

Grade Level |

11-12

California Writing Project

Keeping Close to Home: Education and Class—
Writing Analytical Essays for College Readiness
CWP Improving Students' Analytical Writing Teacher Inquiry Team

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From Teacher to Teacher

The team of teachers who developed this lesson all wanted a bottom-line assessment of where our senior students were as analytical readers and writers. Some of us used this lesson at the very beginning of the year; others used it about a month into school as an assessment that would be a part of students' college preparation writing portfolios.

At least a third of our students were reclassified English learners, and the majority of our students and their siblings would be the first in their families to attend college, but all had college aspirations. Using a scaffolded University of California Analytical Writing Placement Examination (AWPE) seemed like a good way to find out the bottom line because it would give us an indication of what we needed to work on to improve students' analytical writing and critical reading. We selected "Keeping Close To Home," an AWPE passage adapted from a chapter in bell hooks' book, *Talking Back*.

We selected this passage because of its relevance for our students. For so many of them, as much as they want to attend college, often away from home, they were conflicted about that choice. Some were translators for parents who speak only Hmong, Lu-Mien, or Spanish. Some had parents who were distrustful of public schools, not to mention colleges. Some feared that the cost would be a burden to an already strapped family and had made the decision to start at a community college or to use the resources of the military to support any plans for higher education.

Because "Keeping Close to Home" addresses, in part, similar concerns and conflicts for bell hooks, the passage makes for compelling reading. That students were interested in the writing allowed all of us to gain a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in critical reading and analytical writing.

One recommendation for all teachers: take the time to write your response to this passage and writing topic. "Keeping Close to Home" is written with an adult's understanding; it has taken years for bell hooks to come to terms with the experiences she is analyzing as illustrated by this quote: "I want to speak about these contradictions because sorting through them, seeking resolution and reconciliation, has been important to me both as it affects my development as a writer, my effort to be fully self-realized, and my longing to remain close to the family and community that provided the groundwork for much of my thinking, writing, and being."

Our seniors were taking their first steps in analyzing, reflecting on, and writing about their own after-high school journey. We needed to be reminded that we were assessing the writing of students who had not lived long enough to come to terms with their experiences yet, much less write about them.

Text Resources

Link for 1994 University of California Analytical Writing Placement Examination:

<http://www.ucop.edu/elwr/sample1994.html> (accessed July 12, 2012)

You will find a downloadable PDF copy of the AWPE passage and writing topic on the lower left-hand side of the webpage.

Teaching Context

High school teachers participating in the Improving Students' Analytical Writing program (ISAW), a statewide learning community of the California Writing Project, developed this lesson primarily for twelfth grade students. Some eleventh grade students at some ISAW schools also wrote to this lesson. ISAW teams of teachers work with students at low-performing middle and high schools (all API 1-3 schools). Most of the students for whom this lesson was designed were from large urban schools with high poverty and high English learner student populations.

Text Type, Genre, Writing Prompt

An Argument/Analytical Essay written in response to an analytical/argument text, "Keeping Close to Home" that was written by bell hooks (Gloria Watkins) and published in her collection of essays, *Talking Back*.

Writing Topic: Keeping Close to Home

What conflicts does Watkins describe as separating her from members of her family, and what sources of connection does she describe as linking her to them? In what ways, if any, does her analysis of these opposing forces help you to understand families that you know about? To develop your essay, be sure to discuss specific examples from your own experience, your observation of others, or any of your reading.

Instructional Strategies

- Quick Writes
- Metacognitive marking of text
- Interacting with the text by annotating it
- Interactive writing to quotations and examples from the text
- Developing examples from experience, observation, reading, and viewing
- Using student essays as models, for genre analysis, and for assessment
- Self-assessment and peer assessment after early drafts

Common Core State Standards

Reading Standards for Informational Text: Grades 11-12

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Writing Standards: Grades 11-12

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
 - a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
 - b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
 - c. Use specific rhetorical devices to support assertions (e.g., appeal to logic through reasoning; appeal to emotion or ethical belief; relate a personal anecdote, case study, or analogy).
 - d. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
 - e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
 - f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

English Language Development Standards Grades 11 and 12

Grades 11-12 (Bridging)

