

“College Girl to Call Girl” Process Description

The following connects to a website reference on p. 258 of *Acting on Words*. Other references to Valerie Desjardin’s process description of “College Girl” occur on p. 233 and p. 234.

Essays Are a Form of Process

Essays work through a number of interconnected appeals to their readers. These include point of view, features of language, methods of gathering and reporting information, and various approaches to arguing interpretations. To gain a solid understanding of an essay, it often helps to analyze its process by noting its features and methods. This analysis may become a full, formal essay of rhetorical analysis, but often it is sufficient to make a brisk note-form summary of the essay’s methods, as Valerie Desjardins illustrates below. This process summary can then inform one’s completion of a content summary as well as other analytical work related to understanding and explaining the essay under study.

Practice Activity

To test your ability to prepare a process description, read pages 163-168 of *Acting on Words*. Then read “College Girl to Call Girl” (p. 457-460). Make notes on the various methods and appeals that you find in that essay. Be as precise and complete as you can. Then compare your results to Valerie Desjardin’s note-form process description below.

Here is an illustration of a process description in note-style

Note-form Process Description of “College Girl”

Valerie Desjardins

Investigative journalism; intended for general public audience; omits specific citations; unreferenced statistics—80% of prostitution is now off street and college tuition fees have risen 126% on average over nine

years, both stats juxtaposed toward beginning; uses mostly examples – interviewees, 4 student prostitutes (one ex), escort service manager, police detective, novelist-researcher; main subject at beginning, middle and end is Stacy; Stacy shown by language, actions and comments by others to be self-deluding; outreach worker Bennett says toward end (impact location) that Stacy uses “rationalization”; John toward end (impact location) suggests the middle class world is essentially one of imposed prostitution and denials; Lowman, sociology prof, suggests middle-class is heavily into prostitution and denial (impact location at beginning where thesis of essay might be, after opening extended anecdote).

Focus Questions

1. Has Desjardins overlooked anything that you believe should have been included?
2. Has Desjardins included anything that does not strike you as a part of rhetorical process?

Discuss your findings with classmates and your instructor.

Uses of Your Process Descriptions

The details in your carefully observed process descriptions (analyses of rhetoric) will assist you to finalize your summary of the main claim and supporting ideas of the reading (a content summary) as well as to be able to identify various excerpts from the reading as specific forms of rhetoric with specific purposes related to the main purpose and to the thesis of the reading.

To see how the above description may help you to explain how an essay excerpt relates to the essay as a whole, see *Acting on Words* pages 241-246. To see how this process description may inform a critical essay, see *Acting on Words* pages 257-260.