JEP REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

JEP Reflective Questions are designed to help you focus your observations and critically reflect on your experiences in relation to the material in your literature course (or, for volunteers, in relation to your educational training at USC). In addition, as the JEP and NAI Writing/Mentoring Project is still in the early stages of development, your responses to these questions will help shape the program for the benefit of future USC students.

REFLECTIVE QUESTION REMINDERS:

1. **Read the questions first.** Reading the question before you go to your JEP site is required in order to answer many Reflective Questions. Moreover, having the entire set of questions on your mind when at your site will help focus your observations and improve your essays.

2. **Take notes.** As soon as possible after leaving your site, take a few minutes to quickly write down a few notes about your experience that day—difficult moments, things that surprised you, highlights from mentoring, etc. Taking a few minutes to do this each week will save you time later and will provide the examples and observations you need to write outstanding responses.

3. **Proof your work.** Like any college-level writing assignment, proofread your work to make sure that you answer the question at hand and that your writing is clear and free from errors.

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 take seriously your PA's feedback each week.

5. **Be respectful.** Show your respect for community members by being mindful of the limits of your experience and knowledge. Avoid generalizations and psychological 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.

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 WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

The core component of the Reflection Question (i.e., the section you need to focus on) is highlighted in **bold.** Use the additional parts of the question to guide/supplement your answer. Please refer to the materials you received in training for instructions regarding formatting requirements and uploading your responses to Blackboard. Note that some essays require longer responses and are worth more points.

**ESSAY 1—“Pre-reflection” (1 page, 10 points): DUE February 14**

This week, we have devised different questions for new JEP/NAI writing mentors and returning JEP/NAI writing mentors.

Option #1: For students who HAVE NOT previously served as a JEP/NAI Writing Mentor
Please review this five-minute video featuring the writing mentoring program:
http://college.usc.edu/videos/featured/176/students-mentoring-students/

To learn more about USC's community programs (including JEP and NAI), please review the following USC websites:
http://communities.usc.edu/
http://communities.usc.edu/education/nai.html
http://college.usc.edu/joint-educational-project/
How will your work as a writing mentor this semester contribute to the goals of both JEP and NAI? Consider your unique status (as a teacher and as a student) as well as the unique social context in which you will be working (i.e., a mentor for high school students meeting in a USC-sponsored tutoring facility). How might your knowledge of literature and/or life as a college student provide assistance to hopeful future USC Trojans? What do you hope to achieve as an educator? What do you hope to learn as a service-learning student? Do you have any concerns about your JEP role? What challenges do you anticipate?

Option #2: For students who HAVE previously served as a JEP/NAI Writing Mentor
How will you take what you learned through working as a JEP/NAI Writing Mentor to improve your experience this time around for yourself and/or for your mentees? Now that you know something about how the JEP/NAI Writing Mentoring Program works, what do you hope to learn from serving as a Writing Mentor 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 2—“Your Mentoring Assignment” (1.5-2 pages, 15 points): DUE February 21
If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.
— Booker T. Washington

You cannot help someone get up a hill without getting closer to the top yourself.
— General H. Norman Schwarzkopf

. . . I did really cry in good earnest when I went to bed, to think that my expectations had done some good to somebody.
— Pip, Great Expectations by Charles Dickens (Chapter 37)

The above quotations espouse the philosophy that people help themselves when they are helping others, which is also a key concept in service-learning. Reflect upon these quotations in the context of your writing mentoring assignment. How can you draw upon the lessons you are learning in your own literature course to mentor your students in their NAI English course? How do you think your mentees will benefit from participating in the JEP writing mentoring program? Do you anticipate gaining skills and/or knowledge from this service-learning opportunity? Have you (and/or your mentees) considered how this partnership might influence your own strengths and weaknesses as a writer, reader, mentor, and/or student? Hint: It might help you to think about what motivated you and your mentees to participate in the project in the first place.

Hint for JEP non-course credit volunteers: You might consider this question in terms of the lessons you have learned through your literature coursework in general.

ESSAY 3—“Introduction to the MLA Language Map” (1.5-2 pages, 15 points): DUE March 7
This week, we have devised different questions depending on which NAI English course your mentees are enrolled in. You will all be using the Modern Language Association’s Language Map in order to gather data to answer your journal question. Go to <http://www.mla.org/map_single> and learn about languages spoken in Southern California and the United States as a whole by following these directions:

--Under “Language” click on “English,” under “State” click on “Mainland USA,” and under “Show Data” click on “% by county.” Click on “Update Map” and make some observations. Which regions in the United States have the largest percentage of English speakers, and which counties have the smallest percentage of English speakers? Pay special attention to how Los Angeles county (and Southern California as a whole) compares to the rest of the country in terms of the percentage of English speakers.

--Now, under “Language” spend some time experimenting with languages your NAI students (and their peers, teachers, and parents) speak on a regular basis—but leave the rest of the data the same (i.e., under “State” keep “Mainland USA” and under “Show Data” keep “% by county”). Click on “Update the Map.” What has changed on the map? Again, pay special attention to how Los Angeles county (and Southern California as a whole) compares to the rest of the country in terms of the percentage of speakers of languages other than English. Experiment also with languages that would be heard by the authors you are studying in your literature course (e.g., classics students should consider “Greek,” British literature students should think about “French,” American literature students might experiment with Native American languages, Asian languages, etc.).
If your mentees are enrolled in 9th grade NAI honors English (Ms. Barrios)
A literature course on “The Epic and the Ancient World” encompasses several cultures and languages. Consider the different languages and cultural traditions that are represented in the literature your mentees have studied in their high school course so far this year. Drawing from the information on the Modern Language Association website and your understanding of the literature assigned in the NAI literature course, are the cultural traditions (signified by things like language and themes) of Southern California (and the United States as a whole) being adequately represented in the literature your students are studying? Why or why not?

