

Inquiry Notebooks

In-quir-y- noun, plural -quir-ies.

1. a seeking or request for truth, information, or knowledge.
2. an investigation, as into an incident: a Congressional inquiry into the bribery charges.
3. the act of inquiring or of seeking information by questioning; interrogation.



Note-book- noun

1. a book of or for notes.
2. a book or binder of blank, often ruled, pages for recording notes, esp. one used by students in class.

Inquiry Notebooks- a notebook that is dedicated to inquiry 😊

Rationale:

This summer I worked with 17 Nebraska writing teachers who ranged in grade levels from first grade to undergraduate and graduate level teachers. Throughout the summer we all explored topics that interested us (inquiry). An undergraduate teacher and PhD student from UNL explored the topic of using Inquiry Notebooks in class. After hearing her presentation and doing my own inquiry on the topic, I am convinced that it is an excellent form of writing that needs to be implemented at the high school level. I applied for a grant to buy each student an Inquiry Notebook, so we will be using these notebooks throughout the year. Inquiry Notebooks can:

1. Give us a space to process items we've read, discussions we've had, or thoughts that are rolling around in our brains.
2. Encourage us to wonder and think critically about anything and everything.
3. Help us to draw connections to readings, people, cultures, etc (Rogers).
4. Help us to improve critical reading skills by encouraging us "to look for themes, possibilities, and intersections in our own work (and the work of others)" (Rogers 8).

You should expect to use these notebooks everyday and I will check them at various points throughout the semester.

INQUIRY NOTEBOOK USER MANUAL*

Because this is something new that we will be playing with, I will simply give you an outline of items that must be present within each individual student's inquiry. In some ways your notebook will resemble a journal, but instead of recording feelings, you will use the IN to further your exploration of class discussions, readings, lectures, assignments, etc. Every now and then our thoughts and feelings collide, so if this should happen when writing in your IN, then go with it.

These basic elements must be present in your IN:

- ✓ **Reading notes ("double entry" style—put their excerpts next to your thinking about those excerpts)**
- ✓ **Class/discussion notes (that you take during or after our class sessions)**
- ✓ **Inquiry prompt writing (responses to prompts given in class)**
- ✓ **At least two pages of "contemplative response" (I will assign these!)**

Reading/Discussion Notes

You may find some of our course readings to be complex, tedious, difficult to understand, frustrating, or even boring. But, I would like you to think of these readings not as something you are required to do, but as conversation partners who are waiting for your contribution to a larger conversation. When this happens, the inquiry work we do will become easier. Don't let our readings overwhelm you, take a deep breath and begin "conversing" with the readings in your IN.

I think it is a fair assumption to say that in most of your classes thus far, reading is not an active process. What I mean is, many teachers expect us to read in order to consume information and spit it out later. However, in our class I will expect you to be active readers, to read critically. You will be challenged to read texts in order to join a conversation and/or understand particular concepts. In this class and in the IN project, you will gain new reading skills that will be useful in life and in college courses. Your IN is a space where you can explore a text/discussion, test what you think, and articulate your thinking, instead of simply writing down your "answers."

Learning to become an active reader will require you to keep reading notes. In your reading notes it's important to note ideas or passages you don't understand, what you think they mean, or what implications they make visible. It's equally important to note the meanings you understand and challenge them anyway. So while you read, take time to quote those passages that challenge, inspire, intrigue, trouble, or confuse. When you find yourself having a sense of surprise, notice that moment and why you're surprised. Quote the section, note the page number and author, and then write your immediate response to that excerpt. You may also wish to record unfamiliar words and their definitions in order to build your vocabulary (this would be helpful on the ACTs/SATs).

Your notetaking can either be double entry style (quote on the left side of the page and your response on the right) or in a narrative format that gives the context, the quote, and then a response. You may choose to take notes while you read or after read. The

goal with this project is to become active readers by marking moments of your thinking and your reading responses so that you can articulate your reading experience rather than regurgitating facts later. You should be thinking about what the text means in multiple contexts. These notes will become the basis for the next step: a contemplative response.”

Contemplative Response

From time to time I will assign a contemplative response that needs to be at least two pages. This will be similar to a reading response essay, but the mission is NOT to summarize the reading. Instead, use the cited excerpts as the beginning of your contemplation and then write what you think the text could mean or imply. You should compare what the text suggests to what you have experienced or know (or even think you know). This is very similar to stating your opinion, but your opinion must be well-reasoned in relation to the text.

It’s important to note that the IN work is personal, but not confessional. Think of the IN space as a place for your personal thoughts and responses to intellectual work. Remember: you will have an audience (you are the primary audience, but I will be reading your inquiry notebook, too).

Inquiry Prompts

To help with your inquiry, I will provide you with inquiry prompts that will be based on the course readings. These responses should be dated and written in essay form, not short answer form. The idea here is to learn to mull, ponder, question through the writing of your inquiry. These writings should be as long as it takes to thoughtfully answer, address, or consider the questions they pose.

Making Your Notebook Yours

Other than the required elements, INs (like journals) should also include whatever you wish. If you’re an artist, feel free to practice within the pages of your IN. Exploring art and other types of writing (fiction, poetry, etc) can be great things to try within the IN. Don’t just confine yourself to the required content—explore your own learning and creativity. Personalize your IN by making it represent you in some way.