

December, 1997 - Regina Giuliani, Biology

One writing assignment I have incorporated into my classes is an exercise on the analysis of a journal article. Rather than assign a term paper, I require students to select an article from a recent (last 2 years) journal in the field of study. The article chosen must be related to the particular course and approved by me before it is analyzed. Generally, I require two analyses per course. The exercise provides students with a tool to analyze and summarize the current literature. The instructor benefits by keeping up-to-date with the literature in the field. Students are exposed to the scientific literature and can explore areas of interest in greater depth.

The format I use for the assignment is given below. It is general enough to be modified to suit other areas. The assignment has been quite successful.

Journal Summaries -2 required (50 points each)

Due dates -October 9/November 13

1. Select an article for review from a recent issue of an appropriate science journal in our library. The instructor will approve your choice of article before you write the review. Choose an article that you can read and understand.

2. Read the article you have selected. Make a photocopy to show the instructor for approval. The photocopy will allow you to work on the article review at your convenience. The photocopy of the article must be attached to the review when submitted.

3. Write your review in three parts:

Part A. Citation - Give a complete, correct, bibliographic citation at the top of page one. Include the author's name, year, title of the article, name of the journal, volume number and pages. Use punctuation and capitalization as shown in the example below.

Randall, S.K., Kelly, T.J. (1992). The fate of parental nucleosomes and their distribution in replicating chromatin. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci., 79: 3143-3147.

The format for writing a proper journal citation varies among journal editors. There is no one correct way to write a citation. For this assignment use the example format.

Part B. Summary - Summarize the major content of the article, including the author's purpose, methods, results and conclusions. This should be approximately one typed page in length and immediately follow the citation on

page one. Do not use the abstract of the article as your summary. You must include your own thoughts and reactions to the article.

Part C. Analysis - Critically consider the article content and evaluate its significance. Consider the following in preparing the analysis: What is your reaction to the conclusions? Why is your reaction favorable or unfavorable? Has the paper changed your thinking on this topic? How? Is this paper relevant to you? Does the paper seem to have major applications for society or is it relatively unimportant? Why? Do you have experience or knowledge which gives you an opinion which is different from that of the author? Explain. How well did the author use the scientific method? What questions does the paper bring to your mind? Are there alternate ways for solving the problem or dealing with the issue that the author did not consider? Does the paper suggest possible new areas of research?

The analysis should address these questions and should be a full page of your typed review.

4. Type your review. Include your name in the upper right-hand corner of the page. The citation should be single spaced. The remainder of the paper should be double spaced. The review itself should be at least two complete pages. You will not be penalized for a longer paper but you will lose credit for a shorter paper.

Grading: Maximum credit is 50 points with 10 points awarded in each of these areas: citation, adequate analysis, adequate summary, writing mechanics including punctuation, grammar and spelling, and evidence of critical thinking in the analysis.