

Research around the clock

12 steps to an A+ paper



College Writing 2

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April 2008 Timeline for Research Paper

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	March 31 Personal response essay	1	2 Guiding question, begin research	3	4 Author bio, Historical sketch	5
6 Conferences this week.	7 Annotated bibliography	8	9 Write Prologue First hand research	10	11 Clock outline Sources and the	12
13	14 Rough draft due	15	16 In class peer workshop	17	18 Final draft due	19

Research around the clock.

While there are many different ways to go about writing a research paper, it is important to consider WHY you choose to write the paper. Aside from the obvious reason to receive a grade and pass a course, what do you hope to learn from the process? What skills do you need to accomplish the task?

First, understand the parameters of the assignment. For this class, I am asking you to choose one of eight short stories.

Second, read and re-read the work. How do you feel about the work? How do you react to it.

- **Write a personal response to the work.** This is a creative assignment.
 - You may choose to use different forms to write this response. Examples:
 - Journal entry
 - Creative poem
 - Dialogue
 - Essay
- **Background and history**
 - By learning about the author, his or her life and experiences, you can understand where certain stories come from.
 - By examining the time period when the author was/ is writing, you can learn something about the reason for the writing. In some cases, the story may reflect the subject. In other cases, the relationship is more obscure.

Unless you know the author personally, you will have to do some research in order to learn answers to these topics.

Third, read what others have written about your particular topic. *Explain your findings. Do not simply quote sources without explaining what the quote means.*

Add your own first hand research: Conduct an interview, create a questionnaire, do your own close reading, and/ or discourse about the text you've chosen.

Guiding questions—

What do you want to get out of this assignment? What do you want to learn? What is your purpose?

Good essential questions have some basic criteria in common:

- They are open-ended and resist a simple or single right answer
- They are deliberately thought-provoking, counterintuitive, and/or controversial
- They require students to draw upon content knowledge and personal experience
- They can be revisited throughout the unit to engage students in evolving dialogue and debate
- They lead to other essential questions posed by students *

Write five guiding questions here. After some initial research, you will probably choose one and/ or combine with one other question for a more complex topic.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Research should be considered a conversation between you and those “other people” who have written about your particular topic. For example, if you read a criticism of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and you want to include that information in your research paper, provide the quote, give credit through proper citation THEN interpret the quote for your reader. But don’t stop there.

Test your own ideas. There are many ways to provide first hand research. Some are more appropriate than others when talking about literature. Some ideas include

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Close observation
- Discourse analysis of various documents

Your opinions matter. If you bring your own empirical data to a paper, you demonstrate your own expertise. While it is not useful in a literature based research paper to conduct *experiments* to prove or disprove your theories, it will be interesting to discuss your thoughts, understanding and evaluation of literature with other students (interview) or the class at large (survey). Close observation, or rather precise, careful reading, of the original text can deepen your understanding. This is particularly useful in shorter works, such as poetry or short stories, where each word is carefully chosen for its meaning and words are ordered in sentences and paragraphs. Discourse analysis could look at the forms of poetry, the use of dialectology or sociolinguistics, the structure of a story (is it cyclical?), and so on

*. <http://www.greece.k12.ny.us/instruction/ela/6-12/Essential%20Questions/Index.htm>

12 Steps to Research Around The Clock

1. **Read and choose one short story** which will become the basis for an in-depth research project
2. **Reader's response**—after reading the short story, write a creative response
3. Thinking in terms of a larger project, what do you want to discover about the short story? **Compose a Guiding Question to help focus your research.** Possible topics:
 - Compare and contrast with one of the larger works that we've read

<i>The Great Gatsby</i>	<i>The Rivals</i>
<i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i>	<i>Into The Wild</i>
 - Choose one of the crafts and discuss how the author uses that craft to tell the story

