

Getting Started: Assessing the Assignment Sheet

Having trouble delving into your newest writing assignment? Do you desire to be productive but feel uncertain about where to start? Look no further than your assignment sheet. Use some of the following strategies to enjoy a productive brainstorming session.

1. Read through the entire writing assignment once. Reading slowly and carefully will give you a sense of what your professor expects.

2. Underline key words and phrases. Take brief notes, answering the following questions:

- ✓ How do these key words and phrases relate to the course content? Has your professor mentioned these terms in lectures or class discussions? Were the terms in your readings?
- ✓ Can you explain these terms in your own words? Do so briefly.

3. Does the assignment ask you to define any terms or provide background information?

- ✓ Are you familiar with the background information required for the writing assignment? If not, where do you need to go to find the information that you need?

4. If there are questions on the assignment sheet, restate them in your own words. Write these down! Reflect on the following:

- ✓ Based on your knowledge of the course content, why do you think your professor would ask such questions? What problems, tensions, or issues do you think your professor wants you to explore? Why?

5. What are the implied questions – questions that are not explicitly addressed on your assignment sheet but that either relate to course content or that can help you further investigate the assignment? Make a list.

6. Using the assignment sheet, can you construct a rough outline? If so, give it a try.

- ✓ Can you anticipate the arguments, evidence, or analysis that you will want to present in your paper? Write them down.
- ✓ Can you anticipate a logical order for these claims or discussions?

7. Think about evidence. Where will you find appropriate evidence for this paper? Has your professor specified?

- ✓ If you have to find your own sources, jot down any course texts or readings that might help you

Sample Assignment Sheet and Brainstorming Notes

Do we need a museum for women? What are the pros and cons of this issue? Are things the same today as when Day's article was published? Does such a museum serve a function today?

Questions/Implied Questions: What are the pros of this museum?
What are the cons of this museum?
How did the museum function when Day's article was published?
Would the museum still function the same way today?
Would it still be relevant today?
Do I want to argue that we need or do not need a museum for women today? Or should I complicate the question?

Rough outline:

I. Introduction

- A. Introduce museum
- B. When it opened / time reference (p. 2)
- C. Introduce article's premise on the museum (p. 2)
- D. THESIS: Do I want to argue that we need or do not need a museum for women today?

II. Pros of museum

III. Cons of museum

IV. Is the museum still relevant?

V. Conclusion