

FINAL EXAM
2015-2016

A READER'S RESPONSE

For your final exam, you will write a **reader-response essay**, which is also called a **reader's response**. This kind of essay draws on reader-response criticism, a school of literary theory that [prioritizes the individual's experience of a text](#). You will choose a text, read it closely, and then complete a reader's response. The major requirements for that essay:

- You must have your text approved.** A Google Form will be created for this.
- The essay is due on or before June 10.** You will submit the exam copy through Google Classroom.

That's it. All other requirements are explained through this prompt or fall under the auspices of our course. You will use our writing process to produce the essay, and you will rely on grade abatement to monitor your process. To help you, there will be **three checkpoints** before the due date. For each, you will be asked to collect and submit evidence of your process — the external artifacts produced by reading, writing, and thinking.

9	10	11	12	13	<i>Suggested focus: deconstruct the prompt</i>
16	17	18	19	20	5/16: Checkpoint #1 Due <i>Suggested focus: select and begin reading your text</i>
23	24	25	🏠	🏠	5/23: Checkpoint #2 Due <i>Suggested focus: outline the response</i>
🏠	🏠	1	2	3	6/3: Checkpoint #3 Due <i>Suggested focus: complete the first draft</i>
6	7	8	9	10	6/10: Reader's Response Essay Due <i>Suggested focus: revision workshops</i>
13	🏠	🏠	🏠	🏠	<i>Q4 GAP reports due; Regents Exam (6/14)</i>

You can choose your text from a wide range of genres and mediums. These options make the most sense:

- Short texts (short stories and poetry especially) that can be read quickly
- Longer texts that you read recently (e.g., *1984*, if you read that when it was offered)
- Texts that you've read before and would like to revisit

Time is a factor. Judge your reading ability — and your schedule — honestly, and then choose a text that you can read in the time allotted. I will push you toward short fiction and poetry, but you can consider almost any genre or medium — even atypical texts like hip-hop or video games. The “text” of a game like *Shadow of the Colossus* lends itself to [this sort of essay](#).

All that said, **remember that this is a final exam**. You can and should experiment, but you do not have enough time to make a *poor* initial choice. You must also remember that this is a *reader's* response; certain texts will not work, no matter how interesting or engaging they might seem.

Use class time and our interstitial resources to discuss your choices with each other and with me. On the next page, [the grade abatement checklist](#) given to you a few months ago is connected to this process and the writing process overall. **Use the logic of grade abatement to direct your work.**

GRADE ABATEMENT CONNECTIONS

The usual GAP checklist has been adapted to reflect the particular requirements of the final exam.



Collegiality ✕ Empathy

□

This prompt is built around collaboration and empathy. You might read the same text, involve a group in your writing process, publish to Medium, etc; and, of course, the reading will activate, explore, and develop the skill of empathy.



Integrity + Character

□

If you choose the right text, your reading and writing will turn that collaborative empathy inward, allowing you to learn more about yourself.

External
Artifacts



Close Reading ⇒ Internalization

□

You must read actively and deeply and insightfully. Create external artifacts like annotations, journals, and reflections.



Critical Thinking ⇒ Metacognition

□

A reader's response is metacognitive by nature; you should also explicitly monitor your progress through those prescribed checkpoints.



Effective Communication ⇒ Writing

□

The central writing artifact is the reader-response essay, but you should also produce interstitial discussions and writing workshop artifacts.

Internal
Artifacts



Amenability ✕ Self-Awareness

□

As always, this is the extent to which you seek and take feedback on your process and product, from choosing a text to publishing the essay.



Assiduousness ✕ Self-Efficacy

□

This is the most important of these softer traits, because you must work independently, in and out of class, throughout this process.







Organization ⇒ Autodidacticism

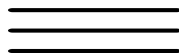
□

But *this* is the crux: You must organize the resources of this course in order to learn about reader-response writing, to read a text, and then to write the essay.

INTERSTITIAL ELEMENTS

This checklist has been adapted, too, to reflect the particulars of the prompt.