If your mentees are enrolled 10th grade NAI honors British literature (Ms. McFadden) or 12th grade NAI AP English (Ms. Barrios)
British literature is taught in United States schools as a kind of “forerunner” to literature of the United States (for example, studying Shakespeare is considered to be important to understanding “our” literary heritage). Given the percentage of speakers of languages other than English in Southern California (and the United States as a whole), to what extent is British literature an important aspect of United States literature and culture? Drawing from the information on the Modern Language Association website, what literary traditions (for example, Spanish) are NAI students likely to be introduced to in other contexts (for example, in the home)? Why is it important for students to be introduced to British literary traditions in high school?

If your mentees are enrolled in 11th grade NAI honors American Literature (Ms. McFadden)
American literature encompasses several cultures and languages. Consider the different languages and cultural traditions that are represented in the literature your mentees have studied in their American literature course so far this semester. Drawing from the information on the Modern Language Association website and your understanding of the literature assigned in the NAI American literature course, are the cultural traditions (signified by things like language and themes) of Southern California (and the United States as a whole) being adequately represented in the literature your students are studying in their “American literature course”? Why or why not?

ESSAY 4—“Your Literature Course” or “A Meaningful Conversation” (2 pages, 20 points): DUE March 21
This week, we have devised different questions for different kinds of JEP mentors. JEP students serving in order to earn credit in their USC literature course MUST answer the first question. Students serving as JEP mentors on a strictly volunteer basis may choose to answer either question.

Option #1: Your Literature Course (required for students earning course credit for JEP)
How has your literature course content helped prepare you for your mentoring work? Consider your course readings, activities, assignments, and discussions in relation to your mentoring work. Have you appropriated any of your course assignments or information from lectures/readings for your mentees, for example?
- Hint for Comparative Literature 487: What texts and images have you and your mentees discussed together?
- Hint for English 304: Have you written any sestinas, villanelles, or misbehaving poems with your students? What kinds of poems have you discussed with your students? How are the poems you are reading/writing together informing the poems you are composing for your poetry class?
- Hint for English 375: Have you noticed any common science fiction tropes in the literature you and your mentees have discussed together?
- Hint for English 430: Have you discussed any of “the conditions of life in Shakespeare’s early modern London, which are still relevant to us today—namely, conditions relating to gender, economics, politics, religion, philosophy, power, class, race, sexuality, and social performance” (as mentioned in the introduction of your course syllabus)?
- Hint for English 469: How have your discussions of representations of women in literature helped you better understand the gender dynamics in your mentoring group?
- Hint for Volunteers: How have you drawn from your literary coursework in general during your conversations with your mentees?

Option #2: A Meaningful Conversation (for volunteers only)
Describe a meaningful conversation between you and your mentees. Why does this conversation stand out as particularly important or significant to you? How has it affected your relationship with your mentees and/or your perspective about your JEP assignment?

ESSAY 5—“Key Terms from your USC Literature Course” (2 pages, 20 points): DUE April 4
A good understanding of basic terms is necessary for any literature scholar. Pick a word that relates to the material you have been covering in your literature course (for example, genre, poem, prose, play, stage) and look it up in your textbook and/or class notes. Now, look up the term in an “outside” resource such as The Literature Resource Center (available through USC’s electronic resource page: http://www.usc.edu/libraries/index.php#eresources) or a copy of The Oxford Companion to English Literature. How have your mentoring experiences changed the meaning of this word for you?

Hint for JEP non-course credit volunteers: You might consider key terms related to education in general. Alternatively, consider a term that you and your mentees specifically discussed together.

ESSAY 6—“JEP” (1.5 to 2 pages, 15 points): DUE April 11
This week, please answer one of the following prompts:

Option #1: Improving the Writing Mentoring Program
How could the JEP/NAI Writing Mentoring program be improved for the benefit of future JEP and NAI students? What worked well? What did not work well? How could the mentoring work be better linked up with your literature coursework?

Option #2: Open Classroom (for students who plan to participate in this program)
Discuss your plans for the USC College Open Classroom Project. What motivated you and your mentee(s) to participate in the program? What do you think your mentee(s) will gain from visiting a college classroom? Would you like to have participated in such a program as a high school student? How could the program be better linked with the JEP/NAI Writing Mentoring program?

ESSAY 7—“Author’s Choice” (3 pages, 25 points): DUE April 20
This week, please answer one of the following prompts:

Option #1: Character Identification
Compare your own experiences as a mentor with the experiences of a character you have studied (or written about) in your literature course this semester and/or discussed with your mentee. How have you and/or your mentees grown morally, psychologically, or otherwise as a result of the mentoring project? Do you personally relate to any of the characters’ motivations, struggles, or stories? Hint: If you consider your journey as a kind of bildungsrroman, it might help to look back at your first two journals to remind you of your state of mind as the mentoring partnership was just beginning.

Option #2: The Makings of a Classic
The works you and your mentees discussed together have withstood the text of time in that they have been included on a high school or college syllabus. Choose a text that you discussed with your NAI mentee(s). Based on your conversations this semester (in your college class discussions and in your mentoring sessions), why do you think this particular text has become a “classic”? What aspects of this story continue to interest readers across racial, cultural, temporal, and educational lines? Why did you and your mentee(s) choose this particular text to discuss in your mentoring sessions? Hint: You might consider how this text has been interpreted in various film adaptations and other popular cultural venues.