Reflective Essays

How to write your first paper
4 Keys to Reflections

(p. 61)

Tell a Good Story
Let the Details Convey the Significance
Be Honest
Focus on the Little Things
What Makes a Good Reflection? (p. 62)

1. Choose a good topic by listing.
2. Engage Readers at the Beginning.
3. Write with a Personal Voice
4. Introduce a Complication
5. Provide Concrete Details
6. Use Dialogue when possible
7. Identify a Central Theme
8. Come to a New Understanding
Notice the structure of the essay.
- Plan which parts will be the **introduction**, which parts will be the **body paragraphs**, and which parts will be the **conclusion**.

Anticipate the need for structure for your own reflective essay.
- Tell the story, perhaps **not** in chronological order.
- Make your readers feel as if they are there with you.
- Answer the questions from the assignment sheet.
Process for Reflection Paper (pp. 92-3)

1. Choose a topic (your best memory of when you knew you wanted to be a ________)
2. Ideas and Text.
3. Write a Draft
4. Get Feedback from Peers/Tutors. (Not in book but it should be!!)
5. Revise, Revise, Revise
6. Submitted Version
Look at the assignment sheet.

Determine which memory best fits the task.

- Does the memory come back to you clearly?
- Is it more than a year old so you have had some time to reflect?
- Can you recall specific, vivid details?
- Can you ask others who were there to help you remember details about the place, the people, the activity???
Notice the value of good pre-writing and how it can save you from re-writing.

NO details are insignificant at this point. Write down everything you remember seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, or hearing.
(IF YOU CANNOT THINK OF AN EVENT YET, DESCRIBE YOUR BEDROOM AT HOME. FOLLOW THE SAME PROCESS LISTED BELOW.)

Describe the PLACE where your event occurs. Write down all the senses first: see, smell, taste, touch and hear.

Turn those details into sentences.

Turn those sentences into a paragraph.

Revise that paragraph, top to bottom.

Share that paragraph with the person next to you.

Make comments under the person’s paragraph on the same sheet of paper.

Write down whatever might help the person make the paragraph better. Can you SEE the PLACE clearly?
(IF YOU CANNOT THINK OF AN EVENT YET, DESCRIBE A FRIEND WHO IS NOT IN CLASS. FOLLOW THE SAME PROCESS LISTED BELOW.)

Choose SOMEONE from your story you wish to tell in your Reflective Essay.

Describe that person from head to toe using the same sense imagery as before: see, smell, taste, touch and hear. (This can be tricky!!)

Turn those details into sentences.

Turn those sentences into a paragraph.

Revise that paragraph, top to bottom.

Share that paragraph with the person next to you.

Make comments under the person’s paragraph on the same sheet of paper.

Write down whatever might help the person make the paragraph better. Can you SEE the PERSON clearly?
Describe an Object

(IF YOU CANNOT THINK OF AN EVENT YET, DESCRIBE AN OBJECT NOT IN THE CLASS. FOLLOW THE SAME PROCESS LISTED BELOW.)

Choose an OBJECT from your story you wish to tell in your Reflective Essay.

Describe that OBJECT from top to bottom using the same sense imagery as before: see, smell, taste, touch and hear. (This can be tricky!!)

Turn those details into sentences.

Turn those sentences into a paragraph.

Revise that paragraph, top to bottom.

Share that paragraph with the person next to you.

Make comments under the person’s paragraph on the same sheet of paper.

Write down whatever might help the person make the paragraph better. Can you SEE the OBJECT clearly?
Drafting

- When it is time for peer-critiquing, bring your best possible draft, perhaps a second or third draft, to class to share with your group.
- Make sure the draft is your best effort.
- Focus first on content and then on other areas.
- Go to the Writing Center for help. (BH 1003)
Peer-critiquing

- Plan to take 30-40 minutes to write a good critique.
  - (Critique Directions on the next slide.)
- Give your best honest feedback to the other students and expect the same from them.
- In one class period then, you will strive for two complete critiques. Two opinions allow you to compare the advice and make a decision.
  - One should be of someone’s essay in your group.
  - One should be of someone’s essay outside your group.
Peer Critique Process for REFLECTION Assignment

NOTE: Use your own paper to answer the questions below AFTER you have read the draft twice. Be sure to put your name on your critique as the critic and return it to the author. Answers that are shorter than the questions below, such as yes or no answers, will only earn an “F” for you on your critique grade. Write as much as you can, as legibly as you can, in the time allotted for the critiques.