<input type="checkbox"/>		Google+ Community Start discussions. Ask questions. Post works-in-progress. Ask me to set up a section for the reader's response, if necessary.
<input type="checkbox"/>		Google Drive Use Docs to take notes, reflect and metacogitate, and collaborate on early drafts. Organize evidence in Drive. Experiment with other Google Apps.
<input type="checkbox"/>		Medium Workshop final drafts here. Then publish and publicize your response. Ask me to set up a collection for these responses, if necessary.
<input type="checkbox"/>		Google Classroom Submit evidence as we hit each checkpoint. Then submit your final essay alongside any other relevant artifacts.



GRADES

Your final essay will be assessed through the DAMAGES rubric, which will be converted into a 100-point grade through an aligned scoring scale. You can load these documents online:

- [DAMAGES Rubric](#)
- [Aligned Scoring Scale: Writing](#)

The writing *process* will factor into your Q4 grade abatement profile. The profiles are reprinted below, alongside another aligned scoring scale designed to remind you of the relative weight of these skills and traits. Use this to guide yourself through each checkpoint.

- [Aligned Scoring Scale: GAP Scores](#)

The discretionary curves (the +3 [detailed here](#)) are built into this version of the GAP scoring process. You will find a similarly curved score conversion for the final exam essay. If you have any questions about this process, ask in person or send an email.

HOW TO WRITE THE ESSAY

You should write this essay as you have written every other essay this year:

- [BC-1: Prompt and Circumstance](#)
- [BC-2: Writing Process \(Lite\)](#)
- [BC-3: Writing Process \(Full\)](#)
- [BC-4: Post-Writing Process](#)

A reader-response essay is built from the same universal elements of effective writing. This time, however, the responsibility for ETA and DAMAGES work is almost entirely yours: *You* must seek out models, search for guides, and use the other resources of our course to learn what to do. This final exam is a test of your GAP skills and traits, too, including your organizational and autodidactic ability.

That said, I would not send you into this without a fallback option. You can use the structure printed below exactly as it is in order to write this essay. You can use it loosely, too, adapting it as necessary. Or you can design your own structure. Regardless, **read this outline and use it to inform your process.**

Remember that the pilcrow symbol (¶) denotes a section of a response, not necessarily a single paragraph. This outline has four *sections*; it may have many more paragraphs.

- ¶1 offers the context in terms of plot (i.e., what is happening in the text). What does a person unfamiliar with the text need to know in order to understand the rest of the essay you will write? This is background and exposition. It lays out the scene, so to speak.
- ¶2 analyzes the text by breaking down literary elements (e.g., character development or thematic development). This is not meant to be turgid literary analysis; in fact, you should avoid anything that smacks of that sort of SparkNotes writing. Instead, you are acknowledging that artists built the text to which you are responding. You are acknowledging the elements of that art, from the depth of a character to the arc of a conflict to the poetry of a descriptive scene. Authorial choices and writing strategies are responsible for the connection you feel to a text.
- ¶3 explicates or unfolds *your* connection to the text — as a reader, your experience of and reaction to it. You might answer one or more of these questions, which are cobbled together from other sources:
 - What about the text is significant? Does it deliver a message or moral, teach a lesson, invite thought? What about the text is most interesting and compelling?
 - What personal connections can you make? As the text resonates, what events, people, beliefs, etc, from your own life come to the surface?
 - What is your favorite section or idea from the text? (Treat the word "favorite" as the start of something more precise and meaningful, e.g., a look at philosophy you love or a consideration of stylish writing.)
- ¶4 concludes by addressing the universality and worldly relevance of the text. Offer your thoughts on why this text is important and should be studied. If the text teaches a moral, *why* is it crucial for it to be taught? If the concepts raised deserve further study, *why* is that? Why does this text matter beyond an English classroom? (You aren't likely to mention an English classroom in your essay, of course, but you hope to write something that looks like it didn't start with an assignment at all. You want authenticity, and the idea of teaching is a good proxy for that.)