

Week 5: The Summary Response Essay

There is obviously more than one way to deal with a piece of writing. In your first essay, you analyzed and evaluated it. In a rhetorical analysis, we do not respond to that essay, either to support it or to refute it. We simply explain how the author went about making his or her argument, and then evaluate how well that argument was made.

But this can be difficult, right? We all have opinions, and most of us (especially you headstrong young people!) are just DYING to share them with others. It can be tough to simply evaluate a piece of writing without adding, “And the author is totally wrong, by the way.”

Here comes the summary response essay to the rescue! In this essay, instead of evaluating the effectiveness of a piece of writing, you either SUPPORT IT or REFUTE IT. This is a completely different way to approach a piece of writing.

In fact, because of the differences between a rhetorical analysis and a summary response essay, you could find that in your rhetorical analysis, you positively evaluate an article (“the author did a great job making an argument”), but completely refute it (“but the author was wrong”) in your summary response.

The summary response essay has two pieces (as you might have guessed from the name):

1. You summarize another author’s argument
2. You then either support or refute it

The important thing to remember here is that it’s not about you AGREEING with the author. Agreement is subjective. Your goal is to objectively, through evidence and logic, either support or refute the author’s argument. You will make an argument stating that the author was right or wrong (you will declare this in your thesis—see the chapter), and then you will support that position, as I said, with logic and evidence.

In fact, don’t make the mistake of using some form of this language as your thesis:

I agree with Author X because of A, B, and C.

Instead, do something like this:

Author X is right/wrong because of A, B, and C.

Chapter 10, your reading this week, will discuss this essay in more detail, along with providing several other important tools:

1. The basic organizational pattern (pg. 76)
2. **THE ASSIGNMENT ITSELF** (pgs. 75-76 starting at bottom of pg. 75)*
3. A sample essay for your review (pgs. 77-79)

We will write this essay over the span of three weeks. This week your job is to preview the chapter, get an idea of what a summary response is and how it works, and then read the article by Ed Koch. Although Koch’s article is not a response to a specific piece of writing, it is a response to a political position and shows how an author can summarize and respond to opposing arguments. You should also select a topic this week and get started on your own essay.

Next week we will have additional reading, another discussion forum, and you will submit a rough draft for peer review.

In week 3 of the unit, we will have a final discussion forum and you will submit your final drafts.

READING

Chapter 10 in *The Super Compact Guide*
Ed Koch Sample Summary Response
Preview options for your summary response essay

THE ED KOCH SUMMARY RESPONSE DISCUSSION FORUM

Once you've completed the reading, go to the Ed Koch Summary Response Discussion Forum link. Review my opening question and respond, and then respond to at least TWO of your classmates throughout the week.

*Note a couple of items regarding the reading. First, this book is also used in other English classes, and in those classes, the essay order is different. So ignore any mention of which essay this is.

Second, rather than include specific articles from which you could choose, I placed "xxx" in the selection area of the assignment. Online articles change regularly, so I didn't want a hard copy of a website that was no longer valid. Please see the article options list in each of the next three learning modules. Note that you can also select your own article if you would prefer.