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***ESL 4030: Advanced Academic Writing***

This course for English as a second language students incorporates extensive practice in rhetorical writing strategies and techniques, with a review of appropriate grammatical structures and verb tenses.

***Summary-Reaction Essay***

After reading and discussing “The Meal” (Chapter 7 from Michael Pollan’s *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* (Young Reader’s Edition; Dial Books, 2009), students write a summary-response essay on the text.

***Foundational Theme: Relational spirituality***

Building on commonly held background knowledge on fast food, the instructor asks international students to consider information about the production and consumption of food in the US and its environmental consequences. Connections between food issues and culture are discussed along with the impact of personal choices on the environment.

***Strategy for assessing the students’ progress***

On-going in-class activities have students remember vocabulary related to production and consumption of food, summarize information from Pollan’s *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, compare and contrast their home cultures to the individualism in American culture and culture’s relationship to food production and consumption, and create a summary-response essay based on what they have learned.

## Lesson Plans for Three Two-Hour Class Sessions

### Day One

1. Show students an image of environmental pollution. Ask them to talk about what they see with the person next to them. Discuss as a group.
3. Ask students to freewrite individually on the answer to this question: *What connections can you make between your personal habits—what you usually do each day—and the ecological health of Earth?*<sup>1</sup> Discuss as a group.
3. Remind students of the previous essay they wrote using compare and contrast format and Venn diagrams to think about the comparisons and contrasts before writing. Tell students they are going to produce a Venn diagram on a large sheet of paper while working together in their groups. Ask them to produce a diagram which uncovers the comparisons (similarities) and contrasts (differences) between food in the US and food in their home country(ies). Ask students to focus on answering the questions of who, what, where, when, why, and how in their diagrams (give an example). When groups are done, hang the diagrams around the room and have the students explain what they wrote. Discuss.
4. Ask the students what they think the connections are between their culture(s) and US culture and how they and people in the US view or consume food. Guide students in constructing a Venn diagram about the differences between collectivist and individualistic cultures.
5. Read the first three pages of the chapter. Think especially about the connections we just spoke about and what Pollan writes about in the first part of this chapter. These learning activities challenge students to consider the ideology of individualism in American culture as a fundamental problem perpetuating our environmental crises.

*Homework:* Review the vocabulary study guide in order to be ready to read the rest of the chapter.

### Day Two

1. Show students a photo of corn.<sup>2</sup> Ask them to individually write about what they see, focusing on the picture itself. Have them share what they wrote in pairs and then a group. (Caption for photo: “Corn is an all-American favorite. It would be difficult to image a summer barbecue without corn on the cob, or a movie without popcorn. Corn is also rich in nutrients, and a versatile ingredient in many vegetable recipes.”)

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Uhl, *Path to a Sustainable World: Developing Ecological Consciousness*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Image found at <http://home.howstuffworks.com/corn.htm>



2. Bring out a paper bag and tell students that you have brought a bag of corn in today. Show bottles and cans with products that include corn. Discuss.
3. Show students video of growing corn, “How Stuff Works Show: Episode 1: Growing Corn.”<sup>3</sup> Follow link: [http://youtu.be/O\\_csQ8dvAYM](http://youtu.be/O_csQ8dvAYM).....Show last image of video and photo of corn side by side. Ask students to talk about the difference between these two images. They might mention: The influence of man.....Emphasize that corn is not the problem. It’s what we’ve done with it that is the problem.
4. Give students the remaining pages of the chapter. Have students in groups summarize sections of the rest of the chapter. Students will share summaries with the rest of the class, using the document projector.

### Day Three

1. Show short film “This Bulb”<sup>4</sup> to students and ask them to write down what they hear about the effects of this one bulb mentioned in the video. Use this link: <http://youtu.be/FvOBHMB6Cqc> Discuss. Talk about individual responsibility and stewardship.
2. Students will prepare the “Summary/Response Essay Template” in class and discuss.<sup>5</sup>
3. Students will use the template to prepare for their in-class writing during the next class session.

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<sup>3</sup> Video available at <http://videos.howstuffworks.com/discovery/31277-corn-growing-corn-video.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Video available at <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/environment/going-green-environment/conservation-in-action/this-bulb-ngv/>

<sup>5</sup> Statements in step 1 are from Christopher Uhl, *Path to a Sustainable World*



## Summary/Response Essay

On Wednesday, March 20th, you will be writing an in-class essay. This essay is called a summary-response essay. You will have one hour to write your essay, and 30 minutes to proof-read your essay with a dictionary.

Reaction or response essays are typical assignments given in many different types of classes. Teachers often want to read what you have to say about a particular class reading, or maybe a chapter from a textbook, so they will ask you to write a summary of the text and then respond to it.

Follow the steps below to write an excellent summary/response essay.

1. **Now that you have read this chapter, how have your feelings about the statements below changed?**

The role of humans is to control and dominate the earth.

Technology will solve all of humankind's problems.

Individuals don't have any power to change the way things are in the world.

**Use the space below to write your responses. You will discuss your ideas in your group.**

2. **Next, do some *prewriting* for your summary/response paper.**

The following statements could be used in a reaction/response paper. Complete as many statements as possible, from the list below, about what you read. Do this *as quickly as possible*.

My reaction to Michael Pollan's "Fast Food" chapter is ...

I think that \_\_\_\_\_

I see now that \_\_\_\_\_

I feel sad that \_\_\_\_\_

It seems important that \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, \_\_\_\_\_

Because \_\_\_\_\_

I loved when Pollan said, " \_\_\_\_\_

In addition, \_\_\_\_\_

For example, \_\_\_\_\_

Moreover, \_\_\_\_\_

However, \_\_\_\_\_

Consequently, \_\_\_\_\_

Finally, \_\_\_\_\_

In conclusion, \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Organize your summary/response essay following the structure below.**

**Introduction** – This part of your paper includes all the basic information about the reading you are responding to.

**Sentence 1:** This sentence should give the **title, author, and publication information.**

**Sentences 2, 3, and sometimes 4:** These sentences give a brief summary of what you read —In this case, you will summarize the chapter you read in class.

**Sentence 5:** This sentence is your thesis statement. Focus on how reading Pollan’s chapter has changed or affected you.

Your introduction **MUST** end with a thesis statement, which is a focused statement of your response to the reading.

**Body** – This part of your paper includes paragraphs that provide support for your thesis. Each paragraph should contain ONE MAIN IDEA. Each paragraph should start with a TOPIC SENTENCE that supports the thesis. The final sentence of each paragraph should lead into the next one.

*Example of body paragraph format:*

**Topic Sentence** – This should focus one way you have been affected by the reading

**Body could include a detail, example, or quotation you want to talk about**

**Concluding and/or Transition Sentence**

**Conclusion** – This part of the paper is usually looks back at what you said in the rest of your paper. It can also be a comment which focuses on your overall reaction. It could also be a prediction of what might happen because of what is described in the text you are reacting to.

4. Plan your paper and print it out. Before handing it in, be sure to do one final polishing of your text. Look it over carefully for good spelling, punctuation, and grammar. See if you can change any of the vocabulary words so they are more academic.

*Do not use contractions or the words “you” or “your” in this paper.*

*Adapted from “Writing a Reaction or Response Essay” found at LEO: Literacy Education Online (1999).*