

Example Reaction Papers

Below are several reaction papers from past Roots of War classes. All of these papers got high marks (above 4.5 points) because the student stated his or her reaction/response clearly and explored the aspects of the assignment that elicited or created the response. Similarly, the student writer structured the paper around a coherent point or set of related points and concluded with a sentence or two that reiterated the central theme in a concise way. Do note, as well, that the papers show few proofreading goofs. None of these papers are perfect but all of them model the central features of an excellent response/reaction paper.

#1)

Stephan King's "On Writing" Reaction Paper

"I never opened my mouth and you never opened yours. We're not even in the same *year* together, let alone the same room...except we are together. We're close." Stephan King's short work, "On Writing", suggests that good writing is effortless for the reader; that the reader almost absorbs the information in front of them. In order to create such effortlessness, a writer should be concise, passionate, and genuine. He demonstrates the success of these tactics in his own writing with such ease that the reader does not even catch on until he or she is already invested in the work.

King is obviously passionate, confident in his abilities and the subject matter in which he is discussing, and is real to the reader. As readers, we can sense his authenticity in the way his writing flows. He does not try to compensate with unnecessarily large words, or extravagant sentences.

The reader must trust what the writer is trying to portray; this requires authenticity and investment on the writer's part. According to King this means that the writer must not reach beyond the capacity of his or her actual vocabulary. King demonstrates in his own writing that vocabulary does not necessarily need to be complex but, rather, fitting. King's use of simple language easily engages the reader and allows them to absorb his ideas with ease, while his familiar tone feels friendly yet assertive; leaving the reader feeling trusting of his message.

By the end of the work, the reader trusts King as a writer, feels that he is credible, and has a relationship to what he has written. The process has been effortless, almost as if it were, in fact, telepathy.

#2)

War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning Reaction Paper

The effectiveness of Chris Hedges,' *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, relies on his use of the ideas of *mythic reality* versus *sensory reality*. Without these terms, as he presents them in Chapter One, the book would not make sense. It would not be consistent and coherent.

While reading the following six chapters of the book, I used the definitions of mythic and sensory realities to the scenarios I encountered. For instance, the idea that those who directly oppose war and those who directly support it merely have different opinions no longer rings entirely true to me. According to Hedges, "*In mythic war we imbue events with meanings they do not have.*" (21)Where as in sensory war, the viewpoint comes from those who have seen the awful impacts that war has on a society. "*In sensory reality we see events for what they are,*" (Hedges, 21)

Had I not had this knowledge prior to reading the following chapters, I would have had a more difficult time processing the enormous amount of information that the book provided. With this new vocabulary, the information became manageable where it might have been overwhelming otherwise.

By providing his readers with a more organized view of a deeply abstract reality, Hedges does not take away from the gravity of war, but rather is more successful in expressing his thoughts. Because war is so vast, the contrasting ideas of mythic and sensory reality gives the reader a way of organizing the information it contains makes it easier to grasp. With the mythic and sensory definitions Hedges uses in his book, the idea of war is more attainable.

#3)

The Forever War Reaction Paper

I felt that Dexter Filkins' use of fluid writing style, and genuine understanding of his readers were the main factors of *The Forever War's* success.

In comparison to *Fiasco*, *The Forever War* proved to be much more successful for me, as I was interested in its reliance on the human experience to tell its story. *Fiasco* was difficult for me to grasp due to its many technicalities and the way in which the information was presented. Although I appreciate that *Fiasco* was a great success and hugely helpful in giving the war context, I felt overwhelmed by details. This is why *The Forever War* was more successful for me. This is not to say that *The Forever War* lacked either details or context, but rather that the manner in which it was presented was, for me, more manageable.

As a reporter Filkins understands human communication impeccably and that his writing style reflects this understanding. The experiences that Filkins chose to share, for example, are very telling of his ability to relate experiences in ways that truly resonate with the reader. A good example of this occurs on page 30 as Filkins is describing Omar, a fighter in the war against the Soviets. "Shrapnel flew into Omar's right eye. "Omar just got hold of his eye, took it out, and threw it away," Hassan said."

This moment is more than just gruesome. It shows the solidarity and loyalty this man has to his God. Moments such as these are what drew me to Filkins' style, and I believe deepened my understanding of war on a more human level. I feel that Filkins' success lies in his ability to articulate his experiences in a fluid way that will connect with most readers.