

## Examples of reflection

### See below also the collection of example reflections

Although they are not formally structured in the what, so what, now what layout, you will probably be able to identify differences in the level of insight which each one offers.

Your objective is to think about how you can make your own reflections as insightful as possible in a way with which you are comfortable.

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### Reflections of a business studies student on placement

**The placement is in The Black Bull in Grentown.**

**Chris, the student, has been at the placement for only a few days. They have been asked to wait on the tables at lunchtime.**

Today the pub was full and many people wanted lunch. I think that Mr Freddings (the manager) was a bit caught out because it had been very quiet the last few days and he had told two of the regular lunchtime staff not to bother to come in until later. I helped out in the kitchen this morning – washing up and doing some cleaning up. Jan, the cook, said that I would be needed to wait at the tables. I was a bit shocked because I had not done this before. I was embarrassed when she took me out and told me what to do in front of some of the customers, but I suppose I did need to know. I was left in a situation in which some customers knew that I am new to this, and others did not. On the whole, I decided to pretend that I had been doing it all my life. Jan told me how to write down what people order very quickly, and told me her type of shorthand which I have been trying to use. On the whole it seems to work, - I did make one or two mistakes when I had to go back to the customers and ask again what they wanted again. One customer was really nice when this happened because she had seen me being taught what to do. Another, a bit later, was quite abrupt. I guess that I had become a little over-confident by then. I backed off and realised that I have a lot to learn even in this simple matter of taking orders and bringing out the food.

A bit later there was a difficult incident that I got involved in. There was a party of three women – I think that they work at the big company that makes furniture up the road. They had booked but were a bit late and, because it was quite busy by then, we had to tell them that they would have to wait for their meal for a bit. They grumbled and then ordered. Then it got really busy and cook could really hardly cope so it made it even longer that they had to wait. She asked me to go and tell them they would have to wait even longer. She told me what to say – to be polite but firm and not to get drawn into stuff about how they had booked – because, as she said, it was their fault because they were late. Anyway, the women treated me as if it was my fault. I fell apart a bit, not sure what to say apart from sorry lots of times. I got away and went back to the kitchen. By then Mr Freddings had come in and he and Jan had decided to offer the women some food that could be served up straight away. I wished they could have thought of it earlier. Again, I had to take out the message. The women were cross and made a huge fuss about not wanting the food on offer, and said how the pub had gone down-hill and it used not to be like that. I just had to stand and listen and wished I had not pretended to have been there all my life. It all made me feel upset especially when, at last, grudgingly they said they would have the food.

I brought out their meals and now they were all smiles because they thought they had got a bargain because what they had been given was more expensive. They were nice to me then and left quite a tip. I think I learnt quite a bit about waiting all in a short time.

These are some of the things that I learnt from today...(she lists 6 topics).....

## Examples of reflection

### Reflection on study habits over the last semester

**The student, Kerry, is in level 2 on a Biology programme. They have been asked to reflect on her progress in study in the previous semester by her tutor and to bring the piece she has written to the tutorial. This is part of the personal professional planning initiative in the university.**

In the summer at the end of my first year of uni, I travelled all around Europe. I had always wanted to do that and felt that I had to come back before I was ready. I got back to uni two days late and I felt unsettled for a while after because it seemed that everyone had got into ruts of studying before I could. I missed a few lectures in the first two weeks – none of it seemed to have any meaning. I thought about leaving but my parents were wild when I said that that I thought I had better try to settle down.

We had lots of work to do at that stage for the first genetics module. You can't afford to get behind in that and I was behind. I had to go to Dr Spolan and tell him I couldn't do it. He was really helpful which made me feel a lot better. He said he knew several of us would have difficulty and set up a surgery with some of the postgraduate students. Mostly they were good, though sometimes they did not have much idea of just how hard I found it. Somehow they could not always explain. Anyway, I seem to have caught up now and passed the exam.

I think I have difficulty writing essays. I can't seem to organise my ideas in the way that tutors want. I think I have done it and then get comments about there not being proper discussions and conclusions to what I write. I am not sure that anyone has ever told me how to write an essay – you just have to guess. I did buy a study skills book for science students and that helped me because it had examples, even from biology. It also helped me with referencing. I have always been confused about how much you can put down of someone else's work without it being plagiarism. I know we had some rules about plagiarism in the course handbook, but when you are in the middle of an essay, with a really relevant book in front of you, it seems difficult to see how to apply the rules. Can you, for example, put down quite a big chunk of someone else's work if it says exactly what you want to say yourself? It would have a reference put after it of course. I think I need some help on this.

We have multiple choice questions for the first biology methods module. I was not sure how to revise for an exam like that. We ended up making up questions and testing each other on the answers. I did find that I did not seem to need to understand the ideas that were put over in the questions – I thought I could just guess at the kinds of questions and make sure that I had the answers. I did not do all that well in the exam so maybe I need to prepare differently - but I really don't know how to do it. I will need to ask .

Anyway, I think that deciding to stay on at uni was a good idea and as the term goes on, I feel more settled.

