

Scaffolding Assignments

Workshop – facilitated by Alina Gharabegian for AUA

October 25, 2017

The following assignment is designed for our gateway course for English majors, but appropriate for any class where students are *introduced to engagement with secondary sources*:

Thursday:

- Class discussion of James Joyce’s “Araby.” Students will have read the short story independently at home.

Homework:

- Assignment that asks students to read, annotate, and summarize (in 1-2 paragraphs, each) two secondary sources that subject “Araby” to a critical reading – Jerome Mandel’s “The Structure of ‘Araby’ ” and Suzette Henke’s “James Joyce: East and Middle East.” Students are also asked to bring questions about the essays to class. (Low-stakes writing.)

Tuesday:

- Class discussion of Mandel and Henke in order to ensure literal and interpretive comprehension, in broad terms, and to settle pressing questions about the articles. Students will be taking notes during the discussion (low-stakes writing). Students turn in summaries.

Thursday:

- Summaries of Mandel and Henke are returned to students with marginal and terminal comments for consideration as they reread the articles for further interpretive comprehension.
- In-class writing assignment (freewrite): “What do you remember of your notes and our discussion from Tuesday?” Five minutes. “Now turn to your notes, consult them, and complete your freewrite.” Another 5 minutes. (Low-stakes writing. These are submitted; I look them over and return them to students on Tuesday, with minimal comments and a check mark.)

Homework:

- Students reread Mandel and Henke on “Araby,” keeping in mind our class discussion and my responses to their summaries.
- Students create an outline of the main argument of each essay by quoting the sentences that constitute the essays’ thesis statements (main claims). Next, students quote the 3-4 sentences in each essay that provide support (in the form of smaller claims) for the thesis statements. (High-stakes writing assignment – converting summaries into outlines; identifying thesis statements; identifying supporting claims; distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details; pulling pertinent quotes.)

Tuesday:

- In class, students paraphrase the sentences that constitute the thesis. They paraphrase the 3-4 smaller claims. (Lesson on providing direct quotes for substantiation; lesson on paraphrasing; lesson on avoiding plagiarism.) Students submit their outlines.

Homework:

- Students compose a one-paragraph summary of the essay's main argument and supporting claims, based on the paraphrasing work we did together in class. They are instructed to be vigilant against the possibility of plagiarizing by making sure that they do not borrow anything whatsoever from the language of the articles. (High-stakes writing.)

Thursday:

- In-class writing: "Carefully re-examine both essays and find an instance in both where the same literary element (plot point, scene, character, literary device, etc.) from 'Araby' is treated. Which author's claims about the literary element do you find more cogent and why? Compose a one-paragraph response. Your explanation should ideally lead to your *own* interpretation of the literary element under discussion." (Low-stakes writing—first encounter with "entering the conversation.") Students retain their paragraphs to use at home. Students' outlines are returned to them with marginal and terminal comments and grades. Students submit their formal summaries, completed at home. At this point students have the following written work to use in completing the culminating writing task:
 - Preliminary summary (returned with comments)
 - Outlines of theses and main claims from Mandel and Henke (returned with comments)
 - In-class work on paraphrasing
 - Second, formal summaries composed from paraphrasing exercise (students should retain their own copy)
 - In-class writing on entering the conversation—writing on a literary element

Homework:

Using the in-class writing assignment in which they examined a literary component of the short story, students compose a 2-page formal response piece. In the response, students attempt to place their ideas in conversation with Mandel's and Henke's. They are asked to focus on just one instance from their essays in which the same literary element is undertaken. The three of them (the student and the two critics) are "in conversation" about the topic. Students are expected to integrate the critics' ideas with their own and weave a tapestry of the three perspectives. They are asked to observe MLA in-text citation rules as they quote and paraphrase.

*The outlines of the two articles, the formal summaries of the two articles, and the 2-page response piece are all graded assignments, with the response piece as the culminating task that is weighted most heavily.