## 1 Sample Paper

- I have always been interested in science, but I must admit I wasn't looking

  3 forward to reading textbook-like essays by dry scientists. I can't remember reading

  4 anything by Stephen Gould or Lewis Thomas before it was assigned in class, and I came

  5 into the readings with negative preconceived ideas. I assumed that Lewis' The Lives of a

  6 Cell would be reminiscent of my tenth grade biology book and that Gould's essay would

  7 be a rehash of all the dinosaur books I read as a kid. I was wrong. Gould and Thomas

  8 were both very interesting to me, but in different ways. Gould and Thomas may both be

  9 members of the science-writing genre, but their style, technique, and results are very

  10 different.
- Gould's writing style seemed less scientific than Thomas'. By less scientific, I
  mean mor down to earth with more obvious humor than Thomas' writing. Thomas used
  subtle humor which took a second glance to realize and Gould went as far as to use the
  fried testacles and terminal trips" in his "Sex, Drugs, Disasters, and the

  Extinction of Dinosaurs" essay. Neither author used vocabulary that was difficult to
  understand, but Thomas used words like "mitochondria" in The Lives of a Cell and
  Gould used the word "highfalutin" in one of his essays. Another reason Gould's writing
  was much less formal than Thomas' was his use of parentheses and postscripts as an
  aide. Gould constantly used parentheses to make it seem like he was talking to the
  reader personally. A good example of this is when he told a quick, not quite relevant
  story about the color of toilet paper in a bathroom in Erie. Thomas' style of writing just
- One of the main reasons I found both Gould and Thomas interesting is that they

  24 wrote about science and nature but addressed societal issues at the same time. However,

Assignment – Response paper for a first-year seminar to compare two authors read for class: Lewis Thomas and Stephen Jay Gould. The two-page paper was to follow an essay format of thesis-support.

25 they differed in this aspect as well. Lewis Thomas wrote of deep aesthetic issues such as 26 the will to live, the acceptance of death, and mankind's impossible drive to control 27 Mother Nature herself. He also speculated about the existence of a planet-sized 28 organism. Gould addressed issues not found in a science textbook in his essays as well, 29 but his were more domestic than Thomas'. Gould argued for more education in our 30 country, and revealed some facts about the scientific community that few of us know 31 about, such as the big deal about naming dinosaurs and why some hypotheses are 32 indisputable and worthless at the same time.

It was a pleasant surprise to me that both Gould's essays and Thomas' The Lives

34 of a Cell were interesting and informative without being dry and simply a list of facts and

35 big words. However, I found them interesting in different ways. Thomas made me think

36 with some of his deep speculation and "twisting" writing style that has to be read

37 carefully to catch completely. Gould captivated my attention with his behind the scenes,

38 earthy essays. Although their styles are quite different, they both managed to make

39 "science writing" entertaining in a different way.