

3. The Close Reading Essay

Guidelines

The close reading essay requires students to carefully examine and defend an original thesis about a single text. Both because it is the simplest of the three essays and because close reading skills are essential for both the lens and research essays, the close reading unit is generally taught first. In addition to teaching the practice of close reading, the classes leading up to this essay should introduce the basic skills of college essay writing: thesis, motive, evidence, and analysis. The length of close reading essays is generally between five and seven pages.

Goals

- Teaching students how to derive meaning from the smallest parts of a text
- Encouraging students to link smaller elements in a text back to a larger thesis about that text
- Focusing straightforwardly on a single text in order to emphasize the elements of the academic essay
- Setting up the lens and research essays which require the use of close reading techniques but complicate them by adding additional components

Tips

- Type of text: You should ask your students to close read a piece of art or culture, a text that has some clear meaning but also contains enough ambiguity to allow students to formulate original and contestable theses. Texts that make for good close reading assignments include: short stories, poems, novels, advertisements, plays, songs, films, television programs, and art works. Texts in which the author is clearly expressing a point of view or in which the meaning is very straightforward do not usually work well for close reading essays. Such texts include: articles (both academic and popular), editorials, pieces of critical theory, and documentaries.
- Topic: In addition to assigning students a particular text (or type of text) to close read, it is usually beneficial to require students to focus on a particular topic. This relieves them of the burden of finding a worthwhile topic and allows them to focus on the task of close reading. Examples of possible topics include, representations of gender in a Shakespeare sonnet or the satiric treatment of race in a Dorothy Parker short story.
- Length of text: Short stories are generally of ideal length for close reading. However, it might benefit your students to challenge them by asking them to close read something very short (e.g. a sonnet or an advertisement) or something very long (e.g. a novel). Close reading a short text will give students practice expanding their ideas to fill five or six pages. This is a task young students often struggle with, and forcing them to rise to this challenge often produces stronger essays. Close reading a long text will give students practice in narrowing and refining their ideas to an appropriate length for a short essay.
- Pre-draft assignments: You will need at least two pre-draft assignments in your close reading unit. It is generally ideal for one of the assignments to focus on an element of the academic essay—thesis, motive, and analysis would be more relevant—and for the other assignment to focus on techniques of close reading. Possible pre-draft assignments are listed on the following page.

Pre-Draft Assignments: Close Reading Essay

UWS instructors are required to assign at least two pre-drafts for the close reading essay. It is recommended that one pre-draft assignment focus primarily on close reading techniques and another focus on a specific “element of the academic essay,” in this case, constructing a thesis. Though I offer potential variations on these assignments in a few cases, they have been left somewhat vague in order to allow instructors to creatively adapt them to their own courses in more specific ways.

Pre-draft assignments should not be self-contained. In addition to using them as building blocks for the close reading essay, instructors are encouraged to use pre-draft assignments as foundations for in class exercises. In most cases, I relate these assignments to exercises that can be performed either in class or on Webct message boards (or both).

Assignment #1: Notes on a Source Text (with Reflection)

Ask students to take a page or two of notes while reading or viewing the text (or a portion of the text) they will be using for their close reading essay. Once they have taken their notes students should read them over looking for patterns, tensions, or questions that emerged in what they noticed. Ask them to write a one page reflection addressing an issue of significance that emerged in their note taking. This assignment provides students with a technique for practicing close reading while encouraging them to take notes on course texts and to reflect on their own note-taking strategies.

Assignment #2: Mini-Close Reading Assignment

Choose several difficult passages in the text(s) you will use for your close reading assignment (possibly moments that generated puzzlement or disagreement in class discussion) and ask students to write a 1-2 page close reading that takes a position on the meaning of one of those passages. You might choose five or six passages and assign groups of three or four students to each passage, a foundation for group work in the following class.

Another possibility would be to ask students to locate a puzzling or meaningful passage for themselves. Like the assignment above, the goal of this assignment is to provide students with a hands-on strategy for approaching close reading. If you decide to ask students to choose a passage on their own, be sure to provide some guidelines for what makes a good passage for close reading. I recommend asking them to identify a question or tension in the text—the technique most likely to produce strong thesis statements—that they identify explicitly at the beginning of their pre-draft assignment and explore in 1-2 pages of focused writing.

