

Sample Reflective Essay - Example #1

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Sample Reflective Essay #1

Author: Prefers to remain anonymous

As an English major I have learned to appreciate the peaceful, yet exhilarating moment when my mind engages with an author's thoughts on a page. As Toni Morrison says in *The Dancing Mind*, "[reading is] to experience one's own mind dancing with another's." In my early days as a college student, I wanted to know the "true" meaning of a work or what the author intended, however, I have now realized this would void literature of its most noteworthy complexities. Individual interpretations bring varied insights to a work and it is also interesting to point out messages the author may not have realized s/he included in the piece.

I have always been a thinker, but throughout my coursework, I have greatly sharpened my critical analysis skills. Instead of focusing on proposed meanings or biographical background, I have learned to continuously ask "why" on many different levels. I challenge myself to dig into a text as deeply as possible and unpack every detail to develop a satisfying close read. Also, by reading multiple novels by the same author I have learned to identify different writing styles and make connections that weave texts together; this helped me develop a deeper understanding of the novels. When I look at one of my freshman level novels and see clean pages, I realize that I did not actively read the book. I guess you could say that I have learned to read with a pen, which has drastically taken my writing to a new level because I am able to connect back with my initial insights marked on the page.

Writing had always been one of my strengths, but it was challenging to take that initial step past the high school, five-paragraph essay form that constricted my ideas for so long. Moving past this form, however, has greatly opened my mind. My thoughts are now able to be more complex because I have learned how to sustain a logical argument in an organized manner. My writing has become increasingly more concise and I no longer have room for added "fluff" or "padding." Another improvement is my ability to point out multiple complexities within a text, instead of sticking to one-sided arguments in my papers. Furthermore, learning how to find peer reviewed journal articles and order books through interlibrary loan has significantly widened the scope of my research, which has lead to more scholarly papers with credible references. My writing is so much more interesting than it used to be.

It is difficult to identify gaps in my knowledge as an English major, only because I feel like I have learned so much. I feel that I have largely expanded my literary analysis and writing skills, but I need to be prepared to teach high school students their required

literature. I think it would be useful to identify commonly taught novels in our local high schools and study them myself. By studying the required literature and thinking about how to teach it, I will have a sturdy foundation to work from once I am in the classroom.

Sample Reflective Essay - Example #2

 web.archive.org/web/20171024115900/http://english.csuci.edu/program/sample-essay-example-2.htm

Sample Reflective Essay #2

Author: Nekisa Mahzad

I have been a student at California State University Channel Islands (CI) for 5 semesters, and over the course of my stay I have grown and learned more than I thought possible. I came to this school from Moorpark Community College already knowing that I wanted to be an English teacher; I had taken numerous English courses and though I knew exactly what I was headed for—was I ever wrong. Going through the English program has taught me so much more than stuff about literature and language, it has taught me how to be me. I have learned here how to write and express myself, how to think for myself, and how to find the answers to the things that I don't know. Most importantly I have learned how important literature and language are.

When I started at CI, I thought I was going to spend the next 3 years reading classics, discussing them and then writing about them. That was what I did in community college English courses, so I didn't think it would be much different here. On the surface, to an outsider, I am sure that this is what it appears that C.I. English majors do. In most all my classes I did read, discuss, and write papers; however, I quickly found out that that there was so much more to it. One specific experience I had while at C.I. really shows how integrated this learning is. Instead of writing a paper for my final project in Perspectives of Multicultural Literature (ENGL 449), I decided with a friend to venture to an Indian reservation and compare it to a book we read by Sherman Alexie. We had a great time and we learned so much more than we ever could have done from writing a paper. The opportunity to do that showed me that there are so many ways that one can learn that are both fun and educational.

The English courses also taught me how powerful the written word and language can be. Words tell so much more than a story. Stories tell about life and the human condition, they bring up the past and people and cultures that are long gone. Literature teaches about the self and the world surrounding the self. From these classes I learned about the world, its people and its history; through literature I learned how we as humans are all related. By writing about what we learn and/or what we believe, we are learning how to express ourselves.

I know that my ability to write and express my ideas, thoughts and knowledge has grown stronger each semester. I have always struggled to put my thoughts on paper in a manner that is coherent and correct according to assignments. I can remember being told numerous times in community college to "organize your thoughts" or "provide more support and examples". These are the things that I have worked on and improved over the past couple of years and I feel that my work shows this. The papers I wrote

when I first started here at C.I. were bland and short. In these early papers, I would just restate what we learned in class and what I had found in my research. I did not formulate my own ideas and support them with the works of others. The classes I have taken the past couple semesters have really help me shed that bad habit and write better papers with better ideas. I have learned how to write various styles of papers in different forms and different fields. I feel confident that I could write a paper about most anything and know how to cite and format it properly.

There are a couple of things that I do feel I lack the confidence and skill to perform, and that is what I hope to gain from participating in Capstone. I am scared to teach because I don't know how to share my knowledge with others-students who may have no idea what I am talking about. I hope to learn more about how teachers share their knowledge as part of my Capstone project.