# Mondo-Mega List of Essay Prompts

***\*\* Some of these have detailed advice on paragraph sequences, and some do not\*\****

1. **Short Analysis and Research, With “Full Prompt”**
2. **Outline of Short Analysis and Research, With Sample Paragraphs**
3. **Artifacts**
4. **Before During and After**
5. **Borders**
6. **Classical Argumentation**
7. **Compare Two Texts**
8. **Compromise**
9. **Ethnography**
10. **Exploratory Versus Expressive**
11. **Idiomatic Expressions**
12. **Imagine Yourself in a Situation**
13. **Imitate Authorly Structure**
14. **Job Search Article**
15. **Knowledge**
16. **Lawnmower**
17. **Make a Difference in the World**
18. **Manifesto**
19. **Movie Review**
20. **Museum Curation**
21. **Past-Present or Chronological**
22. **Personal Responses (Seven Included)**
23. **Places**
24. **Play List**
25. **Policy or Proposal**
26. **Representative Example**
27. **Respond to Author**
28. **Sell a Product**
29. **Societal Problems and Race**
30. **Soft Skills**
31. **Song Breakdown**
32. **Textbook Summary**
33. **Word Report**

***\*\*I am starting with a full prompt, and an outline I typically give to students that shows sample paragraphs (#1 and #2 on this list)\*\****

1. **Short Analysis and Research**

This assignment will ask you to do a short research paper based on a text you have read for the course. This text will either be a course handout or a text from the web. You will choose a text, break it down to show you understand it, then find a source that adds to our understanding of one of the main topics the text raises. The source you research should be current, and from a valid place so it can lend your essay legitimacy.

In the introduction, state the text you are analyzing, its author, and what you think the purpose of the text is. After this, discuss what you think the most important elements of the text are, and how these elements help the author achieve their purpose. Finally, state how your research helps us better understand the important elements of the text.

You might want to consider the following:

* Is data a prevalent part of the text?
* Does the author make usage of emotion?
* Does the text address a current problem?
* Is your research current?
* Is it from a relevant source?

Your first body paragraph (after the introduction) should be your own analysis of the text, and the second body paragraph should be devoted to your research.

In your body paragraphs, make sure to identify the topic of the paragraph, and make direct references to the text. Try to quote the text you are referencing twice in each paragraph, and cite according to MLA guidelines. You should give context for what you quote, and explain why what you have quoted is important to the text.

As far as the research goes, how to distinguish between good and bad research, and scholarly and non-scholarly articles, will be covered in class. I will provide documents to guide you through the process (which will be put on Canvas). The essay will be evaluated in large part on the authority of its sources.

In the conclusion, discuss why the topics the author raises are valuable for discussion. Try to discuss how the text brings these important things to light. Also, consider if there is anything else you want to mention about the text. Perhaps you might mention future studies that could be done on the text, or its central topics.

The essay should be about three pages, typed, in MLA format. There should be a Works Cited page. You will be required to annotate your sources (we will discuss this in class also).

The final paper is due Monday, September 28. Good luck! Let me know if you have any questions.

**Learning Outcomes**

* students will use reading strategies to understand argumentative texts
* students will compose a clearly-written, well-organized, purpose-driven analysis

**Examples**

Examples of good analysis, research, introduction, and conclusion paragraphs can be found on Canvas, and we will develop these as practice in class.

**Instructor Response Time**

I will have these essays graded and returned within two weeks.

**What to Do If You Need Help**

Check out the Writing and Language Development Center. You can look at their website on the Yuba College web page, or stop by in person. The WLDC is located inside the library, near the front entrance and to the right. You can walk in or make an appointment. Hours of operation are Mon.-Thurs. 8:30am-5:00 pm and Friday 8:30am- 4:30pm on all instructional days. You can call them at 530-740-1709.

The WLDC is open and free for all currently enrolled Yuba College students. Their services include but are not limited to the following: drop-in assistance for any writing assignment, MLA, APA, and Chicago style formatting help, one-on-one or group appointments, informal study space, technology assistance, proofreading tips, ESL reading, writing, and conversation support, Kurzweil 3000 software for assisted reading & writing.

