

Reflective Essay

Before taking this class, I was unsure whether I would be able to grow significantly as a writer. I had some experience with academic writing, but I wasn't confident that a single course could make a noticeable difference in my skills. However, after completing this class, I can clearly see how much I have strengthened my college-level reading and writing abilities. The lessons introduced me to new techniques for analyzing complex texts, approaching assignments more thoughtfully, and expressing my ideas with greater clarity and precision. As the semester progressed, I found myself developing stronger analytical and critical-thinking skills, learning not only how to explain why something made sense to me, but how to articulate my reasoning in a well-structured and meaningful way. I also became much more confident in integrating outside sources into my writing, thanks to the models we examined together and the opportunities to practice these skills through multiple essays. Additionally, the collaborative aspects of the course—such as peer-review sessions and group projects—helped me learn to work more effectively with others. These activities encouraged me to engage with classmates I hadn't known before and made me more comfortable exchanging feedback and collaborating with new people.

My first major essay was an analysis of the costumes in *Rent*, where I focused on the characters Angel, Mimi, and Roger. In this assignment, I examined how each character's costume design reflects their personality, emotional journey, and overall role in the show. I think I succeeded in describing how the costumes support the storytelling, reveal aspects of each character's identity, and shape the audience's perception of them. Writing this essay taught me

how to analyze clothing with more depth and intention, and it helped me express the relationship between costume design and character development. Looking back, one improvement I would make would be to include images of the costumes. While descriptions can be effective, visuals would have given the reader a clearer sense of the details I was analyzing, especially in moments where words alone might not capture the full design.

For the genre translation project, I created a collage board about gentrification—one of the major social issues highlighted in *Rent*. My collage incorporated images, quotes, signs, and visuals from the musical itself to show how gentrification affects real communities and how the show represents this issue. I feel I did well in making the collage both visually appealing and thematically cohesive. I used bright colors and bold images to attract attention while maintaining focus on the serious message behind the project. If I were to revise it, I would work on improving the layout to ensure everything is evenly distributed. Some areas ended up crowded with text and images, while others had noticeable empty space. A more balanced composition would make the final piece stronger and more visually effective.

In my research essay, I explored accessibility in musical theater, focusing specifically on the use of ASL (American Sign Language). I chose this topic because accessibility is often overlooked in theater discussions, and the work of companies like Deaf West Theatre is extremely important but not widely talked about. I believe I did well in explaining how Deaf West integrates ASL into its productions and why this representation is so meaningful for the Deaf community. The examples helped me show how inclusive practices can expand who gets to participate in and enjoy theater. For future improvement, I would try to incorporate more recent sources to strengthen my research. Some of the sources I used were over ten years old, and

including newer scholarship or recent productions would make my argument even more relevant and current.

Overall, this course has not only strengthened my technical writing abilities but also helped me grow as a more confident, thoughtful, and intentional communicator. Each assignment pushed me to think critically, revise purposefully, and express my ideas with greater depth and clarity. I leave this class feeling more prepared for future academic challenges and more aware of the ways writing can shape understanding, connection, and creativity. The skills I developed—whether in analysis, research, or collaboration—will continue to support me throughout my college journey and beyond, and I'm grateful for how much I've grown as both a student and a writer.