PART 1: Interacting in Meaningful Ways

2. Interacting via written English: Collaborate with peers to engage in a variety of extended written exchanges and complex grade-appropriate writing projects, using technology as appropriate.
4. Adapting language choices: Adjust language choices according to the task (e.g., group presentation of research project), context (e.g., classroom, community), purpose (e.g., to persuade, to provide arguments or counter-arguments), and audience (e.g., peers, teachers, college recruiter).
6. Reading/viewing closely
 - a) Explain ideas, phenomena, processes, and relationships within and across texts (e.g., compare/contrast, cause/effect, themes, evidence-based argument) based on close reading of a variety of grade-level texts, presented in various print and multimedia formats, using a variety of detailed sentences and a range of general academic and domain-specific words.
7. Evaluating language choices: Explain how successfully writers and speakers structure texts and use language (e.g., specific word or phrasing choices) to persuade the reader (e.g., by providing well-worded evidence to support claims or connecting points in an argument in specific ways) or create other specific effects, with light support.
8. Analyzing language choices: Explain how a writer's or speaker's choice of a variety of different types of phrasing or words (e.g., hyperbole, varying connotations, the cumulative impact of word choices) produces nuances and different effects on the audience.
10. Writing
 - a) Write longer and more detailed literary and informational texts (e.g., an argument about free speech) collaboratively (e.g., with peers) and independently using appropriate text organization and register.

PART 2. Learning About How English Works

1. Understanding text structure: Apply analysis of the organizational structures of different text types (e.g., how arguments are organized by establishing clear relationships among claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence) to comprehending texts and to writing clear and cohesive arguments, informative/explanatory texts and narratives.

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Interact with analytical, argumentative text by using the following critical reading strategies:
 - taking notes
 - asking questions of the text and the author
 - reacting to the ideas of the text
 - connecting personal experiences to the ideas of the text
 - choosing and explaining quotations from the text
 - developing examples and comparing them to the examples in the text
 - relating observations and other readings to the ideas and examples in the text
 - taking a reader's position on the author's ideas
 - engaging in academic discussions about the text, the author's ideas, and the relationships between the author's ideas and their own
- Write an analytical essay in response to the writing topic that focuses on claim, examples, development, and links or connections to the claim.
- Practice strategies for giving and asking for help with the academic task and sorting out which work for them.

Session One: Reading and Discussing the Passage

1. Link here to download the passage and writing topic:
<http://www.ucop.edu/elwr/sample1994.html>
2. We read “Keeping Close to Home” together in class using a simple metacognitive marking system.
 - a. We read the essay paragraph by paragraph, they with the text in front of them, and the teacher with a copy on the document camera.
 - b. Students, as they read, put a box around words or phrases that were unfamiliar and put a question mark in the margin.
 - c. At the end of the paragraph, we came back to the question marks to see if they could now understand the word or phrase through the context of the paragraph.
 - d. As a group we made meaning of those words and phrases in context. When we couldn't, pairs of students took turns finding definitions for the class.
 - e. Together, we underlined everything in a paragraph that seemed to be important. We then summarized in a sentence or so the meaning of that paragraph.
 - f. As we read, we also starred in the margin ideas that seemed particularly important to the meaning of the whole essay.
3. At the end of the reading, students moved into small groups to talk about the meaning of the reading as a whole, to summarize the writing topic, and to note what the questions of the writing topic asked them to address. Ordinarily, we would provide much more scaffolding, but we wanted to see what my students could do independently and collaboratively. We took observational notes as they worked.

Session Two: Planning and Drafting the Assessment Essay

We gave our students almost two full class periods to write their best draft to the writing topic:

What conflicts does Watkins describe as separating her from members of her family, and what sources of connection does she describe as linking her to them? In what ways, if any, does her analysis of these opposing forces help you understand families that you know

about? To develop your essay, be sure to discuss specific examples from your own experience, your observation of others, or any of your readings.

They had in hand their reading notes about the passage, their small group's summary of the writing topic, and their notes about what addressing the topic meant they have to cover. We let them know that they had time to plan, write, and read for clarity. They could ask for clarification, but we would not be answering the question, "What do I need to do next?"

We reassured them that this in-class essay was a way of finding out where they were as readers and writers at the beginning of our working together on the analytical writing that would be at the core of their work in college courses. This essay would tell them and us where we needed to proceed and progress over the course of the school year. We also let them know that, as we worked through this essay, we would be exploring ways they could help each other with their reading and writing. We emphasized that learning how to find help and/or study partners would be important for their studies in college.

Session Three: Developing Processes and Skills for Critique and Support

1. Before our students critiqued their own drafts and those of their classmates, we engaged first in a critique and feedback session using three essays written by high school seniors who had been accepted to a University of California. All three essays were written in a timed two-hour administration of the 1994 Analytical Writing Placement Examination when "Keeping Close to Home" was used as the passage and topic. These essays are essentially first drafts, so they work well as models for the kind of feedback that helps propel students to revise.
Note: We teachers always look for ways to help our students know that writing really does count. Using the released 1994 examination (then called Subject A, now Analytical Writing Placement Exam—AWPE) gave us an opportunity to remind our students that everyone who takes the exam is already admitted to a U.C. campus. But how well they perform on the exam is a part of determining which courses they will be allowed to take until they satisfy the writing requirement for the particular campus they will attend.
2. See the Learning From Student Work section for UC Student Essays A, B, and C and also see the Appendix for the *Critique Sheet for Analytical Essays* and prepare sets for your students.
3. We read the essays with our students, one at a time in alphabetical order. Make sure they have the critique sheet at the ready. The most important considerations for our students were:
 - How well did these writers answer the questions of the writing topic (and turn that into a claim)?
 - Where did they do that in the essay?
 - How well did they select and develop examples that support their claim?
 - If this writer were a member of your critique and support group, what would you suggest for revision and clarification?

