A Puzzling Literary Genre: Comparative Views of the Essay." *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1983, pp. 133–53. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40246392>. Accessed 12 Dec. 2022.
 5. Essay in book / Lynch, Thomas. "Bodies in Motion and at Rest". *The Contemporary American Essay*, edited by Philip Lopate, Anchor Books, 2021, 423-427.
- "Poetry is nearer to vital truth than history". (1)
 - The essay has an "all-encompassing power" that contributes to it being one of the longest-lasting genres. (3) Columbia article about Philip Lopate
 - One of the masters of the essay, Philip Lopate, said, "Instead of lecturing you, it invites you into the pathways of the mind of a writer who's examining, testing, and speculating." (3)
 - ...they have now become a favorite among younger readers. (2)
 - "Why are we all eventually orphaned and heartbroken?..Why are we not all immortal?" (5)
 - In other words, as a scholarly article says, while it might be a confusing genre to categorize, it is not a futile task to attempt to understand it. (4)