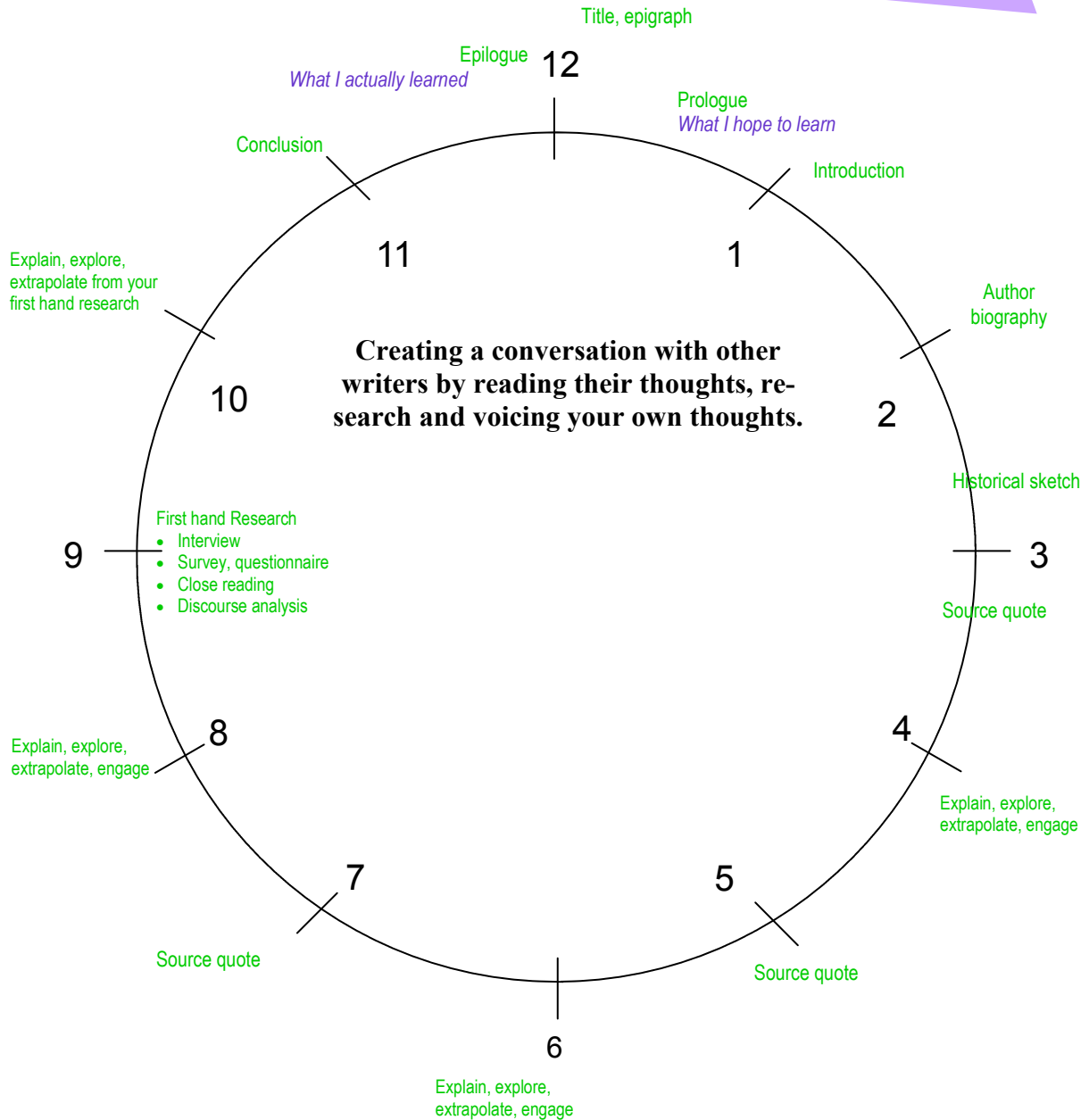
¶¶Character	¶¶Plot	¶¶Setting
¶¶Theme	¶¶Point of view	¶¶Psychic distance
 - Discuss trends or tendencies of a specific author by comparing this short story to other works by the same author and/ or the time period when the story was written
4. **Begin the research** aspect of the project by looking for scholarly sources referring to your chosen work, author, and/ or craft
5. **Brief author biography.** Points to consider:
 - ◇ At what point in the writer's career did he/ she write this piece?
 - ◇ What background did the author bring to the story?
6. **Brief historical sketch.** When was the short story written and/or what period is the story about. In terms of the setting of the story and/or the author's surroundings, what was happening the world?
7. **Create an annotated bibliography**—As you research, take notes. Your notes will include ALL information to use in your bibliography AND accurate quotations to use verbatim in your paper PLUS your own comments on the facts that you are choosing. You might use index cards for this collection, but you can also create a word document for each source OR photocopy OR print in you're using online reference material.

