Overall

_____

With Overall, we're asking what readers think the point of our whole text is. Sometimes it's not easy to know *ourselves* what we want to say overall. For example, if you're writing about the purpose of getting an education you might want to say "It's to help get a job," "It's to get a well-paying job," or "It's to get a job you enjoy doing." These start out close to each other, but can end up very different places. And sometimes you may start off thinking that you want to say one thing and realize through writing and discussion with your readers that you really want to say something else.

Overall is also helpful for readers in trying to understand a text they are reading for the first time. Your text might be clear, but about a complicated topic and using the Overall lens can help us understand what you are trying to say.

To give a writer an Overall for their draft read the whole thing, then, try to sum up in a sentence what you feel the writer is "getting at." Feel free to try this with several "draft" sentences. Write your response in a mildly questioning tone that invites the writer to respond. Think of yourself as inviting the writer to restate and get closer to what they want to say.

It's Like:

Overall is like what we do sometimes after we hear a teacher give a lot of instructions about an assignment. We ask to clarify, *"Are you saying this draft will be due next week, but* also *due later as part of the final portfolio?"*

Example:

"Are you saying overall that injustice is usually about the majority oppressing the minority? or,

Are you saying overall that justice can't be revenge, and that usually laws are about revenge?

Are you saying overall that injustice is when a government *says* it grants people rights but doesn't actually live up to what they say?"

Tutor Notes on Overall

The Writer Can:
I think I'm saying overall …

Watch out for:
Just listing back smaller claims of the draft or responding paragraph by paragraph. Overall should be about what the whole text is saying overall. Use Skeleton Feedback to look at individual claims.

Background & Theory
This lens was used by Sondra Perl and Elaine Avidon of the New York City Writing Project as 'Sayback". We revised the lens to add the word "overall" because some students would just make lists of topics or claims in the paper, rather than trying to get at the crux of what the writer seems to be trying to say. We finally changed the actual name of the response to Overall, because tutors and students were still just repeating back claims or simple perceived purposes rather than sorting out confusions about what the draft was saying or could be saying..