We read the essays, and then we gave them time to answer the questions about claims. After we discussed their answers to those questions, we decided which others on the critique sheet seemed most important to discuss.

Notes about the three essays:

Student Essay A:

This writer fared very well on the AWPE, and the essay is one my students appreciated for its lively voice and sense of honesty and humor. The writer introduces the topic, noting that Gloria's analysis helps him understand his own family and the conflicts and common bonds they both share. He organizes his paper by using a split claim/thesis, introducing the beginning of it at the end of the first paragraph, analyzing examples from Gloria's experience that link to and explain

his own experience as well as the opposing forces they both grapple with, and naming those opposing forces to conclude the claim and the essay. For a timed writing, his control is striking, as is his analytical balance of passage and personal experience.

Student Essays B and C are not as successful, but they have revision potential, which is what we wanted our students to understand. Rarely, does a first draft result in an essay like Student A's. But with practice, our students could learn to revise their drafts, perhaps even beyond what Student A accomplished.

Student Essay B:

This essay is overbalanced to analysis of personal experience with flimsy, very general connections to the passage. Using a personal connection or a vignette is an effective way to introduce an analytical essay, but the personal must support an analytical claim. Student B has used the passage more as a jumping off point than a way to interact, reflect, and analyze the passage and the points bell hooks makes. Our students enjoyed pulling out of this essay what works, writing possible claims, and reorganizing the essay. They wrote a number of claims—claim first possibilities, as well as split claims and delayed claims. They theorized that Student B might have wanted to write a delayed claim and that she should have planned more before writing to set up that claim. That is just the kind of thinking we wanted my students to do.

Student Essay C:

Student C summarized the passage and then tacked-on personal experience. The reader has to do all the work of making a claim for the essay because the writer does not specifically answer the question of how bell hooks' analysis of the opposing forces in her family life help the writer to understand families he or she knows about. The claim is almost there, but not quite. Our students also enjoyed reworking this essay. In fact, they said that Essay C was the most like theirs. In developing possible claims for this essay, they were practicing for revising their own. Students also named places where this writer over-interpreted in a way that is not supported by the passage—"pre-determined course," "become haughty and conceited," and "low expectations."

Students thoroughly enjoyed discussing the essays of others. We are always amazed how well they can identify the strong and weak points of someone else's essay, especially if they do not know the person. But with practice over the school year, our goal is that they will use what they learn from critiquing the writing of others and apply it to critiquing their own writing.

Session Four: Critique and Response in Small Groups

1. Students gathered up all their notes, including their first draft essay, for working in read-around groups of three students.

We asked them to read the essay by the other two writers in their group closely, using the questions on the critique sheet to respond to the essays. We emphasized that they needed to carefully consider if the writer had a claim or a partial claim because answering that question would determine the answers to all the other questions. We also asked them to be as specific as possible in explaining their responses and offering advice for improvement.

2. When everyone in the class had finished, we opened the time for the groups to discuss their responses with each other. Had they not discussed the strengths and weaknesses of three UC student essays already, they might not have taken to this part of the process as well as they did. They were involved in the discussion and actually helping each other with improvements.
3. We also shared with them that often in college writing courses they will have in-class critique sessions. Our practice during the year will help them learn how to make good use of that support.

Session Five: Self-assessment, Revision, Editing and Final Draft

Students took the feedback from their classmates and used that and the critique sheet to weigh the feedback, assess their own writing, and plan for what they needed to revise.

They worked in-class and at home on the revision and met one more time in their feedback groups to compare drafts and take additional suggestions.

Borrowing a phrase from one of our ISAW colleagues, we reminded our students that writing is never done; it is just due. Together, we set the deadline for the final draft, and they turned in all their notes and drafts. Collecting all their work allowed us, the group of teachers, to take a deeper look at what the students were able to do from reading to final draft and where in future assignments they will need more practice and additional scaffolding.

See three samples of student writing in the *Learning From Student Work* section. The samples are from the classrooms of different teachers, and although we collaborated on the analysis of the first drafts and discussed the annotation of the final drafts, each teacher annotated the final drafts of his or her own students.

