

## What's a "reaction paper"/"response essay"?

### GENERIC PROMPT OF A REACTION PAPER:

"Describe an interesting idea or issue that \_\_\_\_\_ raises for you; based on your thinking about it, assert your own opinion about it, being as specific as you can. Then, support your position with three examples, from things you have read, things you know from history or current events, or your own experience."

Remember that a "reaction paper" is not a paper about the story or text that inspires your reaction (This is often confusingly referred to by teachers and textbooks as a "response to literature," in that you're saying something about what you read); rather, a reaction paper is a supported argument in which you get to advance your own opinion about any idea *inspired by* what you read.

Your reaction can thus take the form(s) of:

- + "I think that people should..." (*a moral*)
- + "Whenever we do---, this can lead to..." (*your assertion of a cause-->effect*)
- + "I believe that people who...end up worse/better off in that..." (*A speculation about the benefits or risks of actions, an analysis of a situation's "ethics"*)

And so on. The whole point is that you're taking a position, but then supporting it with clear examples.

Your goal in fleshing out your actual essay is to look carefully at what you're claiming (your Thesis) so that this is what you explain or show about each example: you must explain "how each example shows that your point is true" before each body paragraph can be considered "complete."

### OUTLINE USING THE SHOW-->TELL METHOD:

|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Examples that show <my idea: <i>you have to fill in what you need examples of</i> > | <According to what I said in my Thesis, I must prove that in each example, _____ happens to prove my point. I must explain HOW each example shows or LEADS to what my thesis claims.> |
| paragraph 1 example:                                                                | How example 1 supports <my main idea>:                                                                                                                                                |
| paragraph 2 example:                                                                | How example 2 shows <my main idea>:                                                                                                                                                   |
| paragraph 3 example:                                                                | How example 3 shows <my main idea>:                                                                                                                                                   |

## Format of the finished paper

Opening paragraph:

- Explain what your idea is (can use a SCR!) :)
- Give necessary background: where does it come from? If in the book, must have some text that you're responding to.
- Clarify exactly what you're going to prove

Body paragraphs:

- Each introduces one example: can be from
  - something you read,
  - something in history or the news (real people, but those you don't necessarily know)
  - Your own experience
- Each example gets thoroughly explained: ("tell": "what about this example shows my point? How so? in what way?)

Conclude by a short paragraph that

- Restates your point
- explains "why is this important? Why should we care?: " If it still sounds unfinished, you haven't answered this!