Assignment #3: Thesis Writing Exercise

After reviewing Gordon Harvey's criteria for a strong thesis statement in class, ask students to compose two thesis statements that adhere to Harvey's criteria, meaning that they 1) get at the heart of the text, 2) are limited enough in scope to be arguable within page limits and with available evidence, and 3) are true but contestable. You can then use some of these thesis statements as examples that further your initial thesis lesson during group discussion in the following class. You may even want to ask students to submit their thesis statements to you electronically beforehand or post them on Webct so that you can pick the most useful ones (good, bad, and middling). Though you should choose a variety of examples, I often find that most useful student theses to present for class discussion are those that are potentially very strong, but currently very weak.

Assignment #4: Peer Critique of Introductory Paragraph (Thesis)

After reviewing Gordon Harvey's criteria for a strong thesis statement in class (see Assignment #3, above), ask students to write an introductory paragraph for their close reading essay and bring several copies to class. In small groups, students should 1) identify the thesis in the intro and 2) assess how well it fulfills Harvey's three criteria. In order to save class time, this assignment can also be done on Webct (especially good for classes that meet only once a week). Have students post their introductory paragraphs and assign two students to respond to each post in the same manner they would in small groups in class. In addition to emphasizing the importance of peer feedback, this assignment allows the instructor access to each student's thesis before the close reading essay is written, allowing him or her to troubleshoot off track assignments *before* the student composes an entire draft.

Sample Close Reading Questions

1. Write an essay that explores a contradiction, misperception, or other question about prostitution in the past using the archaeological record of brothels in the 19th century. Use specific archaeological evidence from Seifert et al. and Costello to support your argument.
2. Develop an argument about the way in which the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo are an example of how memory is used in political activism, as depicted in the film *Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo*. Support your argument with a close reading of the film.
3. Identify and make an argument about a tension in the way one of the films (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* or *Memento*) represents memory. You must base your analysis on two key scenes from the film you choose.
4. Identify and interpret a problem, tension, inconsistency or ambiguity in the depiction of the *Metropolis* in Fritz Lang's film. For example, you may choose to write about authority, class relationships, gender, the organization of spaces, the role of technology.
5. Marcel Mauss's influential *Essai sur le don* (*The Gift*), originally published in France in 1950, challenges many of our accepted notions of what a gift is or what conditions define the act of gift giving. For your first essay, critique and refine Mauss's theory of gift exchange by evaluating the theory's ability to explain gift giving practices in contemporary America.
6. Choose a scene from *The Importance of Being Earnest* and offer an analysis of it that challenges or complicates the standard reading (i.e., the status quo).
7. The readings for Unit #1 reveal the extent to which Americans met the enormous changes after World War II with redoubled efforts to map the boundaries of permissible behavior and shore up the social categories that defined groups and individuals across the country. Magazine articles, public speeches, bestsellers, and other sources from the period brim with carefully drawn prescriptions for postwar Americans—instructions for how to act, what to want, and who to be. Your assignment is to pick one concept, rule, or ideal and make an argument that focuses on something problematic about its use. In other words, you should make an argument based on a close analysis of a paradox, ambiguity, tension, or other perplexing feature you deem worthy of exploration. Potential topics range widely from political principles like “democracy” or “freedom,” social categories like “Western man” or “teenager,” to cultural judgments like “subversive” or “square.”
8. Write an essay about one story from *In Our Time*, showing how it critiques, challenges, or complicates a conventional definition of “the lost generation.” In order to write such an essay, you will need to specify how you are defining the phrase, and from which sources your definition comes.

Sample Assignment: Close Reading Literature (From Andrew Albin)

During this first unit, we will begin a semester-long discussion about how to read—how to locate and reside in the strangeness of a text—and how to produce a reading—how to make an argument about a text and support that argument with detailed analysis. Before you move on to non-traditional texts like film and music, it is important that you feel comfortable producing critical analysis for traditional texts. The interpretation of literature is the foundation on which we will build grander and more complex readings as the semester progresses.

Your assignment for this paper, therefore, is to interpret *one* Shakespeare sonnet from our course pack using close reading techniques. Locate a contradiction, complexity, or ambiguity in the poem—a textual strangeness—and explain *how and why* Shakespeare uses it to construct the gender identities of his characters. By focusing exclusively on specific details of a single sonnet, you can reveal how the poem “works” at the local level, how an author’s specific language choices contribute to the way a text makes meaning.

Your essay should be 5-6 pages long, and should follow the formatting guidelines in the Classroom Expectations of our syllabus.

