

Essay #2: Difficulty/Curiosity Essay



In the labyrinth of a difficult text, we find unmarked forks in the path, detours, blind alleys, loops that deliver us back to our point of entry, and finally the monster who whispers an unintelligible truth in our ears.

-Mason Cooley

Purpose:

The purpose of this essay is to help you pay greater attention to what your mind does as you read, and to allow you to explore an aspect of your book in greater depth. In particular, I want you to learn about either difficulty or curiosity—to recognize that in difficulty and curiosity lie rich promise for interesting discoveries. ALL readers encounter difficulties and all readers should find places in texts that make them want to know more. In this essay, we will explore how to recognize these places, address them, and how to use those aspects of a text to deepen our understanding. This essay will help to prepare you for your Senior Thesis by giving you a greater meta-cognitive awareness of how you read, and a concrete strategy that you can apply when you are researching.

Your Task:

PART 1: Your difficulty or curiosity (350 words min, 2 quotes/paraphrases min)

1. Quote or paraphrase the section(s) of the text you find difficult, OR the section(s) of the text that spark your curiosity.
2. As specifically as possible, describe why those sections are challenging/sparking curiosity for you. What is going on in your mind as you read this?

PART 2: Your strategy for addressing your difficulty or curiosity (350 words minimum)

1. Formulate a plan of action in which you come up with a combination of strategies to address your difficulty or curiosity. Perhaps you wish to underline a particular these or idea, or maybe you will research more, or maybe you just need a vocabulary or character list. Be sure you explain in detail:

- a. What strategies you will be using
 - b. Why you believe those strategies will address your difficulty/curiosity
 - c. What you hope to understand by using those strategies
2. Attach your reading strategies to your finished essay. You need to figure out how to create evidence of each strategy. This could be notes from a conversation, research notes and a source list, notes from a conversation you had, photocopies of your annotations, or anything else that provides evidence that you put your strategy into action.

PART 3: New insights (350 words minimum, 2 quotes/paraphrases minimum)

After you put your plan into action explain how your strategy impacted your understanding of the text. Use quotations from the text or from your additional sources to develop and support your ideas. These may be the same as the quotations you used in part 1. Potential questions to address include:

1. What new insights did you gain?
2. In what ways did your understanding of the text change or shift after putting your strategy into place? What is now clear? What is now fuzzy, or what additional questions do you have?
3. How does this new understanding impact your understanding of the text as a whole?

PART 4: Reflection (350 words minimum)

In this section, please reflect on what you learned from this process. You might wish to consider questions such as the following:

1. What did you learn about the reading process by completing this essay?
2. What have you learned about yourself, and the way you approach texts by completing this essay?
3. The next time you encounter a challenging text, or an idea that makes you want to know more, what will you do?
4. How has this assignment prepared you for success in your senior thesis?
5. How might you change your approach, if you were to do the assignment again?
6. What do you see as the value or purpose of this assignment?

Due Dates:

1. Rough Draft Parts 1 and 2: Monday, 10/16
2. Rough Draft Parts 3 and 4: Monday, 10/23
3. Final Draft: Thursday, 10/26