Here are three different samples of student writing, by three different students. Each is a response to a different sort of assignment, with varying levels of commitment, time, energy and value (grade-value) to the student.

For any one of them (your choice), we would like you to explain how you would proceed with a student who brought this piece of writing to you. What questions would you ask? What observations would you make? What would you recommend or suggest? And what would you plan for future sessions with this student?

Please limit your response to approximately 500 words maximum. It's OK to give a list or bullet points, but please provide at least a paragraph of narrative/reflection explaining your overall goals and philosophy as represented by your response.
Sample 1

For my “outside art event”, as required by the class, I saw the Taj Mahal. While this wasn’t during my time as a student in Macaulay, it definitely was an memory I will keep with me for a very long time.

In February, my family, some close family-friends, and of course myself went on a “Bharat Yatra”, or what one would call a pilgrimage. It was a way of “closing the circle”, so to speak, because although my great-grandparents were born and raised in India, no one had visited since then. So, it was our responsibility to return to the motherland to see what all the fuss was really about.

Growing up, I always heard of how great India is. Although my parents were born in Guyana, which was once colonized by the British, my grandparents, and soon thereafter, my parents always retained their Indian heritage, and so we practiced Hinduism strictly and upkeep our customs. We visited many holy places, but one that stood out to me aesthetically was, of course, the Taj Mahal.

This picture was actually taken by me on my way out of the monument. But, just looking at it, what emotions are evoked within you?

Upon seeing the Taj for the
first time, I was awe-struck. Of course, I had wallpapers previously of the beautiful monument with a sunset in the back and was familiar with how it looked, but seeing it with the naked eye was a whole other experience.

The monument built with marble and pure labor, is truly a work of art. The symmetry of the gardens in the front leave you wondering, “how is it possible that this all came from one man’s imagination, one man’s love for his wife?”.

Although it is not clear in this post, the monument is designed within the marble with beautiful flowers, paisley, and other Eastern styles of art. Inside the monument however, once you walk past the arch, there lies of the tomb of the emperor’s wife. Although the outside of the Taj is most definitely awe-inspiring, the inside was a little disappointing, to be completely honest. There was limited light, most the tomb could not be seen due to security measures taken to ensure that no one could tamper with it, and the tomb was not nearly as ornate as the outside. However, the Taj is nonetheless a sight to behold, and one of the wonders you should make an effort to see at some point in your life.

The picture seen above, was actually taken by myself on my way out from the monument, and I remember thinking on that hot day, “what makes this so special?” I had the same thought when I saw the Mona Lisa in France a couple years ago, but I always wondered – these objects have one thing in common – they are
known everywhere for their beauty, but what else? What makes this art so special?

But, as we discussed in seminar, there is no one purpose of art or one definition of beauty. And in that simple, yet enigmatic answer to my own question, I guess I will have to continue to see art until I figure out a better answer!
Sample 2

Truthfully, I was not sure what I would think of this performance. I had never attended an opera before, so having the opportunity to see this production live was an entirely new experience for me. I was aware that operas are known for their extremely dramatic style and theatrics. As result, I was worried that perhaps its style would throw me off and taint the experience for me. I was wrong.

I remember walking into the Metropolitan Opera House and being instantly dazzled by it. As you walk in, there are lovely golden, snowflake-like chandeliers that dangle from the ceiling. The walls and steps are covered with red velvet that cushions every step you take. Everything is ornamented in colors of gold, silver and red. It was both elegant and striking. The concert area itself was just as striking. From the ceiling, hanged a beautiful sphere chandelier that glittered in the light. As much as I loved the elegance and style of the Opera House, I also fell in love with the opera itself.

Tosca, is a rather complex opera that deals with the concepts of betrayal, extreme passion and an infinite love. It is also one of the very few operas in which the storyline is tied to a specific time and place, Rome on June 17, 1800. I thought that it was interesting to see the opera set in this time period. Considering that the man who wrote the opera, Giacomo Puccini, was Italian, one would think that having a play with the main characters being supporters of Napoleon rule would be a distasteful topic. However, Puccini welcomed this storyline and concept.

