“Discussion Starters” give me a sense of what interested you (and what confused you), and also serve as a bit of a prod to make sure you keep up with the reading assignments. About one quarter of the class has a discussion starter due each class meeting; the syllabus indicates “Discussion Starter Group X” for most class meetings. Note that you do not have to work with a group for these assignments; this just lets you know when your particular assignments are due.

IMPORTANT: Discussion Starters are due in hard copy (printed) at the BEGINNING of class on your assigned day. If you cannot come to class, or if you forget to bring your paper (or forget to turn it in), please complete one for the next class meeting (on the next assignment). Writing (or handing me) your paper after we’ve already had the discussion is not helpful for me (or you).

Your Discussion Starter is not a formal response paper; it does not need an introduction or thesis. Here is what you should include in each Discussion Starter:

**Quotation**
Include ONE quotation from the day’s reading or viewing assignment. You should cite it properly in MLA style (see reverse for MLA style overview). You should then follow up after it with some discussion, of about 2-4 sentences. Why is this quote important? What is interesting/confusing/etc. about it?

**Questions**
List 2 (or more) questions you have that you think would be good to discuss in class. Try to develop open-ended questions (not just “yes/no”) to help us expand discussion.

**Connections**
A big goal in the class is to draw connections both within the course material and to outside of course material. Write a paragraph discussing any connections you can make with other texts we’ve read (or that you’ve read in other classes) or other topics or themes we’ve been discussing.

Your paper should look like this:

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Student Name
Text title
Date

Quotation with analysis [Quote plus a paragraph]:
“blah blah blah blah blah” (123). This quote seems important because …. I was really offended by this part because…..I am wondering if….What is going on this passage….is it possible that the author means….

Questions for the class [Try for two; more is great!]:
1. Why does…Is this……What is the significance of……Do you think…..
2. What do you think of…What would you do if…..Is this author doing…..Why does this character…..

Connections [a paragraph]:
This story connects with this other story/poem/film we’ve read in class, or the other discussion we’ve had in class…
This story connects with this other story/poem/film from outside of class…. This story brings up a literary/historical question I’ve wondered about….
You need to complete four (4) Discussion Starters (as assigned) over the course of the semester. With the discussion starters, you want to demonstrate to me not just that you have read, but that you have thought about the reading. To be an active reader, you need to do work before you come to class to help yourself understand the reading. Don’t just say (to yourself or in your discussion starter), “I didn’t understand the reading.” Focus. Struggle. Work with the text. If you don’t understand something, articulate what it is that you don’t understand. Be specific in your questions about what is confusing about the text. I want to encourage you to slow down. Merely skimming the reading is not enough. Writing your discussion starter is way to push your thinking, to answer your own questions, and to develop starting points for classroom discussion about the text.

You have four opportunities to write these, so please take note of comments I make on the Discussion Starters I return to you, so that you know how to improve for future Discussion Starters.

Finally, please be sure to follow these guidelines:

- Discussion Starters should be typed.
- Include your name at the top.
- You DO NOT need to use outside research sources – this is your response.
- You DO NOT need a works cited list for these papers.
- The writing should be standard college-level, free from grammar and spelling problems. You may use “I” in your response, and you may (and should) ask questions. Don’t forget to use MLA style for quotes from the text. You should be using complete, grammatical sentences throughout the one-pagers.

**MLA style basics for citing a quote**

Below I have provided an example of a quote integrated into my own writing, with proper citation:

In “A Rose for Emily,” the narrator explains, “our whole town went to her [Miss Emily’s] funeral” (2182).

So you put quotes around the quoted material, and then put a page number in parenthesis at the end, with the period all the way at the end (so it’s clear that the page number goes with that quote). Sometimes you need to include both the author and the page number like this: (Faulkner 2182) but in the example above, it was clear from the introduction to the quote which text I was using, so I only needed to include the page number in the citation at the end of the quote. For successive quotes by the same author and in the same story, you only need to include the page number. For your Discussion Starters, the example I have above should suit your needs.

Note that I also indicated who was speaking (the narrator). Be very careful to properly attribute quotes, and especially careful about the difference between author and narrator when you’re working with fiction (which is pretty much every text this semester).

You can also see that I inserted square brackets to explain who the “her” was in this quote. Sometimes that is clear from your introduction; other times, it is easier to use square brackets for any additional/explanatory information. Square brackets go around any text that is not part of the original quote.

Later in the story, Judge Stevens asks one of the complaining neighbors, “will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?” (2183).

In the case above, note that the original quotation ends with a question mark. I have put that question mark INSIDE the quotation marks, the put a period at the end, after the parenthesis.

Please note that if your quote goes longer than four typed lines, you need to use the long quote format. But in general, for the discussion starters, you will likely be using shorter quotations. For future reference, please do review MLA formatting for long quotes. There is a handy guide at the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) here: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/03/