

JEP REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Project Read
PA: Andrea
FALL 2011

As a JEP student, your work in the community is similar to that of a social scientist who conducts “participant-observer” research. Throughout the course of the semester, you will observe and participate in the daily activities of those you meet at your JEP site, and you will write about your experiences on a weekly basis. These JEP Reflective Questions (RQs) are designed to help you focus your observations and critically reflect on your experiences in relation to what you are learning about in your USC course.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS HINTS:

1. **Read the questions first.** Reading the question before you go to your JEP site is required in order to answer many RQs, and having the questions on your mind will when at your site will help focus your observations and improve your response to all RQs.
2. **Write as soon as possible.** As soon as possible after leaving your site, sketch out your answer to that week’s RQ. Even just taking a few notes about some difficult moments, things that surprised you or highlights will make writing later much easier and will provide the examples and observations you need to write an outstanding journal.
3. **Proof your work.** Like any college-level writing assignment, proof your work to make sure the writing is clear, error-free, and that you answer the question at hand.
4. **Read and respond to your PA's comments.** The questions are related to and build upon one other. So refer back to previous responses and to take seriously your PA’s feedback each week and respond to the feedback by following the PAs suggestions.
5. **Be respectful.** Show your respect by being mindful of the limits of your experience and knowledge. Avoid generalizations and stereotypical explanations of behavior; in other words, do not make arguments that assume you know how someone else thinks or feels or use these assumptions to explain the way people act or their circumstances.
6. **Use examples.** Focus on writing detailed and concrete accounts of people, social settings and conversations (including direct quotes, when possible). Never make claims without evidence or examples!

YOUR ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

The core parts of each assignment (which you need to focus on) are highlighted in **bold**. Use the additional questions to guide/supplement your answer. Please refer to the PA agreement you received in training for instructions regarding journal due dates and format requirements. *Note that some weeks require longer responses and are worth more points.*

ESSAY ONE - “Preflection” ***(1 page, 10 points, due: 9/26)***

Please respond to one of the following prompts. Question #2 is for returning students only.

#1: Over the next eight-weeks you will be taking your college education outside of the walls of the University. Based on what you know about JEP and what you know about your site, what do you imagine your JEP

experience will be like? Make sure to explain why you think what you think and use examples from your experiences at USC and in the community to explain yourself. Make your imagined vision of your JEP experience specific by addressing these two questions: **Ideally, what would you like to learn from your experiences in JEP? When you think about JEP, what makes you the most nervous or concerned?**

#2: Think back to your last experience in JEP and think about how you can take what you've learned about JEP, USC and the surrounding neighborhood, or the organization or school you worked with and improve your experience this time around. **Now that you know something about how JEP works, what do you hope to learn from doing JEP again? What was the biggest obstacle you faced in your last JEP experience and how will you address that issue this time?** Make sure to use clear and detailed examples from your last JEP experience to explain your reasoning.

ESSAY TWO: Your Assignment

(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 10/3)

Describe the responsibilities of your assignment, including a brief description of your reader. What are the particular issues, tasks or problems you are dealing with? Using specific examples describe how have you attempted to respond to these things so far? **Why do you think the teacher has identified your reader as someone who could benefit from tutorial help?** What do you hope to accomplish with him/her/them over the course of the semester?

ONE-ON-ONE CHATS:

(Scheduled with your PA, 10/10-10/14)

This week you will be meeting one-on-one with your Program Assistant to talk about your experiences in JEP. In place of a full-length essay this week, we ask that you take a few minutes to **jot down any questions, comments or concerns that you have about your JEP assignment so far.** For example, what are your tasks at the site and how are you adjusting to your new role? How are you relating to the people at your site? Are you having any problems with any of the logistical aspects of your assignment (e.g., schedule, transportation, Blackboard access, etc.)? *You do not need to submit these notes on Blackboard; rather, take them with you to your one-on-one chat with your PA so you are prepared and remember to talk about any issues that need to be addressed.*

ESSAY THREE: Your K-12 education

(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 10/17)

Compare and contrast your experiences at your JEP site with your own K-12 education. How is the JEP site, its facilities, its approach to education and teaching, etc., similar to or different from what it was like at the schools you attended? What are some of the unique strengths of and challenges facing the students and the school? **Also, compare your own school experience with reading with that of your student. What are some of the similarities and differences in your experiences?** Were programs such as Project read or other JEP programs available to students at your school? What do you see as the main benefits of such programs?