Writers: Be sure to return these critiques as part of your process when you turn in your essay.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING 2 QUESTIONS AFTER YOU READ THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OR TWO OF THE PAPER.

1. Does the first paragraph grab your attention? If not, explain why not. If so, explain why. Tell them what would grab your attention even more.

2. Is there a clear thesis which lets you know where the paper is headed? If not, explain why and give suggestions. If yes, explain why and try to make it even better.

FOR QUESTIONS 3 & 4, YOU MUST ADDRESS EACH BODY PARAGRAPH.

3. Do the body paragraphs support and develop the thesis? If not, explain why and help them make it better. If so, explain how and why.

4. Is each body paragraph developed enough? Point out any that are too short or underdeveloped so that the writer can know how to make them better. Give suggestions for any paragraph that doesn’t seem just right.

FOR QUESTIONS 5 & 6, BE SURE TO RE-READ THE CONCLUSION.

5. Does the conclusion reiterate the thesis, not re-state it word for word? If not, explain how they could re-phrase it. If yes, explain why.

6. Does the conclusion wrap up the essay and end on a satisfying note? If not, explain why and give suggestions. If so, explain why.

7. Make any final comments or suggestions for the student.
Responding to Critiques

For each point raised in the critiquer’s comments, you should respond to that feedback either agreeing with or disagreeing with the suggestions and stating what you will do.

These responses count as part of your overall grade so take your time and consider the feedback so that you make thoughtful comments.

(See sample of critique and response on the next slide.)
Sample Peer Critique

Peer critique for Joe by Tom

1. The first paragraph didn’t grab my attention very much. I like how you described the place where the event happened, but I just don’t understand why I should be interested in the topic. I think if you used part of your conclusion or another paragraph where it was really vivid, it would help grab my attention.

2. I can’t see a clear thesis in the beginning of your paper. Perhaps you are still working on it? Again the conclusion seems to make the strongest statement and maybe that is OK for a reflective paper. You could always ask someone in the Writing Center.

3. AND SO ON AND SO ON!

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

Sample Response to a Critique

Response to Tom’s Critique

1. Thanks for your feedback, Tom. I think I will move some of my conclusion to the front of my paper and not save the best for last. If I didn’t grab your attention, then I might not grab Mr. McGinn’s attention and that might hurt my paper grade.

2. Thanks again Tom, but I have to disagree here. I think my thesis is in the right place, right up front, but I will ask Mr. McGinn or someone in the Writing Center if it is OK to put the thesis in the conclusion.

3. RESPOND TO EACH PART OF EACH PIECE OF FEEDBACK. REMEMBER THAT THESE ARE GRADED, TOO!

4. AND SO ON AND SO ON!
Follow Faigley’s advice on pp. 102-3 in your class text.
Use the process the students uses all through pp. 94-109.
Find, read and print out the sample Reflective Essay from my web site, written by Ashley Perry.
Editing

- Look at **paragraph** length.
- Look at **sentence** length.
- Look at **word** use.
- Look at **style**.
- Look at **tone**.
Proofreading

- Read aloud.
- Read sloooooooooooowly.
- READ BACKWARDS, SENTENCE X SENTENCE.
- Check the following areas:
  - GRAMMAR
  - PUNCTUATION
  - MECHANICS
  - USAGE
Turning in Your Paper

- TOP — the Final Draft of your essay in MLA Format.
- Next — the Revised/Edited/Proofread Draft(s).
- Next — the Responses to the Peer Critiques.
- Next — The Peer Critiques.
- Next — The Rough Drafts, numbered if more than one.
- BOTTOM — The Pre-writing from activities in class and any done outside out of class.
- (Keep any homework notes or Journal entries not relevant to the paper.)
MLA Format

MLA stands for Modern Language Association.
MLA format is both for appearance of your paper and for how to cite and document sources.
Samples of the format are all through the Faigley book, especially the final draft of the essay on pp. 104-107.
MLA paper format means:
- one-inch margins,
- a four-part heading in the upper LEFT of the first page,
- your name and page number in the upper RIGHT of each page,
- doubled-spaced text all through the essay, and
- a standard font size, usually ten or twelve point.