I would have to say that my favorite thing about the opera was Mario’s aria that took place in the last act as he was contemplating his death. I felt that it was a very beautiful and touching performance. I also feel that it was this aria that made me love the opera. There was just so much raw emotion portrayed in that scene and I was actually able to feel that emotion. I don’t get emotionally when watching things like television shows or movies, but I did feel something during this performance that made my
eyes water up. I think that the music had a lot to do with the pull on my emotions. In the beginning of the piece, Cavaradossi sings softly with a solo clarinet tune accompanying him. The sound of the single clarinet almost emphasizes the aria’s melancholy sound. As it continues, the single clarinet becomes accompanied by strings such as the violin, double bass and the harp. Cavaradossi’s voice also slowly rises to a louder dynamic becoming fuller and denser, matching the melody of the instrumentation. This gradual rise in dynamics almost mimics Cavaradossi’s oncoming wave of despair and his realization that he is about to die. His aria toys with the concept of life and the realization of the things that you took for granted while you were alive. It was very touching.

I hope that I will be awarded the opportunity to see another opera again.
Sample 3:

ANR: The Hardware Shop that Raised a Family

Traveling through Elmhurst, one of the most diverse neighborhoods located in western Queens, is like taking a trip around the world! Just by walking down one block, I passed by East Asians, Whites, South Asians, Middle Easterners, and Hispanics alike. People were often traveling in groups, whether it's families or friends. After passing by a couple of larger groups – with five or more people – while walking down Grand Avenue, I noticed that almost every group was composed of people from at least two different racial backgrounds. Elmhurst can be considered a classic example of the “melting pot” concept. It is a neighborhood where people of different ethnicities not only come together but also intermix – proven by the shops and businesses that line the streets.

In Elmhurst, you can easily visit a Chinese bakery for fresh egg tarts for breakfast, sit down at a Thai restaurant for lunch, or grab a quick sandwich from a Hispanic Deli on the go all on the same block. Unlike some neighborhoods where different ethnic groups physically divide and stay in their own territory, Elmhurst blends different racial groups together, like a huge melting pot. A great example of this is the Chinese herbal shop that is located right next to a Hispanic mini mart. By walking a couple of streets along Grand Avenue, you can find Italian Pizzerias, Chinese bakeries, Irish pubs, and Hispanic mini markets. In fact, it is more common for neighboring shop owners to have different rather than identical ethnic backgrounds. It is also common for people of different ethnic backgrounds to mix even within the same shop. For example, the first Chinese bakery I walked into had a Hispanic worker. The friendly and warm atmosphere between different racial groups is one of the many factors that makes Elmhurst unique.

Historically, according to John Roleke, Elmhurst has developed rapidly starting in the early 20th century due to the extension of subway lines into the area. Since then, Elmhurst has been the home to three different waves of immigrants: first the German, Irish, and Polish immigrants, then the Jewish and Italian immigrants, and now the Chinese and Hispanic immigrants. These immigrants often leave behind evidence of their stay, through places of religious worship or through individually owned family businesses that have been passed down from one generation to another. As a result, it is not extreme to say that Elmhurst is a diverse neighborhood that is constantly changing its personality and image due to the different waves of immigrants that have move in and out. One store owner who has physically experienced Elmhurst's change in personality and image is Mr. Chattoo, the owner of ANR Hardware Shop on Grand Avenue in Elmhurst.
Mr. Chattoo immigrated from Trinidad to the United States in the late 1980’s and started his business, ANR Hardware, at its current location 25 years ago. Throughout the twenty-five years, me mostly managed the store alone, with some help from his wife and kids, making ANR an individual, family owned business. Mr. Chattoo did not hire anyone to help him manage the shop partly because it is a cash business and partly because they couldn’t afford to do so. During the earlier years, Mr. Chattoo struggled just to “get out of the red.” Because the business was new and did not have much loyal customers, Mr. Chattoo struggled quite a bit before he started making any profit. Since twenty-five years ago, Mr. Chattoo’s goal was to use his shop to support his family and bring up his two kids. “From this business, they (his kids) get some pocket change and they go to school.” After the first fifteen years, Mr. Chattoo was finally able to purchase the building his business was in and officially take complete ownership of it. In the past ten years, he has added two floors to the building and is currently renting it out to others. Now, as the owner, Mr. Chattoo tries his best to not increase rent for those renting despite the rising prices because he had first-hand experience with hardships caused by increases in rent. Not increasing the rent is beneficial for the renters but not so much for Mr. Chattoo. “It’s a [contributing] factor to why my business is losing.”

