

Reading Responses: Your Assignment

English 2025-2 • Fall 2007 • Prof. Jennifer West

Your Task

In lieu of a formal essay for this class, you will instead write a minimum of 5 reading responses. Before each reading assignment, starting with Toni Morrison's "Recitatif" and Toni Cade Bambara's "The Lesson," I will post prompts on our class blog. After completing the reading, your job is to compose a thoughtful response, post that response in the comments section of the appropriate blog post, and bring a printed copy to class to turn in to me. Think of these as informal essays: they are, above all, your personal reflections on the readings, but they should also demonstrate that you have thoughtfully considered what points or questions you'd like to raise and planned how best to go about communicating those points or questions.

Some Guidelines

- Audience: you are writing for the members of this class, for each other and for me. Consider these responses part of an out-of-class conversation that you are responsible for starting (or continuing, if others have posted already about what you're interested in).
- Don't summarize! Please do refer to the text; that is how you will support the points you are making (and demonstrate that you've read). But, we have all read it too, so we don't need a blow-by-blow. Rather, point to particular quotes or passages and then analyze them. Tell us what they mean and how they contribute to the point you're trying to make.
- Have a plan. Your essay should demonstrate a strong sense of organization.
- Have a focused point or question. You can't possibly cover everything for any given text, so make sure you zero in on an idea that can feasibly be developed and explored in about a page.
- Draft and revise! These are informal, yes, but they should not be thrown together at the last minute. I expect you to work through your writing to produce an essay that is **clear** (we understand what you're saying), **thoughtful** (we can see that you have reflected on what you've read), and **clean** (edited for careless mistakes and sentence-level errors).

Grading

Each response is worth 20 points; at the end of the semester, you will have written 5 for a total of 100 points. That grade counts 20% of your final grade in the course. An A response (18-20 points) will: be complete (550-900 words), be turned in on time, demonstrate careful reading (refer to the text without summarizing), exhibit strong analytical skills (show that you've thought about what you've read and what you have to say about it), and adhere to the conventions of standard edited English (it's clear that you've spent time drafting, revising, and proofreading). You may write as many responses as you wish; I'll count the highest 5 scores.

Turning Them In

All hard copies are to be typed, single-spaced, with your name somewhere at the top of the page. Your responses should also have titles (something more creative than "Response to This Story" is encouraged). Your posts to the blog are due before you come to class on the day the response is due. At least 2 responses are due by Midterm (October 9).

