

Envoys to Themselves: Metacognitive Assignments and Final Portfolios

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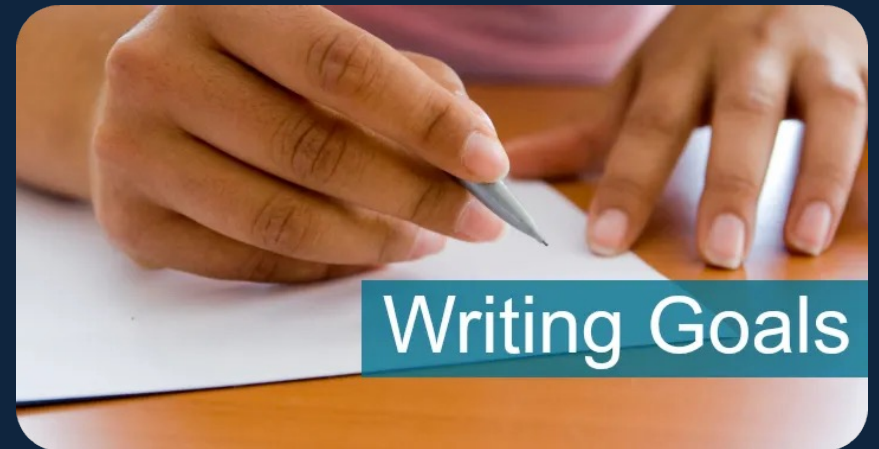
What is Metacognitive Writing?

- Metacognitive writing involves self-awareness, reflection, and critical thinking about the writing process.
- It goes beyond the act of writing itself; it focuses on thinking about one's own thoughts, strategies, and learning.



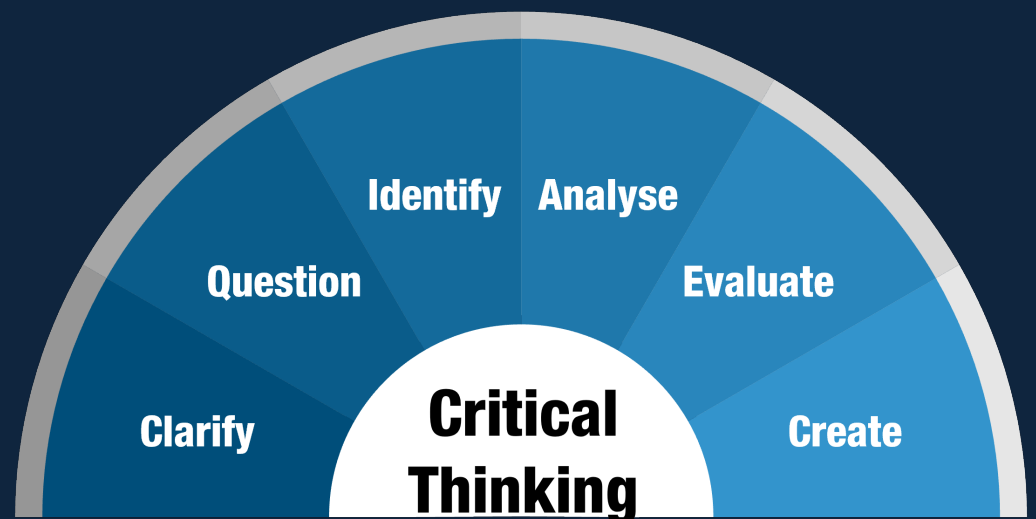
Promotes Self-Regulation and Goal Setting

- Metacognitive writing encourages students to set clear goals for their writing tasks.
- It fosters self-regulation by helping students monitor their progress and adjust strategies accordingly.
- Students become active participants in their own learning journey, taking ownership of their writing process.



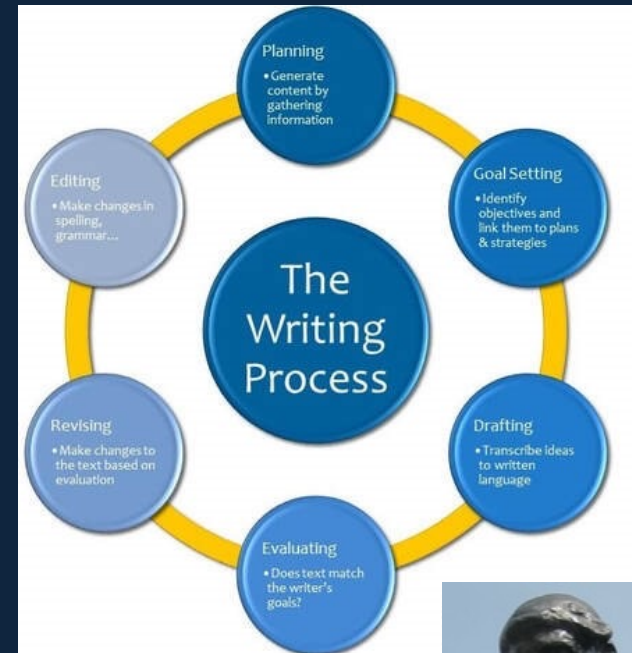
Develops Critical Thinking Skills

- Metacognitive writing assignments cultivate critical thinking skills.
- Students learn to analyze and evaluate their writing choices, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.
- By examining their thoughts and assumptions, they develop a deeper understanding of their own writing style and preferences.