## Examples of reflection

### Reflection on a skills module

**Jo is on a level 1 skills module, and has just given a presentation as part of that module and has been asked to assess how they got on in a reflective manner as part of the assessment of the module.**

I have just done a presentation in front of our group. We were asked to choose any subject this time but next time we will be giving a presentation on a topic associated with our subject. I choose to talk about my adventure sailing holiday in Scotland. I was third to go. I was nervous because the last time I gave a presentation was at school and then I knew everyone well. This is a new module so I do not yet know people. There were 6 of us, and the tutor.

I talked about the journey up to Scotland – and how we missed the train and then could not find the boat we were going on. People seemed to be listening. I talked about the first day of sailing. It was windy and I told them how I was a bit scared – then there were two days when we did not go anywhere because it was so rough. We then did get some sailing and went to several islands. There were adders on the islands so we had to wear boots if we walked on the heather. It made me very nervous about going onto the land.

I talked for the six minutes that was required. I fitted in most of what I had to say. I then had to ask if anyone had any questions. There were three questions. Sam asked how old the boat was and I told him that it was built in 1910. Beckie asked where we sailed from and Dr Smythe asked if we had to be the crew and pull ropes. I told him that we were the crew and that over the week I began to learn which ropes did what to the boat.

Then it was over. I think I did the presentation well and people listened. I do not think that I would do anything differently next time.

## Examples of reflection

### An exercise in comparison

**This is an account of an incident in a park. It is recounted by 'Annie' who was involved in the incident herself. It is written in different versions that demonstrate different levels of reflective writing.**

#### The Park (1)

I went through the park the other day. The sun shone sometimes but large clouds floated across the sky in a breeze. It reminded me of a time that I was walking on St David's Head in Wales – when there was a hard and bright light and anything I looked at was bright. It was really quite hot – so much nicer than the day before, which was rainy. I went over to the children's playing field. I had not been there for a while and wanted to see the improvements. There were several children there and one, in particular, I noticed, was in too many clothes for the heat. The children were running about and this child became red in the face and began to slow down and then he sat. He must have been about 10. Some of the others called him up again and he got to his feet. He stumbled into the game for a few moments, tripping once or twice. It seemed to me that he had just not got the energy to lift his feet. Eventually he stumbled down and did not get up but he was still moving and he shuffled into a half sitting and half lying position watching the other children and I think he was calling out to them. I don't know.

Anyway, I had to get on to get to the shop to buy some meat for the chilli that my children had asked for for their party. The twins had invited many friends round for an end-of-term celebration of the beginning of the summer holidays. They might think that they have cause to celebrate but it makes a lot more work for me when they are home. I find that their holiday time makes a lot more work.

It was the next day when the paper came through the door – in it there was a report of a child who had been taken seriously ill in the park the previous day. He was fighting for his life in hospital and they said that the seriousness of the situation was due to the delay before he was brought to hospital. The report commented on the fact that he had been lying unattended for half an hour before someone saw him. By then the other children had gone. It said that that several passers-by might have seen him looking ill and even on the ground and the report went on to ask why passers-by do not take action when they see that something is wrong. The article was headed 'Why do they 'Walk on by'? I have been terribly upset since then. James says I should not worry – it is just a headline.

## Examples of reflection

### The Park (2)

I went to the park the other day. I was going to the supermarket to get some meat to make the chilli that I had promised the children. They were having one of their end-of-term celebrations with friends. I wonder what drew me to the playground and why I ended up standing and watching those children playing with a rough old football? I am not sure as I don't usually look at other people's children – I just did. Anyway there were a number of kids there. I noticed, in particular, one child who seemed to be very overdressed for the weather. I try now to recall what he looked like - his face was red. He was a boy of around 10 – not unlike Charlie was at that age – maybe that is why I noticed him to start with when he was running around with the others. But then he was beginning to look distressed. I felt uneasy about him – sort of maternal but I did not do anything. What could I have done? I remember thinking, I had little time and the supermarket would get crowded. What a strange way of thinking, in the circumstances!

In retrospect I wish I had acted. I ask myself what stopped me - but I don't know what I might have done at that point. Anyway he sat down, looking absolutely exhausted and as if he had no energy to do anything. A few moments later, the other children called him up to run about again.

I felt more uneasy and watched as he got up and tried to run, then fell, ran again and fell and half sat and half lay. Still I did nothing more than look – what was going on with me?

Eventually I went on I tell myself now that it was really important to get to the shops. It was the next day when the paper came through the door that I had a real shock. In the paper there was a report of a child who had been taken seriously ill in the park the previous day. He was fighting for his life in the hospital and the situation was much more serious because there had been such a delay in getting help. The report commented on the fact that he had been lying, unattended, for half an hour or more. At first, I wondered why the other children had not been more responsible.

The article went on to say that several passers-by might have seen him playing and looking ill and the report questioned why passers-by do not take action when they see that something is wrong.

The event has affected me for some days but I do not know where to go or whom to tell. I do want to own up to my part in it to someone though.

