



Promoting Integrative and Reflective Thinking in Writing-Intensive MT Engage Courses

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Sample Blog Prompts

- Potential Topic: Identify 3 specific habits of mind from the list that you want to cultivate this semester. Then discuss:
 1. Why you want to focus on those in particular,
 2. Specific steps you will take to develop those this semester,
 - and
 3. How you believe those habits would be beneficial to your growth as a reader and writer, both in this class and beyond.
- Potential topic: What reading strategies are you applying to your sources? How are these strategies helping you evaluate your sources and their relevance to your project?
- Potential topic: What are your thoughts on how the podcast attempts to bring sources and their stories to life? What are your thoughts on how the podcast uses evidence to support claims? How does the inclusion of the interviewees' voices help the podcast's creators achieve their purpose? How could you use similar strategies in your article to bring your interviewee to life?

Habits of mind:

- Curiosity – the desire to know more about the world.
- Openness – the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world.
- Engagement – a sense of investment and involvement in learning.
- Creativity – the ability to use novel approaches for generating, investigating, and representing ideas.
- Persistence – the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short- and long-term projects.
- Responsibility – the ability to take ownership of one's actions and understand the consequences of those actions for oneself and others.
- Flexibility – the ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands.
- Metacognition – the ability to reflect on one's own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge.

Sample Blog Post

[. . . .] Not only did she conduct interviews with parents and students of the Normandy district, **she included their actual voices. It helped us as listeners to not just hear what they said, but how they said it. The emotion and strength and pride and sadness and happiness. We could hear it, and as a result we could feel it in our hearts [. . . .]**

The way Hannah-Jones uses this source to strengthen her main point or idea is really intelligent and powerful. This would be a model to follow in integrating my sources or personal interview. Also, just including the voices of the students and parents and just being able to hear their empathy, anger, sadness, etc. was really touching and could possibly be an idea for the presentation aspect of my paper.

I also like the way she explains her sources. She will introduce them and say directly what they say. Immediately following, she explain exactly what they are trying to say in a way everyone can understand - either with simpler, more explicit word choice or by making a comparison to a famous historical event which most or all of us know about and understand. This would be a very effective technique I most likely will incorporate into my paper.

Sample Blog Audit 1: “Forecasting”

I definitely envision myself using the habits of mind that I discuss in my blog posts. I hope that I never lose my persistence habit of mind. Knowing that this semester was extremely stressful for me yet I still put all of my effort into all of my classes truly shows my persistence. I feel that persistence is that most important to me because if I want to make it in the music business, I need to be strong-willed and not give up so easily on things.

I haven't exactly improved on my openness habit of mind, but I would like to work on this skill outside of English 1020. I am really disappointed with myself because I focused so much on my persistence and metacognitive habits of mind that I basically ignored this one. Even though I did not use this trait as much as I wanted to, I believe that having this characteristic is important because being neutral and staying open to new perspectives and ideas are a great quality to have, I would eventually like to acquire this trait.

I feel that I made the biggest improvement in my metacognition over the course of this semester. I used to think that tracing the steps of my thought process would be impossible since I have A.D.D, so most of the time I'm thinking about two things at once. I have actually found that focusing and writing down my thoughts have helped me achieve metacognition. I know that I will continue writing down my thoughts and practicing metacognition well beyond this class. Instead of keeping the blog, though, I will be keeping my writing journal to write down my thoughts, plans as well as ideas. Keeping the journal will be useful in structuring thoughts and making connections. I am truly proud of myself for improving on these habits of mind as well as the others.

I know that I have made significant improvements in my writing. At the beginning of the semester, I did not think about the audience. I did not think about what they know or what they did not know. In my last post I talk about how for my research article, I was worried that the audience would not understand the point or statement I was trying to make. This class has forced me to realize that the audience truly does matter and that I should think of who my audience is while I am writing. Just thinking about who will be reading my work has completely changed the way I write, and I am grateful for that.

Sample Blog Audit 2: “Reflection”

This is how I have developed the habit of mind, creativity. In my third blog I said, “I have always tried to play it safe, whether it comes to asking questions or doing research. I always choose topics I know most about, whose outcome I can visualize.” This time, for my article, I tried to move out of my comfort zone. I chose a topic I was curious to know more about, something I did not know much about before. In the third post, I also mentioned that “I will chose topics I know least about or know nothing about. That might make me come up with questions on the topic, which in turn would lead me to finding more information, which will further aid me in coming up with more questions.” I believe I have followed through. I have done what I said I would strive to do. My research on the lack of women in computer science led me to find more information which made me ask more questions, and that is how I ended up with a nine page article, trying to answer all those questions [. . . .]

I have also developed persistence and openness. These blog posts are proof that I have genuinely worked on improving my writing. This was achieved through persistence, completing all of my work on time and following through with assignments. Most of the things I have worked on in this class, I had never done before. All of this was out of my comfort zone. My comfort zone was basically not writing anything at all. So I opened myself up to new ways of thinking and researching. I had never done a blog before. Like I have mentioned before, I do not like translating my thoughts into words. This blog forced me to do what I did not like doing and it turned out to be something good. I developed confidence in my writing that I never had before. When I look back at it, which is time consuming because it's just too much to read, it does have worthwhile information. It is worthwhile because I wrote all that, and now I can say I have accomplished something.

Sample Blog Audit 2: “Forecasting”

In the future, the skill that I think I can take with me is reading like a writer. I have come to realize that no matter which profession I am in, I will always have to write something –an article, or a research paper, or even maintain a blog [. . . .]

In the above examples, I am thinking of the distant future. Before all that can happen, I will first have to graduate college with a degree. So before that is possible, I will be writing papers for most of my classes. I will be writing essays for scholarships. The habits of mind, engagement, openness and creativity, might help me write convincing essays that are to the point. Engagement, like peer review will help me come up with new ideas, also fix all things that may have more than one interpretation or might be misinterpreted. I am not looking to offend anyone so having another person’s perspective will help. I learned about responsibility. In the sixth blog, I said, “It is my responsibility as a writer to face the consequences and also make sure that my writing does not distort the information from my sources.” Openness would be when I actually refer to my peers’ suggestions to improve my words. Creativity would be how well I actually implement their suggestions.

In the ninth blog post where I had to talk about the presentation for my article, I said, "I had not anticipated the audience's reactions or expectations very well. I had some parts, or even one line of commentary that, that came out a little stronger than I had intended. I also realized that my article did not have a clear purpose." This is what I have learned from writing a research article for a real world audience: To attract a certain audience I need to have a clear purpose to get them involved in the problem I am trying to solve. I need to make suggestions to get them thinking and hopefully they will do the rest for me. This is another skill that could be useful when I am trying to get something started, when I really hope to see a change.

Representative Investigative Research Article Topics

- Women in Computer Science
- Why *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* Failed to Meet Expectations
- The Journey to Becoming a Doctor
- Challenging Game: How the Advent of Competitive Gaming Takes Advantage of Its Players