**Disabled Student Resource Center**

If you are a college student with a documented disability, you have the right to “reasonable accommodations based upon your educational limitations” under Title 5 of the California Education Code and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If you have not yet documented a disability with the college and you’d like to establish reasonable accommodations, please contact Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) and set up an appointment. DSPS provides support services and academic accommodations to ensure access for students with disabilities consistent with the educational offerings and mission of Yuba College. They can be contacted at: 530-741-6796 or dspsinfo@yccd.edu.

1. **Outline of Short Analysis and Research, With Sample Paragraphs**

**Introduction Paragraph**

**Give title of text you’re analyzing / state the type of text it is / name the author and source–** “California’s Largest Utility Provider Could Face Murder Charges for Wildfires, AG Says” is an article by Dakin Andone and Marlena Baldacci that appeared on ktla.com.

**State the purpose of the text (often, it is to evaluate a topic AND SOMETIMES to argue a stance) –** The purpose of this text is to evaluate the destruction caused by PG&E’s negligent practices.

**State a key point from the text, and say why it is important** **–** One of the most important points of this text is statistics. This key point is important because it helps us see how much damage has been caused by PG&E’s negligence.

**Describe research (what it is, how it adds to our understanding of the first text) –** Additional research shows that more recently, PG&E has been enacting new safety measures. This helps us see that the company is changing the way they do things, particularly when the risk of wildfires increases throughout California.

**Analysis Paragraph**

**Introduce the key point you will mention, say why it is important –** One of the article’s most important key points is statistics that show how destructive the company has been.

**Describe the text (often it helps to locate the passage you are citing, or summarize what is happening in the text) –** In the middle of the text, we get some statistics on the destructiveness of PG&E.

**Give a quote, as a correct MLA citation –** According to the article, the Camp Fire on November 8, 2018 was so destructive, it “claimed at least 85 lives” (Andone and Baldacci).

**Explain the quote (what exactly it means, and how it helps the text) –** This is a high number of deaths, obviously. The statistic shows us how bad the fire was, and how much life was lost.

**Describe the text some more, and discuss what is happening in the passages you are citing from –** Later on, we get statistics about another incident caused by PG&E – this one in San Bruno, California.

**Give a quote in correct MLA format –** In 2010, a pipeline explosion in San Bruno, according to the text, “killed 8 people and injured more than 50 others,” and was caused by improper surveillance of the pipeline (Andone & Baldacci).

**Explain the quote (what it is saying, and how it helps support the purpose of the text) –** These are more statistics that help us see the damage caused by PG&E. Given that PG&E was held responsible for both of these incidents, we can make a connection between their negligence and the injury to and loss of human life.

**Research Paragraph (generally the same guidelines as the previous paragraph)**

**Introduce research** **–** A more recent news source shows PG&E has become a lot more cautious in their practices.

**Describe text** **–** The article, “California Fire Season Starts With PG&E Power Shut-Off in 5 Counties” goes into detail about how PG&E will now reduce power to communities when conditions for potential fires increase.

**Give quote** **–** The text shows PG&E was “cutting power to approximately 22,700 customers in two events across five California counties, as wind speeds were forecast to accelerate” over this past weekend (Walton).

**Explain quote** **–** This quote shows us evidence that PG&E has started to change the way they do things.

**Describe text** **–** Communities all over California are affected by this, we learn, including our own.

**Give quote –** According to the text, “PG&E turned off power to about 20,500 customers in Butte and Yuba counties on Saturday night” (Walton).

**Explain quote (connection to first text) –** This shows that PG&E has been shutting off power to several places, as a way to reduce the risk; basically, they shut power lines down when wind conditions worsen in dry weather and the risk of fire increases. From this research we see that as fire risks increase, more and more California communities will be impacted by a series of new safety measures enacted by PG&E.

**Conclusion Paragraph**

**Why the topic matters (examples: it is current, it is widespread) –** This topic matters because a lot of people are affected by these fires, and the damage is often severe. For instance, many Camp Fire victims have still not recovered.

**Other key points from the text that are worth mentioning / why they are important –** Another important part of the primary text is PG&E admitting fault. This helps us see they know that they need to improve safety practices, and take steps to improve their service.

**Shortcomings (examples: the text is old, the text is too short, the text has limited perspectives) –** One shortcoming of these texts is they are over a year old.