You need 5 different sources for this paper. You may use online sources accessed through a library database as long as the source exists as a separate book, journal, etc. I.e. you could access via another method if you had the time and resources available, such as going to another library
8. **Write a prologue for your paper**—"In this paper, I hope to discover how _____ does _____. In proving this, I will investigate literary criticism, references of authors, etc...." The prologue will probably be a ½ page to ¾ page.
9. Think of your investigation as the beginning of a **conversation**. What you learn and read that others have written is just their side of the coin. Your job is to think about your own opinions regarding your Guiding Question.
10. **First hand research**—Create your own questions and discover answers through:
 - a. Interview
 - b. Questionnaire
 - c. Close reading and interpretation (passive)
 - d. Discourse analysis of course as if you were having (active)
11. Write **rough draft**
12. Revise and write **final draft**



Clockwise outline for 8 page paper

Each hour represents approximately 1/2 to 1 page.



Possible topics:

- Compare contrast
- Crafting the story (*plot, character, setting, theme, POV, psychic distance*)
- Trends and tendencies of author, period?
- Other topics???

Sherman Alexie (1966-) *This is what it means to say Phoenix, Arizona*

Just after Victor lost his job at the BIA*, he also found out that his father had die of a heart attack in Phoenix, Arizona. Victor hadn't seen his father in a few years, only talked to him on the telephone once or twice, but there still was a genetic pain, which was soon to be pain as real and immediate as a broken bone.

*Bureau of Indian Affairs

Rick Bass (1958-) *The Hermit's Story*

An ice storm, following seven days of snow; the vast field and drifts of snow turning to sheets of glazed ice that shine and shimmer blue in the moonlight, as if the color is being fabricated not by the bending and absorption of light but by some chemical reaction within the glossy ice; as if the source of all blueness lies somewhere up here in the north—the core of it beneath one of those frozen fields; as if blue is a thing that emerges, in some parts of the world, from the soil itself, after the sun goes down.

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) *Winter Dreams*

I. Some of the caddies were poor as sin and lived in one-room houses with a neurasthenic* cow in the front yard, but Dexter Green's father owned the second best grocery-store in Black Bear—the best one was "The Hub," patronized by the wealthy people from Sherry Island—and Dexter caddied only for pocket-money.

* a condition marked by chronic mental and physical fatigue and depression

Stephen King (1947-) *The Man in the Black Suit*

I am now a very old man and this is something that happened to me when I was very young—only nine years old. It was 1914, the summer after my brother, Dan, died in the west field and not long before America got in the First World War. I've never told anyone about what happened at the fork in the stream that day, and I never will. I've decided to write it down, though, in this book, which I will leave on the table beside my bed. I can't write long, because my hands shake so these days and I have next to no strength, but I don't think it will take long.

Jack London (1876-1916) *To Build A Fire*

Day had broken cold and grey, exceedingly cold and grey, when the man turned aside from the main Yukon trail and climbed the high earth-bank, where a dim and little-travelled trail led eastward through the fat spruce timberland. It was a steep bank, and he paused for breath at the top, excusing the act to himself by looking at his watch. It was nine o'clock. There was no sun nor hint of sun, though there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a clear day, and yet there seemed an intangible pall over the face of things, a subtle gloom that made the day dark, and that was due to the absence of sun. This fact did not worry the man. He was used to the lack of sun. It had been days since he had seen the sun, and he knew that a few more days must pass before that cheerful orb, due south, would just peep above the skyline and dip immediately from view.

Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964) *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*

The grandmother didn't want to go to Florida. She wanted to visit some of her connections in east Tennessee and she was seizing at every chance to change Bailey's mind. Bailey was the son she lived with, her only boy. He was sitting on the edge of his chair at the table, bent over the orange sports section of the Journal. "Now look here, Bailey," she said, "see here, read thin," and she stood with one hand on her thing hip and the other rattling the newspaper at his bald head. "Here this fellow that call himself The Misfit is aloose from the Federal Pen and header toward Florida and you read here what it says he did to these people. Just you read it. I wouldn't take my children in any direction with a criminal like that aloose in it. I couldn't' answer to my conscience if I did."

Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) *The Necklace*

She was one of those pretty and charming girls who are sometimes, as if by a mistake of destiny, born in a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, understood, loved, wedded by any rich and distinguished man; and she let herself be married to a little clerk at the Ministry of Public Instructions.

**Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1928-) *The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World*
*A Tale for Children***

The first children who saw the dark and slinky bulge approaching through the seat let themselves think it was an empty ship. Then they saw it had no flags or masts and they thought it was a whale. But when it washed up on the beach, they removed the clumps of seaweed, they jellyfish tentacles, and the remains of fish and flotsam, and only then did they see that it was a drowned man.

Reader's Response to Literature* (also called a Personal Response, or Narrative Response)

A Personal Response is not a critical essay. It is not intended to be a detailed, formal response to literature. As the title suggests, it is a **personal** response. Your response might be based on an incident from your past, or it might be entirely made up. That decision is up to you. Choose whichever approach you think will communicate your ideas about the subject **most clearly**.