ESSAY FOUR: Different Types of Learners

(2 pages, 20 points, due: 10/24)

What type of learner does your student seem to be: auditory (e.g., s/he likes to hear texts read aloud to him/her), visual (e.g., s/he likes to make associations with visual cues), or kinesthetic (e.g., s/he likes to use games to understand sound)? How does s/he react to writing assignments? What is your learning style? What are your own attitudes towards reading and writing? How might your own style and attitudes affect your work with your student?

BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION: Topic To Be Announced

(2 posts to Blackboard, 10 points, due: 10/31-11/4)

Instructions and topic will be posted on Blackboard.

Discussion purpose: Your weekly journals consistently reveal a wide range of interesting insights and abilities

that result from your coursework and service-learning assignments. Since students participate in JEP from more than 100 different courses each semester, and rarely do all students in a particular class choose to enroll in JEP, we lack the opportunity to bring you together on a regular basis to learn from one another. As a result, the educational benefits of participating in JEP are limited mostly to your individual or small group experiences. This forum is designed to counter the relative isolation of JEP's service-learning assignments by providing an opportunity for you to share your insights with your peers.

ESSAY FIVE: Reading in your Reader's Life

(2 pages, 20 points, due: 11/7)

How would you categorize your reader's attitude towards reading? How do reading and writing currently affect the student's life? Does s/he read at home, either independently, or with a parent or sibling? What special interests or hobbies does s/he have? How could reading be integrated into these activities? Also think about what kind of material "counts" as reading. That is, if your reader seems to avoid chapter books, what does s/he think about magazine articles, comic books, websites or other media that tell a story?

ESSAY SIX: Your Role in a Community Service Organization

(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 11/14)

Reflect on your role at your site as a participant in a community service organization. List one or two things that you have done that might benefit the person(s) with whom you are working, either immediately or in the long run. Consider some of your personal limitations as a helper. Was there something you could have done to benefit your student/client but did not do, perhaps because you could not do it? What kinds of limitations do community service programs like JEP face when working in the community?

ESSAY SEVEN: Final Reflections

(2.5-3 pages, 25 points, due: 11/21)

Take a look back at the essays you have written (make sure to use Blackboard, so you can see your PA's comments), and think about what you have learned over the past few weeks. It is often noted that one of the benefits of service-learning for participating students is "higher academic achievement." For this final essay, we want you to focus on this particular outcome vis a vis your JEP assignment. **First, consider the premise itself: how does participating in a service-learning program lead to higher academic achievement?** When does it fail to do so? Do students' outcomes vary by the subject matter of the course? Or do they vary by their experiences in the community? **Describe what you think are the most important factors in a service-learning assignment that ensure "higher academic achievement" for university students.**

Next, think about your JEP experiences in the context of your USC course: What is the most significant "academic" outcome of your JEP assignment? How has JEP affected your understanding of the course content? Why do you think your professor is giving academic credit for JEP? What are his or her goals for you? In answering these questions, make sure to use specific examples from your course. Think broadly about the relationship between JEP and your course. Even if you believe there is no direct connection, consider how you could apply a course concept to help better understand or explain something you encounter in your JEP experience. You might focus on detailing a specific learning outcome (e.g., describing a particular theory and how it came to life through your experiences, or how teaching helped you to understand a particular course concept). Alternatively, you might reflect on how your experiences in JEP shed light on material you have learned in other courses at USC.

The goal of this assignment is for you to think critically about the academic outcomes of service-learning and describe what you learned from your experience. If you are struggling to make the connection, as an alternative, explain, in detail, how you think the course or JEP could be redesigned to foster a more meaningful connection between your course and a service-learning experience in the community.