Reflections

After we administered this AWPE pre-assessment to our senior ISAW English classes, we noticed that many of our students had talked around the demands of the prompt, demonstrated only a partial understanding of the passage, and revealed minimal understanding of how to organize and develop their ideas. Specifically, students were confused about how to interpret the prompt, how to use the passage effectively to develop their ideas, and how to analyze examples from the passage to support their own ideas and claims. Spending time on interacting with and discussing the passage and then critiquing, discussing, and rewriting sample essays from UC students who had written to the same topic helped the majority of students understand what the intellectual work of an analytical essay is. Our next instructional steps will focus on helping students link their understanding of a reading passage to developing a claim, selecting appropriate examples, and drafting and practicing lines of reasoning that will help them write to argue and analyze.

Extension Resources

Professional Resources

Trimbur, J. *The Call to Write*. Boston, MA, 2011.

This college writing textbook is an invaluable resource for teachers who want examples of genre-based college assignments and instructional strategies.

Three additional University of California Analytical Writing Placement Examinations are available by linking to <http://www.ucop.edu/elwr/sample.html> (accessed July 12, 2012). One of the released examinations includes annotated student writing samples.

Student Sample A

In her 1989 book *Talking Back* Gloria Watkins reveals her struggle to "be fully self-realized" and still "remain close to [her] family," to find a place where these two contradictions could co-exist peacefully in her life. Watkins describes certain conflicts as separating her from her family and sources of connection linking her to them.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed radical changes in the status quo. The civil rights movement was in full swing during the late 60s with bold, brilliant leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. The South struggled through these times with great difficulty. Watkins' family was very traditional; her parents didn't really understand her motivation for attending Stanford University and becoming intellectual. But Watkins was a part of a new generation, always pushing boundaries set by society's tradition. Her value of education conflicted with her parents' value of other skills.

However separate Watkins felt from her family, she found traces of tradition to connect her to them. She realizes that her heritage is vital to the way she thinks, writes and is. Although her grandmother refuses to speak of Watkins' education, they share "the legacy of her quilt making, a family history, [and] of her incredible way with words." Watkins also finds that many of her basic beliefs and principles are found in her father's "example of diligence and hard work."

Her analysis of these opposing forces provides great insight into modern family. Families have traditions and beliefs which hold them together through the changing generations. My family, for example, takes an annual summer trip to a ranch timeshare. As my sister and I began to approach our teen years we no longer enjoyed these vacations as much, but we still went. We went to hear my grandfather recount stories of when his parents came to America from Germany, when the land we now call the ranch was barren.

Another child who dealt with the conflicts of his family is Antonio, young boy whose fictional story unfolds in Rudolpho Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*. Antonio is forced to choose his path in life, to be a priest as his mother wishes or wild man of the Ilano like his father. At a young age, Antonio tries to determine his own destiny under the pressure of his parents. Yet this family is united by their love and strong faith.

Children don't always follow the track made by their parents, but if the opposing forces described by Watkins are relatively balanced, children are still bonded to their families.

Annotation – Student Sample A

What is this writer working on or on the verge of understanding?

This writer is working on how to develop a claim that answers both questions of the writing topic. She does well with developing a response to the first question about opposing forces and sources of connection as illustrated by the first paragraph. She understands the text and draws on well-selected examples and quotes from it.

Where she is not as confident is in extending her claim and developing examples to address the second question of the writing topic. Her lack of specificity—"great insight into modern families"—in the second part of her split claim forecasts the two under-developed examples of modern families, examples that are not reflected on or linked to the claim.

What are the next steps for this writer?

This writer has shown me what we can build on. She is ready to practice the part of a claim where she names what the significance is of her analysis and to work on developing examples from experience that are more detailed and better connected to her claim. I reminded my students that the many of the examples from experience they used to develop their essays were ones they were still living. Being more analytical about experiences and observations often needs distance and time, and even in six months or a year their perspectives would probably be more reflective and thoughtful.

Student Sample B

Family Bonds

As I approach a time in my life where I will be leaving my family for a new place, I can understand some of the emotions expressed by Gloria Watkins in a passage from her book entitled *Talking Back*. In this passage Watkins expresses conflicts arising from her desire to study in a different state versus her family's feelings of reluctance to support such a move. It is clear, however in this passage that Watkins lives in a very loving family, which is able to connect through "open, honest communication." Through the analysis made by Watkins I am able to understand how often times elder family members have a hard time accepting changes within their family, but at the same time family members can relate to each other because in reality they have the same values.

