

INTEGRATING LOW-STAKES WRITING IN LARGE COLLEGE CLASSROOMS SUPPLEMENT 3: PROCESS JOURNAL EXERCISES

The following process journal exercises are to be done by the due dates listed on the schedule and brought to class on the day they are due. No late exercises will be accepted. You may handwrite these (if your handwriting is legible) or type them, though typing is recommended, as many exercises will become part of your essays in progress. Be sure to take these exercises seriously as they will help you create stronger drafts and improve your writing practice.

These will be evaluated based on the depth of your engagement on a check scale:

- v+ = thoroughly follows directions and engages deeply in writing practice
- v = follows directions and shows a satisfactory engagement with the writing practice
- v- = does not follow directions or does not show satisfactory engagement with writing practice.

Process Journal Exercises for a Research Essay

1. Read carefully over the guidelines for the assignment that was handed out in class. Then freewrite about a topic that interests you. If you need to write about several topics to find out what you're most interested in first, that's fine too, but once you identify a topic, write about that one. Discuss why you are interested in this topic and what position you take on it. After freewriting for a while, do some preliminary research on your topic on Google or in Wikipedia to discover what others have said about it. *Note: though you will use more scholarly sources in your essay, this search is meant to spark some ideas about avenues you might pursue.* Then freewrite again from your new perspective. Are there new issues that you want to take into account? What issues warrant deeper research? Finish this freewrite by coming up with a driving question that will guide your research.
2. Visit the library or access a database on the library website, such as ProQuest or another database relevant to your field, and locate at least three secondary sources that you plan to use for your research paper. Copy down the title, author, and other bibliographic information located in the source citation, and write down some notes about how these sources will be useful in helping to answer your research question. Then choose at least one passage from one source that you are considering directly quoting in your paper and freewrite about it, focusing on how this passage connects to your driving question. Be sure to indicate the page number where this passage is found. Though this is all that is due for your journal, you might consider freewriting about other passages that you find as you begin to draft your essay.
3. Write a draft of a paragraph that sets up the stakes for your research essay. Discuss why this research topic is important and/or what gaps or issues you feel need to be explored and why.
4. Write three consecutive body paragraphs toward your research essay. These paragraphs should integrate research and build on each other using meaningful transitions that highlight the shifts in your thinking from one paragraph to the next. Provide clear and detailed context for each source, make smart choices about the format of your evidence (quotes, paraphrase, summary—use block quotes if your quote is longer than four lines), and follow your evidence with

thoughtful analysis that connects your evidence to your research question. When analyzing, ask yourself: what aspect of my research question does this evidence answer or address and why does it matter?

5. Write a paragraph that addresses one or more of the counterarguments to your position. Include at least one outside source in this paragraph and be sure to introduce and analyze the outside source.
6. Freewrite about the further implications of your argument. Why does it matter to the world? What difference does it make? How has your position changed in relation to the topic since making the argument?

Process Journal Exercises for an Analysis Essay

1. Choose a subject that you might consider focusing on for your analysis. If your subject is a text, freewrite about what you notice in the text. If your subject is an image or a place, freewrite a detailed description. If your subject is an organization, freewrite a detailed description of how it works or who is part of it. This isn't a formal paragraph so it can be jumpy and erratic, but try to be as objective as possible (don't judge the subject, just freewrite about what you observe). For example, you might select a few quotes and discuss them in terms of argument or language use, or explore what they mean to you. Or you might notice an aspect of the image connects to larger themes in our class. Once you are done, go back through your freewrite and circle (or underline) observations that you made that seem to unlock some greater understanding about the work or that might provide a guiding idea for your essay. Look for any reoccurring themes or conflicting ideas that you want to explore and take note of them.
2. Write two paragraphs that introduce the context behind the subject of your work. You might choose to write one on the historical significance and one on the audience reception, for instance. Or you might write one on a surprising fact about the author or about the author's life in general. Bring both versions to class.
3. Write two paragraphs that each focus on a selection of evidence from your subject; either select passages of the text or concrete details of the image—perhaps some details you made note of in your freewrite. In each paragraph, introduce the evidence in a meaningful way and then provide thorough analysis of the evidence. Consider analysis questions such as "Why does this matter?" "How does this evidence reveal something unexpected about the subject?" Try to take the analysis further in the second paragraph, either by building on previous analysis or expanding on a key theme. When you are done drafting, underline the evidence and put a wavy line beneath your analysis.
4. Consider what evidence and analysis you presented in the last two paragraphs you wrote, and write a paragraph about another aspect of your subject that will complicate what you have so far. Consider quotes or images that contradict or complicate earlier points you made. For example, does the context of the work cause us to see the quotes or images you've described so far differently? Look for potential clashes, conflicts, or contradictions in the subject that might build on and evolve the paragraphs you have so far. Remember to include both evidence and analysis in the paragraph.

Process Journal Exercises for a Narrative Essay

1. Freewrite about what comes to mind after reading the prompt for the writing assignment. Explore different experiences you have had, describe in detail what imagery you remember, tell a story. While freewriting, try to discover what questions you have about this experience. What would you like to understand better about how it affected you? What did the experience mean in the larger scheme of your life? How did it affect your view of the world? Write without stopping for at least ten minutes, preferably more. At the end of this freewriting experience come up with a specific question that you might use to guide your writing experience—a question that could be the DRIVING QUESTION of your essay. What specifically do you want to know about this experience? Bring these to class for discussion and to hand in.
2. Begin to write your essay by drafting two paragraphs about your topic in two different paragraph modes. There are six different paragraph modes to choose from, each offering a different angle of approach to your topic. Narration, Description, Comparison, Example, Cause and Effect, Definition, or Classification/Division. Choose two of these modes and explore your topic through the angle they offer. These two paragraphs need not be in order, nor does either paragraph have to serve as the introduction (though it can!). Focus on answering your driving question by using one mode at a time. Regardless of what kind of paragraphs you choose to write, be sure to include concrete details, choose words wisely, and transition between sentences as needed.
3. Once you finish your first draft, return to your initial question and freewrite about the answer you have come up with. Take your answer further by asking, “What other outcomes could there be?” Or, “Is that really true?” Or, “Is this answer too clichéd or easy?” Or, “Why does this answer matter in the larger context of my life or the world?” Read over your freewrite and see if there is anything you would like to add to your essay to make it more complex.