**Future studies we could do to learn more about this topic (they should add to our understanding of the central topics)** **–** Future articles might show us in more detail what PG&E is doing to change their ways. Also, are they paying out compensation to the victims of their negligent practices? We might also learn this in future studies.

1. **Artifacts**

**\*\**Adapted from Barry Brummett’s* Rhetoric in Popular Culture\*\***

Often we give certain values, or identities, to things. In assigning these values we might be

guided by cultural biases. For example, consider the following two people eating lunch at a

café:

- Person A is having a Budweiser, a steak, fries, and chocolate ice cream for dessert

- Person B is having chai iced tea, whole wheat pita bread with steamed veggies, lentil beans, and raspberry sorbet for dessert

If you had to guess, based on these descriptions.

- Which one is a man?

- Which one is a republican?

- Which one is from California?

- Which one is heterosexual?

- Why did you think these things?

For this essay, choose 4-5 “artifacts” from any given culture and describe their

“stereotypical values.” For instance: a pickup truck might signal manliness, and a pink

bicycle might signal femininity. These can be from the categories of clothes, food,

entertainment, personal possessions, or career choices.

Next, create a random person that these artifacts belong to. Write 4-5 sentences on who this

person is.

After this, choose 4-5 artifacts that represent yourself. What are these artifacts and what do

they say about you? Do they fit or not fit “stereotypical” definitions?

1. **Before, During and After**

Choose an event; it can be something personal, something that has happened in society, or a historical event.

* What was life like before the event?
* What was the event itself, and how were things different after the event happened?

Support your body paragraphs with research.

1. **Borders**

***\*\*Adapted from the Puente Project\*\****

In her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, author Gloria E. Anzaldúa, defines borders in the following way:

“Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.”

For this writing assignment, you will write an essay to explain how we define borders.

Think about what we’ve learned about expanding our understandings of borders beyond the physical/geographical. Why is this important? What are the different points of view? What is *your* point of view?

As we conduct the research process, we will share, analyze and log resources together. You will also create an annotated works cited page.

**Research Question: What concepts that we’ve learned together are the most important to define and understand borders, and why?**

**Write a paper addressing questions you see above, and your choice of the following questions:**

Describe ways borders exist in the area you are researching. Is that border visible or invisible?

How is it that the borders you identified continue to exist?

What factors affect the existence of these borders?

What recommendations do you have for addressing these borders?

1. **Classical Argumentation**

***\*\*Adapted from William Murdick’s Teaching College Composition: A Practical Guide for New Instructors\*\****

* Use the following features of classical argumentation as subjects for your body paragraphs:

1. Identification of an issue and statement on why it is important
2. Presentation of your stance on the issue
3. Presentation of a rebuttal to your stance
4. Discussion of what in the rebuttal has merit
5. Discussion of why ultimately your stance is superior
6. Discussion of the author’s stance on the issue
7. Reassertion of why your stance is correct

* Afterwards, write an introduction that summarizes what is to follow in these body paragraphs

1. **Compare Two Texts (Needs examples)**

* Choose a text, and link it to another text. Some examples of “links” are social problems, the usage of emotion, a recent event, or the prevalence of expert opinions on a topic
* Summarize both texts in the introduction, and say what the link between them is. Also, discuss how the link serves each text, and what we learn by comparing them
* The structure for this essay will be either a “blocking” or “braiding” structure

Blocking Structure

Intro

Analysis of Text #1

More Analysis of Text #1

Analysis of Text #2

More Analysis of Text #2

Discussion of the links between them, and what makes them different

Conclusion

Braiding Structure

Intro

Analysis of Text #1

Analysis of Text #2 with references to text #1 on what the link is, and how the link is different in each text

More Analysis of Text #1

More Analysis of Text #2 with references to text #1 on what the link is, and how the link is different in each text

Conclusion

Below is a sample outline, with examples of the intro and the “discussion” paragraph

from option one, the “blocking” structure. For the “braiding” structure, you will want to

work the “discussion” into the analysis (see above instructions for “braiding”).

