

# Reading Response Instructions

The purpose of a reading response is to provide space for you to think through your reading and connect it to the larger world. These responses will help you stay accountable to your reading as well as scaffolding your revision of your thinking about the topics the readings represent. After all, to make the most of your learning, you must move beyond simply reading and recalling that text—though these two activities are the *sine non qua* of learning from one’s reading; to truly learn, you must develop and confront your budding understanding of the topics in the text.

To facilitate your learning from the scholars and texts we will read, we will use a structured reading response. Your responses will follow the format **Reflect, Extend, Connect, and Discuss**<sup>1</sup>, each of which are described below.

## Reflect

Your response should **show you have thought deeply about the ideas in the text**. There are two key ways to do this: (1) **provide a brief summary** of the text. This could be one to three sentences in length. (2) Choose and **respond to at least one important passage**. Quote or paraphrase (and cite!) the passage(s), which may encapsulate an idea, a sentence, or even up to a paragraph of the text. Then you should explain why you think this quote or paraphrase is important.

## Extend

Your response should then **elaborate how this text informed new directions in your thinking**. In other words, what new ideas did the text provide that broadened your thinking or extended it in different directions?

## Connect

You should then endeavor to **connect your reading and thinking with texts from the larger world**. How does your reading connect with the other readings in this course? What about texts in your other courses, both education and in other disciplines? How does your reading connect with other forms of media in the broader world, such as movies, novels, comic books, social media, etc?

## Discuss

Finally, your reflection should **provide a few questions for discussion** for use in class. Write at least one of these. To help you draft quality discussion questions, please read through and consider the following discussion guidelines:

Guidelines <sup>2</sup>	Model Discussion Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Formulate open ended questions, questions that can be interpreted through various perspectives. No yes/no questions!</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How might members of different groups in a multicultural society like ours interpret the <i>Pledge of Allegiance</i> line “one nation under God”?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Compare, contrast, and look for connections between the reading(s) and other readings assigned in class.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How do you reconcile the <i>Pledge</i> itself with the rights of people to reform or overthrow their government as outlined in the <i>Declaration of Independence</i>?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Look for gaps in the author’s reasoning or statements that you find problematic.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What do you make of the use of the word “republic” over “democracy” in the pledge? How might the former structure be less inclusive than the latter?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Think about the broader implications of the author’s arguments.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How well does reciting the <i>Pledge</i> achieve its purpose—to focus citizens’ and future citizens’ attention on their duty to their country? Can simply saying the <i>Pledge</i> be enough to show loyalty?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Look for connections between abstract or theoretical ideas and actual—or potential—practice.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How can teachers enact the principles of “with liberty and justice for all” throughout the school day? What are other potential rituals worth performing at the beginning of the school day?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Build upon connections between the reading and current events and controversies.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How should teachers make sense of pledging allegiance to a symbol that many Americans treat quite skeptically, for example with recent controversy over athletes kneeling?</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the Connect, Extend, and Challenge framework from [Harvard Project Zero](#)

<sup>2</sup> adapted from Dr. Janell Hobson of SUNY Albany