In *Talking Back* by Gloria Watkins the reader sees a separation within the family from a desire of a younger family member to try new things, versus other family members resisting such changes. Watkins explains her "intellectual aspirations" as causing "intense conflict" within her family, but particularly between her and her parents. While Watkins wanted to try something new all the way across the country at Stanford University, her parents felt that an adequate education could be attained at a near-by, all-black college. I can identify with the feeling of separation that Watkins feels between herself and her family members, because I plan next year to go to college and study Animal Physiology so that I can one day practice as a veterinarian. This is hard for my parents to understand, because they do not see why a young girl such as myself would like to study science, which they see as a male-dominated subject. While they do support my goals, between us lies a certain conflict or feeling of difference that sets us apart. This is just as Gloria Watkins knew her parents feared what college would do to her mind, so she felt separated from them because they were unable to truly understand her.

However, despite the conflict that Watkins feels between herself and her parents, she is connected to them through strong communication. Watkins states in her passage that throughout change it is important to communicate well within a family, because that is the only thing that can bridge separation gaps. For example, she explains that while her grandmother would not acknowledge her college education, Watkins appreciated her grandmother because of the wonderful stories she used to tell. This shows that while the family may be out of sorts and separated, there is always a way to maintain relationships through communication. The communication Watkins had with her father was able to teach her the hard work he had in his job as a janitor, so that she could "mirror and develop" such behavior. While Watkins felt separated from her father on an educational level, through communication with him she realized they were not that different, because both of their jobs were done with similar work ethic.

Watkins' analysis of opposing forces within a family helps me understand that while family members may feel separate and different, deep down their values are the same. In *Talking Back*, Watkins mentions how her parents felt indifferent to her growing education, because they felt it would change her. However, toward the end of the passage it is clear to the reader that Watkins actually worked hard in her professional life to have the same seriousness about her job as her father had. This shows that while Watkins did spend a portion of her life away from her family, the real person inside her did not change that much because in her adulthood Watkins worked "with discipline" to be like her father. Similarly, when I leave for college next year to start learning the mysteries of science, what will really be driving me are the things I was taught as a child by my parents. While they might worry that I might be suffocated by the difficulties of a male-dominated field, they should feel reassured that they taught me to work hard to do what I believe in. I think in this passage Watkins is reassuring the reader that despite differences felt among a close group of people, particularly families, there are always similarities that can be brought out by communication and getting to know each other.

Annotation – Student Sample B

What is this writing working on or on the verge of understanding?

This writer is working very hard to figure out how to write an essay that presents the ideas of an author and develops her ideas in response, all in a way that addresses the demands of the writing topic. That her writing sometimes reads like an answer to the questions of the prompt rather than an essay illustrates that she is not confident with this type of a writing task—yet.

She has developed a serviceable claim and has selected pertinent examples from the text and from her own experience. She just isn't sure what to do with everything yet. Her repetition of several words— separation, difference, conflict— and her need to use the phrase "this shows" is an indication that she's not sure about the "how" of writing this essay.

What are the next steps for this writer?

She knows the "what" of the passage and topic; she needs to practice the "how" of the analytical writing that responds to the "what." She's ready to learn to split the lengthy paragraphs and reflect on and extend the examples from the passage and her experience. She's ready to learn to be clear about her ideas first and then to work on more precise language. She needs practice and support, and she needs to read, discuss, and analyze examples of analytical essays, so she can see how the pieces come together.

This writer has shown me, too, what we can build on. She, and most of my students, worked very hard on their essays. They took me at my word that I would be looking at their essays as the first of many writing improvement steps we would be taking together.

Student Sample C

The Conflicts of an Education

Gloria Watkins was a first generation college student. In the passage adapted from an essay and her 1989 book *Talking Back*, Watkins describes conflicts that she faced with her family as she was attempting to pursue a higher education. She also describes sources which brought together the gap of separation created by her intellectual endeavor, and linked her closer to her family members.

Gloria Watkins is a "southern black girl from a working-class background" who had never left the city, nor her family. Naturally, her parents are fearful of Watkins' well-being as she departs her home and family for college. However, her well-being isn't their only concern. Watkins' parents "fear that they would lose [her] forever. Like many working class folks, they feared what college education might do to their children's minds." Her parents did not completely understand why she had to leave so far away for school. They didn't understand the importance of an education. Furthermore, the importance of an education to Gloria.

The main separation between Watkins and her family members as she left to Stanford University was fear. There was the fear of losing her, the fear of education, but mostly the fear of losing the culture and tradition of their family. Watkins' family did not understand her passion for "thinking, writing, and being," but nonetheless they bought her books. Her parents "(especially [her] mother) would work to ensure that [she] had access to books, but they would threaten to burn the books or throw them away if [Gloria] did not conform to other expectations." Her parents bought the books to please her but didn't want her to read too much in fear that it might "drive [her] insane."

As much as Gloria loved reading, writing and thinking, her family an education did not make her a better person. This idea is evident when Watkins writes, they insisted "that being smart did not make me a "better "or "superior "person." This very idea perturbed Watkins because she wanted to think that being educated did set her apart.

