

Response/Reaction Essay

- 500-1000 words
- MLA format (Times New Roman, 12 pt., double-spaced, one-inch margins)
- Cited sources throughout (which means you need a Works Cited page)
- Choose a writer, a literary period, a collection of writings with a similar theme, or whatever else resonated with you so far. Then you need to select an *additional* thing - a story, a writer, evidence connected to your topic - which is something you'll need to research.
 - For example, if you want to write about Edgar Allan Poe, you can write about Dark Romanticism, "The Raven", and "The Purloined Letter," but then you need to go a step further and read one more of his stories, or a Sherlock Holmes story since that body of work was inspired by Poe.
 - Or, if you're commenting on a historical event, researching other facts or statistics will help bolster your own point of view.
- A Reaction/Response essay can be written in the first person. It involves both a summary of the person/topic/literary period you're writing about AND your personal reactions to it.

Essay Structure

Introduction

- **Write a catchy hook:**
 - Making use of a statistic: some puzzling conclusion that researchers might have reached at some point and which is relevant to the topic you are about to respond to.
 - Citing someone who is related to the area of expertise of your topic or is known for having deep knowledge about the topic. The more popular the person you are citing is, the more efficient your introduction will be.
 - Story-telling or reproducing a dialogue might also help, provided they are relevant and short.
- The introduction provides context for the rest of your paper, so this is where you'd mention the works, era, authors, or ideas you're going to be reacting to.
- **Thesis statement:** This is your main impression, lesson, or point of view. You can write it in the first or third person. Whatever it is, this is the sentence that embodies your most overarching and primary reaction to whatever topic you chose.

3-5 Body Paragraphs

- These are the primary reasons why your reaction/response is what it is
 - Learning facts you didn't know
 - Having a new feeling about a topic you haven't had before
 - Learning a new side/point of view on a topic you weren't familiar with
 - Details about the genre, writer, or literary elements that stood out to you
 - Any statistics, stories, or other ideas that provide support
- Each paragraph should have at least one cited source

- **IMPORTANT:** You should add one source of information you've found on your own (an article, another story/narrative by the same author, another work that falls under the same literary genre or era. **You will lose points if you omit this requirement.**
- Example:
 - Let's say I'm writing an essay about the first and second Great Awakening and Americans' response to them. I know I'm going to mention Jonathon Edwards and Frederick Douglass, but I also need AT LEAST one outside source.
 - Jonathan Edwards gave his sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," during the first Great Awakening in the mid-1700s in an attempt to re-awaken Americans' fervor for God and the church. I found his words harsh and condemning, so even if I agreed with his desire to bring people back to the Puritan faith, I'm not sure his fire-and-brimstone effort would've worked on me. It certainly did work on colonists. In fact, Christine Leigh Heyrman from the University of Delaware History Department wrote that "the first Great Awakening left colonials sharply polarized along religious lines" (Heyrman).

Conclusion

- Reiterate your main reaction/response without repeating yourself
 - No new information
 - No citations necessary
 - Leave a final impression that connects to your introduction (this ensures you didn't go off on tangents)
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Works Cited

Douglass, Frederick. "A Parody." Handout. Literature and Composition. 14 Sept. 2021. Print.

Edwards, Jonathan. "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Handout. Literature and Composition. 16 Aug. 2021. Print.

Heyrman, Christine Leigh. "The First Great Awakening." Divining America, TeacherServe. National Humanities Center. 20 Sept. 2021.

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/eigheten/ekeyinfo/grawaken.htm>