

Response Paper

A response paper is a written “reaction” to something the writer has read, viewed, or listened to. But let’s get even more specific. To do that, let’s use a fictional assignment: a response to the movie *Citizen Kane*.

It Is NOT a Summary

Generally, a response paper assumes some basic familiarity with the topic. Don’t give your audience a synopsis of what happens in *Citizen Kane*. You may need to summarize a particular scene or two, but that’s about it.

It Is NOT a Formal Review

Typically, response papers are not like journal articles in which the writer is making a very sophisticated argument that requires a lot of scholarly support. Your response paper will probably not have outside sources. That’s okay—the point is to get across your response.

It Is NOT Unstructured

Just because it’s not formal doesn’t mean a response paper is just like a rant on a blog. For example, going through your “likes and dislikes” about *Citizen Kane* is not a response. Response papers, even though they are primarily your opinions, have a tight focus and a clear sense of organization.

So What Is a Good Response Paper?

Think of a good response as a carefully constructed, specific argument about a particular point of the film, book, play, or musical medium that you are reacting to. For example, you could write a response paper about how the realistic acting of *Citizen Kane* makes the film believable. Or about how the plot of *Citizen Kane* is so complicated that it hurts the film’s message. Like any good argument, it needs to be tightly organized. You need to explain, for instance, why the acting is so realistic by using clear examples from the