

Put the names of articles, essays and other subordinate titles in quotation marks consistently throughout your writing. Put the names of books and other main publications like newspapers and magazines in italics.

Provide first and last name when introducing a person. Once introduced, consistently use last name only.

Teacher's *Remix* Sample Homework

Chapter One: Identity

Write summaries, responses or hybrid sentences. Think about what you've written. Which is it?

(list the essays read and write one sentence for each)

- In Emily White's "High School's Secret Life," which is the first chapter of her book *Fast Girls: Teenage Tribes and the Myth of the Slut*, the journalist investigates cliques, which she calls "tribes," because the behavior of sticking with like individuals is a long-honored human trait.
- Queen Latifah's "Who You Callin' Bitch?" offers readers, including African American women, an alternative to Karrine Steffans' gossipy memoir about her time as a "video vixen," which I am sick of hearing about due to its limited approach.
- In Andrew Sullivan's "The 'He' Hormone," women appear reduced to a single aspect of biology: having less testosterone than men. Therefore, simply put, men have more power, meaning among other applications, more power to earn money in a capitalist economy. As a female, I think there is more to say, but I appreciate Sullivan's discussion.
- Lucy Grealy's "Masks" reveals a complicated look at illness and childhood, where illness is not all bad and childhood is not all good.
- The poem "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" by Gloria Anzaldua makes me want to learn Spanish, or perhaps invite Jennifer Lopez to recite for students.
- The use of metaphor in Firoozeh Dumas' "The F Word" is fun but not as personal and moving as her reference to the 1970s television show *Charlie's Angels* and its recently deceased star, Farrah Fawcett.

Summary

(write a one paragraph summary of one essay)

Be sure to follow the directions regarding the first sentence of your summary. Include the author's name in full, put the title of the essay in quotations and summarize the main point of the essay. Practice the art of brevity; practice the art of paraphrase. When integrating outside sources in your writing, use more paraphrase than quotation. Paraphrase raw facts like numbers and names. Quote when you can't say it better. Always put quotes around another writer's words. Give credit whether you paraphrase or quote.

In "the 'F Word'" by Firoozeh Dumas, Americans are asked to open up and accept foreign cultures. The essay is a chapter from the author's memoir *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America*. Back in the 1970s, Dumas moved from Iran to northern California with her family. In middle school, she felt the need to simplify and Americanize her name, to make communication easier for the natives, so she complied, as did her siblings eventually. As she matured and passed through college into parenthood, Dumas reversed her earlier decision. She changed her name back to Firoozeh, deciding that she was fine as she was born and that Americans would be better off adapting to a multi-cultural world. In her essay, she uses the metaphor of the "spice cabinet" to equate trying unfamiliar tastes with learning new names and cultures.

Be sure to practice the distinct skills of summary and response ("Analyzing the Text") as directed. Both are needed in essays, where they are preferably woven together in a sophisticated manner and found side by side inside sentences and paragraphs.

To practice clear communication for the workplace and the home, follow the guidelines of what I call stand alone writing. Fully introduce authors and properly name essays in all four parts of the homework pattern: sentences, summaries, "Analyzing the Text" and (if mentioned) in mini-essays. Pretend in each instance that you are talking to a new audience of general adults who are not enrolled in the course. Take care of your audience. Be clear.

Analyzing the Text

(answer one question for the essay summarized)

In her autobiographical essay, "The 'F Word,'" Firoozeh Dumas addresses the need for flexibility and cultural awareness. After moving to America from Iran in the 1970s with her family, she changed her name to Julie, but eventually she changed back to her birth name. "I have found that Americans are now far more willing to learn new names, just as they're far more willing to try new ethnic foods," she adds in 2000 (the year of publication). Decades before, however, trying to find a new name, she turned down the suggestion of "Farrah," an Iranian name, because she didn't want to be associated with then teenage heart-throb Farrah Fawcett. Anyone alive at the time, in America and anywhere else the television program had migrated, was well aware of THE Farrah Fawcett poster, photographed in tones of amber, orange and Coppertone. "I didn't want to be associated with somebody whose poster hung in every postpubescent boy's bedroom," Dumas explains.

