EN 102-056 S17

J.Park

# Major Essay #1: Text Analysis

**Writing Task:** Interacting with a text on a critical level is a valuable skill you’ll use throughout the semester. In order to write thoughtfully, you must first know how to critically read, assess, and interpret a piece of writing. For this reason, your first major essay acts both as an introduction and foundation to the critical thinking and writing you will be expected to do this semester.

For this essay, you will analyze a cover story recently published in a magazine or newspaper. A cover story is the featured story and is typically longer and more involved than the other articles in the publication. The cover story you analyze must have been published in the last three years. You can select a cover story from the list below or find one on your own. Choose a cover story about a topic you’re unfamiliar with, curious about, or genuinely interested in and challenge yourself to read outside of your comfort zone. When choosing a cover story, you will also need to assess if it’s “substantial” enough for this assignment: Can you write a fully developed, thorough, and detailed analysis on this cover story without being redundant?

You will only need to choose one text for this essay. Here are some cover story options:

* “Standing Rock Was Never Just About the Pipeline” by Susan Matthews and Christian Hansen (*Slate*, Dec. 11, 2016)
* “Run for Office” by Osita Nwanevu (*Slate*, Jan. 16, 2017)
* “Panda Bear: The Wanderer” by Philip Sherburne (*Pitchfork*, Jan. 5, 2015)
* “Red Meat, Hot Dogs, and the War on Delicious” by Jeffrey Kluger (*TIME*, Oct. 29, 2015)
* “What It’s Like to Be a Cop in America” by Karl Vick (*TIME*, Aug. 13, 2015)
* “Pusha T: Behind the Bars” by Mychal Denzel Smith (*Complex*, Dec. 2016/Jan. 2017)
* “Lady Gaga: Portrait of a Lady” by Lady Gaga and Mel Ottenberg (*Harper’s Bazaar*, Nov. 14 2016)
* “The Case for Reparations” by Ta-Nehisi Coates (*The Atlantic*, June 2014)

Once you’ve selected a cover story and carefully read and reread the text, you must identify the author’s purpose and look into how the author communicates their purpose. Closely examine the various techniques the author uses and how these techniques work to inform your understanding of the text. Most cover stories also include images (photographs, charts, etc.) that are used to enhance the author’s purpose. Your job is to examine all of the elements that make up the cover story and explain how these elements work toward building your understanding of the text. How you read the text and what you decide to focus on will form the basis of your interpretation and/or judgment of the text. Your essay, therefore, can be based on what you think the cover story means to you (or to a larger/broader audience) and/or on the techniques the writer uses that are effective or ineffective. In sum, your essay will assess how a text works.

A successful text analysis will include the following:

o A summary of the text that is appropriate in length and scope o A clear and thoughtful interpretation and/or judgment of the text o Evidence from the text that supports and enhances your points

**Length**: 1000 words

**Format**: MLA (double-spaced, 12-pt Times New Roman, in-text citations, Works Cited page) **Grade weight**: 200 points (20%)

**Due date**: Friday, 2/3 at 6pm (submit to Turnitin)

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## Essay Evaluation - 200 pts (20% of total grade)

Academic Honesty: All the work you turn in must be original and your own. You may not turn in work from a paper file, a friend or family member, the Internet, or a tutor. Papers that do not comply with this policy will be turned over to the Dean’s Office for review. Please see the academic misconduct policy on the course syllabus and your instructor for further clarification.

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| **Concerns**  | **Points possible**  |
| *1st Concern: Ideas* * Does the writer demonstrate an understanding of the writing prompt?
* Does the writer demonstrate an understanding of audience and purpose?
* Does the writer present clearly articulated ideas that show strong critical thinking?
* Does the writer present a clear, well-formed, and thoughtful thesis?
* Does the writer maintain their purpose throughout the essay?

  | **/50**  |
| *2nd Concern: Support* * Does the writer use specific information to develop their point concretely and thoroughly without digression, repetition, or non-substantive material?
* Is source material smoothly integrated into the writing?
* Does the writer explain the connection and relevance of the source material they present?
 | **/50**  |
| *3rd Concern: Organization* * Are paragraphs organized around thesis-based assertions?
* Does the introduction capture the reader’s attention and map the paper’s direction?
* Does the conclusion effectively wrap up the essay?
* Is the essay forcefully written with strong, logical progressions that aren’t formulaic?
* Are transitions used within and between paragraphs in a way that enhances the development of ideas?
 | **/40**  |
| *4th Concern: Style & Voice* * Is the tone appropriate for the audience and purpose?
* Does the writer’s voice seem natural, not forced?
* Are the sentences substantive, powerful, and varied in construction?
* Is there a balance between overly casual language that may undermine the writer’s credibility and overly sophisticated words that may sound empty or forced?
* Will the reader be convinced that the purpose of the essay is sound and compelling?
 | **/35**  |
| *5th Concern: Conventions* * Does the writer correctly cite all sources?
* Did the writer carefully edit the essay for careless mistakes?
* Is the essay formatted according to MLA requirements?
* Is the essay reasonably within the specified length?
 | **/25**  |

(Rubric adapted from Dr. E. Chandler)