GOALS OF THE ESSAY

Identify a strangeness of the text—a feature that engages you, perplexes you, makes you think—and formulate a thesis that explains how this feature shapes the poem’s gender representations. Your thesis should be original, non-obvious, non-impressionistic, and genuinely interesting; it must take an arguable stance with real stakes, one that is not plainly factual but that requires a defense against other points of view. Look back to your reading notes from when you first read the text—this is always a good place to begin locating an idea that can fuel an essay. While your initial reaction to a word, line, or set of lines may not be immediately paper-worthy, it can be the springboard to an excellent thesis. Some questions you might ask yourself:

- What did you first think was the gender of the speaker’s addressee? What specific words, phrases, etc. led you to believe this?
- Do you agree with the standard young man/dark lady assignment (note: “I agree” or “I disagree” is not an arguable thesis)? Why or why not?
- What about the speaker’s gender?
- What are the meanings of the words that get repeated or receive special emphasis because of rhyme (remember that rhymes need not occur at line breaks), location within the line (beginning and end are especially emphatic), or typography (capital letter, italics, etc.)? Look these up in the Oxford English Dictionary Online, linked at the library’s A-Z Database List (<http://lts.brandeis.edu/research/articles/alpha.html>).
- What might Judith Butler or the *World is a Text* editors have to say about this poem?

All interpretations require evidence; all evidence requires analysis. Be absolutely clear on the distinction between evidence (concrete facts, examples, and details; the data) and analysis (explanation of how that data is meaningful and contributes to your overall interpretation). Your evidence *must* be drawn from the sonnet you have chosen; you may not refer to the other sonnets. Please note: it is only rarely that a piece of evidence can be fully analyzed in a single sentence.

Structure the essay according to an argument. Avoid simply describing your sonnet or structuring your paper in the order of your observations. On the other hand, avoid “five-paragraph form,” which offers a sequence of evidence to prove the same point by reiteration. While analysis should always tie back to the thesis, a paper should proceed according to logically developmental “steps,” presenting, analyzing, and connecting each. While you’ll want to ground your reader in a context, this paper should mainly consist of close reading—analysis of specific words, phrases, images, lines, and metrics.

Orient your reader. Address your essay to readers who have read Shakespeare’s sonnets but not recently or in depth and who may not remember this particular poem. You will need to orient them with appropriate reminders (*quick* summaries of narrative context, characters and their relationships, location in the sequence of poems if relevant), always making sure those explanations *serve a purpose* (not just summary for its own sake). Never assume (1) that readers know what to look for, (2) that they see the same details in the same way as you, and (3) that they draw the same conclusions as you. Rather, persuade your readers of your claims through skillful analysis.

Employ effective, active verbs by eliminating your use of “to be.” By forbidding you to use all forms of the verb “to be,” including *am, is, are, was, were, be, been, and being*, this simple exercise invigorates your style with stronger, more descriptive verbs as well as strikes the passive voice out of your prose. It will also help you avoid introducing ideas with empty phrases such as “there is” and “there are.” Ideally, you will develop an awareness of your verb use while you draft and write, rather than translating sentences out of empty or passive forms once the draft is done. Refer to Writing Analytically 286-292 and A Writer’s Reference 140-143 for more detailed treatment on verb use and passive voice.

Document quotations using MLA in-text citation method. You are not asked to bring the *World is a Text* introduction or the Judith Butler quote into your essay; they are intended simply as catalysts to generate critical thinking. If you do choose to quote, please use MLA citations. Quotation from the sonnet should follow MLA conventions, as explained in A Writer’s Reference 378. Indicate line breaks within quotations with a forward slash (/).

Sample Assignment Sequence: Close Reading Advertisements (from Kelly Cotter)

The purpose of advertisement is persuasion. Advertisers sell us products and services by convincing us that we want and/or need the products and services being sold. In the athletics industry, some of the top-selling and most well-known companies include Nike, Adidas, and Reebok. Advertisers for these companies have developed images and slogans to inspire us to buy their athletic apparel. Nike's slogan (Just do it!) sends an entirely different message to customers than either Adidas's slogan (Impossible is nothing) or Reebok's (I am what I am).

Your task for the close reading assignment is to choose a commercial from one of these companies (see the links below). Does the commercial illustrate the company's slogan, or do the images send a different message than the message allegedly being proposed by the company? What do these commercials say about motivations to exercise? Papers should be 5-6 pages, double-spaced, using Times new Roman 12-point font, and should follow APA formatting guidelines.

