

English 103

Conversation with an Author

This exercise asks you to compose a dialogue between yourself and one of the authors we've read for Essay 2. Its purpose is to help you develop the writing skill called "synthesizing."

"Synthesizing" means showing how your ideas and another author's ideas *interact*. For example, where do you and the other author agree and disagree? How does your thinking move beyond theirs? Why do you think your own ideas are different from theirs? When you interpret and present your sources in this way (as opposed to picking out quotes to "support" a thesis that you've already thought of), you achieve greater depth in your critical thinking.

Note that an academic essay will not contain a full dialogue between you and a source. However, this exercise is a great way to experiment with your own and sources' ideas, in exploratory form. Here's what to do:

- 1) Choose the essay (Delpit, Jordan or Royster) you are most inclined to write on.
- 2) Look through your annotations on this essay and choose a statement or question that interests you.
- 3) Write this statement as the first line in the dialogue, preceded by your own name (see example).
- 4) Imagine how the other author might respond to you. Write the next line of dialogue in her voice. **The author's statements must be grounded clearly in his/her text (that is, you can't just make up an imaginary set of beliefs for her!) You can quote the other author, but if you do, each quotation must be followed by a paraphrase that begins, "In other words ..."**
- 5) Respond back to that author, as yourself. Continue the dialogue until you've typed at least two pages. Double-space between speakers.

Format your dialogue like this:

YOUR NAME: [An initial statement or question, drawn from your annotations of the article.]

AUTHOR'S NAME: [A response to your statement or question. This should be in the author's voice (as you interpret it), and should be paraphrased if possible. When quoting, be sure to use quotation marks and follow each quote with a paraphrase that begins, "In other words ..."]

YOUR NAME: [Your response to what the author just said.]

AUTHOR'S NAME: [A response back to you.] ... and so on.

Note: This exercise is based upon one originally developed by Peter Elbow.