

Lisa Steffen, History – WID Fellows Portfolio – Informal Writing Activities

I. In-Class “Thought Letter” (Western Civilization).

You are now more aware of events and people from 1300 through the early 1500s: Great Famine, Black Death, Hundred Years War, Peasant Revolts, Crisis in Church Leadership, *The Divine Comedy*, Medici patronage, Brunelleschi, Donatello, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Machiavelli and Erasmus. Contrasts abound!

violence vs. humanistic reflection
grief vs. celebration
starvation vs. plenty
putrid disease vs. glorious paintings
conservative reactions vs. provocative innovations
the collective vs. individualism
spiritualism vs. secularism

Now let’s think. Write a letter to your mom, dad or good friend. Choose one of the contrasts. Explain to mom/dad/friend why this contrast existed. Offer a narrative of events as well as thoughtful analysis of why the people would have acted and behaved in the ways that they did. What surprises you most? What should your mom/dad/friend remember most? Can you relate these aspects of the early-modern period to anything you see in the world today?

II. In-Class Personal Response (U.S. History)

This response has two parts.

Part 1. Please, read the excerpts from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Governor George Wallace. In the space of a page, restate the arguments of each in your own words. You can write a summary, make an outline, draw a flowchart or a diagram of the reading, or simply take careful notes. The purpose of this page is to help you understand as fully as possible the structure and details of the author’s argument.

Part 2. On page two, please offer your own personal reflections or reactions to the readings. Analyze it, illustrate it through your own experience, refute it, get mad at it, question it, believe it, doubt it, or go beyond it.

III. In-Class “Microthemes” – Responding to Videos (Western Civ. and US History)

- Watch the 10-minute excerpt on Gothic Architecture. List 3 definitive characteristics of this style. What aspect of the Cathedral would have impressed a poor peasant the most? Why?
- Watch the 20-minutes of Brunelleschi’s Florentine marvel. Why was his design “revolutionary”? In what other ways did this Renaissance genius contribute to art? Remember Gothic Architecture. Which do you prefer: the dome of Florence or the cathedral at Chartres? Why?
- Watch the 20 minutes of the Summer of Love, 1967. Would you have wanted to be at the corner of Haight-Ashbury? Why? Why not?
- Watch the 10 minutes of the New Right. How do you respond to Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority? Why? What does this response tell you about your own political views?
- Watch the 5 minute clip from the LA riots. Who was rioting? What does that tell you about race relations in the early 1990s? Does it relate to issues of immigration? Why?

IV. In-Class “Microthemes” - Brief responses to primary sources or short biographies.

- What did you learn about women in Ancient Mesopotamia after reading the Code of Hamerabi?
- What was Aristotle’s “mean”? Why is this group the most reliable for good governance?
- Why might the Romans have found the Germans “barbaric”? Would you have preferred to have lived as a German or a Roman?
- Would you like to be ruled by Machiavelli’s ideal prince? Why? Why not?
- Offer two examples of how Jacques-Louis David’s artwork was a type of propaganda for Napoleon.
- Patience Kershaw would have been attracted to the ideology of Socialism. True or False. Defend your answer.
- In what way did nationalism shape the world view of Theodor Herzl?
- How would the Marshall Plan help stop the spread of communism in Western Europe?