

Informal Essay

As discussed in class, a typical Response Essay begins as an informal reaction to a reading assignment. Aside from generating a basic analytical understanding of a particular work, these assignments also provide the student a better comprehension of the material as a piece of literature.

Some of important elements to identify for yourself:

- recognition of protagonist or persona
- comprehension of relationship between protagonist and antagonist
- purpose of narration

I. Objectives

1. Generate a full one-page response to the text. What is your immediate reaction? An honest opinion is best, even if you disliked the work. The important thing is to have a clear understanding of *why* you dislike the material. Be very specific when expressing feelings to a story or poem. An informal, casual tone is fine.
 2. Always read the full material first, highlighting key phrases and points discussed by the author. Double check definitions of key words if necessary.
 3. Do *not* conduct outside research. You are not writing a research paper.
 4. Do *not* provide a summary of the full plot. Analyze the material.
 5. Use full sentences with all written responses; likewise, supply evidence from the work as defense to your observations.
 6. **Follow this basic outline:**
 - A. Paragraph One: personal reaction
 - i. Indicate which story/poem you will discuss. State author's name.
 - ii. Did you like the material? Why or why not?
 - iii. What did the work reveal to you about the author's reaction to his/her interpretation of the world?
 - B. Paragraph Two: character analysis
 - i. Examine the personality of the main character/poet-speaker.
 - ii. Did you relate with the protagonist/persona? Why or why not?
 - C. Paragraph Three: over-all message
 - i. What is the author's point in the work?
 - ii. What is the final message?
 - iii. How does the author's views agree or clash with your views?
- II. Remember all printed assignments should follow MLA guidelines.

III. Due *before* lecture covering the material.

Reading Response

Name

English 2322: Brit Lit

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Reading Response #1

Yesterday's lecture did provide some help preparing me for T.S. Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." However, I am still confused about a majority of the work and the intentions of the writer. You can guess, I do not like the poem very much. It appears long winded, a rambling collection of images. You mentioned the Modernists do like to use a collage approach in their poems, but Eliot seems to wander from point to point without a purpose or direction. Was he suicidal himself? Why does he limit the world to a polluted, pessimistic black hole? For instance the opening lines only talk about smoke, alleyways, and "time to murder and create" (l.28). It seems he has a tendency towards violence, but he contradicts this with the complaints and griping.

Prufrock himself seems like a rejected personality overall. He asks too many questions! And too, he tells us all the things he is not, neither saint nor hero (Lazarus, Saint John, Hamlet). I do not know how anyone can relate to his broken speeches and self-criticisms. He says he cannot make up his own mind (indecisions and revisions mentioned in lines 32-33). Which frustrates me due to his extreme apathy towards his own life. No, I do not like Prufrock. No, I do not feel sorry for him. At first I felt a little pity, but around line 110 I lost all sympathy.

Is this a specific message to England or to Europe as a whole? Prufrock says: "It is impossible to say just what I mean!" (l. 104). Which leads me to think Eliot does not have a specific declaration. And too, the closing stanzas only show mermaids and the sea... is there a connection between the mermaids and the rest of the poem? Eliot throws them into the poem from out of nowhere... thinking it over, I do see Prufrock as an alienated individual. I get the point we as readers are not supposed to relate to him. We should want to be distanced from him. At first I found him to be very sad, but we as readers are not told *why*. That is the frustrating point for me. Too many unanswered questions. Ready to hear more about the piece in today's lecture.