**Interpretation of Literature 08G:001/Smith**

**Reading Response Guidelines**

As you know, part of your course grade is based on informal reading responses. For the most part, you will be given a question or prompt to get your thinking started. At times, you will have the opportunity to come up with your own question and then respond. Reading responses should help you develop your **critical reading skills**, building up a toolbox of reading techniques that will allow you to read ***interpretively***. They will also prove useful as the sources of potential topics for other assignments, such as power paragraphs and major essays.

**Basic RR Instructions:** For each class, you will come in with a *brief but pithy* (150-250 words) paragraph or two in which you make one or more concise interpretive claim(s) about the day’s reading. Quote the text to supplement and support your analysis.

Spend some time **reflecting** on what you’ve read before you begin your response. Make **specific interpretive points**, and pair them with **quotes and examples** from the text whenever possible. Spend enough time on each discussion point to elaborate your thoughts relatively fully, within the length constraints (in other words, don’t just bring something up and move on without follow-through, or present your thoughts as unelaborated bullet points).

Reading responses will call for a combination of personal reaction, candid reflection, and critical thinking. I will be looking for your own engaged response to the text’s ideas and imagery. Your work should show that you have *read well*—that you engaged with the text actively and thoughtfully, employing critical thinking skills so that your reading resulted in new thoughts of your own.

This is not a formal essay, so you don’t need to have a focused thesis or argument for each response—although sometimes you might. You also don’t need to worry about formal structure or smooth transitions—if you need to jump straight from thought to thought, that’s fine. Do, however, try to write as carefully as possible, using complete, grammatically correct sentences.

I will take your **first** reading response in the form of a hard copy, so that I can give you detailed feedback. All other reading responses will be submitted electronically, either on ICON or in Dropbox. Check your syllabus for reminders about which format we’re using each week. In either format, the deadline for submission will be **noon** on the due date.

* Your reading responses should be **150-250** words in length, and should discuss **2 or 3 of your own insights, arguments, or responses to the text(s)** we’ve read during the week the response is due**.** Your work will be stronger if you **anchor your observations to the text*,*** using your close readings of **specific quotes and passages** for evidence and support.
* **For ICON discussion posts:** Go to “Discussions” and find the discussion board for that week. The prompt you are responding to will be posted at the top of the board. **Use Copy+Paste** topost your own reading response in the online box by **noon** **or earlier** on the day it is due. In addition, please try to **respond** to one or more of your classmates’ posts. (Your response needn’t be lengthy, but should be thoughtful and consist of more than mere agreement or echoing).
* **For Dropbox Submissions:** Go to “Dropbox,” find the folder for the appropriate week, and upload by **noon or earlier**.

**Tips for effective critical reading:**

*Read* ***activel****y:* don’t just take in information—get your hands dirty! Disagree, engage, and consider.

*Read* ***in drafts***: just like writing, reading works best in stages: tackle the text little by little, not necessarily all at once.

*Read* ***for tactics***: look beyond content; consider the strategies the writer uses to communicate.

*Read* ***contextually***: ask questions about target audience, writerly purpose, and surrounding circumstances.

*Read* ***authoritatively***: connect with the text by bringing to bear on it your own knowledge and experience.

*Read* ***with balance***: read first with acceptance (“with the grain”) and then with skepticism (“against the grain”).

*Read* ***smart****:* break down the task, work when you’re alert, and keep a pen in hand.