How the Personal Response works

Based on your reading of the short story, react to the story. Good literature relates to readers' lives. Writing personal responses helps you to explore your relationship and helps you to clarify and develop your thoughts and feelings.

Framing questions—

- Why do I want to respond to this work?
- What thoughts and emotions are evoked by my first reading? Do I have a strong sense of what the author means and how the text works? What part of the work stands out for me? Why?
- Upon rereading, what impressions, connections, and questions am I most interested in exploring?
- What form should I use? How can this form expand, clarify, and deepen my thoughts and feelings about the text? (p. 67*)

What do I write? **

A Personal Response is wide open, in terms of what sort of writing you produce. You might write:

A Short story. This story might be entirely fictional, or it might be based on something that happened to you, or someone you know. There is no need to indicate where fact changes into fiction.

A Personal Response Essay. It uses the same format as a critical essay, but you can write in a relaxed manner. You still need a thesis statement in the introductory paragraph, and you still need to prove that thesis in the following paragraphs, but your evidence is not as important here as the ideas you are putting forward.

A speech, in which you address an appropriate audience.

A Newspaper Editorial, in which you address a real-world issue, which happens to match the theme and question of the assignment.

A Script. A short script (either for the stage or screen) in which the dialogue reveals your ideas, and answers the question. Do not worry about proper script formatting, so long as dialogue and stage directions are clear.

A Diary Entry, or a series of entries.

Anything else of appropriate length.

* Writers Inc. *Write for College*. Great Resource Education Group, Houghton Mifflin Co. Wilmington, MA

** www.rockyview.ab.ca

Explaining quotes—

I discovered a terrific book that provides templates for interpreting other people's words. It's called *They Say, I Say* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, published by W.W. Norton, New York, NY.

Here are some phrases to help you first introduce quotes in your papers then explain the quotes using your own words.

1. Templates for introducing quotations—

- X states, “_____.”
- As the prominent philosopher X puts it, “_____.”
- Accord to X, “_____.”
- X himself writes, “_____.”
- In her book, _____, X maintains that “_____.”
- Writing in the journal *Commentary*, X complains that “_____.”
- In X's view, “_____.”
- X agrees when she writes, “_____.”
- X disagrees when he writes, “_____.”
- X complicates matters further when she writes, “_____.”

2. Templates for explaining quotations—

- Basically, X is saying _____.
- In other words, X believes _____.
- In making this comment, X argues that _____.
- X is insisting that _____.
- X's point is that _____.
- The essence of X's argument is that _____.

I hope that these templates help you in thinking of ways to include quotes without sounding forced and revealing the true meaning behind the quotes that you include.

Please read the following quote carefully. Then, write a paragraph citing a portion of the quote. (See template choices 1.) Finally, using template choices 2, explain your choice in your own words.

All stories are told by a **narrator**, and one of the first choices writers make is who tell the story. This choice determines the story's **point of view**— the vantage point from which events are presented. The implication of this choice are far-reaching. ...The narrator of a work of fiction is not the same as the writer— even when a writer uses the first-person I. Writers create narrators to tell their stories. Often these personalities and opinions of narrators are far different from those of the author. The term **persona**— which literally means “mask”— is use for such narrators. By assuming this mask, a writer expands the creative possibilities of a work.

When deciding on a point of view for a work of fiction, a writer can choose to tell the story either in the first person or in the third person. (p. 182)*

* *Portable Literature, Reading, Reacting, Writing*, 6th edition. Kirsznner & Mandell. Thompson & Wadsworth, Boston, MA.

Annotated bibliography— *

A **bibliography** is a list of sources (books, journals, websites, periodicals, etc.) one has used for researching a topic. Bibliographies are sometimes called "references" or "works cited" depending on the style format you are using. A bibliography usually just includes the bibliographic information (i.e., the author, title, publisher, etc.).

An **annotation** is a summary and/or evaluation.

Therefore, an annotated bibliography includes a summary and/or evaluation of each of the sources. Depending on your project or the assignment, your annotations may do one or more of the following:

Summarize: Some annotations merely summarize the source. What are the main arguments? What is the point of this book or article? What topics are covered? If someone asked what this article/book is about, what would you say? The length of your annotations will determine how detailed your summary is.

For more help, see our handout on paraphrasing sources.