When discussing what an author does in a text, use present tense. (EX. Dumas says . . .)
When discussing the historical past, use past tense. (In the 1970s, Dumas moved . . .)

In America, no one person can ignore the larger culture, and American television largely shapes the nation. (Look at reality television now.) Being Iranian would not have helped Dumas escape comparison to the sexy *Charlie's Angels* television star had Dumas changed her name as her mom suggested. In middle school, such comparisons could have become cruel and caused the young woman to feel extremely self-conscious. Instead, Dumas yearned for something that would help her blend in quietly, like the short simple name she chose. Dumas wanted to fit in, not stand out, which, ironically, is one American ideal practiced by many that is not often highlighted in the land of the free.

In summary, stick to the facts, minus personal observations. In analysis, build longer responses by making personalized and public connections. Connect elements inside the author's essay to something outside. Discuss the connections you recognize as you read, write and think. Explore ideas in detail. Review the writer's tool box in the writing process section of the coursepack for reminders about the ways to build detailed language.

Dumas notes the way Americans like to feel comfortable by taking the easy road: sharing familiar things (television shows), taking short cuts (reducing names like William to Bill) and eating plain foods without foreign spice. She evokes an America out of the past (thankfully) when there were fewer television channels, everyone seemed to watch programs like *Dynasty* and *Charlie's Angels*, and the entire nation appeared hooked on the products advertised during those show like disposable razors and processed foods—in short, a more homogenous, not fully healthy, world. It's funny the way Americans are known for liberty but often cling to a narrow definition of community that acts more like conformity. Eventually, Dumas changed her name back to her birth name, as she gained confidence in herself and no longer needed to hide. She insinuates that both the writer and her adopted country have grown up, in sense, and have learned to be more accepting of diversity, which is a very good development.

Inside your essay, credit outside sources with signal phrases (see coursepack dictionary). Realize that you already know and are using signal phrases. The *Remix* homework pattern asks students to practice writing signal phrases in each of the four writing steps. All of the essays in *Remix* are potential outside sources, which student writers refer to inside their own homework writing. Giving credit, or citation, simply means providing signal phrases inside essays and a Works Cited page at the end. Identify sources by name inside the essay and by location on Works Cited pages.

Pay attention to the structure of essays. The opening sentences of an essay need to attract attention. Like they say in Hollywood, open strong. Use homework mini-essays to practice thesis and topic sentence. Provide strong sentences to start all body paragraphs. Writers must clarify their point or expect to lose their audience. Take care to be clear.

Rough draft mini-essay

(as inspired by the chapter)

"Free the Clowns"

Don't forget a title. All essays, like people, need a name. Titles should connect to main point. Give readers a clue about the essay's point of view.

Growing up, I always wanted to be a circus clown. When the Ringling Brothers circus came to town, my grandfather Bob packed us up in his woody station wagon and took all his grandchildren to see the elephants. He'd take us alone, without our parents or Grams, and he let us eat us much junk food as we could stomach, all the pink cotton candy and Good N Plenty we could hold down. Naturally, our annual trip was beloved. My cousin Rick, now a police officer, liked the lions. My brother Tony, who later travelled the world with the army and his wife, even taking a safari to Africa, preferred the high-wire act, but I loved the guy with the big red nose, brightly colored wig and over-sized hobo clothes. Instead of a pink Barbie toy convertible or aqua Suzy Homemaker oven, for Christmas I wanted shoes four times too big. Rather than bell bottoms and halter tops, I was likely to match stripes, polka dots and discordant colors whenever I was allowed to dress myself, which wasn't often.

Questions lead research, which is the hunt for answers. Inside essays, control questions. Limit questions. Answer all questions. Realize a thesis cannot be a question, and must be a statement of belief.

