Understanding Strong Response Writing

- *Equally important to summary writing is strong response writing, in which you join the text’s conversation and speak back to it.*

- *The writer engages with the text actively, both assenting to an author’s ideas and questioning them.*

Reading Against the Grain

Reading against the grain is a key part of creating a strong response. When you read against the grain of a text, you challenge, question, resist, and perhaps even rebut the author’s ideas. You are a resistant reader who asks questions, pushes back, and reads the text in ways unforeseen by the author. When you make against-the-grain points, you challenge the author’s reasoning, sources, examples, or choice of language. You generate counterexamples, present alternative lines of reasoning, deny the writer’s values, or raise points that the writer has overlooked or specific data that the writer has omitted.

Generating and Exploring Ideas for Your Strong Response

After you have written your summary, which demonstrates your full understanding of the text, you are ready to write your strong response. The following questions might stimulate your thinking…

1. Who is the text’s intended audience? How is the author trying to change that audience’s view of his or her topic?

2. How have the author’s ideas affected me? What points do I agree with? Disagree with?

3. If I am not persuaded by the author’s ideas and evidence, why not? What is missing? What can be called into question?

4. What is excluded from the author’s text? What gaps or omissions do you see? What has the author overlooked?

5. What are the author’s values, beliefs, and assumptions? Do I agree with them? How can I question them?

6. How has the author changed my view of the topic? What new insights have I gained?