



Non-Thesis-Driven Assignments

Assignments That Are Nearly Impossible To Plagiarize

Inspire Their Imagination

While most scholastic essays focus on argumentation, you might have students write a piece that does not require a traditional thesis and argumentation, which almost necessarily prevents plagiarism.

Example 1: For Literature Class

For example, in my literature classes, I love to have students write:

- *a “lost” scene of a play we’re reading*
- *a “what happens next” piece hypothesizing about what happens to the characters after a novel or story ends*
- *a scene from a novel written from the perspective of a different character*

To add an analytical writing opportunity to such assignments, I ask students to write a paragraph or two about the creative work they’ve done:

- *What textual details prompted their piece?*
- *How do they justify their choices?*
- *How did they use diction and style to mimic the author’s writing or diverge from it?*

This analytical work provides insight into students’ thinking while assessing their understanding of the text.

Example 2: Interdisciplinary Applications

While these examples could feel specific to literature courses, they actually work well in most disciplines:

- ***What might a particular mathematician or scientist have been thinking or feeling as she made her discoveries?*** *Get inside her head, based on your learning in this class, and write her diary entries as she worked through her discovery. Alternatively, compose a letter to a fellow scientist describing her work and thought process.*
- ***Write a scene from history or politics or the arts from the perspective of one of its major players.*** *What might General Grant have been thinking during the Battle of Shiloh? How did he make his strategic decisions? Students can write a first-person*



narration from the perspective of any historical figure, drawing on their knowledge and/or research to interpret the character's motivations and actions.

- *Every subject has the opportunity to envision a "what if?" scenario or embody a major character in writing. Students can write:*
 - ***An interview from the perspective of Freud or one of his patients***
 - ***A letter from Nelson Mandela to a member of his party, or an opponent***
 - ***A diary entry from Beethoven, a medieval peasant, or a student of Socrates***

How To Use Non-Thesis-Driven Assignments In Class

As with every assignment, think about your pedagogical goals and the skills, concepts, or knowledge you want students to demonstrate. Then use non-thesis-driven genres to have students show their work towards or mastery of those skills. Because these pieces are written in less formal voices and can be shorter, you need not devote as much time to them as you might to more formal, thesis-driven assignments, and therefore these can be used as fun (but still educational!) interludes that are nearly impossible to plagiarize.