

MICROPAPER GUIDELINES

A “micropaper” addresses a prompt within a very short space. No longer than 600 words, micropapers require a clear purpose and effective argumentation through close textual analysis. They demand revision, preferably with the assistance of the Writing Center or a friend. DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THIS ASSIGNMENT.

A CLEAR PURPOSE

The purpose of the micropaper should be established at the outset. You may get a clearer sense of that purpose during the writing process (this is part of why revision is important). Once you have identified the purpose of your micropaper, make substantial edits. Each component of your micropaper must fit the purpose. Tangential ideas waste precious space.

EFFECTIVE ARGUMENTATION

An effective argument consists of: (1) a clearly established position; (2) sound reasoning and supporting evidence; and (3) elaboration of the significance and implications of the argument.

CLOSE TEXTUAL ANALYSIS & EFFECTIVE SUMMARIES

Close textual analysis concerns specific areas of a text. Rather than offering broad generalizations, it develops focused interpretations of passages. You must determine which ideas to closely engage and which can be summarized.

Engage concepts and ideas from a text by (1) briefly explaining their meaning and (2) identifying your agreements, disagreements, revisions, amendments, etc. Quote only those words and sentences that are crucial or especially illuminating. Avoid lengthy quotations unless you write an elaborate analysis. Respect context; do not twist quotations to fit an argument. (Note: Quotations are no substitute for thoughtful argumentation.)

An effective summary (1) identifies an author's main point, (2) accurately reproduces the author's line of thought, and (3) clarifies the significance of that argument. It should give a clear sense of what a text is about even for someone who hasn't read it (a summary is more like a film synopsis than a teaser trailer).