What could be better than to make people smile? There's so much sadness in the world, I considered my choice of profession to be honorable. When I grew up, I would run away and join the circus. My mom and dad supported my fantasy because they didn't take me seriously. The family would joke about how I would be paid (in funny money) and what kind of children I'd have (born wearing make-up). Years later, in high school, the first time I saw Cirque du Soleil (the Saltimbanco show), I cried. It was so beautiful, with a whole new take on clowns, clowns that were acrobatic and tragic, more serious and more talented than old fashioned clowns. I was impressed, rightly, as this new circus has now been around for twenty-five enduring years because people need what clowns give. Dreams change like clouds as we mature. I grew up, learned to dress myself (pretty much) and realized I was better suited to accounting than showbiz. Thankfully, the stereotype of the boring accountant is just plain wrong, at least in my case. Every year for Halloween, I pull out my lime green dress with purple polka dots and the rest of the costume I've lovingly gathered over the years, complete with plastic flowers in my hat. Happily, I maintain my alter-ego, Bubbles the Clown, all day, even at work. It's become a tradition that people look forward to in my neighborhood and at the office. I feel great when others enjoy the show.

I had fun stealing my friend Karyn's identity (and fiddling with it a bit) to create this homework example (which could be called a false memoir). I had to conduct some light research to find the name and spelling of the circus. Going to the Cirque du Soleil's website to research its history constitutes researching an outside source. Trusted websites can be listed on MLA Works Cited pages as sources.

The world has changed a lot since I was a kid in the 1970s, when *The Brady Bunch* was a first run television show. (personalized thesis) At this point, I'm fed up by evil depictions of clowns because Bozo and his pals should be used for spreading good will, not fear and sarcasm. I believe in freedom of speech, but I also believe in common sense and good taste. There's never been a better time for a quick smile! Today, in the reign of HDTVs and the ability to watch movies huddled alone over thumbnail-size telephone screens, too many kids associate clowns with scary or creepy characters, which is a shame. It's like the last innocent thing has been trampled and defiled. Nothing is left of childhood innocence. Movies like *It*, *Killer Clowns from Outer Space*, *Poltergeist*, and *Shakes the Clown* muddy the image of clowns. I say, free the clowns! (public thesis) It's important for children to laugh and not automatically distrust unfamiliar adults. Clowns, like other thespians, allow audiences to laugh (and cry) at themselves, which is so valuable in world brimming with stress. Traditional clowns may seem quaint, but they represent the finest tradition of theater and offer catharsis, which isn't just child's play. Scary movies avoid real life. Clowns, ironically, embrace it.

Notice how the language of your thesis develops with your thoughts. A writer's blueprint takes the form of words, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, lists, cluster maps, doodles, practice writing, prewriting and some sort of numbered outline system (see outlining in coursepack). Be sure to study all course materials about the writing process, including the aptly named Powerpoint on my webpage.

This mini-essay is a personal narration, like students are asked to write for the first essay in the essay sequence. (Your first and second essay may grow out of one your homework mini-essays.) In storytelling, sometimes writers build to a thesis at the end of a personal narration, following the dramatic tradition of climax. But the world is rich with possibility. In some personal narrations, the thesis may work better in the introduction, in some at the end, and occasionally, in some rare cases maybe even in the body, who knows? Writing is an art and a craft.

Outside of narratives, college students are generally expected to put a clear thesis statement of one or two complete sentences inside introductions. The second and third essays in the essay sequence will require a traditional structure with thesis and hook (that's it!) inside the introduction of the essay. For homework, it's okay to write seven personal narratives with thesis statements in the conclusion. However, try to challenge yourself to sometimes write more public essays (see the public essay and book review directions). As you think and create, focus on common things in the world, not just you and your own personal world.

Use the *Remix* homework pattern mini-essay to practice good basic essay structure. When writing college essays, it's helpful to find your thesis early in the writing process. Learn to compose essays around a clear thesis statement, stated early in the essay, inside the introduction. For essay writing, I advocate a simple but effective system of complete sentence outlining (title, thesis, topic sentences) instead of traditional bullet-point Roman numeral outlines, which are better suited for report writing.

Explore how much fun writing can be. Your brain is the best computer you will ever own. Challenge yourself. Enjoy!