**Reflective writing sample article**

Gibbs (1988, p. 47) suggests the following stages to encourage deeper reflection:

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| **Description:** | What happened? What are you going to reflect on? Don't make judgements yet or try to draw conclusions. |
| **Feelings:** | What were your reactions and feelings? |
| **Evaluation:** | What was good or bad about the experience? Make value judgements. |
| **Analysis:** | What sense can you make of the situation?  Bring in ideas from outside the experience to help you.  What was really going on? |
| **Conclusions (general):** | What can be concluded, in a general sense, from these experiences and the analyses you have undertaken? |
| **Conclusions (specific):** | What can be concluded about your own specific, unique, personal situation or ways of working? |
| **Personal action plans:** | What are you going to do differently in this type of situation next time? What steps are you going to take on the basis of what you have learnt? |

Read this example. Can you recognise the sections and language identified above.

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| Introduction  Last week, I had to give an oral presentation on my progress in an assessed piece of work that my colleagues and I have been working on.  We have been developing a new advertising strategy for a well-known  international company.  We are a group of three from different countries all doing the same third-year course.  Description  The presentation was 3.00 last Thursday. It was in a small formal lecture theatre and there was an audience of about 20, including my lecturer and the other members of my group. We had prepared the PowerPoint slides together, each person contributing one part of the whole presentation. I had to speak for 10 minutes. I started on time, but I felt very nervous to begin with. And immediately I pressed the wrong computer key and cancelled the show. That made me feel even worse. After that the next few slides went fine but when I came to the first slide prepared by one of my colleagues I started to make mistakes. I gave the wrong information, contradicting what was written. When someone asked a question, I was not able to answer and the person who had written the slide had to answer it. This happened twice more. My voice became less confident at that time and I slowly plodded through the rest of the slides. I finally finished a few minutes late. There were only one or two question, one of which I could not answer at all.  Feelings  I was very worried before the presentation.  I was afraid that I would not be able to say the right things and that I would not be able to represent our progress adequately.  I had done one or two oral presentations before but had never been very satisfied with them.  I decided to use Power Point.  I was not very secure about its use, though, because I have seen it go wrong so many times.  I thought it would be a good idea to practise in advance but I couldn’t get access to the room with the projector in so I wasn’t able to. I was quite annoyed about that. When it came to giving the presentation, I really wanted to do it well. But, as it turned out, the presentation was terrible. It just didn’t go smoothly at all. It has left me feeling very unconfident in my ability. I even worry about it at home and it’s affecting my other courses.  The timing was terrible and everyone seemed bored. No one asked me any sensible questions, either. The PowerPoint presentation itself went wrong. I think I clicked on the wrong button. I was very nervous and my voice was very unsteady. Well, that was how I felt, anyway.  Evaluation  I’ve just been reading what I wrote last week after my terrible presentation. When I read what I wrote again, I do see things slightly differently.  It probably wasn’t that bad. The other members of my group actually said afterwards that I had looked quite calm, despite how I was feeling. Although, I am not sure whether they really meant it or were just trying to make me feel better. When I think back, though, if I had known that they thought I was doing all right - despite what I felt - I probably could have continued more positively. Maybe it would have been useful to practise in front of my collegaues before the real presentation. They could have then told me what they thought. I would have also got my timing right (Lowe, 2006). I had decided to use PowerPoint as I had  not seen any of the other students giving a presentation without using it – so I thought it would probably be expected. And knowing how to use PowerPoint would be a valuable addition to my transferable skills on my cv. The student in the previous week had been excellent and I hoped I could be just as good.  The presentation had been interesting, informative and clear and I thought the handouts from them were good, giving just enough but not too much information. As it was, it went from bad to worse. I know it was bad at the end because the other members of my group started to answer the questions that people were asking me.  Analysis  I have talked to several of the audience and they said it was OK. My points were clear and logical and they understood what I was trying to say. They also said that when the other members of my group started answering the questions, I should have tried to prevent this. That's probably right. Maybe I need to learn to be more assertive. But I should also made sure that I knew what I was talking about. I have also talked to my lecturer. And he said that, despite some problems, it was OK. I need to learn how to use PowerPoint better (Lowe, 2006). I also need to make sure that I know and understand what my colleagues have put on the PowerPoints before I get to the actual presentation! I have read a little bit more about evaluating advertisements (Lavidge & Steiner), which was what their slides were about. So I am now feeling more positive generally and I can begin to analyse what I could do better in future presentations.  Conclusion (general)  In general, I think it's clear that, although oral presentations can be very threatening, with proper planning they can be handled. It's important to to know the subject well and understand how to work the technology. Timing is important and you can't guess; the only way to get it right is to practice.  Conclusion (specific)  I need to think again from the beginning about the process of giving a good presentation.  I probably will use Power Point again but I need to make sure I can use it properly.  I have looked at the help file and and a manual (Lowe, 2006) and I now know which buttons to press - "N" for next and "P" for previous - it's easy. I also need to remember that I am using PowerPoint as a tool. I should not let it control me. In order to do that I need to be confident in using it – I need to practise more.  Action plan  I'll probably always be a little nervous in such a situation, but next time, I will make sure that I know the subject matter well, and that I know how the computer works, before I start. That means I need to study the PowerPoint manual more. I also need to make sure I am organised enough to have a practice session with the rest of the group.  Conclusion  As I am finishing writing this, I am discovering how useful it is to go back over things I have written about before and read them again. It helps to see the situation differently.  The first time I wrote this, I felt that the presentation was dreadful and that I could not have done it differently.  But now I realise that it wasn’t so bad, that some of the problems were not mine and there are easy solutions to some of the others. |