Intro

**(TEXT ONE) Title / text / author –** “Chapter 13” is part of *A Dream Called Home* by Reyna Grande.

**Purpose –** The purpose of this chapter is to show Grande working at a summer job.

**(TEXT TWO) Title / text / author –** “Chapter 16” is also part of *A Dream Called Home*.

**Purpose –** The purpose of this chapter is to show her working at an optometrist’s office.

**What the link is (emphasize similarities) –** Both show her meeting a guy that she likes while at a new job.

**Why the link is important to each text (emphasize differences) –** What is different, however, is that Gabe in Chapter 13 is wealthy, and has a nice house and kids. Arturo in Chapter 16, is poor, and lives in a dilapidated house.

**What we learn by comparing them (hint: we learn more about something, either the link, or one of the main subjects of the text, or both) –** Comparing them, we learn Grande is too independent to follow someone else’s dream, and that she tends to want to help people who seem to be struggling.

Analysis TEXT ONE

**Introduce key point** –

**Describe text –**

**Give quote –**

**Explain quote** –

**Describe text** –

**Give quote** –

**Explain quote** –

Analysis TEXT TWO

**Introduce key point** –

**Describe text –**

**Give quote –**

**Explain quote** –

**Describe text** –

**Give quote** –

**Explain quote** –

Compare Contrast

1. **What texts have in common (the link)** – Both chapters show her interacting with guys. We learn a lot about her from how she does this.
2. **How the link is different in each text –** However, Gabe is an older man, with more money, a family, a house, and a dream. Arturo is younger, with less money, and no family. He wants to go back to Mexico, not build a house in America.
3. **What we learn by comparing them (hint: we understand the link better)** – Comparing these chapters, we learn Grande wants to follow her own path, and live in America, but also that she likes men who remind her of her father, and that she wants to help others.

Conclusion

**Why the topic matters (current, widespread)** –

**Other key points worth mentioning / why they are important** –

**Shortcomings (old, short, limited perspectives) –**

**Future studies we could do** –

1. **Compromise**

* Choose an issue that people seem to argue about
* What are the different viewpoints?
* What is your viewpoint?
* What is it about opposing viewpoints that you are willing to admit has merit?
* How might elements of certain opposing viewpoints be incorporated into what you advocate as a solution to the issue?
* What are you willing to compromise for the sake of establishing a consensus?
* What would you ask your opposition to compromise?

1. **Ethnography**

According to the web article “A Guide to Ethnography” by Jack Caulfield, ethnography is “a type of qualitative research that involves immersing yourself in a particular community or organization to observe their behavior and interactions up close. The word ‘ethnography’ also refers to the written report of the research that the ethnographer produces afterwards.

In this essay, you will describe another culture in detail. This can be done through research, interviews, or personal experience.

* Some defining features of an ethnography essay are

A culture’s history

Community problems

Contact zones with other cultures

Education

Enemies

Fashion

Foods

Gender roles

Governance / Hierarchies

Important dates

Politics

Rites of passage

Rituals

Sacred texts

Sources of revenue

Identify one of these things in your text. Write an analysis paragraph showing that it is in the text, with discussion about why it is important to the text. Guidelines for this paragraph are on Canvas.

After this, find research on this key point and write an analysis paragraph on the research.

Next, write a personal response paragraph in which you discuss *your* experience with this key point in *your own* culture. Discuss the similarities, and / or differences, between your culture and the ones you mention in the previous paragraphs.

\*\* In place of this personal response paragraph, you have the option of conducting an interview with someone about their experience with this key point.

In the conclusion, mention the things we learn from your comparisons. How are the cultures alike? How are they different? What are things we could do to learn more about each culture?

The structure should look like this

Intro

Analysis Paragraph

Research Paragraph

Personal Response / Interview Paragraph

Conclusion

Make sure your introduction is a concise summary of the three body paragraphs.

1. **Exploratory Versus Expressive**

Exploratory essays look at a problem you encountered, and how you tried to solve that problem through considering different points of view.

* Identify a problem you encountered
* What did you do about it? What perspectives did you seek out?
* What did you find?
* What did you learn?
* Did you “solve” the problem?

An expressive essay describes your thoughts, feelings, experiences, memories, and emotions, in ways that use descriptive language.

* What is an experience you would like to describe?
* How might you use all five senses to add to the description?
* What emotions did you experience?
* What are the most powerful memories?
* Did you learn anything from this experience?

