

## COMPOSING TEXT RESPONSES

Text Responses are forms of writing which are concerned with the reader's experiences and opinions about a text. The idea comes from a long literary tradition, where instructors would ask their students to respond to a text.

Usually, a Text Response is focused on an argumentative/persuasive text. In a Text Response, you are expected to discuss how you agree or disagree with a particular text. For example, you may talk about how the text seems correct or incorrect in its facts or opinions. You may even include your own take on the situation, bringing in your own beliefs, faith, opinions, arguments, etc.

Text Responses are unlike "Reader Responses" which are specifically centered on a work of literature (e.g., a work of fiction, poetry, a novel, or even an essay). Moreover, "Reader Responses" seem more concerned with analyzing the qualities of the story/language (focusing on characters, settings, tensions, literary techniques, etc.).

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EX: Reader Response (Spoiler Alert!)

The classic novella (or short book) entitled, *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupery is a delightful and tragic tale about a little prince who lives on a large asteroid called B-612. He spends his day caring for his little asteroid and the life there. Bored and interested in having some sort of adventure, he leaves his planet to explore other asteroids/planets. He eventually lands on Earth, and finds it not as hospitable as his home. So, he longs to return. He encounters a snake who says to him, "Send anyone back to the land from whence he came." The prince consents to the snake's promise; the snake bites the little prince; and, the prince dies.

The book seems troubling, since the prince dies so abruptly. I don't understand what the significance of killing the prince brings to the audience. Since the book is so short, I wonder if the author simply wanted to end the book, so he kills off the main character. In reading the book, there is much to consider in terms of life lessons. The prince encounters several people who are unique; each character brings a different lesson or moral. However, the snake simply seems to bring a quick and bitter end to a book that seems so invested in the main character.

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Text responses are more about your agreement or disagreement with the author's message, particularly his/her argumentative position. Here is an example.

EX: Text Response

The text, "The Case for Torture," by Michael Levin explores the idea of Torture. He suggests that although torture is unconstitutional, we might consider torture to save lives. He discussed how we might have killed Hitler (thus preventing the holocaust), yet we did not. Torture can be seen as a pre-emptive strike, a way of alleviating the losses of multiple lives by harming one person. He proposes the question/scenario: If a group of Terrorists had placed a nuclear bomb in a major city (like Manhattan), would it be okay to torture a captured terrorist in

order to find the bomb and save millions? He suggests that we had better start thinking about this idea and the ethics involved with torture.

I agree with Levin that there are several cases for torture, and I agree that we must consider the ethics of saving lives over the harm of a terrorist. If my family were in a city where a nuclear bomb was planted, I would probably be the first person to want to torture the terrorist (in order to find the bomb and save my family). One thing that is particularly powerful in this text is the use of examples. These examples are powerful and potent. And, because of these examples, I agree that we need to consider our ethics carefully. Moreover, these examples are very real possibilities. If someone were going to "blow up" your family, would you spend time to allow them to seek representation (i.e., find a lawyer). Would that person have rights? Not in that situation. What about the rights of the people who would die?

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In completing a text response, you must realize that there is never a correct answer or presumption about the text (which the instructor wants). You simply "write what is on your mind." You can praise a text's position or even complain about a text's position.

The main idea is to react to what you are reading and to let your own position be known. Tell why you agree or disagree with the author, and extract passages/lines which support/differ your own views. And, your reaction can be based on the reading as a whole, sections of the text, direct lines in the text, support within the text, etc.

You can agree or disagree with anything. Again, the key is to react to the text, not to analyze it.