

sample CPN 101/103 assignment: analysis/evaluation of a source

Writing Assignment

CPN 101, section 301

Analysis/Evaluation of a Source

Directions: Pick one or two of the essays that we have read in class to analyze and evaluate using a set of criteria that you develop during class. In your essay focus on how specific passages illustrate your criteria for analysis and evaluation. Here are your goals for the analysis and evaluation essay: a) to interpret accurately how the author achieves her/his effect, b) to describe the important components of the essay and to show how these components work to create an effect, c) to indicate your judgment about how well the author uses the genre of memoir.

Analysis: analysis requires you to *break the memoir down and explain how it works*. To analyze your memoir clearly, you will also need to provide background information for your reader. You should state what the article is about and what the author's main idea or theme is. Show that you are aware of the author's objectives. Provide any background information you feel is necessary to demonstrate your understanding of the memoir. Also you should quote directly and properly document your passages.

Evaluation: The evaluation requires you to *judge the essay*. Ask yourself these evaluative questions: How effective is the author's use of content/theme? What reasons can you offer for your judgments? How effective is the author's use of language and structure? What reasons can you offer for your judgments?

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

essay title: uses key terms to clarify the purpose and focus of the essay (see Troyka 52-3)

writer uses analytical and evaluative terms to achieve a purposeful thesis

writer achieves unity and coherence by focusing on ideas from thesis in topic sentence

writer uses a series of specific quotations to develop analysis with MLA parenthetical documentation (see Troyka 490-503, 548-555)

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CPN 101-301
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Finding Meaning in Memoir

¶1 Both "Seven Years Ago I Raped A Woman" by Jack M. and "Notes from A Fragmented Daughter" by Elena Tajima are effective memoirs, but for different reasons. Each possesses its own particular strengths. Jack M.'s memoir is strong because the author is excruciatingly honest and open to the reader about the rape and his feelings about it, while Tajima's piece offers bold and descriptive images as its greatest strengths.

¶2 Jack M., the author of "Seven Years Ago I Raped A Woman," does not hold back and is very straightforward with his audience. The candid honesty of Jack M. is shown right in the title of his memoir; he says, "I raped a woman" (111). The author is not proud of what he has done and makes no excuses for himself. In this memoir, Jack M. does not try to rationalize his behavior or make himself look innocent. Looking back on his life "Seven years ago," he admits his guilt not only for the rape incident, but also for the way he has treated all the women with whom he has had sexual relations in his period of heavy drinking and "slutting" (111). He openly admits, "I was often cruel to these women" (111). Furthermore, Jack openly displays his poor treatment of women when he tells of how he acted only in ways that would help him ultimately to achieve sexual favors. He tells us how he manipulated one of his many pick-ups: "I would do everything I could to make her go to bed with me" (111). Jack admits his shameful behavior saying, "I would use

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empathy, understanding, humor, even my deepest secrets to get them on my side" (144). Jack continues to show his honesty by including statements like this: "if the sex was good, I might see them again, but I would quickly get bored...and I would abruptly blow them off" (111). Jack is honest at all costs, and his absolute truthfulness serves as the cornerstone of this memoir. He gains his readers' trust by sharing his private memories. Jack is willing to sacrifice his image as a "good guy" as he writes his memoir, thereby creating a very strong and engaging impression as a story-teller.

In "Seven Years Ago I Raped A Woman," Jack M.'s honesty with himself and his audience creates an especially interesting element of positive personal development. The author shows how his growth as a man has made him realize the harm and pain he inflicted on his victims. And as a result of this realization, Jack also emphasizes his feelings of remorse in his memoir. He is deeply ashamed of what he did and is taking responsibility for his actions. This former rapist convinces his readers that he has truly changed for the better: that he regrets his past actions and hopes that his story will instruct others not to take his path.

While Jack M. centers his memoir on one specific event in his life, Elena Tajima chooses to write her memoir about many times in her life. However, all of the memories that Tajima shares deal with one aspect of her life, her heritage. In "Notes from A Fragmented Daughter," she tells of her experience growing up being of mixed American-Japanese heritage. She adds positive energy to her memoir by using bold descriptions when discussing the situations that she has encountered. Tajima is descriptive throughout her

*writer evaluates on the
basis of analysis*

*writer draws significant
conclusion on the basis of
earlier analysis*

*transition: writer creates
a smooth connection
between sections of the essay*

*writer provides background
on source, including
author and title*

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memoir, painting vivid pictures of every situation. For example, Elena adds in details such as hair style, car models, brand names, skin tones, and movie titles; instead of just saying a car, she says "a Volkswagen," and instead of just a camera, she says "a Kodak Instamatic" (82). These examples are only a few of the many times that she pinpoints specific details. At first, the specific examples may seem like only a small part of Tajima's memoir, but they are what makes her memoir so effective.

writer connects sources

15 Elena, just like Jack M., does not hold back. Tajima gets right to her point and cites various happenings as support. This author uses many examples to serve as justification for her feelings. For instance, Elena tells of the time when she was out at an Asian American exhibit featuring oriental food when she was asked if she had cooked any of it simply because she "looked kinda Asian" (1). She goes on to point out that as Americans, we live "in a culture that can't tell Chinese apart from Japanese . . ." (1). In addition, by using details and descriptions, Elena effectively allows her readers to see what she has dealt with due to her Asian ethnicity, and as a result the audience tends to empathize powerfully with her. "Notes from A Fragmented Daughter" includes bold descriptions of racist stereotypes, including terms such as "flat-faced chinaman" and "slant-eyed face," descriptions used by others to describe Elena, such as "idiot," "hillbilly," and "bub," as well as descriptions of a sexist attitude she described as "touch-me-feel-you" (82). Tajima's word choice includes these and a number of other controversial terms. They are not the infamously known "bad words," but they are shocking and daring, so they catch our attention. These words are meant to make the reader stop and

*writer continues to analyze,
focusing on a series of specifics*

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think twice about how they are being used. Without her word choice, Tajima's memoir would lose a substantial amount of power and feeling.

The most powerful point of Tajima's memoir comes at the end when she gives a lengthy, bold, detailed description of herself:

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a half-Japanese postmodernist Gemini feminist, existentialist would-be writer of bad one-act comedy revues, avid cat trainer, and closet reader of mademoiselle, cosmo, signs, diacritics, elle, tv guide, national enquirer, feminist issues, house beautiful, architectural digest, country living, cat fancy, bird talk, mother jones, covert action, vogue, glamour, the new yorker, l.a. times, l.a. weekly, and sometimes penthouse forum. (82)

This quote is not only proof of the author's bold descriptions, but also evidence of the transition that takes place. No longer is Elena sitting back and listening to what others have to say, but she is now silencing oppressive white culture with her new found spirit. Not only is Elena speaking up, but it is as if she is talking back to everyone who has ever hurt her throughout her life. Elena's memoir begins with her being ashamed of her true identity and ends with her bursting out with an extremely detailed and powerful description of exactly who she is. Readers have to admire her strength of character after finishing this memoir.

Both "Seven Years Ago I Raped A Woman" and "Notes from A Fragmented Daughter" satisfied my requirements for effectiveness in that they were honest, descriptive, interesting, and filled with feeling. The authors open themselves up to their readers and use distinctive techniques for getting their points across in bold and powerful ways.

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*writer uses long quotation
format (see Troyka 448)*

*writer illuminates a significant
subject*

writer creates effective closure

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Works Cited

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Tajima, Elena. "Notes from a Fragmented
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