

“Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar.”¹

~ Kenneth Burke

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

This essay invites you to enter into a conversation with two authors you choose from the six assigned readings on the topic of education (i.e., Gatto, Bennett, Allitt, Jackson, Holt, and Graff). Specifically, you are asked to write a 4-5 page essay that engages with a discussion you believe the two chosen authors are addressing. Just as the above Burke quote suggests, before you write the actual essay, you must first *listen carefully* to the authors, analyzing the arguments for their motive, evidence, reasoning, and stakes. What is a question you believe they are responding to? After recognizing the rhetorical situation at hand, use the analytical skills of summary, synthesis, and direct citation to articulate it to an audience of academic peers. Then, you put in your oar, so to speak. How would *you* respond to such a question? Articulate your personal ideas, integrating them into the conversation effectively and ethically, by presenting evidence and reasoning to support your claims. Because you are entering into an academic debate, a successful essay will demonstrate knowledge of academic genre conventions and use MLA citation standards.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESS

Focus on articulating a question that you believe the authors are responding to. By making this question specific and nuanced, you will be able to engage more meaningfully with the texts and the topic.

Try finding as many similarities and differences as you can in a pre-writing exercise; then, *challenge yourself* by looking for differences within the similarities and similarities within the differences. In addition to being able to define the debate in clearer terms, you are more likely to reveal something to the reader they didn't know before. In other words, try to push past obvious difference and seek out unexpected similarity—and visa versa.

Summary is different from synthesis, even though they may be related. In summary, one highlights the key points in providing an understanding of the overall meaning. Synthesis creates new insight by combing and contrasting information from two or more texts. Successful essays will effectively use both summary *and* synthesis.

As a college student, you have a stake in any debate regarding higher education. This essay is an opportunity to reflect on your educational experience and furthermore, use it as evidence in building an argument. Let your voice to be heard!

¹ Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 110.

Due Dates:

10/18	Workshop Draft due (bring two hard copies to class)
Week 4	Come to your scheduled conference with your instructor
10/28	Final Unit 1 Portfolio due in a two-pocket folder with individual components stapled

Final Portfolio Contents:

1. Workshop Draft with instructor comments
2. Peer Review Workshop Draft
3. Blank Rubric
4. Blue Slip from the Writing Center
5. Final Draft