After this, choose a subject you can write each essay on. Follow the steps for each essay, but write 1-2 sentences only for each step. Now, write a few sentences on how they look compared to one another. What is emphasized in each?

1. **Idiomatic Expressions**

The most basic definition of an idiom is a phrase or expression that tries to get meaning across in a colorful, creative way. Most cultures are loaded with idioms.

Here are some American idioms:

- Let’s put our cards on the table (meaning: let’s be open and honest)

- They fight like cats and dogs (meaning: they fight a lot, or very aggressively)

- Sweep it under the rug (meaning: hide, or conceal)

- Hit the road (meaning: get out of here)

Find three idioms. Can you find research on the history of the idiom? Do you ever use it? Can you use it in an original sentence? Try to follow these steps for each one, and cite your sources.

1. **Imagine Yourself in a Situation**

* Are there decisions people made that you wouldn’t have made?
* What could you have done to stay out of this situation?
* *G*e*t* out of this situation?

***\*\*This is also a good project for small group discussions and larger class discussions. Students tend to have fun with it\*\****

1. **Imitate Authorly Structure**

For this paper you will use the rhetorical maneuvers an author makes as a framework for your own writing.

The framework comes from Malcolm X’s “A Homemade Education,” which is an excerpt from his autobiography. In this text Malcolm X describes how he became literate while in prison, and how afterwards, he began reading texts that motivated him to join the struggle for civil rights in America.

The text has a three-part structure:

1. His motivation to learn to read

2. His process of becoming literate

3. The results of his literacy

Write an essay in which you discuss your own motivation to improve in some way, the process of improving, and the results of your progress.

1. **Job Search**

* Find a job advertisement online that you think you would be interested in
* Copy-paste the job description into a Word document
* Beneath the description, write a short, three-paragraph cover letter that tells your prospective employer why you would be a good candidate for the job

1. **Knowledge**

Some knowledge we gain is “empirical,” meaning it comes from things that we read,

or study. Some knowledge we gain is “experiential,” meaning it comes from life

experience, from doing things. Give 2-3 examples from each category. What did you

learn? How did you learn it? Why is it important, or valuable?

1. **Lawnmower**

In auto shop classes, a common exercise is to take a lawnmower engine apart, describe what each part is and the function it serves, and then put the engine back together. In this essay, you will do something similar, but for a text. The challenge is, to keep your own opinion out of it, and merely describe how a text is “functioning”

* Choose a text
* Establish what the purpose of the text is. Is it to evaluate a topic without making an argument? Do you see an argument? What is it?
* What are the key points of the text? How do these key points help the author establish their evaluation and / or advance their argument?
* Why is this an important issue? What are some shortcomings of the text? What are future studies we might do to learn more about the topic? (Usually these questions are addressed in the conclusion, and you have some leeway to be a little opinionated here)

1. **Make a Difference in the World**

What is a random problem in the world that you feel you can help solve? What is this

problem and why is it significant? How can you help? Why is your solution valid? How is

the solution plus your efforts to solve the problem achievable?

What sources to you have to back up your argument?

1. **Manifesto**

What is a manifesto? Typically, a statement of belief.

Common features of a manifesto are:

* the intentions, motives, and views of an individual or group
* statements of social or cultural values
* the identification of a social or political movement
* an existing consensus of some type

Manifestos commonly connect their stances to codes of morality, ethics, beliefs, or traditions.

Try to write a manifesto. Here’s how.

Give 1-2 sentences on each of the following:

1. Identify an existing issue
2. Give your personal stance on it
3. Identify people or groups who agree and/or disagree with you (this one is kind of hard so I will make it optional)
4. State why your beliefs have merit
5. State why this is such an important issue
6. Say what the consequences will be if we do nothing about it

Here is an example:

1. One controversial subject is testing medicine and health products on animals.
2. Personally, I think we only should do this when absolutely necessary.
3. Some may disagree, saying animals are not the same as humans, or that it is a necessary evil to ensure products are safe for humans. Others think it is always wrong to subject animals to danger as we test products for humans on them.
4. I believe my stance has merit because certain types of testing can save human lives. For example, this type of testing has led to major breakthroughs in treatment for leukemia, multiple sclerosis, and tuberculosis; such efforts have helped save millions of lives and end suffering for millions more.
5. This is a crucial issue because there will always be a need to help improve human health, and cure conditions that continue to affect people around the world.
6. However, if we do not establish which practices are ethical and which are not, we run the risk of animal cruelty. We should be very careful about when we decide to do this.

