

**sample assignment: essay
responding to two reading sources**

Writing Assignment
CPN 100, section 073

Responding to Two Reading Sources

Compare and/or contrast the views of Laurel Richardson in "Gender Stereotyping in the English Language" and Eugene R. August in "Real Men Don't: Anti-Male Bias in English" on the subject of sexist language. Write for an audience of classmates.

To document your source, include MLA-style parenthetical citations and a "Works Cited" page.

sample essay: responding to two reading sources

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CPN 100, section 073
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Sexist Language: Who's Being Affected?

Many people claim that certain words in the English language need to be changed. The question is, which words? Some want to change any word that is gender biased. But what constitutes a gender-biased vocabulary? Both

¶1 Laurel Richardson, author of "Gender Stereotyping in the English Language," and Eugene R. August, author of "Real Men Don't: Anti-Male Bias in English," argue that language is sexually biased, and they give multiple examples to back up their positions. Richardson provides a better analysis of the issue, however, because she demonstrates the effect that language has on both sexes while August focuses only on men. Richardson's examples are also more relevant than August's, and she persuades her audience rationally while August tends to demand rather than persuade.

¶2 Richardson's article is more comprehensive and ultimately more objective than August's. She shows both sides of the controversy in order to prove her point. Although she feels that our language is biased toward women, she admits that there are also derogatory words for men. Pointing out that studies have found "more than 1,000 words and phrases that derogate women sexually" (7), she mentions that there are nowhere near as many derogatory words for males. She acknowledges that there are 22 words to describe promiscuous men, but contrasts this to the 220 words that describe

essay heading: does not include instructor's name (according to portfolio guidelines)

essay title: uses key terms to clarify the focus of essay (see Troyka 53-54)

opening strategy: writer engages readers by asking provocative questions and providing background (see Troyka 104-06)

writer introduces sources: stating authors' full names, titles of essays

thesis statement: writer formulates main point about the relationship between two reading sources

writer develops response to one source, focusing on specifics

summary, paraphrase, and direct quotation—with MLA-style parenthetical citations (see Troyka 518-36, 580-87)

sample essay: responding to two reading sources

writer develops response to other source, focusing on specific points of comparison

writer paraphrases and quotes relevant points in reading—with MLA-style parenthetical citation (see Troyka 522-32, 580-87)

transition: writer starts paragraph with link to preceding paragraph (see Troyka 82-84)

writer uses ellipsis marks and brackets to adjust quotation—for smooth integration into writing (see Troyka 523-24)

writer uses long quotation to analyze key words—with MLA-style parenthetical citation (see Troyka 522-28, 580-87)

writer continues to develop response to one source

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promiscuous women (7).

By contrast, August never mentions derogatory words for women and focuses only on those that are demeaning to men. Thus, his argument is completely one-sided. Whereas August exhorts readers to stop using language biased toward men, Richardson tells them to **¶3** stop using language biased toward either sex. Richardson argues that "the use of the language perpetuates the stereotypes for *both* [my italics] genders and limits the options available for self-definition" (9). Admittedly, Richardson is not free of bias, for she is definitely making a case for women. Nonetheless, she is more open-minded than August because she cares about the effects language has on both genders.

Being open-minded is only one condition for writing a convincing argument. The author must also support his or her position with convincing examples and an appealing tone. The words August uses to prove that language is derogatory toward men are out of date. He points out that "coward ... is a word applied almost exclusively to males in our society, as are [its] numerous variants -- chicken, **¶4** chickenshit, yellow, yellow-bellied, lily-livered, weak-kneed, spineless, squirrely, fraidy cat, gutless wonder, weakling, butterfly, jellyfish, and so on" (294). I've seen these words in literature written before I was born, but how many of them are still used to describe "cowards"? Why does August cite these antiquated examples? While he attempts to show anti-male bias by dredging up examples of stale, no longer commonly used words, he refuses to admit that increasing numbers of words have become demeaning toward women.

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915 Richardson uses more valid, up-to-date examples to get her point across, and this makes for a more convincing argument. For instance, she points out that slang words for women such as "dog, fox, ass, [and] chick" have more negative connotations than those for men such as "dude, stud, [and] hunk" (7). Anyone can relate to these examples because they reflect current usage.

916 Another difference between Richardson's and August's articles lies in the authors' rhetorical goals. Richardson tries to persuade her audience based on the evidence. She wants people to read her article and think about how biased our language is, perceive the words that are biased, and appreciate the need for change. August demands that readers agree with him, and he does not allow for other views. He urges his readers "to recognize and condemn forms of anti-male bias in language whether they are used to exclude males from equal consideration with females, to reinforce restrictive aspects of the masculine gender role, or to stereotype males callously" (298). Richardson takes a more even-tempered approach, and thus her article is more likely to convince an audience.

917 August hopes to make people think that if there is any derogatory language in our society, it's biased toward men, not women. But it is unlikely his argument will appeal to readers who are not initially inclined to agree with him. Richardson, who provides a more balanced view (highlighting anti-female language but acknowledging the problem of anti-male language as well), could have an impact on a much wider audience.

*writer responds to relevant points
in other reading source*

*writer uses quotation to analyze
key words—with MLA-style
parenthetical citation
(see Troyka 522-28, 580-87)*

*writer analyzes how each source
rhetorically engages audience*

*writer quotes key passage—with
MLA-style parenthetical citation
(see Troyka 522-28, 580-87)*

*conclusion: writer fully develops
response to each source*

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MLA-style "Works Cited"
(see Troyka 588-607)

Works Cited

August, Eugene R. "Real Men Don't: Anti-Male Bias in English." *Language Awareness*. Ed. Paul Escholz, Alfred Rosa, and Virginia Clark. New York: St. Martin's, 1990. 289-300.

Richardson, Laurel. "Gender Stereotyping in the English Language." *The Dynamics of Sex and Gender: A Sociological Perspective*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987. 5-11.