Nike:

http://www.metacafe.com/watch/240189/maria_sharapova_nike_commercial/

Adidas:

http://www.metacafe.com/watch/613051/adidas_2006_great_ads/

Reebok:

<http://tinyurl.com/2gdbg8>

Your Goals

You must formulate a thesis that argues persuasively and coherently for one of the commercials we've watched to be considered consistent or inconsistent with its company's slogan. Of course, you could argue either way for all of the commercials. Thus, your argument must take account not only of evidence that illustrates your point of view, but also must acknowledge instances where the commercial is divergent from your opinion. Basically, you are trying to persuade a skeptical reader with an argument that is arguable, is well-reasoned, and considers fairly any likely objections.

You must support your thesis with solid examples drawn from the text you are discussing. The key to success in any close reading is in the strength of the explication of specific moments within the text. Take a careful look at places in your chosen work that seem especially important and explain what makes them so. What is being said and how do you know? Of what importance is this specific moment to the whole work? How does this point build upon what has come before, and how do subsequent moments relate to it? You will want to draw a reader's attention to specific points in the text through selective quotation and citation, but remember that a quote can't explain itself. You must explain *why* each moment is so significant.

You must structure your argument in a way that makes sense and helps make your case.

Give some thought to the way that your major points fit together to make a whole. Does each successive point build upon the last? Can a reader follow the progression of your argument from beginning to end and understand why it looks the way that it does? Remember that a successful argument is able to incorporate a variety of different points and examples into the framework of a larger claim in a way that is logical and persuasive. Make sure each example in your argument adds something to the whole and has a place in the whole that makes sense.

Consider your reader. Assume that you are addressing a good-natured but skeptical reader who has a general knowledge of your text but is lacking in specific knowledge. Remember to provide brief moments in your argument to remind your reader of what is going on more generally in your chosen work when discussing a specific example, and never assume that your reader will automatically see things the same way that you do or inevitably draw the same conclusions as you. Your relationship with your readers should be one where you demonstrate to them that your argument has merit and one where you show them how you reached your conclusions.

Use consistent and appropriate citation. You will only be referencing one work this time around and need not concern yourself with citing your chosen commercial in a references section. Nevertheless, it is important to clearly identify the places in the text to which you pay specific attention. All citations should be consistent with APA standards.

Make the most of the inherent variety and nuance of the English language. Nothing bogs down a promising argument faster than endlessly repeated terms and frequent conjugation of “to be.” Do your best to find fresh, active verbs and dazzle me with your expansive vocabulary.

**Pre-Draft Assignment 1.1 Notes on a Source Text with Reflection
Due Monday, Jan 28**

The first step in a close reading is making sure that you have a clear understanding of the text you are evaluating. To that end, your first assignment will be to examine the Nike, Adidas, and Reebok commercials. You should take a page or two of notes for each text while viewing the commercials. Next, you will look over your notes for patterns, tensions, or questions that emerged in what you noticed. Write a one page reflection addressing an issue of significance that emerged in your note taking for each commercial.

Nike:

http://www.metacafe.com/watch/240189/maria_sharapova_nike_commercial/

Adidas:

http://www.metacafe.com/watch/613051/adidas_2006_great_ads/

Reebok:

<http://tinyurl.com/2gdbg8>

**Pre-Draft Assignment 1.2 Peer Critique of Introductory Paragraph
Due Monday, Feb 4**

Now that you've had some time to evaluate a variety of commercials that employ different styles and techniques, it's time to see how an individual commercial compares with the slogan employed by the company who's product the commercial advertises. Choose a commercial you have examined so far (Nike, Adidas, Reebok) and answer the following:

1. Summarize the essential message or argument that your chosen commercial is trying to get across in a few sentences.
2. Pull five or six specific instances from your chosen commercial that seem to you to be absolutely essential to the expression of your chosen commercial's persuasive message. Write a sentence or two for each, explaining why each is so significant.
3. Briefly characterize the overall method your chosen commercial employs in a few sentences. How does the commercial communicate the basic persuasive message?
4. Write a sentence or two explaining how well or how poorly your chosen commercial fits with its company's slogan. What evidence supports or contradicts the proscription the slogan makes?

Based on Gordon Harvey's criteria for a strong thesis statement, write an introductory paragraph for your close reading essay and bring five copies to class. In small groups we will identify the thesis in the introduction and assess how well it fits Harvey's three criteria.