Potential topics (I recommend looking at the website procon.org and looking at all the issues there until one jumps out at you):

Vaccine distribution

Climate change

Gun violence

Infrastructure investments

Student loan cancellation

The death penalty

Vegetarianism

Universal health care

Banning plastic usage

***\*\*One exercise can be for students to all write on the same issue, and then read their manifesto aloud in class. Students can listen, take notes, and then free write on what information from other students they accepted, or rejected, to modify their own manifesto, and why (best to not have them read this part aloud)\*\****

1. **Movie Review**

* Choose a movie
* Go onto a website like rottentomatoes.com that aggregates movie reviews and select a review of that movie (I recommend choosing a “Top Critic,” ie a professional reviewer)
* Without reading the review, copy-paste the text into a Word document and do a word count on the review
* Watch the movie, and take notes on what you think might be important to mention
* Write a review of the movie that is roughly the same length as the review you selected
* Now, read the review you selected
* Are there things that you and the reviewer both mentioned? What did you mention that they didn’t? What did *they* mention that *you* didn’t? What do you think these differences reveal? Anything?

***\*\*Alternative structure for a more formal writing assignment\*\****

* Choose a movie
* Go onto a website like rottentomatoes.com that aggregates movie reviews and select a review of that movie (I recommend choosing a “Top Critic,” ie a professional reviewer)
* Watch the movie, and take notes on what you think might be important to mention
* Write a paragraph summarizing the movie
* Write an analysis paragraph on the movie review
* Write a paragraph answering some of the following: are there things that you and the reviewer both mentioned? What did you mention that they didn’t? What did *they* mention that *you* didn’t? Do you agree with the reviewer about the movie? Why or why not?
* In a new paragraph, discuss why you think this is an important movie to discuss. Is it merely a reflection of what entertainment is popular? How? Is there a message to the movie people need to hear? Are there certain people the movie is directed toward?

Your structure should look like this:

Intro

Paragraph summarizing the movie

Analysis paragraph on the review

Paragraph discussing how your “review” and opinions compare to the reviewer’s

Conclusion

Make sure your introduction is a concise summary of the three body paragraphs.

1. **Museum Curation**

For this project, you will be a “curator” for a museum. You will have the option of choosing a museum that represents: 1. Your community, 2. Your family and/or personal background, 3. An issue that you find important or interesting.

You will do the following:

* Choose a topic from the guidelines listed above
* Find 10-15 “artifacts” that represent this topic
* Include pictures of these artifacts (it is acceptable to email these to me, since it may require a lot of ink to print them out)
* Describe what each artifact is, and why it is part of your museum.

You will turn these in with a “cover letter” that explains why you chose these artifacts, how they represent a range of information on your topic (in other words, different categories give us a diverse understanding of what your museum is about). Does your museum have sections? Is the physical space arranged in a certain way? Why is this? Your cover letter should be 1-2 double spaced pages.

1. **Past-Present or Chronological**

*(Past-present structure)*

* Choose an issue
* Go back in time 10 / 20 / 50 / 100 / ? Years
* How is this issue different today than it was at “at that time”?

*(Chronological structure)*

* Choose an issue
* Go back in time 10 / 20 / 50 / 100 / ? years
* Trace the evolution of this issue at various stages. Are their key moments in its history? Large gaps where nothing changed very much? Who are the influential figures?

1. **Personal Responses**

* (*memoir prompt*) Utilizing a memoir narrative that focuses on a specific time in your life (not “beginning to present,” which is an autobiographical structure), create a narrative that isolates this time; ideally, it would be one that shares commonalities with the themes of a course text.

Describe this time, and then discuss how your experiences link to the text, and how they are different. You might consider such things as lenses (money, gender, technology, what people want, or desire), cultural artifacts (clothes, entertainment, art, food, group identifications and values), or stages of storytelling (stasis / trigger / quest / surprises / critical choices / climax / altered state / ending note) for ideas.

