

An effective *writing process* deepens your thought, conveys it clearly to the audience, and uses evidence to back up claims effectively. The process includes *pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing*. Each of these steps contributes to a good paper. Great mechanics do not substitute for great ideas, so invest the time to find *topics* that not only *address the prompt\** but also *interest you* and readers.

**Pre-writing:** A first step in good writing is not writing but *reading, focusing, and collecting thoughts*. Mark relevant sections in readings; use them in class discussion and papers.

**Length:** If you tend to wordiness, leave time to condense. If you have trouble filling pages, brainstorm to make sure your paper has enough “meat” and make sure you unfold all ideas.

**Purpose:** Rarely do assignments ask you simply to list or summarize. Instead, they may ask you to define, explain, argue, analyze, or other. For Question 1, **\*compare** the *genres and styles* of the texts, *the kinds of experience* described in them, *the author’s position* relative to them, *similarities and differences* between the two, and *your own responses*. You might start with the text you prefer and examine the reasons for your choice. What gives it power?

**Support claims:** Use evidence to give readers reason to believe your claims. A common pattern includes specific evidence (i.e., a quotation or example) after a claim: “Friedan seems logical. She uses the third person and identifies other women as the sources of her information.” You should often delete the first person (“I”) because readers assume that your statements express your well-considered opinions, supported by facts.

**N.B.: Introduce quotations:** Use identifying (or introductory) tags before (or at least after) all quotations. By doing so, you avoid “dropping” quotations into your paper.

Dropped quotation: “You see he does not believe I am sick!” (Gilman).

Introductory tag: The narrator exclaims about her husband, “You see he does not believe I am sick!” (Gilman).

Good papers “unpack” the relevance of quotations, pointing out their significance.

**Generate ideas:** read, think, and make notes before writing so you can select and shape your material. Here’s the first prompt:

Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper* are widely considered classic texts in American feminism. Compare Chapter 1 of *T F M* and *T Y W* in terms of: their ability to reflect upon life experience, their engagement with ideologies of domesticity, their persuasive and literary power, and their visions of individual and social change. In the contemporary era, does either or both of these texts continue to have personal and political relevance? If “yes”, in what way? If “no”, why not?

What might a **good tentative thesis** look like? Remember to compare (and contrast).

Ex.: Friedan’s chapter and Gilman’s novella both [verb phrase]; Friedan uses a more A, B, and C style of engaging with and reflecting upon [ ] while Gilman [verb phrase(s)] . . .

Ultimately, formulate the clearest, most comprehensive and specific thesis statement you can. Writing a complete draft will put you in a better position to polish this thesis.

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