Gloria Watkins "learned to value and respect very skills and talents folks might have, not just a value people who read books and talk(ed) about ideas." This is a result from her family's insistence that books and an education weren't important. The way in which Watkins represents what her grandparents might say is a great example of what her family thought and believed. Watkins writes, "now he don't read nor write a lick, but he can tell a story." Her family focused more on the idea that people should be appreciated for their wisdom and life rather than how smart they are. Gloria's Family ideas are opposite of hers and thus cause conflict because they (being her family) had feared what might come of change. Gloria's grandmother once asked, "How can you live so far away from your people?" Her family also feared the loss of connection between Gloria and her past, culture and family.

In order to amend the fear and void the existing conflict between Gloria and her family, Watkins thought of sources that could link her closer to her family. The main and most important source was an "open honest communication." This source was the most important way in which she could maintain "relationships with kin and community as [their] class experience and background change." Watkins learned the importance of the source through her grandmothers "sharing the legacy of her quilt-making, of family history and her incredible way with words." As a result, Gloria mirrored her grandmother's ways with her father. After his retirement, she tried to link closer to her family and past through her father. They would talk as Watkins used to with her grandmother. It didn't matter where they spoke as long as they spoke.

The conflicts that Gloria Watkins faces as she leaves her family to attend the University are very similar though not identical to the conflicts I face. I, very much like Gloria, am also a first-generation college-bound student. My family is also very afraid of me leaving home and forgetting about everyone. However, unlike Gloria's family, my family is very supportive of me pursuing a higher education. They are proud to see that I have overcome many barriers and succeeded academically.

Watkins' analysis of the opposing forces, the conflicts and links, help me very much understand my family's concerns. They fear they might lose me forever, and that I might

forget my past and my culture. I can also understand that they might fear what an education might do to me.

Gloria Watkins was separated from her family members by many fears that were a direct result from not knowing what an education was about, and the change that would result from it. However, in order to keep a link to her family members, Watkins had to keep an "open honest communication" very much like her grandmother kept with her. In order to keep the link Watkins had to keep in touch with her past which is why her family and post I thought that people should be appreciated for their wisdom and experience in life, rather than their intelligence.

Very much like Watkins kept in touch with her past I will do the same with my family in order to keep the link with more my family instead of creating more separation. As I leave for college I will avoid more conflicts by having "open honest conversations" with my family members.

Annotation – Student Sample C

What is this writer working on or on the verge of understanding? What are the next steps for the writer?

This writer did not understand how to even begin to write an analytical essay that explores the relationship between the writer's and bell hooks' ideas and demonstrates insight into the implications of the text, "Keeping Close to Home." What she has written is an extended summary of the passage with only three sentences that respond to the central question of the writing topic: How does bell hooks' analysis of these opposing forces help you understand families that you know about?

She does understand yet how to move toward analysis. My first step will be to ask her to conference with me so that we can talk about the difference between her approach to the writing and the UC Student Sample A.

UC AWPE Student Sample A

After reading this passage from Gloria Watkins' novel, *Talking Back*, many people would assume that families and people like those Watkins discussed only lived in the South. Surprisingly, people similar to Gloria Watkins and her family are everywhere. One such person is writing these words in front of you. While we may not be from the same state, or have the same skin color, I believe that Gloria Watkins and I are very much alike in several ways. Among them: we both have conflicts with our families yet still find several common bonds with our parents, grandparents, and friends which draw Gloria and I closer to our relatives.

Gloria's parents are much like mine. She writes that her parents supported her education, but at the same time feared what an education would do to their child's (Gloria's) mind. I, too, am supported emotionally and financially by my family—yet they are still unable to see the wisdom of going to college. Recently I was planning to drive to L.A. to tour UCLA to help me in my college decision-making process. When I told my grandmother this, she said, "I don't know why you're wasting all your money on that stupid trip. You know you're not going to go that far away from home (I live in San Jose)—besides it's not even worth it. You'd probably crack under the strain." Much like Gloria's parents feared her reading books would drive her insane, my grandmother felt the tough university work would be too much for me to handle.

Gloria and I also decide to leave our comfortable homes and depart for college. She went off to Stanford, and I will be going to U.C. Berkeley. I agree with her when she writes, "Each movement away makes return harder. Each separation intensifies distance, both physical and emotional." She remarks that at the time she didn't realize her parents' fear of her leaving was really their fear of losing her forever. I also had the same problem. All this time I had been very selfish and only thought of how great college would be. I never realized the emotional bond that was going to be broken when I left until I saw my seven-year-old brother sitting in my room this morning crying. When I asked him what the problem was, he wailed even more and in between sobs told me he was sad that I was leaving and didn't want me to go, since he'd "never see me again." Much like Gloria my trek to college will be the severing of a very strong emotional bond between my family and I.

