

Writing Reflection Papers

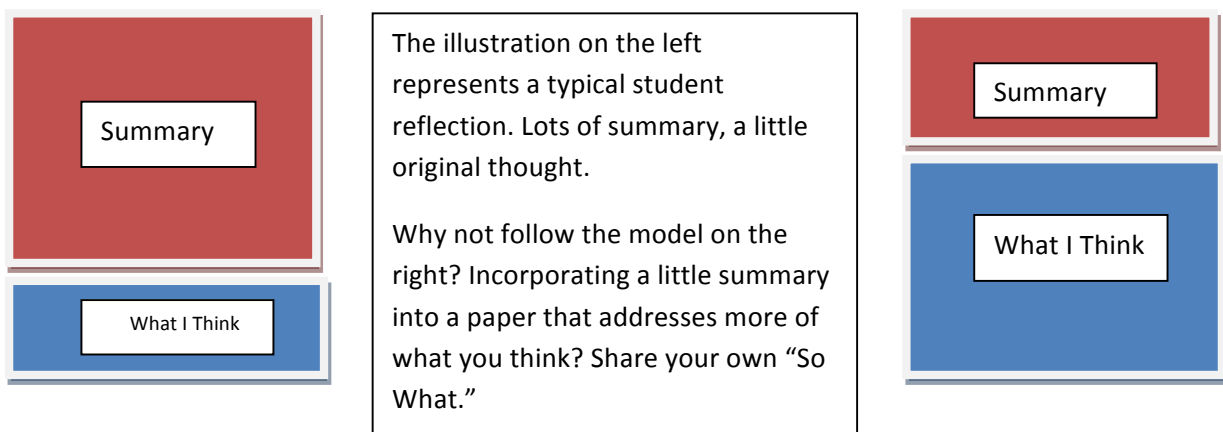
When it comes to a movie, food choices, the right girl or guy for a friend, the best accessory for an outfit, or perhaps the right club for a golf shot we're ready and willing to say "Let me tell you what I think." Yet when it comes to writing reflection papers, students often feel that they have nothing to say.

How can that be? If you've done the reading, or the experiment, or the interview, or seen the movie or the show...or done whatever it is you are meant to be reflecting upon you are bound to have some opinions. You may even have learned something. Ideally, it will be something about the course material and/or about you personally. Really think about it. What insights do you have after having completed the activity assigned? That is what the professor wants to read.

A reflection paper is not about venting, telling your secrets, or simply detailing what you did that day. It's about sharing a discovery of something significant. These papers can: foster greater understanding of an experience, help you apply concepts and course learning, make the ideas more concrete and prove to faculty that you understand and can integrate the course material.

The "So What" you attach to an activity, a reading, or event is what makes all the difference. When writing your paper, first hone in on a thesis. What is the significance of the experience you are reflecting on? *Why* is it important? *Why* is it worth writing about? *Why* is it worth reading about?

Once you have your focus, be sure you write for your intended audience, honestly, in depth, citing sources and finishing strong. Try to write as vividly as you can about the people, events, places, readings you did and how they relate to the course material. Write actively. Organize your thoughts. Proofread carefully.



This handout is based on the Let Me Tell You What I Think...Writing Effective Reflections presentation offered by the Center for Academic Success. If you have any questions, or would like assistance with writing your reflection papers, come visit the Writing Center in Dana 014.