

How to identify references that demonstrate understanding of an essay

Before you begin

What you need:

Related text: **“Dance with a Giraffe” by Christine Jurzykowski**

Approximate time this exercise should take you: **30 minutes**

Reminder

Presenting references that demonstrate your understanding of the essay is the last step in your mastery of the “Comprehension and Insight” criterion. Although you are not obliged to quote directly from the text to demonstrate your understanding, this is a reliable way to extract appropriate references from the text that show your overall comprehension. You can also paraphrase, rather than quote directly. You could also use personal detail from your own experience to show your understanding, but if you do this, be cautious not to wander off topic. Also, always try to vary your use of references so that you show an understanding of the text overall, rather than only focusing on one limited aspect.

Instructions

Select one or two references or direct quotations from the text to support each of the following statements.

Exercise 1

1. Jurzykowski's partnership with nature started when she was just a girl. (paragraph 1)

2. Jurzykowski mentions her father's death when she was only fourteen in order to hint at her experience with death. (paragraph 2)

3. The writer describes the connection she feels to animals and her perception of the broader relationships in the natural world. (paragraph 4)

4. The writer describes the size of the giraffe to help develop the power of the experience of the death process. (paragraph 6)

5. When Jurzykowski says she matched the rhythm of Nick's breathing, she describes that the experience was almost musical. (paragraph 14)

6. The writer uses several references to the notion that Old Nick, the other giraffes and she all shared the knowledge that he was dying. (paragraph 15)

7. In the text there are references to the time frame of Nick's death process. First she mentions twelve hours had passed and then she mentions a twenty-four hour home vigil. She adds this detail to demonstrate that this time was needed to absorb the experience. (paragraph 20)

8. The writer makes the point in her text that in nature everything is somehow connected. (paragraph 23)

Answer key

You may have found other places in the text where there are suitable references to support the statements (in addition to the paragraphs suggested in the exercise above).

1. In this paragraph any of the lines that refer to her love of animals when she was young would be suitable, especially her explanation of her “first” experience with nurturing and loving the anteater.
2. Here the notion of death is foreshadowed in the statement where she recalls her father’s death. This is the only part of the text that mentions her father, although references to “death” are repeated throughout the text.
3. This paragraph contains supporting evidence to demonstrate the author’s observations about the “nature of nature” and the cycle of nature. She refers to this relationship as a “universal dance.”
4. Clear factual detail from this paragraph would be appropriate reference here.
5. The best part of this paragraph to refer to is the last line of the paragraph: “... as if we were matched to a piece of music written in four-four time.”
6. Any of the lines in this paragraph that show the repetition of the word “knew/knowing” would be the most fitting choices.
7. The time frame is mentioned in the first line of paragraph 20.
8. Again, there are other places in the text where you will find references to everything being connected, but in paragraph 23, there are a few sentences that explicitly state her philosophy.

How to identify references that demonstrate understanding of an essay

Before you begin

What you need:

Related text: **“Dance with a Giraffe” by Christine Jurzykowski**

Approximate time this exercise should take you: **30 minutes**

Reminder

When you write the Exit Exam, you will have to demonstrate your understanding of the essay you are analysing by including appropriate references from the text. There are many ways to integrate references into your discussion: for example, quoting directly, summarizing/paraphrasing, giving examples from the text, or using pertinent examples from your own life experiences.

Instructions

For each passage below, indicate whether the references within each short paragraph are acceptable or unacceptable examples of how to use supporting references in a discussion about a text.

Exercise 2

1. The process of the giraffe's death is carefully explained in the text. The writer first describes Old Nick's fall from a standing position and the importance of keeping the animal's head propped up to avoid causing an aneurysm and then explains the staff and Jurzykowski's provision of support and comfort until the animal's passing.

Acceptable _____ Unacceptable _____

2. Most people have experienced the death of a family pet. This can be devastating to the pet owner, especially if the animal has been with the family for several years. In a similar way to Christine Jurzykowski, I once stayed by my pet's side while the veterinarian euthanized my very sick cat. This was an extremely emotional experience for me as I witnessed my cat's last breath. I would not like to go through anything like this heart-breaking experience again.

Acceptable _____ Unacceptable _____

3. In the text "Dance with a Giraffe," it is clear that the writer is relaying her emotional experience as she shares in the process of the giraffe's death. At one point in her account she mentions that she and Old Nick were breathing in unison. Jurzykowski says, "After twelve hours, it occurred to me to match the rhythm of Old Nick's breathing... My mind went elsewhere as kinaesthetic awareness took over." Through this shared breathing, the notion of interacting and interrelating with others is demonstrated.

Acceptable _____ Unacceptable _____

4. An interesting observation the writer makes about the power of nature is in her descriptions of the herd of giraffes that "danced" and moved toward "frenzy" as they moved in unison. The herd sensed the impending death of Old Nick, and their dance illustrated "the mystery of language beyond words."

Acceptable _____ Unacceptable _____

5. Christine Jurzykowski brings forth the idea of the cycle of life in her text. In doing this she is showing the reader that we should all fear being isolated and alone in the world. She uses such words as “partnership,” “harmony” and “connection” to make her point that no one wants to be left alone in the world. She even ends her text with the line, “you are my friend, you are safe here, you will be taken care of.”

Acceptable _____ Unacceptable _____

Now, find your own references from the text to support the following statements

6. Jurzykowski is demonstrating to her readers the power of nature, particularly the idea of harmony and interrelationships within nature.

7. In the text it is evident that not only Jurzykowski but also the Fossil Rim staff become involved in supporting Old Nick through his dying process.

8. The dance with a giraffe refers to the closeness of humans and animals within the cycle of life.

9. The reader is aware that Christine Jurzykowski's life mission has been one where she is very close to nature and taking care of animals.

10. The descriptive details of the size and power of the giraffe help to vivify this very emotional scene.

Answer key

In this type of exercise, answers will vary, but they should be similar or comparable.

1. **Acceptable.** Although this passage does not contain any direct quotations, the references/examples are acceptable as they demonstrate understanding of the text.
2. **Unacceptable.** This passage contains references that are incorrect and inappropriate to support the response.
3. **Acceptable.** This passage contains a good combination of direct quotes and relevant references.
4. **Acceptable.** This is also an acceptable passage/use of references. Part of the references contain paraphrase and part are direct quotation.
5. **Unacceptable.** In this passage the references are not acceptable because they show a misunderstanding of the text rather than a clear comprehension. The response contains the opposite association than what one would assume is correct. The misread seems to be supported by inappropriate references.
6. You will find suitable references in paragraphs 10, 14, 15, 22 and 23.
7. You will find suitable references in paragraphs 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11.
8. You will find suitable references in paragraphs 14 and 15.
9. You will find suitable references in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3.
10. You will find suitable references in paragraphs 6, 7 and 12.