One factor that is largely influencing Mr. Chattoo’s business negatively is the changing demographics and people. Since the 1980’s the Asian, specifically Chinese, population has grown exponentially – or in Mr. Chattoo’s words, “The Asian is taking over.” In fact, the Asian population has grown roughly 10% in just the past 10 years. The new immigrants moving in are bringing their culture, food, and beliefs along as well. Mr. Chattoo stated that in the past ten years, new Chinese supermarkets, bakeries, nightly-nine cents stores, and repair shops have been added to the community. Amongst these shops, the one influencing Mr. Chattoo’s business the most is the Chinese hardware shop right down the street from him.

The Chinese hardware shop that opened near Mr. Chattoo’s ANR Hardware shop is a great competitor for Mr. Chattoo. He claims that ever since the opening of the Chinese hardware shop, he has been losing quite a few of his customers. Mr. Chattoo believes that part of the reason is because people like to buy from their own people. Since Elmhurst has such a large Asian community, a significant proportion of Mr. Chattoo’s customers are Asian. In other words, the opening of an Asian Hardware store nearby means that ANR Hardware will be losing some of its Asian customers. This may have caused a drop in sales but Mr. Chattoo believes the greatest reason for his drop in sales and lost in customers is the price difference between his goods and their goods.

Mr. Chattoo stated that the price of goods from the Chinese hardware shop is very low. He tries to match with them but just couldn’t afford to. He suspects that it’s because of the difference in price they pay for their stocks. “It affected my sales. I guess they’re getting their stuff cheaper. I buy a lot of the American stuff. I buy some from China. But they probably get it [for] less than me, so they [can afford to] buy a lot of stock and make more profit.” Logically speaking, goods imported from China
are usually cheaper than those manufactured in the United States. As a result, the Chinese hardware shop can afford to sell their goods at a lower price. This difference in price led to a loss of customers for Mr. Chattoo's store.

In addition to losing customers and profit due to direct competition, Mr. Chattoo's business is also losing due to the economy and indirect competition. Generally speaking, the pricing of goods has been increasing over the years due to the economy. Thus, Mr. Chattoo is buying his goods at a higher price than twenty-five years ago. However, he cannot afford to increase the price of these goods in order to compete with his neighboring hardware shop. As a result, Mr. Chattoo's business is losing even more. "It put me down. I'm actually losing financially... I buy less now since sales dropped." In fact, on some days, he would only earn 40 to 60 dollars, which barely keeps his business afloat. Because of this, he had to take on a second job as a cab driver at night. Mr. Chattoo is currently struggling to juggle two jobs as well as sleeping. This second job influences his business indirectly. Because his job as a cab driver can be exhausting, Mr. Chattoo opens his shop in the afternoon only, leading to more loss in customers.

New immigrants moving into Elmhurst can be viewed as additions to racial diversity, but at the same time, the new immigrants can also be seen as a source of competition for the existing shop owners and people of the neighborhood.

Overall, Mr. Chattoo has a very positive outlook on his experience with his business. He believes that if one works hard in America, one has the chance to succeed. Despite his good experience with ANR Hardware, Mr. Chattoo does not wish to continue his business any longer. After all, it has already served its purpose of bringing up his kids and supporting his family. He is currently looking for someone to take over his business so he could retire.