* (*memoir prompt II*) Write a personal response that discusses a specific episode in your life, using the structure of 1. Background (the context, or situation), 2. Episode (what happened), 3. Commentary (your opinion on things, what you learned). Some questions to guide you are: What happened? What was the context? What did you learn? What was the time, the place, the characters? How did the episode make you feel? What are important details? Objects? How did this experience affect or change you?
* (*literacy and mentorship prompt*) Write an essay in which you discuss how you gained literacy in something. What was the literacy? What was your motivation to acquire it? Did you have a mentor or series of mentors? What was the process of “becoming literate”? Remember to think of literacy as anything you can acquire knowledge or expertise in. After this section, take on the role of “mentor” to the reader, and write a “how-to” section in which you describe how to do whatever your literacy is, in the role of a teacher. For example, if it is playing guitar, write a passage on the basics of guitar playing, or a certain type of cooking, or working with cars, etc.
* (*internal / external prompt*) Write an essay in which you discuss how you see an issue in the world around you affecting others, and also how it affects you personally. For example, pollution; you could describe pollution in the world, and also the effects it has on you personally. Other potential topics could be gender roles, the state of the economy, the quality of schools, or issues related to health and diet. How is your experience a common one? A unique one? Why is this issue important?
* (*identity and intersectionality prompt*) Intersectionality is defined as framework for understanding how aspects of a person's identities combine. Examples may include gender, race, family income level, location, sexual orientation, religion, disability, physical appearance, birth order, profession, academic interest, personality type, household dynamics, nationality, or political beliefs. List all of these things out, and rank from 1-10 the role you feel they play in your overall identity. What did you find ranked the highest? The lowest? Do you feel this has helped you learn about your overall identity? How would you describe your overall identity? Is there anything you’d like to add to the list?
* (*opinion versus level of experience prompt*) Two different types of personal responses are what your opinion on a topic is, and your level of experience with a topic. An example of the former can be the verdict in a trail (I agree with the punishment / I feel the punishment is too harsh); an example of the latter can be extreme weather conditions (I have been impacted by the wildfires / I remember living where hurricane evacuations occurred with frequency). Sometimes, you can find a topic that suits both types of the personal responses. For example, climate change: I have seen its impact on my community, and this has influenced my opinion that urgent action is needed. Find a topic that *you have experience with and an opinion on*. What is the relationship between these things? Do you admit to a certain amount of bias? Are there people who disagree with you? Why is this?
* *(emotions / habits of mind prompt)* For every day in a given week (two weeks might work even better), write down the things you are feeling throughout the day. After a few days, write on the following questions:
* Are there certain patterns to what you feel depending on the time of day? How about the day of the week?
* Were there certain disruptions that altered your mood rapidly? What were they and how did they impact you?
* Do you feel like you have certain “mental routines” or “habits of mind?” For example, times of day you are more talkative, more contemplative, more likely to read, more likely to want to relax?
* Are there certain outside events, or people, which affect you routinely? What are the events, and effects?

1. **Places**

What is a local place that you consider beautiful? How about ugly? Why do you feel this way? Now, what is a non-local place you consider beautiful? Ugly? Why is this?

1. **Play List**

***\*\*Works well with the short text “Wilkie Fahnstock, The Boxed Set” by Rick Moody, a piece that describes various moments in the titular character’s life, with accompanying song lists that correspond to the time periods mentioned\*\****

* Describe various time periods in your life, and list songs that seemed to be part of the “soundtrack” of this time
* After doing this, write on why these songs were so important to you, or why they were a part of the time period(s)

1. **Proposal**

* Choose a current issue that represents a problem in need of a solution
* Find a current news story that covers this issue
* Write an analysis paragraph showing the problem in this story
* Write a research analysis paragraph that adds to our understanding of this text. The key point must be: a problem that needs solving
* Write a personal response giving your opinion on how to solve it
* Find a source that supports you, and write an analysis paragraph showing the solution has merit. The key point must be: the solution to the problem

The structure should look like this:

Intro

Analysis paragraph on the “problem” from the news story

Research paragraph on the “problem”

Personal response on the “solution”

Research that supports your “solution”

Conclusion

Make sure your introduction is a concise summary of the body paragraphs.

