

**RACElaboration**

A **constructed response** is an open-ended essay question that demonstrates knowledge and reasoning. Most of you know the RACE strategy (Reword, Answer, Cite, Elaborate) for responding to constructed-response questions, but it isn't merely following the format that makes a good piece of writing. A good constructed response must, as the definition says, demonstrate knowledge. *You have to show that you understand the material.* Your answer must be thoughtful, reasonable, and defensible. RACE helps you do this, but it is still your job to reason logically, make inferences, and draw conclusions. In other words, *you* do the thinking and learning, and the RACE strategy will help you explain your new knowledge clearly.

The **E** in RACE stands for *elaborate* (or *explain*). This is the part of the response that shows how the textual evidence you have cited supports your answer to the question. It is where you explain your reasoning and show how you arrived at your conclusions. It is your response to “*So what?*” Unlike the other elements of RACE, this one is **ALL YOU!** It sets your response apart from all the others. **It should be the longest and most interesting part of your response!** But students often assume that their textual evidence is self-explanatory and do not develop their RACE responses completely, or they write responses that don't contain any of their own thinking. That's not good.

*Elaborate* contains the word cells: *-e-* (out) and *-labor-* (work). When you elaborate, you are *working out* your claim and textual evidence. You are **developing a topic sentence or claim with specific<sup>\*</sup>, relevant<sup>\*\*</sup> details** so that your reader will better understand and appreciate the points you are making. Extraneous, unnecessary language or information just to make your essay longer is not elaboration.

**How to RACElaborate**

- 1) Reword/Answer the question with a clearly stated topic sentence or claim.
- 2) Cite textual evidence and sources.
  - a. Quote no more than 15-20 words directly from the text, with quotation marks and source citation.
  - b. Summarize/Paraphrase longer sections, and include the source citation.
  - c. Use evidence stems like these to smoothly embed your evidence into your response.
    - i. According to  [Name of source and/or author] , ...
    - ii.  [Name of author]  claims ...
    - iii. The article titled  [Title of article]  indicates...
    - iv. As stated in the article  [Title of article]  by  [Name of author] , ...
    - v. On page  , the author wrote...
- 3) Elaborate: Explain why the textual evidence is significant. How does it support your topic sentence? (*So what?*) Explain the reasoning that led to the conclusion you've reached. Use elaboration stems like these to get started:
  - This [textual evidence] means...
  - In other words, ...
  - This shows...
  - Based on this information, one can conclude that...
  - The quote proves...
  - The evidence clearly shows...
  - This information reveals...
  - These events confirm...
  - This relates to...
  - It is evident since...
  - Because of this, it is clear that...
  - Since this is the case, we know that...
  - This leads one to the conclusion that...

\*Specific evidence is an actual, focused, complete, detailed, fully explained example – not a generalization.

\*\*Relevant evidence and elaboration actually support the thesis; they are not there just to lengthen the paper.

Your Turn: Using the RACE strategy, write a two-part constructed response to this prompt:

*Never shall I forget that night, the first night in the camp, that turned my life into one long night seven times sealed (p. 34).*

- 1) **How is night an appropriate symbol to convey Elie Wiesel's concentration camp experience?**
- 2) **How does night represent the effects of the Holocaust upon his faith?**

#1 **R**(estate): Night is an appropriate symbol to convey Elie Wiesel's concentration camp experience because...

**A**(nswer): ... \_\_\_\_\_

**C**(ite): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**E**(xplain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Conclusion Sentence (Restate Answer/Conclude Explanation) :** \_\_\_\_\_

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#2 \_\_\_\_\_

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