**Using Journals to Reinforce the Reading Cycle**

Journal assignments work best with the reading cycle when they are written specifically to address the readings and papers in your class. I generally write journal sets of 5 to 6 entries to accompany my paper assignments. These journals are in addition to the annotations/notes that students are required to take while reading.

To make reading journals effective, label each journal with instructions on when to complete it (before, during, or after reading). I usually provide some time in class to begin journal #1 and to finish up the post reading journals. Reading journals are generally completed in 3 weeks and are turned in the class period after the paper corresponding to the journal set is due.

**Pre-Reading Journals:**

The initial journal in a set should address pre-reading by activating knowledge or assumptions students already hold about key terms, concepts, or themes in a text, or the journal could ask the student to reflect on their own lives in such a way that engages with concepts they will encounter in the text. For example, if you were reading “The Chase” in Comp I, you might begin with a journal entry that asked students to reflect on what they enjoyed playing as children or what memories from their childhood seem vivid in their minds now and why. There are many, many ways to go with this initial prompt, but I do my best to make it a creative prompt and have some fun with it.

**During Reading/Post-Reading:**

The next two journals in the set generally each address a separate reading and ask students to reflect on the parts of the essay, its purpose, how it employs the mode it fits into, and other details where the students use basic evidence from the text to back up their ideas about the essay. These writing responses can often be taken or adapted from questions in the textbook. These are the journal responses that we would think of as stereotypical for a Composition class.

**Post-Reading Leading into Paper:**

The next journal or two in the set asks students to re-examine the piece of reading after the initial post-reading responses, looking for quotes or details that they could use in a paper to make some type of point about the reading. At this point, the students have an essay assignment which involves the reading, so they should investigate the reading in terms of the writing assignment, looking for textual evidence that proves their point.

Generally, for these last journals, I ask students to either write down quotes or paraphrases from the reading (I give them a certain number and a minimum number of lines for each quote) and then have them write three to four sentences for each quote or paraphrase telling what this quote proves or why they picked it.