Reflection Essays

For each Reflection Essay, you will write a minimum of **five paragraphs and 300 words**. Do not include any scholarly sources or outside references.

The point of these essays is to create a clear thesis or opinion of a work’s theme or point. Then, in at least three body paragraphs, you will defend and prove your position by analyzing at least **1-2 quotes** from your chosen work(s) in each body paragraph.

The quotes are your proof and evidence, and you will incorporate significant passages from your readings by using quotations with a parenthetical citation afterward (Smith 8), demonstrating proper MLA formatting and the ability to include quotes within an opinion/persuasive/argumentative essay where the focus is on your ideas and on defending those ideas.

For example:

Thesis: In “Sadie and Maud,” neither protagonist is truly happy or more successful than the other because Gwendolyn Brooks’s message to readers is living life based on the expectations of others – whether meeting those expectations or rebelling against them – leads to lack of individuality and genuine happiness.

First Body Paragraph: When Brooks writes, “Sadie scraped life with a fine tooth comb” (l.5), she suggests Sadie both struggled to make ends meet as well as enjoy each moment to the fullest. Being a single mother, Sadie was judged and held at arm’s length by the people in her town, causing her and her children’s life to be harder than necessary. Sadie, while rebelling against the status quo and social obligations, never found true happiness and identity as an outcast who was marginalized to the outskirts of society. Sadie was true to her adventurous spirit, but she was never accepted by her community and was made to live an empty life of labels and loneliness.

Notice how the above example presents a clear and effective thesis (opinion and topic). The body paragraph presents a quote and the line numbers for the poem in parenthesis after the quote. The quote is then discussed and analyzed to prove and further define the essay’s thesis.

Also notice how the opinion of the student is given without the use of personal pronouns like “I” or “me” or “you” – and how the sentences sound more authoritative and direct. As a result, you should **avoid using personal pronouns** in your essays. Instead, be direct and professional in your writing.

Follow the essay structure:

Introduction Paragraph

* Grab Attention
* Give some background and context
* Present your thesis clearly (opinion and why)

Body Paragraphs

* Transition readers into the paragraph (First, While, In order to…)
* Introduce the point of the paragraph
* Introduce your quote
* Discuss/Analyze the quote
* Repeat if necessary (adding scholarly quotes and discussion)
* End the paragraph by returning to your thesis – how have you proven part of your overall point?

Conclusion Paragraph

* + Transition to the end (Ultimately, Finally, Without a doubt)
  + Recap your main points
  + Review your thesis (use fresh language)
  + End with a bang! (Be thought-provoking; make us glad we read your essay)