1. **Representative Example**

In this assignment, focus on one person or small group that represents a “case study.” For example, homelessness. The essay will start with a description / portrayal of one homeless person, then it will branch out to homelessness in a community, or state, or country. The objective is to utilize the rhetorical strategy of humanizing the issue with a portrait, then broadening the scope to show how this one person / group’s situation is representative of a larger societal trend.

1. **Respond to Author**

* Choose a text in which the author offers a stance, opinion, or conclusion on a topic
* Characterize in detail what that author’s stance / opinion / conclusion is with an analysis paragraph that cites the text
* Write a paragraph in which you agree or disagree with the author, or perhaps say it is impossible to do one or the other
* Support your own stance with evidence in a research paragraph
* In the conclusion, mention why this issue is important, and ways we might learn more about what to do in the future

The structure should look like this:

Intro

Author’s stance

Your opinion

Your supporting evidence

Conclusion

***\*\*I recommend giving extra credit to students who “disagree” with the author\*\****

1. **Sell a Product**

Pick a random product. Who are you selling it to? How will you pitch it? What visuals will

you incorporate, and why would those particular ones be effective? Is there a gender, age

group, region, culture, religion, income level you are targeting? How is your “pitch”

influenced by these things?

Part one of the essay will be the pitch itself, part two will be you explaining the pitch by

answering the questions above. Does any research support the methodologies you are

using?

1. **Societal Problems and Race**

Mara Lee Grayson in *Teaching Racial Literacy: Reflective Practices for Critical Writing* states “Research results, such as statistics on societal problems like poverty, education, and the prison industrial complex, may make evident the extreme racial biases in long-standing social and governmental institutions.”

For this paper, choose one of the societal problems she mentions:

* Poverty
* Education
* Prison industrial complex

Try to conduct research which combines recent stories like news articles, with more academic studies on the history of this problem in America. Do you see evidence of racism? How has this impacted societal institutions, and the problem itself? What does the research say? Try to write three to four paragraphs summarizing your research, and cite the text. Make sure to write an intro that summarizes your findings, and in the conclusion mention what we might do in the future to take action, or learn more about the topic.

1. **Soft Skills**

Here is a list of some common “Soft Skills,” which can be defined as a broad range of behaviors and values that help a person be successful in life:

* Collaboration
* Creativity / Imagination
* Following directions
* Handling conflict
* Investigating local issues
* Meeting deadlines
* Perseverance
* Personal investment in work
* Problem solving
* Project planning
* Punctuality
* Respect
* Responsibility
* Risk-taking
* Social justice
* Time management

In this option, choose two of the above “skills.” Identify their presence in a course text, and write an analysis paragraph on each, showing their presence in the text combined with a discussion of why they are important to the text.

After this, write a personal response paragraph in which you discuss your own experience with the skills.

In the conclusion, mention some other soft skills that are important to the text, and say why. Mention if you think some of these skills are particularly important to success in life, and say why.

The structure should look like this:

Intro

Analysis Paragraph on first soft skill

Analysis Paragraph on second soft skill

Personal Response Paragraph

Conclusion

Make sure your introduction is a concise summary of the three body paragraphs.

1. **Song Breakdown**

***\*\*Adapted from Mara Lee Grayson’s* Teaching Racial Literacy: Reflective Practices for Critical Writing*\*\****

Choose a song, and write an essay in which you address the following questions:

* What mood does the music invoke? Does the mood change?
* Is there a narrator? A variety of characters? A plot? A specific time in history that is mentioned? A specific circumstance?
* What objects or settings does the song reference?
* What research were you able to find on the song?
* What does the artist have to say about the song?
* What are some critical reactions to the song?
* What does the song remind you of personally?

1. **Textbook Summary**

Find a textbook.

* First describe the content. What is it? Why does the book exist? Who is it for?
* Now, describe the layout. How is it organized? What do you think the strategy is behind the organization?
* Finally, describe the presentation. What are the photos, the illustrations, the look of the pages, the covers? What do you think are the strategies behind these things?

1. **Word Report**

* Choose a word
* Define the word
* Discuss the origins of the word
* Mention similar words that have the same function
* Discuss its usage over time
* Mention a contemporary text(s) that features this word, and discuss why it is there
* Write a short personal response paragraph in which you make usage of the word

***\*\*I strongly recommend giving students a list of words to choose from\*\****