

WRITING ABOUT AESTHETIC ISSUES

Discussions about aesthetic issues provide students with the opportunity to develop their own thoughts and ideas. Robert C. Solomon in *Introducing Philosophy* states: "*Philosophy, more than any other 'field,' is not so much a 'subject' as it is a way of thinking, one that can be appreciated fully only by joining in.*"

Writing about and discussing aesthetic questions gives students the opportunity to explore issues in a deep and meaningful way. However, writing offers the additional advantage of allowing personal reflection of thoughts over a period of time. Written statements can be clarified or altered as students attempt to organize and express ideas.

Students may argue for or against particular points of view. By attempting to put arguments into their own words, they struggle with clarifying and communicating their thoughts. Articulating ideas and arguing against objections can reinforce and broaden a student's understanding of the issues being discussed.

In aesthetics a student's own answer to questions can be just as legitimate as those given by philosophers of the past. This openness may make aesthetics difficult to approach at first, but provides a valuable opportunity for personal expression as students gain self-confidence and become comfortable with exploring difficult issues.

Here are some suggestions for students to remember when writing about aesthetics issues:

Begin Your Writing with a Specific Question

Sometimes philosophical issues can be very broad and include too many paths that might be followed. By beginning with a question, you can clarify the direction and limit your subject to a manageable focus.

State Your Response to the Question You Posed

Be very specific about the position you wish to take, the reader of your paper will not have to guess where you are going.

Give a Clearly Stated Argument to Support Your Position

Be Yourself

Be humorous, gently persuasive, or boldly forceful in your argument, as long as you are being honestly yourself. Remember that some of the most powerful

writings have survived through the centuries because they reveal the writer's deepest concerns and strongest attitudes about life.

Remember you are writing philosophy using carefully thought-out argument that present your ideas concerning age-old questions.

Self-Assessment of Aesthetic Writing

Out of a possible 25 points for each criteria, how many points would you give yourself?

To what degree did you:

1. begin your writing with a clear statement of the question you wanted to explore?
2. state your personal position in answer to the question posed?
3. give reasons why you took the position you did?
4. write in an honest and straight- forward manner (without pretentious rhetoric) about your attitudes and concerns?

Total Points (100 points possible)