As Gloria and I have several identical conflicts with our families, we also have many qualities in common which links us to our families. Gloria's parents taught her that being smart didn't make her a better person than others. Her parents taught her to respect skills and talents people might have, instead of placing too much emphasis on people who only read books and talk about ideas. A few years ago, I thought I was superior to some other people because of my intelligence. When I told my mother this, she began making me do chores, like sweeping the porch, making breakfast, and helping dad fix the car. She taught me a valuable lesson: book knowledge is useless unless you have the ability to apply it to the real world. Since I don't want to delve into this embarrassing experience, I'll just say that the porch got dirtier, the eggs came out lumpy and burnt, and the car hasn't run very well since! From that experience I've learned a lesson Gloria had to discover as well: just because you have greater intelligence than someone else doesn't mean you're a better person. Worth is determined not by how much a person knows, but by how well that person can apply his or her knowledge.

Gloria Watkins feels that open honest communication is the best way to maintain relationship with home and community while our lives change. I believe this is true. Much like she told her father he was an example of hard work and determination and that he'd influenced her entire life, I told my father much the same thing. He was told that he was my inspiration for trying so hard in school and that I was going to college to make him proud. As in Gloria's case, this communication has led to increased love and a stronger connection between us.

Just as there are several Gloria Watkins in the world, there are always several people like me out there, dealing with family conflicts, learning the difference between book knowledge and lived knowledge, and making their respective journeys off to college. This voyage will doubtlessly be made by many others after Gloria and I; some will not succeed. Others will, and it's these people that will one day be America's writers, judges, teachers, etc. Who knows? Maybe one day in the future another student will be reading a passage from one of my books!

UC AWPE Student Sample B

As a child I was always taught that education was the key to success. Being a Black Youth, the only way to make it in the World today is to have an education. My parents not only taught me the importance of school, they also taught me the importance of spending of spending quality time with the family. As I got older, I began to educate myself religiously. I would go to Church on my own, Bible Studies, and a Youth Group called Young Life to keep my mind focused as well as educated on the Lord. My parents were pleased with my involvement until I let it interfere with my education and my family life Just as when Gloria Watkins stated, "They (especially my mother) would work to ensure that I had access to books, but they would threaten to burn the books or thrown them away if I did not conform to other expectations." My parents threatened to take away my Religious activities if I did not conform to my educational and family obligations. This threw me for a curve. I had always done everything my parents had asked me to do (well almost everything) and now when I finally did something for myself, they threatened to take it away. I was extremely upset, but the only way to keep myself and my parents happy was to spend more time at home and on my school-work. I also decided to start going to church with my family again. Everything was going great until I got accepted to do Work Crew.

Being accepted to do Work Crew was an honor! Through Young Life, Work Crew is a month long job at a sport-type camp. You work voluntarily for a month for the Lord. I was extremely excited until I realized that my parents didn't share my enthusiasm. They didn't understand why I had to go so far away to serve God. You see, I live in Sacramento, California and I was going to be doing Work Crew in British Columbia, Canada. They felt I would be able to do just as much here as I would in Canada. Unlike Gloria Watkins' parents, my parents didn't fear that they'd lose me forever, but what they did fear was me becoming too independent. They thought that I was going to lose sight of the family, and that scared them. They ended up letting me go, and now I am happy to say they are glad they let me go. While I was on work crew, I had a lot of time to sit and think about the importance of family. I did a lot of reflecting on how fortunate I was to have such a wonderful family. When I got back, I was able to let my family know how much they meant to me. Me being gone brought our whole family back together on my return.

In Gloria Watkins' case, I think her parents were a lot like mine. They wanted the best for her, yet they didn't want to lose her to society. Even with the differences she had to face with her family, she was still able to achieve her goals without breaking her family ties. Going to Stanford was what she needed to and she didn't let anything stand in her way. I am sure her parents were a little upset by this, but now on her trips home I'm sure her family is proud to know that in pursuing her goals, she never lost sight of her family.

UC AWPE Student Sample C

There are many forces at work between Gloria Watkins and members of her family that make up her family experience. The "forces" or conflicts and links make this a tight-knit family unit with traditional values. Gloria rebels against these traditional values. They make her feel boxed in because she is expected to follow a pre-determined course according to these values. She feels like a laboratory mouse trapped in a maze. If she chooses the wrong corridor she risks her parents' disappointment and alienation.

Not surprisingly the Watkins are not too different from most families. It is the old story of the pain of growing up, to the child and the parents. The old ways against the modern ways.

