

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH MY LIFE?

Rutgers University Writing Centers
Plangere Writing Center ♦ Livingston Writing Center ♦ Douglass/Cook Writing Center

Sometimes a reading or writing assignment seems, at first glance, to be merely academic. That is, it seems to have to do only with the world of the university, never touching the life you have known outside of school. But assignments are far more rewarding if you can look past that first impression to make a connection with the life you have witnessed or lived, or the life you hope to live.

Use a separate piece of paper to write your answers to the following questions.

How does your life help to illuminate the reading?

When you find connections between schoolwork and what you have known outside of school you can start to use the knowledge and experience you bring with you to deepen the value of the schoolwork. You can use your worldly knowledge to illuminate the specialized knowledge of the university. Here are some questions that might help you do that. Write for a while about them and see what possible connections you can make.

1. Are there any passages in the reading that a person who has lived the sort of life you have lived would be especially able to understand and appreciate? Talk about one of those passages for awhile, and how it relates to your experience.
2. What specialized terms are used in discussing this topic? Do you know of any events or facts that help explain one of those terms, or reveal its usefulness? Do you know of any events or facts that challenge or contradict one of those special terms?
3. Are there any experiences you have lived through or witnessed that don't seem to be taken into account by the specialized knowledge contained in the reading or writing assignment? Talk about one or more of those events, and tell what changes might have to be made in the specialized knowledge to take them into account.

How does this reading assignment help illuminate your life?

On the other hand, you may feel that the reading or writing assignment says more about your life than your life says about the reading assignment. In that case, write for a while on one or more of these questions:

1. Choose a key passage or key idea from the assignment and discuss some of the things it helps explain about the life YOU have known. After you have said as much as you can about that, consider this: does the passage exhaust the

meaning of your experience, or is there more there to be said that the passage hasn't touched upon? What additional idea or theory is needed?

2. Would a person who knew of this reading and accepted its ideas choose the same paths in life that you have chosen or that you have seen others choose?
3. What would the ideas from this reading do to or for the life of someone you know well? How would these ideas change someone's life?
4. Do the ideas of this reading have some special use for a person practicing a certain profession? What difference would these ideas seem to make for someone in that profession?