**Essay One First Draft Cover Letter
First Draft due Wed, Feb 6**

Please write a relatively brief (about 1 single-spaced page) cover letter to go with your first draft. In this letter, you should answer the following questions and address any other concerns you might have or any other issues that you are dealing with:

1. What do you see as your thesis?
2. What do you see as your biggest writing-related problems right now?
3. What do you consider to be your most successful accomplishments thus far?
4. What sentence or turn of phrase are you most proud of in this draft? Is there one with which you are particularly unhappy? Why?
5. What element of your essay- thesis, structure, use of evidence, persuasiveness, style, etc. – would you be most interested in having your respondents focus upon in their comments?
6. What do you intend to focus upon most heavily when you revise your essay? How will you do so?

Remember to bring enough copies for myself and the other members of your peer review workshop and to attach them to the copies of your draft.

Essay One Final Draft Cover Letter
Final Draft due Wed, Feb 13

Please write a relatively brief (about 1 single-spaced page) cover letter to go with your final draft. In this letter, you should answer the following questions and address any other concerns you might have or any other issues that you are dealing with:

1. What do you see as your thesis?
2. What do you consider to be your most successful accomplishments thus far?
3. What writing-related problems are you still struggling with?
4. What sentence or turn of phrase are you most proud of in this draft? Is there one with which you are particularly unhappy? Why?
5. What did you intend to focus upon most heavily when you revised your essay? What revisions did you make and why?

Sample Assignment: Close Reading Film (from Joe Wensink)

Write a 5-6 page close reading of one of the films we screened in class. Your paper should address how this film represents television, and what implicit critique is contained in that representation. You must refine this broad topic, however, to reflect a specific and arguable viewpoint. It is not enough to merely notice that the film criticizes television: you must articulate what specific aspect of television the film criticizes. Is television too populist? Does it corrupt morals? Does it impact politics in a negative way? Does it generate economic inequality? Or, does the film have an ambivalent relationship to television that simultaneously celebrates and criticizes?

Make sure you maintain critical distance. Do not accept the film's critique of television wholeheartedly. For example, if the film seems to accuse television of encouraging immoral behavior, then you should question how the film constructs its own moral sense, and whether or not we should accept its definition.

You should not be afraid of details that seem to contradict your thesis. Use these moments of contradiction to generate analysis, and to further refine or modify your thesis. You do not want a debate-style thesis that forcefully argues a one-sided, dogmatic viewpoint. Instead, you want a subtle, refined thesis that accounts for all the messy contradictions and complications within the film. Your thesis should present an argument, but the argument should not shy away from subtlety and depth.

You must include a one-page cover letter with your draft. This cover letter should reflect on your writing process. Asking yourself the following questions should help you get started: What aspect of writing this draft was most difficult? What came fairly easy? How did the pre-drafts affect your approach to writing the essay? What in-class exercises did you find most valuable?

Your draft should be 5-6 pages long, double-spaced, with 1" margins. Your draft must not contain any instances of the passive voice, and it may not have more than two instances of the "to be" verb per page. If you do not follow the requirements of this assignment, I will ask you to re-write your paper.

Sample Assignment Sequence: Close Reading Music (from Reba Wissner)

In 5-7 pages, you will do a close reading of Egisto's mad scene in Francesco Cavalli's *L'Egisto* (1643). The text is appended to the end of the assignment sheet. Your argument must rely on careful and detailed readings of specific moments in *L'Egisto*. You will explore the elements of madness explicit in the text, as well as those that are not obvious. Talk about what provoked the character's madness and how the other characters deal with Egisto's madness around them. Offer an interpretation of challenges or complicates the standard reading.

Your Goals

You must formulate a thesis that argues persuasively and coherently and you must support your thesis with solid examples drawn from the text you are discussing. The key to the success of any close reading is in the strength of the explication of specific moments within the text. Take a careful look at places in your chosen work that seem especially important to the text and explains what makes them so. What is being said, how do you know? Of what importance is this specific moment to the whole of the work? How does this point build upon what has come before, and how do subsequent moments relate to it? You'll want to draw a reader's attention to specific points in the text through selective quotation and citation, but remember that a quote can't explain itself and that you must explain why each moment is so significant.

