

The Summary-and-Response Essay

Below is a student essay with the essential parts of a summary-and-response essay identified. The key is to be sure your essay has these parts and, in the case of parenthetical citations and the Works Cited page, has them punctuated properly. Exact adherence to the format (MLA or APA) takes on added importance because we are borrowing and blending other people's words and ideas with our own.

👂 Learn how to borrow and blend other writers' words with our own by studying the following:

[Working with Words from a Source \(MLA\)—the document](#)

[Working with Words from a Source \(MLA\)—the video](#)

To get started, please read the professional article "[Don't Let Stereotypes Warp Your Judgments](#)" by Robert Heilbroner. This is the article the student essay below summarizes and then responds to.

This process—writing an essay in response to a professional article in our Viewpoints text—is what I ask you to do for this assignment. Please see the specifics of the assignment to discover which *Viewpoints* articles qualify.

Now on to the student essay. Here are the five requirements of the first paragraph in list form:

1. name the author
2. name the work
3. add a brief summary
4. build a bridge to your thesis (a transition)
5. state your thesis at the end of the paragraph

Here's the student essay with the requirements color-coded:

Robert L. Heilbroner, in his article "Don't Let Stereotypes Warp Your Judgments," explains that assumptions based on stereotypes are not always accurate. He writes that stereotypes are "a kind of gossip" (348) which help us make sense of our abstract world. He gives examples of how names, nationalities, places and accessories cloud our judgment, explaining that these labels save us the trouble of finding out what people and the world are really like. The problem occurs when we take these assumptions and use them as our own thoughts or as fact. Heilbroner's article made me realize all the drawbacks that come with stereotyping people, and how deep-rooted stereotypes are in everyone's mind. These stereotypes are communicated through our upbringing as well as the media, and often become substitutes for reality.

Our upbringing affects the way we view our world and all the components in it. Heilbroner writes that "we begin to type-cast in our early years" and our families influence the way we "grow up with standardized pictures forming inside us" (348). When our families teach us by example, we learn to accept their stereotypes, and be hateful or tolerant, prejudiced or accepting. If we have been raised to see certain people as "bad guys," we tend to stereotype all similar people that same. When I was growing up in the 1970's, my father would often comment that women with tattoos were hookers or members of motorcycle gangs. He would cite as examples his experience by describing living in California, near a Hell's Angels meeting house. I have to admit that I carried my father's prejudice with me. As tattoos on women became the fashion, I often remember struggling with the notion that the tattooed women I saw on the street or at the mall were there trying to make money or looking for a ride on the back of a Harley. This

is a good example of letting stereotypes control our actions and beliefs, whether taught or self-learned.

Media plays a crucial role in reinforcing stereotypes. The misconceptions various types of media relay force the public to accept those misconceptions as fact. Heilbroner's point is that "stereotypes are perpetuated by the advertisements we read, the movies we see, the books we read" (348). While working at a convenience store late at night, if two young white males walk in, a clerk may not think twice about them. Replace those white males with black males and abruptly the clerk's heart may start racing, and he will likely try not to make eye contact. The only thing going through his mind is all those broadcasts on the news about black males robbing convenience stores. Though the clerk doesn't realize it at the time, the media has affected the way he looks at other races.

As frightening as it seems, stereotypes can harm us by become our reality. The result of this is closing ourselves to new experiences and new relationships. Heilbroner is correct when he suggests that "the danger of stereotypes lies not in their existence, but in the fact that they become for all people some of the time, and for some of the people all the time, substitutes for observation" (349). By prejudging the world, we close our eyes to truth, and accept what we have been told. We lose our self in all the fiction, and increase the chances that we will not discover all that life has to offer. A good example is the pre-judgments we can make about people when we first attend college. I recall labeling a hulking-looking "weight room" guy as a "dumb jock." Because he fit my preconceived notion of what an iron pumping, "uh-duh" person looked like, I immediately assumed he was likely in college only because he could play football. Imagine my surprise later when I found myself sitting next to him in my advanced calculus class.

Added to this was the result of our first exam when I compared my C+ to his A-.

So how do we change our ill-conceived notions about others? Heilbroner reminds us that “the true process of change is a slow one that adds bits and pieces of reality to the pictures in our heads, until gradually they take on some of the blurriness of life itself” (350). Perhaps each week we can target one of our stereotypes—say blondes are dumb—and seek contradictions to these in our daily lives. For me, the “dumb blonde” stereotype was easy to break when I found myself and the “dumb jock” sitting behind of a row of blonde women in the advanced calculus class. When the professor asked for a student to volunteer an answer, more often than not two or three of the blondes would immediately raise their hands, all having the correct answer.

Works Cited

Heilbroner, Robert. "Don't Let Stereotypes Warp Your Judgments." National Relationships Review 22 August 2002: 348-352.

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