



## Responding in Writing: Three Activities

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### COMPLETE COURSE DESCRIPTION:

#### English 1A: College Composition I

**Course description:** English 1A is a freshman writing course that offers students the opportunity to learn and develop the reading and writing skills that will be most useful to them during a four-year college program. The course is designed to help students improve their ability to understand and critically judge reading material and to write an essay which has a single controlling idea and which is coherently developed using idiomatically and grammatically correct English.

The heart of the course is readings that require a range of narrative, analytical, reflective and research writing skills.

### STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS:

English 1A is a required GE course for all Sacramento State students. The class cap is 25.

### DESCRIPTION OF HOW ACTIVITIES/ASSIGNMENTS CONNECT THE ONE BOOK'S THEMES, ISSUES, AND IDEAS TO SPECIFIC DISCIPLINARY CONTENT, PROCESSES, AND COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Activities and assignments that focus on Funny in Farsi by Firoozeh Dumas directly connect to the course learning outcomes (writing and reading analytically) as well as the course theme, rites of passage.

Dumas' memoir features numerous themes raised in the discussion of and writing about rites of passage, including issues of cultural tradition, stereotypes, and the universal theme of being an outsider.

In addition, asking students to read and analyze non-fiction positively impacts and strengthens their ability to write articulate, well supported college level essays, not only in this course, but for their courses in other disciplines.

### COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY/LESSON PLAN/ASSIGNMENT:

#### **Activity: the importance of tone in writing**

It is obvious that Dumas utilizes humor as one of the primary ways to engage her readers.

Students will identify places in the book where humor is used and determine if it is used successfully or not in keeping the reader focused, informed and engaged. In doing so, students are able to practice making a specific assertion about the success or failure of using a humorous approach/tono in writing and supporting their assertions with clear, identifiable supports.

In small groups during class time, students will locate three places in the memoir where humor is utilized. One student will record the findings for the group and their analysis to be shared with all the groups after approximately 20-25 minutes.

Students will receive credit for their active participation and contribution to the group's work.

**Activity: the value of tone, voice, organization and audience in writing**

Students will write two letters -- one to the coordinator of the One Book Program on the Sacramento State campus and the other to a very close friend or relative -- relaying specifically why or why not the book Funny in Farsi is a wise and successful reading selection. Issues of tone and voice as well as an awareness of audience and organization is crucial to consider when planning and writing persuasively. Approximately 90% of college writing, no matter the discipline or class, requires persuasive writing.

Students will have one week to complete this assignment. Students' work will be evaluated and scored based on the English 1A rubric published by the Sacramento State English Department: <http://www.csus.edu/lc/fsfac/Engl1ARubric.htm>.

**Activity: examining critically the role of family in the Iranian culture as presented in the book Funny in Farsi and compare and contrast with American culture.**

Students will respond in writing to the following question, based on the chapter, "It's All Relatives" in the book, Funny in Farsi.

**Essay Prompt:** In America, the definition and role of family has changed over the years. For example, with the high rate of divorce, more and more children are being raised either by just one of the two parents, or the child divides life between two households. Also, when divorced parents re-marry, blended families are created. More of the gay and lesbian population are also raising children. Discuss the pros and cons of the changing American family. You must use at least two supports from the chapter as well as supports from two interviews you conduct with a parent in an alternative family situation and supports from at least two readings in the chapter "Family" in the textbook, Rites of Passage by Judie Rae and Catherine Fraga.

Students will practice writing critically and presenting a logical examination that is balanced and well supported with their own observations as well as outside sources.

Students will have two weeks to complete this assignment. Students' work will be evaluated and scored based on the English 1A rubric published by the Sacramento State English Department: <http://www.csus.edu/lc/fsfac/Engl1ARubric.htm>.

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This resource was made possible by the 2008 State One Book Faculty Development Grant Program, with funding from Wells Fargo. While many of the assignments and activities were designed for a specific course and for the 2008-2009 One Book, Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America by Firoozeh Dumas, they may be adapted to other courses and future One Book selections. For additional One Book resources, please visit our website [www.csus.edu/onebook](http://www.csus.edu/onebook).