Gloria Watkins parents (especially mother) according to Gloria have contradictory views on her intellectual endeavors. They reluctantly recognize the importance of an education, but they fear their daughter may change for the worse and become haughty and conceited. They fear she may not respect others that are not at her intellectual level. An example of this is when Gloria recalls that her parents always made sure books were available to her, but threatened to burn them if she read too much. Her mother even suggested she might go insane if she didn't stop reading so much. A result from this conflict was show when it was time for Gloria to go to college. She was accepted to Stanford University obviously the first choice for any student, but even though Gloria's parents supported her they did not like the idea of their daughter going so far away from home and themselves. They expected her to go to a black college nearby, make a decent living, and have a good marriage. Unfortunately, they have low expectations of her.

There are also many links which keep this family strong. They have respect for one another. They have respect for one another. Gloria respects her family a great deal and acknowledges she learned a lot from them and admires them. Gloria shares interest with her grandmother in the history of her family and the art of quilt-making. She also admires her grandmother's way with words. She also has a great admiration for her father. She wants to be as diligent and disciplined as he is when he sets out on a task. Most of all Gloria is proud of the fact that she can communicate with her family.

The Watkins are not that different from most families. The parents want what they believe is best for their child. The child wants to grow up as fast as possible and explore the world and leave the nest. At least I do. Before my time on this earth has passed I would like to experience as many things as possible. My parents would like me to go to Pakistan (where my parents were raised) to study medicine. Even though I was born in Pakistan I have lived here since I was three years old and I am apprehensive about going to Pakistan. I know I said I want to have new experiences and going to study in Pakistan would be a new experience, but a very limited one. The variety of people that I have become accustomed to in the U.S. will not be available in Pakistan. I understand my parents want me to learn their ways but I want to learn new and modern ways and there is no reason why I can't do both in the U.S. My parents, a lot like Gloria's parents, are worried about what kind of person I will become after my college experience. That's probably why they want to send me to an environment they are familiar with. I hope they can work it out that I intend to stay in the U.S. and attend UC Davis next fall.

Critique Sheet for Analytical Essay – “Keeping Close to Home”

Directions: Read the essay through completely before beginning to answer any of the following questions. Remember the purpose of the critique is to help the writer revise his or her essay. Therefore, make your comments specific. Explain what does and does not work in the essay and give the author any specific suggestions you think may be helpful.

Writing Topic for Keeping Close to Home

What conflicts does Watkins describe as separating her from members of her family, and what sources of connection does she describe as linking her to them? In what ways, if any, does her analysis of these opposing forces help you to understand families that you know about? To develop your essay, be sure to discuss specific examples from your own experience, your observation of others, or any of your reading.

Claim

Does the essay answer the first two questions of the writing topic? Highlight or circle where in the essay you find an answer or a partial answer.

The writer’s answer to the questions is that writer’s claim? What then is the claim of the essay? Did you have trouble figuring it out? If so, why? If not, why not?

Where does the writer choose to put the claim— claim-first, split claim, or delayed claim? Does the choice work? Why or why not?

Does the essay adequately support the claim? If not, what doesn’t work?

Introduction

Does it capture your interest? Does it adequately introduce the topic and link to or set up the claim? Does it lead naturally and pull you into the rest of the essay? What specific suggestions do you have for the writer regarding the introduction?

Audience/Voice/Tone

Are voice and tone consistent within the essay? Where are the inconsistencies? How might they be fixed?

Unity of the Essay

Is the essay entirely about what the claim suggests it is about? What in the essay does not seem to belong? Should it be deleted or can you suggest an effective way of incorporating it more effectively into the essay?

Is the evidence given in support of the claim organized in a clear and logical way? If not, how might it be more clearly organized?

Unity of Paragraphs

Does each paragraph of the essay have a controlling idea that unifies it? What is the controlling idea of each paragraph?

Is there any material in any of the paragraphs that does not support the controlling idea of the paragraph? What specifically?

Are the paragraphs too long? Do they seem to have multiple controlling ideas?

Development

Do the paragraphs develop examples that support the claim?

If yes, does each paragraph have sufficient development? Which do not?

Is the development specific or general? If it is too general, suggest ways the writer could make it more specific.

Conclusion

Does the conclusion put closure on the essay? Does it follow logically from all that has come before?

Is it effective in terms of leaving the reader a clear sense of what the writer is trying to communicate?

What suggestions would you make to the writer about the conclusion?

Sentence Variety

Are there any sections of the essay in which sentences are choppy? Do you detect wordiness or padding in the essay?

Are there passages that show particularly good or particularly poor use of subordination or sentence variety?

Are the verbs used vivid and active for the most part? Note on the draft any problem areas regarding verbs—passive voice, vague verbs, weak verbs, etc.

Grammar and Conventions

Note grammar and mechanics problems you see in the margins of the draft. Describe here the kinds of problems you noted.

Personal Reaction

Write your personal reaction to the essay in this space. Also write any suggestions you would make to the writer that you have not made yet in the critique.