

sustained inquiry log (source-based)

I am not absentminded. It is the presence of mind that makes me unaware of everything else. - GK Chesterton

Assignment Description

You will dedicate a file in your Google folder to this small project (named “your last name_ sustained inquiry log”). Each entry will begin with at least 3 inquiries, satisfied with annotated text from one of your sources and end with 1 open-ended inquiry (to be answered, or not, in your next research session). There should be **4 total inquiries per due date**. These “notes to self” will need to be more detailed than in our last inquiry log. They will become the building blocks of your paper.

You may also use this as a collection space for other notes and citations pertaining to your project. Expect this to be your “folder of chaos.” You may find yourself shuffling things around a bit, adding more ideas and connections as the weeks go by. This is as it should be. Just do not delete any ideas or notes. Push them to the bottom of the log, perhaps, but keep them in your log. You never know when a particular thought might become your most valuable morsel!

Examples

(A satisfied inquiry)

Question: I just can’t get into the zone when I am painting lately. Is there any psychological explanation for how this can be achieved?

Textual Satisfaction: “Flow was first defined as a holistic sensation that people have when they act with total involvement (Csikszentmihalyi 1975). It is a very positive psychological state that typically occurs when a person perceives a balance between the challenges associated with a situation and their ability to meet the demands of the challenge and accomplish. The nine elements of flow include challenge-skill balance, action-awareness merging, clear goals, unambiguous feedback, concentration on the task at hand, sense of control, loss of self-consciousness, transformation of time, and an autotelic experience” (Beard 1).

Beard, Karen S. "Theoretically Speaking: An Interview with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi on Flow Theory Development." *Educational Psychology Review* 14.2 (2014): 1-12. Web. 5 Mar. 2015.

Connection: So this “Flow Theory” explains the perfect conditions to get lost in a creative zone. It looks like these conditions engage different modes of engagement – physical, mental, social, even emotional. Balance seems to be an important word here. Autotelic means having a purpose in and not apart from itself. I think this means that the act of painting brings more pleasure than whatever my piece of art will give me when I am finished. Maybe this is why I never keep my paintings.

(An open-ended inquiry)

Question: Can Csikszentmihalyi’s theory be applied to non-creative pursuits as well? Like my chemistry homework, maybe?

Self-Sponsorship Opportunity:

If you have any trouble imagining what a sustained inquiry research project might look like, take 12ish minutes to follow Chris Anderson down his path of unanswerable inquiry. His [TED Talk \(linked here\)](#) showcases a product of gathering information by way of curiosity and values the process over the end result (in his case, there is no end result).