

# National Writing Board

730 Boston Post Road, Suite 24, Sudbury, MA 01776 USA

## Author Report

14 July 2003

Title of Paper: Dorothy Day

Code Number: 0404-MEGO-00148

Author: Name Withheld

School: Private High School

Home Address: Byfield, Massachusetts

**Total Score:** (5-30) Reader One **25** Reader Two **22** **Final: 23.5 (Very Good)(5)**

28-30 = A+ Superior (reported score of 6) (1 in 100 papers rated)

23-27 = A Very Good (reported score of 5)

18-22 = B Good (reported score of 4)

13-17 = C Average (reported score of 3)

8-12 = D Poor (reported score of 2)

5-7 = F Very Poor (reported score of 1)

Category (check one): Short (1,500 to 2,500 words) Actual length: 7,108 words  
x Long (4,000 to 6,000 words)

Each paper is read by two Readers, and significant differences in scores are mediated by a coordinator, all senior secondary instructors in history.

### I. Reading (Sources)

Score: (1-6) Reader One 4 Reader Two 5

Reader One:

Avoid too much reliance on a limited number of sources—Coles and Ellsberg, for example. Your bibliography could stand improvement, especially in the areas of commentary and scholarly analysis. If you should continue to explore your topic, you might consider finding a copy of John Cort's, Christian Socialism (1988).

Reader Two:

The author provides a very thoughtful annotated bibliography, including some interesting primary sources—the phone conversations with Coles among them. The author uses sources well, making a good effort to synthesize information from various sources in order to draw more complex conclusions about Day. The results of these efforts are sometimes less successful than the intention, but the method is good.

### II. Thinking (Understanding)

Score: (1-6) Reader One 6 Reader Two 4

Reader One:

Given your topic, you are obliged to shed more light on the Catholic socialist response to the (all but definitive) class warfare element in orthodox Marxism. You are obligated to refer to the controversies engendered by important Papal encyclicals: Pius IX, Nostis et Nobiscum; Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum; and Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno. Nonetheless, you demonstrate a fine understanding, and it's most apparent as you discuss Day's split with her "secular" Marxist friends and associates. In fact, your level of understanding is one that is usually found among advanced University students. Congratulations!

Reader Two:

I feel a bit torn in this area. On the one hand, the author had developed a very good knowledge (and seemingly understanding) of Day's life and beliefs. But we're not actually sure what the essay thinks about all the information presented here. There is lots of reporting of what other people think, but overall the paper lacks some focus and interpretation. The author is asking the right questions, but the essay sometimes stops short of answering them.

**III. Elaboration (Use of evidence)**

Score: (1-6)    Reader One    4                      Reader Two    4

Reader One:

Construct your thesis with care. Draw the focus down upon it so that it is obvious to your reader. Don't simply "tell a story." Take a stand atop all of the evidence you have gathered, and be very opinionated as you do. Confront your reader. Make your reader take unblinking notice of what you hope to do. Make your case, and then—at the end of your paper—re-visit your thesis to convince one and all that you have succeeded in what you set out to do.

Reader Two:

There is a good use of quotations and anecdotes to illustrate facts. But the author should go much further in explaining or interpreting the significance of the evidence provided. Many paragraphs need further development and many observations could use more analysis. Be sure to follow the line of questioning, what—how—why—so what?

**IV. Writing (Use of language)**

Score: (1-6)    Reader One    6                      Reader Two    5

Reader One:

You have a pleasing writing style. You have a flair, to be sure, but also you have developed mature insights into the dynamics of language. Keep writing! Be constantly aware of your gift, and have your Muse lead you back to the NWB next year. Take care of minor errors in paragraph construction.

Reader Two:

At the sentence level, the author writes very well. Precise and complex vocabulary, mature syntax, interesting style and very clear. On the broad scale, however, the essay needs more of a clear focus and logical coherence. The organizational logic is roughly chronological, but the early pages are not. The essay is torn between a simple narrative and a different focus on Day's significance in history.

**V. Overall Result**

Score: (1-6)    Reader One    5                      Reader Two    4

Reader One:

You deal with the complexities of your subject in a way that few of your peers could manage. You show an adroitness as you confront the ideological and teleological issues and, for the most part, are able to balance them without lapsing into breathless advocacy. That's no mean accomplishment when a scholar brings passion to a given enterprise. You are sympathetic, yet able to maintain academic detachment in most cases. Congratulations. Your paper was a joy to read.

Reader Two:

This essay could be improved by leveraging the great amount of information presented more effectively as historical analysis. Establish a clear focus—is the main question that of her historical significance ? Her influence ? Or her paradoxes? Move beyond the narrative...Further develop each point with an eye toward greater coherence...Good work on this paper!

**Total Score** (5-30) Reader One: 25 Reader Two: 22

**Final 23.5**

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Independent Assessment of Academic Writing  
<http://www.tcr.org>; [fitzhugh@tcr.org](mailto:fitzhugh@tcr.org); 978-443-0022