## Examples of reflection

### The Park (3)

The incident happened in Ingle Park and it is very much still on my mind. There was a child playing with others. He looked hot and unfit and kept sitting down but the other children kept on getting him back up and making him play with them. I was on my way to the shop and only watched the children for a while before I walked on. Next day it was reported in the paper that the child had been taken to hospital seriously ill – very seriously ill. The report said that there were several passers-by in the park who had seen the child looking ill and who had done nothing.

It was a scathing report about those who do not take action in such situations.

Reading the report, I felt dreadful and it has been very difficult to shift the feelings. I did not stop to see to the child because I told myself that I was on my way to the shops to buy food for a meal that I had to cook for the children's party – what do I mean that I had to cook it?. Though I saw that the child was ill, I didn't do anything. It is hard to say what I was really thinking at the time – to what degree I was determined to go on with my day in the way I had planned it (the party really was not that important was it?). Or did I genuinely not think that the boy was ill – but just over-dressed and a bit tired? To what extent did I try to make convenient excuses and to what extent was my action based on an attempt to really understand the situation? Looking back, I could have cut through my excuses at the time – rather than now.

I did not go over to the child and ask what was wrong but I should have done. I could have talked to the other children - and even got one of the other children to call for help. I am not sure if the help would have been ambulance or doctor at that stage – but it does not matter now. If he had been given help then, he might not be fighting for his life.

It would be helpful to me if I could work out what I was really thinking and why I acted as I did. This event has really shaken me to my roots – more than I would have expected. It made me feel

really guilty. I do not usually do wrong, in fact I think of myself as a good person. This event is also making me think about actions in all sorts of areas of my life. It reminds me of some things in the past as when my uncle died – but then again I don't really think that that is relevant - he was going to die anyway. My bad feelings then were due to sheer sadness and some irrational regrets that I did not visit him on the day before. Strangely it also reminds me of how bad I felt when Charlie was ill while we went on that anniversary weekend away. As I think more about Charlie being ill, I recognise that there are commonalities in the situations. I also keep wondering if I knew that boy....

## Examples of reflection

### The Park (4)

It happened in Ingle Park and this event is very much still on my mind. It feels significant. There was a child playing with others. He looked hot and unfit and kept sitting down but the other children kept on getting him back up and making him play with them. I was on my way to the shop and only watched the children for a while before I walked on. Next day it was reported in the paper that the child had been taken to hospital seriously ill – very seriously ill. The report said that there were several passers-by in the park who had seen the child looking ill and who had done nothing. It was a scathing report about those who do not take action in such situation.

It was the report initially that made me think more deeply. It kept coming back in my mind and over the next few days - I began to think of the situation in lots of different ways. Initially I considered my urge to get to the shop – regardless of the state of the boy. That was an easy way of excusing myself – to say that I had to get to the shop. Then I began to go through all of the agonising as to whether I could have mis-read the situation and really thought that the boy was simply over-dressed or perhaps play-acting or trying to gain sympathy from me or the others.

Could I have believed that the situation was all right? All of that thinking, I now notice, would also have let me off the hook – made it not my fault that I did not take action at the time.

I talked with Tom about my reflections on the event – on the incident, on my thinking about it at the time and then immediately after. He observed that my sense of myself as a 'good person who always lends a helping hand when others need help' was put in some jeopardy by it all. At the time and immediately after, it might have been easier to avoid shaking my view of myself than to admit that I had avoided facing up to the situation and admitting that I had not acted as 'a good person'. With this hindsight, I notice that I can probably find it more easy to admit that I am not always 'a good person' and that I made a mistake in retrospect than immediately after the event. I suspect that this may apply to other situations.

As I think about the situation now, I recall some more of the thoughts – or were they feelings mixed up with thoughts? I remember a sense at the time that this boy looked quite scruffy and reminded me of a child who used to play with Charlie. We did not feel happy during the brief period of their friendship because this boy was known as a bully and we were uneasy either that Charlie would end up being bullied, or that Charlie would learn to bully. Funnily enough we were talking about this boy – I now remember – at the dinner table the night before. The conversation had reminded me of all of the agonising about the children's friends at the time.

The fleeting thought / feeling was possibly something like this:– if this boy is like one I did not feel uncomfortable with – then maybe he deserves to get left in this way. Maybe he was a brother of the original child. I remember social psychology research along the lines of attributing blame to victims to justify their plight. Then it might not have been anything to do with Charlie's friend.

So I can see how I looked at that event and perhaps interpreted it in a manner that was consistent with my emotional frame of mind at the time. Seeing the same events without that dinner-time conversation might have led me to see the whole thing in an entirely different manner and I might have acted differently. The significance of this whole event is chilling when I realise that my lack of action nearly resulted in his death – and it might have been because of an attitude that was formed years ago in relation to a different situation.

This has all made me think about how we view things. The way I saw this event at the time was quite different to the way I see it now – even this few days later. Writing an account at the time would have been different to the account – or several accounts that I would write now. I cannot know what 'story' is 'true'. The bullying story may be one that I have constructed retrospectively - fabricated. Interestingly I can believe that story completely.