Assess: After summarizing a source, it may be helpful to evaluate it. Is it a useful source? How does it compare with other sources in your bibliography? Is the information reliable? Is it this source biased or objective? What is the goal of this source?

A paraphrase is... Your own rendition of essential information and ideas expressed by someone else, presented in a new form.

- One legitimate way (when accompanied by accurate documentation) to borrow from a source.
- A more detailed restatement than a summary, which focuses concisely on a single main idea.
- Paraphrasing is a valuable skill because... It is better than quoting information from an undistinguished passage.
- It helps you control the temptation to quote too much.
- The mental process required for successful paraphrasing helps you to grasp the full meaning of the original.

6 Steps to Effective Paraphrasing

1. Reread the original passage until you understand its full meaning.
2. Set the original aside, and write your paraphrase on a note card.
3. Jot down a few words below your paraphrase to remind you later how you envision using this material. At the top of the note card, write a key word or phrase to indicate the subject of your paraphrase.
4. Check your rendition with the original to make sure that your version accurately expresses all the essential information in a new form.
5. Use quotation marks to identify any unique term or phraseology you have borrowed exactly from the source.
6. Record the source (including the page) on your note card so that you can credit it easily if you decide to incorporate the material into your paper.

First hand research—*

After you have read what others have said about the craft of writing, your author, the time period, it is time to add your own thoughts and test your theories.

While this may seem more appropriate to the fields of science, engineering and psychology, you can use the same methods of inquiry in literature.

Interview—

- Create a list of questions for an expert to answer in reference to your topic. Write a list of ten questions. Try to cover the complete range of the scope of your topic. You can conduct your interview either in person, on the telephone, or by e-mail.
- Your documentation should include the interviewees full name, contact information, the time and place where the interview was conducted.

Survey or questionnaire—

- Create a list of questions to gain information from a variety of subjects (classmates, hallmates, etc.) and then compile the answers into a report.
- Your documentation should include the place and time of your survey and the names of your subjects. These may be anonymous as in some cases people are hesitant to participate if their answers are not kept confidential.

Close reading—

- By choosing passages, words, phrases, etc. carefully from your primary source, (the short story) you can create your own theories and opinions. Just as we did in class last week, by reading a title and first line closely, you can begin to determine the psychic distance (for example) by examining characters' names, the point of view of narration, verb tense, and more.

Discourse analysis—

- Imagine that you have just read the greatest short story and you want to tell your friends about it. That's the essence of discourse analysis. Think in terms of what made this particular short story stand out in your mind. How does it compare to other stories that you've read or movies that you've seen? How would you convince a friend to read this story?
- By engaging in an imaginary dialogue with the author, try to determine why he/ she made certain choices. For more ideas, please see excerpt on the next page.

* Douglas Downs, Elizabeth Wardle. "Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning "First-Year Composition" as "Introduction to Writing Studies". " College Composition and Communication 58.4 (2007): 552-584. Wilson Education Abstracts. ProQuest. University of Massachusetts, O'Leary Library, Lowell, Massachusetts. 18 Mar. 2008 <<http://www.proquest.com/>

Explanation of discourse analysis—*

Typical audiences for writing about literature include people studying literature and people teaching literature. Other audiences might be people that are interested in learning more about literature on a critical level that is more in-depth than just thinking your own thoughts after finishing a book. Consider someone who has just seen a movie. Instead of keeping to themselves what they liked, didn't like, or observed about the movie, they want to discuss it in the car on the way home with their friends and hear what everyone else thought about it. It is this inquisitive kind of person that could very well become an audience member for books and articles about literature.

Supporting evidence in writing done about literature is the primary text. If a writer is going to claim that a piece of literature is saying something in particular or making a particular argument, they must be able to give specific evidence from the text that supports their claim. I think that people in other disciplines, namely the hard sciences, might look at what is thought of as supporting evidence in literature and think it is rather subjective. Yes, evidence that a writer about literature offers up as support for his views is very different than scientific data, criminal evidence, or mathematical proofs. Literature is open to interpretation in ways that the hard sciences may not be. Anyone can interpret any piece of literature differently, but unless they have included specific examples from the text, they are going to be putting forth a very weak argument.

The way someone goes about writing about literature is actually not that different than a detective who is building a criminal case. A common form that a piece of writing about literature might take is a thesis driven argument, the author states their position on something about a piece of writing (also known as their thesis), gives supporting evidence from the book that supports their thesis, and proceeds to explain how the chosen evidence works to support the thesis they are putting forth. This is the most common form of writing about literature that a student will be asked to do and I think it is really the building block for other kinds of writing about literature. *

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