

Final Essay Student Examples

Example 1

Along with the importance of being involved and re-reading material, I found that one of the most helpful techniques I learned this semester was the use of annotations. In the past, professors never really stressed the importance of having to annotate; some mentioned it but never really made it a big issue. In this class I found annotating was to be including in our grade for the year, so we had to do it. The thought of writing in my book literally scared me. In the past, I always took the best care of my books, often removing the book sleeves while reading so I wouldn't accidentally rip or wrinkle them, and then replacing them once I was done with the book. I would never fold over corners: a bookmark was always needed. Once I began annotation, however, it became almost addictive. I couldn't stop underlining, and circling, putting things in parenthesis, and if I was feeling bold, highlighting. Circling words I didn't know forced me to look them up. After looking words up, I was able to better understand what the author was saying and found the story more enjoyable rather than just being confused and pretending like I knew what was happening. In class discussion, referring back to annotations made it easier to answer the questions presented. Looking back on the pages of the works we've read, I see they are all covered in pencil markings which make it easier to find the parts I enjoyed or needed for group work. Once I got into the groove of it with this class, I found I couldn't read material for other classes without annotating. I know for the rest of my college career, and also my teaching career, that I will be annotating anything pertaining to education, although in outside reading I've been finding the urge to begin circling the words I don't know.

Example 2

First of all, it is most important for me to note how big of a role self-reflection plays in regards to inner strength and success. I have always found my mind racing with thoughts, especially after a long day. It is not uncommon for me to mentally process my day and pick out things I had said or done and think of how I could have acted differently. These introspections can be overwhelming at times, but it was inspiring to read from authors such as Benjamin Franklin that many other people have experienced similar feelings. Rather than allowing himself to be buried in his own mind as he attempts to be "perfect", he turns this potentially distressing struggle within himself into a beneficial inner-examination, which leads to his attempt to "perfect" others. Through Franklin's willpower and sense of dutiful debt to mankind, he dedicates himself to an abundance of social reformation projects. Of course Franklin is known by all to be a great inventor and political genius, but through reading his works I felt I was able to connect with him on a deeper level I never expected to encounter. As I see myself in the future becoming an adolescent counselor, and as Franklin particularly focused a lot of his attention to educating and encouraging the youth; I feel personally motivated by his works as an author and as an incredible human being.

Example 3

I also have this class to thank for my newly acquired attention to detail. When the course first began, I found it insignificant to pull out the important details and I was just reading through quickly in order to get the assignment completed. However, when I began to slow down and pace myself, it became fairly easy for me to recall the in class questions based on the reading. Not only did this improve my quiz grades, it also made me aware when to pay attention and focus my mind in the moment, especially if I feel my thoughts drifting elsewhere. This was exceptionally profitable in reading poems such as Whitman, Anne Bradstreet and eminently, Dickenson. Dickenson's works are particularly more difficult to interpret as she embellishes her poems with explicit use of satire and metaphors. For example, in her poem "The bible is an antique volume," Dickenson plainly tells readers the bible is outdated; at first glance, this claim can be judged as a shockingly offensive. Re-reading and interpreting each of her metaphorical examples, while relating her chronological phase in America, allowed me to respect her point of view.

Example 4

Before starting this class, no one I knew had a passion for reading more than I did. I spent the vast majority of every day with my nose in book. I read in the car, in the hallways, on my break at work, while hanging out with friends, and even while taking a shower. Deciding to take a literature course seemed like a no brainer. Reading a thousand pages in a week was the norm for me, so tackling fifty pages over the course of a few days seemed like child's play in comparison. I went into class thinking that I could breeze through the assignments, having enough time left over to catch up on my personal novels. But the situation was entirely different than I had expected, for from the very beginning, I scorned every piece we were assigned. Breezing through literature I enjoy is easy enough, but when the assignments were a page stopper rather than a page turner, I began to dread the readings. Trying to read Mary Rowlandson's: A Narrative was like trudging through deep snow. Despite the warning on the syllabus to begin that assignment early, I could not bring myself to do so. Every time I picked it up and read the first page, my interest dwindled away, until I would eventually put the book down. But having a deadline, I had to get through it. Yet rather than absorb the words on the pages, my mind kept telling me, "A *Storm of Swords* is sitting right there. Just pick it up, and throw this annoying, stupid lady's narrative in the trash." From that point on, I realized that I only have a passion for reading when I choose what I am reading, and can do so on my own time.

Example 5

At the start of the semester, I always thought reading the assigned reading once was sufficient enough. I quickly learned how important it is to re-read reading assignments. Re-reading the literature helps you to better understand the message the author is trying to send. I also learned how imperative it is to annotate in the reading passage. This was very helpful when I needed to go back to an important sentence or

message. Underlining and highlighting important words and messages was crucial to my learning the meaning of words. I took advantage of the OED and this site was a huge help in understanding the meaning of important terms throughout the class and readings.

Example 6

Coming into this class I was more nervous than others, after reviewing the syllabus I remember why. The first day I remembered reading that we would be going over the Puritans. If I wasn't sad enough summer was ending, this wasn't my area of expertise. When I thought about the Puritans the first word that popped in my head was boring. To my surprise they had much more to offer than just religion. Each writer from this section brought some of the first views of America. To my surprise I was intrigued by many of their ideas and stories they carried with them. It was a different way to view what I now see America as. In Mary Rowlandson's, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Rowlandson*, I was more touched by this story than any others we read this semester. It brought a different perspective on the views I knew nothing about. These authors based their writings on the accounts I never would have thought about if not for being in this class. It opened my eyes to the changes that literature has produced in America throughout time.