

A FRAMEWORK FOR REFLECTION

Researchers have identified different levels of reflection that parallel the levels of thinking represented in Bloom's taxonomy. Bain, J., Ballantyne, R., Mills, C. & Lester, N. (2002) labeled these levels with the mnemonic "5 Rs of reflection." We have added a sixth level to this framework to account for the way reflection moves into other genres, such as an ePortfolio or personal narrative. Levels of reflection may be used in varying combinations, but they can also be followed as sequential steps.

REPORTING

The writer describes the experience, lesson, assignment, reading, issue, etc.

Challenge to the Writer

- Balancing details with accuracy and purpose.

Sample Prompting Questions

- What happened? What were the results? What is the new idea or concept? Explain important background information.

Examples

- The data show a 40% decrease in the cod population in Rockport, Maine, since the last data collection four years ago.
- As a first-year graduate teaching assistant, I am now leading a composition course. My students often do not complete reading assignments prior to coming to class.

RESPONDING

The writer provides a personal response to the experience, lesson, assignment, reading, issue, etc.

Challenge to the Writer

- Overcoming fear of revealing feelings; not slipping into clichés (safe ground) that don't move thinking further.

Sample Prompting Questions

- What emotional response does this elicit? What aspects of this experience, lesson, assignment, reading, issue, etc. were difficult or challenging, and why? Why did this matter to you?

Examples

- During clinicals, I helped to care for patients with dementia. Seeing the suffering patients and their families made me feel sadness and, admittedly, pity.
- I found the reading difficult to understand because I'm not interested in the topic, and the writer uses difficult language; however, when I took the time to look up words I didn't know and used the strategies we learned in class for breaking apart difficult sentences, I could better follow the author's meaning.

RELATING

The writer makes connections between personal/theoretical understandings and the experience, lesson, assignment, reading, issue, etc. the writer is currently exploring.

Challenge to the Writer

- Only seeing the most obvious connections; failing to understand one side of the connection thoroughly so that the connection is superficial or artificially imposed.

Sample Prompting Questions

- How does this experience relate to another experience, lesson, assignment, reading, issue, etc.? Where do you see connections? What limits (differences, complications) are there in the connections you see?

Examples

- My approach to correcting these inaccurate measurements was similar to the approach I used in an earlier chemistry course in that I need to be certain I use the same units of measure, but I also had to remember to carry the measurement to the second decimal point because the differences were so small.
- The things we saw in the field confirmed the research we had been reading. For example, fresh food was clearly missing from the stores that were not along the major highways and restaurants. It's possible that families were growing some of their own food in backyard gardens, but we found no source for gardening supplies in the rural communities we surveyed. Diabetes and obesity rates in these communities was, not surprisingly, higher than in other parts of the state with more access to a variety of foods.

REASONING

The writer considers and interrogates the experience, lesson, assignment, reading, issue, etc. with a critical lens. She may consider its limitations or alternative causes or parts; she may also consider it from another perspective.

Challenge to the Writer

- Shifting perspective without slipping back into defending the original point of view; not challenging one's own assumptions.

Sample Prompting Questions

- What limitations were there to this experience, lesson, assignment, reading, issue, etc? What would [person/group] think of this? What are the underlying causes/parts? What are some alternative implications or meanings?

Examples

- Because this was merely a simulation, the stresses and surprises of an actual ER scenario that I should prepare myself for weren't present, so I'm unsure of how well-prepared I am, even though my scores in the simulation were quite high.
- I think the client is unhappy because our communication about the remodeling project has faltered, but the dissatisfaction might also come from the higher than expected costs and limited choices

RECONSTRUCTING

The writer considers the future and potential new action or thought, based upon the new understanding of the experience, lesson, assignment, reading, issue, etc.

Challenge to the Writer

- Making moves toward metacognition.

Sample Prompting Questions

- Given what I know now, if I were to approach this or a related experience, lesson, assignment, reading, issue, etc. again, how would I do it differently? How has my belief/understanding changed? How will this experience, lesson, assignment, reading, issue, etc. and my new knowledge/understanding of it change my future action or thought?

Examples

- I just submitted the final draft of my second essay for this course, and I already wish I had set aside more time to work on it. If I could return to this essay again, I would create an outline so that I could more clearly manage its organization.
- I didn't expect to have to reconsider what "family" or "support" meant, because these seemed so obvious to me. After this assignment, I realize that "family" has a number of different meanings, even for the same individuals, depending on the circumstances, and that "support" can actually be unhelpful in situations where the client needs to take responsibility for her own actions. This makes me wonder what other commonplace words need to be reconsidered as we work with our clients or try to resolve complex problems.

REPACKAGING

The writer condenses the material for a specific audience or purpose without losing the richness that demonstrates deep thought.

Challenge to the Writer

- Can't condense; complex thinking disappears; managing formality or appropriateness for external public consumption.

Sample Prompting Questions

- What are the most important parts, and how do I put those into the genre I'm being asked to produce? What would a future employer or a graduate advisor need to know about this experience in order to understand me, my interests, and my ability to learn? When I reread the reflections for the whole term, what patterns do I see, and what can I do with them?

Examples

- Reflection on a personal experience: blog post
- Reflection on a novella: analytical essay
- Semester-long reflective log: position statement or teaching philosophy