

## ENG 1213: Critical Thinking Exercise – Abstract to Concrete

1. Read Chapter 5, pp. 72-88, in the *QA Compact* (Troyka and Hesse), on Critical Reading and Thinking to guide you in this assignment.
2. Watch the "[MLA Documentation PowerPoint](http://kellimcbride.com/units.htm#unit1)" presentation, available at: <http://kellimcbride.com/units.htm#unit1>
3. Read Lucien Stryk's poem, "Cherries," on p. 565 of *The Power of Language*.
4. Summarize the poem, documenting it thoroughly in MLA style, and using a signal in and signal out. Remember the differences in summary and paraphrase.
5. Follow MLA Style guidelines for presenting work, as listed in the Essay Formatting Guideline handout in your syllabus or presented in the [MLA Paper Template](#) available on the class web site as an MS Word doc file.
6. Prewrite on the following and post it to class discussion board on the date designated on WebCT: How is this poem connected to our current economic crisis? In other words, how might we apply Lucien Stryk's message or theme to some of the reasons for our current problems and what we might have to do to weather this economic storm?
7. You will be graded on the following aspects:
  - a. MLA documentation accuracy
  - b. Following MLA style formatting
  - c. Accuracy of your summary
  - d. Completeness of assignment – did you finish all steps
  - e. Depth of response: did you toss off a response or address this on a serious level.

**Note on response:** Part of learning to think critically means to take an abstract concept, such as Stryk's message in his poem, and apply it to a concrete situation, such as America's current economic crisis. In doing so, you open up your mind to all possibilities. We only learn to do this well by actually doing it – working that brain. If you've not had much practice in this, then you will find it perhaps a bit difficult. You may make missteps or have a hard time coming to any conclusions at all, or feel completely unconfident about what you come up with. That is natural.

Here are some suggestions:

1. Do your best to answer the assignment on your own and put your thoughts on paper.
2. Find someone to give you feedback on your ideas. Be sure that you ask people who you feel will give you good quality feedback, though. The class discussion board is for this purpose.
3. Make any revisions you feel are called for.
4. Critical thinking is something that takes practice in doing well. We all make mistakes, misinterpret what we're supposed to do, or completely miss the boat in our analysis. That's part of the game. But learning means that we pick ourselves up and try again. By listening to the ideas of others, we hone our own skills, seeing where we missed something important, or even learning to see things from other points of view that help strengthen our own ability to think. And sometimes, we simply have "well, duh" moments. I pride myself on being a strong critical thinker, and this still happens to me. Do not feel embarrassed or intimidated when it happens. We've all been there, and still go there. ;-)