You must structure your argument in a way that makes sense and helps make your case. Give some thought to the way that your major points fit together to make a whole. Does each successive point build upon the last? Can a reader follow the progression of your argument from beginning to end and understand why it looks the way that it does? Remember that a successful argument is able to incorporate a variety of different points and examples into the framework of a larger claim in a way that is logical and persuasive. Make sure each example in your argument adds something to the whole and has a place in the whole that makes sense.

Consider your reader. Assume that you are addressing a good-natured but skeptical reader who has a general knowledge of your text but is lacking in specific knowledge. Remember to provide brief moments in your argument to remind your reader of what is going on more generally in your chosen work when discussing a specific example, and never assume that your reader will automatically see things the same way that you do or inevitably draw the same conclusions as you. Your relationship with your readers should be one where you prove to them that your argument has merit and one where you show them how you reached your conclusions.

Use consistent and appropriate citation. You'll only be quoting from one work this time around. Nevertheless, it is important to clearly identify the places in the text you pay specific attention or quote directly. All the citation should be consistent with Chicago Manual of

Style or comparable systems. Since you'll be quoting from a libretto which is like a poem, note that individual lines are separated by a "/" when quoted together.

Make the most of the inherent variety and nuance of the English language. Nothing bogs down a promising argument faster than endlessly repeated terms and frequent conjugation of "to be." Do your best to find fresh, active verbs and dazzle me with your expansive vocabulary.

Pre-Draft Assignment 1.1

Due: January 22

The first step in producing a close reading is making certain that you have a clear understanding of the piece that you're reading. To that end, your first assignment will be to read Egisto's Mad Scene and to translate its rather elaborate verse into contemporary American English prose. For example, a passage from another opera (*Dido and Aeneas* (1689) by Henry Purcell) that looks like this: Thy hand, Belinda, darkness shades me;

On thy bosom let me rest.

More I would, but death invades me:
Death is now a welcome guest.
When I am laid in earth,
May my wrongs create
No trouble in thy breast.
Remember me, but ah! forget my fate.

would probably gloss into modern English prose most clearly in a manner like this: "Give me your hand, Belinda, and let me rest on your bosom, the darkness of death invades me and is now welcome. When I am buried beneath the earth, forgive all of my wrongs. Remember me, but forget my fate." Notice that while I had to add some words to make Dido's meaning more clear, I also attempted to keep his sentence intact. While you will probably need to move some words and clauses around to preserve modern sentence structures, do your best to keep your modern English sentences the same as ---'s seventeenth-century ones (this will help you keep track of the subject, verb, and object in each sentence).

Additionally, keep track of each word or phrase that you find yourself needing to look up and include a list of them at the end of your translation, along with mention of the source that you used to find out what they mean. As you work on your translation, you'll want to keep in mind that the Oxford English Dictionary can be found online through the Brandeis University Library webpage (it is a very handy tool to have at your disposal).

Keep in mind that you want a prose translation that is clear to you and accurately reflects the content of the poem. Paying attention to the structure of the verse and the effect of the meter and line breaks is an excellent thing to do, and we'll be doing that very soon, but for now your task is to get a good understanding of the ideas that the mad scene expresses.

Pre-Draft Assignment 1.2

Due: January 29

Now that you have read and translated the text to the mad scene, you will now watch a performance of it. Take a page of notes while watching the scene (you might want to watch it one time before taking notes). Once you have taken notes, you should read them over for patterns, tensions, or questions that emerged in what you noticed. Be particularly attentive to how the performer conveys the text that he is singing in gesture, body language, facial expressions, movement, etc.

You will write a one page reflection in which you will address an issue of significance that emerged in your note taking.

Essay One Rough Draft Cover Letter

Due: January 31

Please write a relatively brief (about one single-spaced page) cover letter to go with your rough draft. Begin the letter with “Dear Reader.” In this letter, you should answer the following questions and address any other concerns you might have or any other issues that you are dealing with:

-What are the origins of this draft?

-What do you see as your thesis?

-What do you see as your biggest writing-related problems right now? What do you consider to be your most successful accomplishments thus far?

-What sentence or turn of phrase are you most proud of in this draft? Is there one with which you are particularly unhappy? Why?

-What element of your essay-thesis, structure, use of evidence, persuasiveness, style, etc- would you be the most interested in having your respondents focus upon in their comments?

-What do you intend to focus upon most heavily when you revise your essay? How will you do so?

Remember to bring enough copies for myself and the other members of your peer review workshop and to attach them to the copies of your draft.