Synthesis Essay: PSC Writing Lab Planning Sheet

**Step 1:** **Jot down notes about the two articles or stories you’ve been assigned.** Use the chart below to keep you on track.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Main idea or life lesson you learned from this article/story** | **One important person (character) or detail from this article/story** | **Another important person (character) or detail from this article/story** |
| **Article or Story 1** |  |  |  |
| **Article or Story 2** |  |  |  |

**Step 2:** **Think of both articles/stories as parts of a whole.** When you put them together, what kind of whole picture do they create? The whole picture needs to be something readers can only truly understand when they read BOTH texts. Look at each puzzle piece in the image below. By themselves, each puzzle piece has an interesting red and white design, but together they form a heart. The “whole picture,” in this case, symbolizes LOVE!

  

**Circle any choice below that seems appropriate, or write in your own. My whole picture is a lesson about…**

history cultural awareness avoiding potential danger/harm empathy causes of a trend/phenomenon a human flaw affects/results of a decision

Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3: Write your thesis statement.** Now that you have a broad idea of what kind of whole picture lesson your paper is going to discuss, you’ll need to arrange your ideas to form a clear thesis statement.

Try using the following template:

**When considered together, both** [title of Article/Story 1] **by** [author of article/story 1] **and** [title of Article/Story 2] **by** [author of article/story 2] **demonstrate** [choose 1 “whole picture” lesson and explain it here]**.**

When considered together, both “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” by\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_demonstrate\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Example (article):** When considered together, both “Multitasking Can Make You Lose …Um…Focus” by Alina Tugend and “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” by Nicholas Carr demonstrate that we aren’t thinking carefully enough about the harmful effects modern technology is having on our lives.

**How the body of this paper could be organized:**

* Body paragraph 1: we’re more distracted than ever before, but unwilling to give up distractions
  + Tugend: we know texting and driving is dangerous, but we still do it & downplay harm
  + Carr: we expect web articles to be shorter with bold headings we can “power browse”
* Body paragraph 2: we deny how much we are neglecting personal relationships & connections
  + Tugend: we use “e-mail voice” on the phone and are often not really listening to others
  + Carr: we don’t read to make connections with others but instead prioritize immediacy
* Body paragraph 3: tech dependence encourages us to forget facts and avoid deep thinking
  + Tugend: we interrupt ourselves so much that we can’t think deeply about anything
  + Carr: we don’t try to remember facts anymore now that we can Google them

**Thesis Example (short story):** When considered together, both “Two Kinds” by Amy Tan and *Smoke Signals* by Sherman Alexie demonstrate the harmful pressure put on members of American subcultures to conform to the stereotypes and traits that are associated with that particular culture.

**How the body of this paper could be organized:**

* Body paragraph 1: stereotypes that characters from sub-cultures are expected to portray
  + Tan: Asian kids are expected to be math/science smart, become a “prodigy”
  + Alexie: Native American kids are expected to be tough & stoic—not emotional
* Body paragraph 2: isolating feeling when you don’t match up with a stereotype
  + Tan: Jing-Mei is angry about her mother’s expectations, and her Mom is disappointed that she doesn’t seem to care—both feel misunderstood and alone.
  + Alexie: Victor wants to be a tough & proud warrior, but his anger at his abusive, alcoholic father who was similar to many other men in his culture causes an inner conflict within him that makes him feel ashamed and alone.
* Body paragraph 3: empowering feeling of rebelling against stereotype, accepting one’s self
  + Tan: Jing-Mei takes pride in her rebellion and chooses her own path, but eventually returns to the piano and feels her first real connection to her mother
  + Alexie: Victor cuts his hair, learns not to blame himself for what happened in the past, and attempts to move forward with more pride about who he is and how he fits into his family/heritage

**Step 4: Plan out your body paragraphs for this paper.** Come up with three main points that support and explain your whole picture lesson AND can be discussed using both stories/articles. Fill in the blanks below.

**Body paragraph 1:** One way both stories/articles portray my whole picture lesson is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

A quote I could use from story/article 1 is on page\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A quote I could use from story/article 2 is on page\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Body paragraph 2:** Another way both stories/articles portray my whole picture lesson is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Body paragraph 3:** Another way both stories/articles portray my whole picture lesson is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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A quote I could use from story/article 2 is on page\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.