Enhances Writing Process Awareness

- Metacognitive writing raises students' awareness of their writing processes.
- They learn to recognize patterns, such as when they struggle with certain aspects or excel in specific areas.
- By understanding their process, students can troubleshoot challenges and optimize their writing strategies.



Using Rhetorical Précis as Reflection

- A four-sentence rhetorical precis can encourage a metacognitive understanding of the rhetorical contexts in which students read and write.
- The precis can be used before writing to prepare students to enter an ongoing conversation or debate
- It can be used to reflect on the rhetorical context and their own purpose in the writing situation.

Template: The Four Sentences of a Précis

- Name of author, the type and title of the work, a rhetorically accurate verb (such as “asserts,” “argues,” “suggests,” “implies,” “claims,” etc.) that describes what the author is doing in the text (or what the text itself appears to be doing, if we are to avoid the intentional fallacy in a highly symbolic text), and a THAT clause in which you state the major assertion (thesis statement or main idea) of the author’s text (and the reason that supports the claim, if there is one).
- An explanation of how the author develops and/or supports the thesis (for instance, comparing and contrasting, narrating, illustrating, defining, using humor or sarcasm, relating personal experience, using statistics or examples, etc.) presented in the same chronological order that the items of support are presented in the text.
- A statement of the author’s immediate purpose (how the author wishes to affect readers in the moment), followed by an IN ORDER TO phrase in which you explain what the author wants to see happen in the world or what the author wants the audience to do as a result of reading the text.
- A description of the target audience (as stated or implied) and the relationship the author wishes to establish with that audience (usually supported by identifying the tone that the author uses to establish that relationship).

Rhetorical Précis for Reading/Critical Thinking

1. In her photograph “Untitled Film Still 10,” Cindy Sherman (or her photograph) suggests THAT media and advertising images limit the roles women play in everyday life BECAUSE those images define women according to a male gaze that confines them to stereotypes, such as the sexual object or domestic slave.
2. Sherman supports her main point by photographing her highly posed subject in sexually suggestive clothing, in a domestic scene, and in a carefully staged composition that includes symbolic props suggestive of how a male gaze limits women’s agency and how a male economy exploits women’s sexuality for profit.
3. Sherman’s purpose is to bring to consciousness the insidious and unconscious powers of the male gaze and a patriarchal economy (as well as the media, generally speaking) in shaping female subjectivity IN ORDER TO empower women to take charge of their own roles, images, and desires.
4. Sherman’s photograph adopts an ambiguous tone (helplessness? anger?) that speaks to a limited audience of educated viewers of men and women who can sympathize with victims of the symbolic violence of the masculine gaze and who possess the critical and active reading abilities to interpret Sherman’s sophisticated artistry.



Student Example: Using Précis as Rhetorical Reflection

- Carissa Camero's personal memoir titled, "Raised on Love, Living in Survival," suggests that different parenting styles and relationships greatly impact her perception of the world and her behavior based on the environment she was raised in.
- Camero supports her claim by narrating and illustrating her behavior throughout middle to high school that were heavily influenced by her two parental figures.
- Camero aims to emphasize the way children are raised in order to show the importance of surrounding a child in an environment that fosters love yet survival.
- In this personal memoir, the target audience relates to those with parental issues, those who have struggled with a broken family/divorced parents while constantly facing internal battles within themselves.

Parts I and II of Final Portfolio: Letter and (Revised) Papers

Part I: Self-assessment Letter

The very first page of the document should be a one-page **letter to me** in which you address:

- Challenges you faced as a writer at the beginning of the course,
- Areas in the writing process in which you have improved throughout the semester (point to specific examples in your portfolio), and
- Things that you still need to work on

Part II: Portfolio

Include all of your formal paper assignments in the order in which they were written. You **MAY** revise elements of your papers, but what you choose to revise depends on what you have to say in your letter. If you tell me you have mastered everything taught in the course, you should be able to point to evidence, details, and examples to support your self-assessment. If your papers do not demonstrate the skills you wish to claim, you may revise elements of the portfolio and point to those revisions as evidence for having mastered a skill. If you cannot point to such evidence even in a revision, identify things you still need to work on to demonstrate your knowledge/understanding of any future writing challenges. Consider how your audience will view the logos, ethos, and pathos appeals you make to support your claims. For example, you will not make a credible or logical case if you indicate one exceptional paragraph written early on that contains no passive verbs when most of the paragraphs you wrote after that contain a lot of them.

Conclusion

- By fostering self-regulation, critical thinking, and reflection, metacognitive writing assignments empower students to take charge of their writing process.
- With enhanced awareness and strategic thinking, students develop lifelong learning habits that extend far beyond the classroom.
- They develop skills to assess their own learning needs and adapt strategies accordingly.
- This self-awareness and adaptability prepare them for future academic and professional challenges.



Continuing the Conversation

- What metacognitive strategies or final projects do you assign in your courses?
- How do you imagine you might incorporate metacognitive assignments in your courses?
- Any challenges to incorporating such assignments that you would like to discuss or consider further?