

Pei

Some Questions to Ask in Reflecting on Writing Assignments

The questions below refer not only to the way the assignment was conceived, but to the way it was phrased on a handout intended for the student:

What turned out to be particularly exciting, ingenious, well-designed, stimulating, novel, refreshing about this assignment?

What were the rewards and frustrations of the assignment for the students? (When I ask this, I don't necessarily assume that all frustration is bad.) Or is it impossible to generalize?

Did the assignment have an effect on the relationship between the students and the course? Did it cause intimidation, contention over grades, heightened involvement, renewed interest . . . ?

What were the strong points of the papers you actually got, and how did they compare to what you imagined would be the strengths of a truly successful paper?

What were the weakest aspects of the papers you got? Is it possible that a modification of the assignment could prevent some of these problems, or at least alert students to them?

On the assignment handout, what was said with particular clarity, elegance, economy, precision?

Conversely, **what turned out to be ambiguous, misleading** to students?

Did the students, on the whole, understand what the paper was supposed to do for its **audience**?

Did the students understand **what they were being asked to think about, and how**?

Did the assignment succeed in making clear the **shape or form** of the finished paper?

Were there **assumptions** made in the assignment that the students turned out not to understand or share?

Did the students, on the whole, understand correctly *how* to do the assignment? Did they waste a lot of energy on a wild goose chase that you never intended?

Did the students find unexpected ways to make the assignment more difficult or less difficult than you intended it to be?

In a revision of the assignment, could you make good use of examples to clarify potentially puzzling aspects?

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