

Assignments

There are two assignments:

1) For each work of literature, write a single piece or work in response.

What genres should responses be? Responses can be in the form of poetry, story, or nonfiction argument. Over the course of the seminar, you must employ at least one of each, but there is no further limit to the number of times you can use your favorite genre. If you're a poet, you're welcome to write six poems and one story and one argument. The purpose of this is to help you hone your craft while giving you some broader experience.

What does it mean to respond? You can take issue with something, write a parody, develop an idea from the work, write something in its style, imagine the inner life of a character, depict a particular scene, or something else not mentioned here. You will want to be able to articulate what connection your original work has with the work you are responding to. A nonfiction argument should have one definite thesis (the point you're arguing for) that has to do with a major theme, character, or something from the work. It needs to be supported by textual evidence, but you are welcome to bring in outside sources as well.

If any of this seems overwhelming, your teachers will be glad to assist you and give feedback or suggestions.

2) For each response written by your classmates, offer a critique. For some you'll just make comments in class. For others, your teacher will assign you to write a substantive written critique.

You will critique **a)** its success as a poem, story, or essay and **b)** its success as a response to the work in question. Read each response carefully, marking places which you would like to comment on in class. Give feedback related to the following questions. You don't have to answer them in so many words, but they should be the considerations behind the comments that you make.

For the written critiques, carefully evaluate the response and make comments in a document for your classmate. Try to give both wordsmithing suggestions and large-scale evaluations. Send these documents to your teacher by the class time when they are due, and the teacher will send them on to your classmate.

Here are the questions to answer for each work:

1. How would you evaluate the form (on the level of word choices, writing style, poetic form, and other cosmetic areas)? What works? What doesn't work? Give particular examples.
2. How does the content engage with the work it is responding to? Characterize its response. Some questions to answer in this section are (but are not limited to)
 - a. What does the response affirm or contradict about the original work?
 - b. How does the response differ from the original work in substance? in form? in worldview?
 - c. Does the response understand the relevant aspects of the original work, or does it miss the point?
 - d. How could the response be more effective in its critique, characterization, or understanding of the original work?
3. (Optional, but helpful) What is successful or unsuccessful about what the response conveys? In other words, what does it convey that could not have been conveyed except through this particular form and content? Try to describe what that something is.

In class, your teacher will lead a short discussion about each individual response, and you are expected to say a few words of evaluation. If you don't have further critiques to give other than what others have given before, be sure to say whose critique stole your thunder, so that the author knows to give more weight to more common critiques.