

**Reader Response:**

MLA format

250-500 words

**How to write a reader response paper:**

What a reader response paper is:

- A critical essay that tells the reader the effectiveness of a literary text. It reflects a close reading of the work, contains specific examples drawn from the work (documented parenthetically with page numbers), and provides your well-considered opinion of the work's strengths and/or shortcomings without the use of first person pronouns. The essay demonstrates that you have read the text, internalized and contextualized its arguments, and can articulate and substantiate your reactions to it.

**What a reader response paper is not:**

- A descriptive summary of the book or of the historical events it describes. Assume your reader has read the text and has a familiarity with the era under consideration.
- A research paper. You may consult additional sources (other studies of the same subject; other critiques of the text) if you like, but you are not required to do so. Use parenthetical documentation.
- A classic "thesis" paper in which you state a thesis argument at the front end and use the text to support this thesis, reiterating the argument in the conclusion. The essay must have an organizing argument (see below) but it should be more analytic than descriptive. Its intent goes beyond proving a certain point of fact.
- An opportunity for general opinionating ("I thought it was really good," or "I thought it was terrible"), nor an opportunity to make statements of opinion that are not supported by evidence drawn from the text.
- A test of whether you had the "right" interpretation of the text. This is a venue for you to tell us what the text means to **you**. It should display thoughtful evaluation of the text and express of how it may have contributed (or not contributed) to your understanding of a particular period, and why.

Ask yourself the following questions as you prepare to write a reader response paper. You don't need to include the answers to these questions in your paper, but they can help you organize your thoughts and decide what you'd like to write about in your response.

- What were the main premises of the text (hint: authors often put these in the introduction, the conclusion, or both)? Did the author, in your opinion, do a decent job of following through with the main premise? Why or why not?
- What types of rhetoric and/or other literary devices has the author employed? Are they effective? Why or why not?
- How is the text "talking" to other parts of the culture and/or literature? Is there a primary theme, lesson, or moral? What is the author's purpose in writing this text?
- What parts of the text are most effective and why?
- What parts of the text are least effective and why?