

How to Prepare and to Write a Response paper – North American History to 1877

What a response paper is:

A well-written, mistake-free, critical, 250-word essay that responds to our reading that shows an original interpretation of the work in question.

It has been copy-edited for clarity of expression.

It demonstrates a familiarity with the text.

It demonstrates that the student has thought on the subject of the article and the article itself.

What it is NOT:

A response paper is not merely a summary of a text.

It is not a commentary on how you “felt” about the work in question; your personal opinion about the quality of the article. It is instead an expression of what you *thought* about the piece and your opinion as a student of history.

What to ask yourself as you prepare:

CONSIDERATIONS

What is the argument of the work?

How is that argument made?

What evidence does the author provide?

Do you find that evidence convincing? Why? Why not?

How does the argument or theme of the work compare to other arguments on the same topic?

CONSTRUCTION

Hook/Introduction:

1. In one paragraph, draw the reader in and explain the point/s that you will make in your response. Do not leave this first paragraph without explaining your main point.

2. A short paragraph that summarizes the article and the argument

3. One to two paragraphs provide your response to the work – how and why you found it engaging, convincing, helpful, etc. . . but as a scholar.

Your response should be free of grammatical, organizational, and spelling errors.