

Reflection Essays & Discussion Topics

To help our newest members learn about our organization and develop into brothers who will contribute to the prosperity of our chapter, we suggest having them reflect on the topics taught by having them write down and discuss their feelings on such material. This can be done through the use of “Reflection Essays” and/or “Group Discussions”.

The following are suggestions on how you can add more to your New Member Education program to transform the New Members into even BETTER Brothers! In addition to the various activities you do with your New Member Class, consider these to enhance your program.

Reflection Essays Written thoughts and ideas from New Members based on various Pilam related topics and values

Group Discussions Conversations about topics relevant to our fraternity amongst New Members and their Educator which help facilitate learning

Suggested essays and discussion topics are organized by the value of our fraternity which it might most naturally align with. Topics are also provided for an “Orientation” week or within a “General” category.

A Reflection Essay could be assigned before a topic is covered in a New Member meeting to get the New Member to think about the topic prior to discussing it OR the essay could be assigned after the topic is covered to assess the New Member’s understanding of the topic covered.

**Many of the Reflection Essays could be Discussion Topics too. New Members could complete a Reflection Essay first (an assignment they do in between class meetings) to get them thinking about the topic beforehand which forces them to put their thoughts into an outline which will enable them to contribute to a group discussion during the New Member meeting more fluidly.*

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Orientation

Potential topics for Reflection Essays and Group Discussions

- Why did you join Pi Lambda Phi?
- What do you hope to get from your Pilam experience?
- What things that were not answered during Recruitment, are you still curious or confused about?
- Have New Members write up a short biography about themselves.
- Your Fraternal Experience
 - What do you want your fraternal experience to look and be like?

**USE THE AREA BELOW TO MAKE NOTES OR ADD IDEAS FOR TOPICS YOU THINK
WORK WELL FROM WITHIN THIS CHAPTER**

Obedience

Potential topics for Reflection Essays and Group Discussions

- Establishing Goals
 - What are your goals for this semester, during college, and for PLP? (can be both academic and social/personal in nature)
 - *save what they hand in and then review it with them the following semester to see if they achieved their goals*

- Fundamentals of a Chapter – BUPTWRIORC
 - Which three fundamentals are the most important and why?

- Fundamentals of a Chapter – Trust
 - Focusing on the fundamental of Trust, consider these questions
 - How do you know *when* you trust someone?
 - How do you know *that* you trust someone?
 - Is trust easily achieved?
 - Do you give or earn trust?
 - Why is trust important to the success of a leader and a chapter?
 - What are the roots of mistrust?
 - What behaviors are evident when mistrust exists?

- Fundamentals of a Chapter – Fraternal Values Exploration
 - New Member Class constructs their own definitions for each Fundamental of a Chapter without using the New Member Manual
 - Members can share their definitions and come to a consensus on which is the best
 - Then have the Educator lead the group into a discussion where the following questions are proposed and discussed:
 - Why do you think these fundamentals were chosen as key for Pi Lambda Phi?
 - How would our chapter change if any one of these fundamentals were missing?
 - Are any of these fundamentals missing in our chapter?
 - How could we work to improve some of these fundamentals?
 - How do these fundamentals relate to the following; the Creed, the 5 New Member Expectations and the Fivefold Obligations?

- What are some of your concerns about being a New Member?
 - **just because they took the bid doesn't mean they don't still have concerns*

- What are some challenges facing fraternities today and what can we do to fix those problems?

- What are some of the negative stereotypes that exist about fraternities?

- New Member Expectations
 - Have New Members count off by five to form groups
 - Have each group take one of the expectations
 - Answer these questions as a group and then present to the rest of the class

- What is the purpose of this expectation?
 - Why do you think it was chosen and why is it important?
- How can we as individuals and as a group accomplish this?
- What does this expectation mean to our new member class?
- Why are these expectations (Scholarship, Time, Finance, Fraternalism, Brotherhood) important?
- New Member Educator Expectations
 - Have the NM class share with the Educator, what their expectations are for the Educator (helps the Educator better cater to the needs and expectations of the New Members)
- Fivefold Obligations (discuss one of the Fivefold Obligations per week)
 - Keep the Secrets
 - What does this mean in the fraternal world?
 - When is a fraternity secret not worth keeping?
- Probationary Period History (Page 6 of the New Member Manual)
 - How do you think we will call on you to demonstrate your desire and worthiness during your New Member (probationary) Period?”
- Evolution of Human Relationships (Page 8 of the New Member Manual)
 - Do you have any examples of consciously recognizing this in your personal growth and development?
- Kovner Quote
 - What does the Kovner quote mean to you?
 - What is the relevance of this quote to our fraternity?
 - When and through what means do you see yourself fully understanding this concept?
- Fill in a blank Table of Organization (page of the New Member Manual 80)
 - *Your chapter may be a little different depending on the role alumni play within your chapter*

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Scholarship

Potential topics for Reflection Essays and Group Discussions

- If you were creating your own fraternity, what values would you want it to be centered around?
- Why do you think academic performance is stressed so much in our NM Manual?
- Have New Members submit a weekly Time Management Grid (page 62 of New Member Manual)
 - *Helps Educator see when New Members are available for Brotherhood events AND enables Educator to see how New Members manage their time*
 - May be beneficial to have them do this during week 1 or 2 of the program
 - Could also consider having them create a Google calendar where they store their class schedule and other commitments – then grant access for the Educator or Chapter President to view the schedule
- What best practices help you manage and balance your time?
 - *Consider having a brother come into the meeting and share ideas too*
- What best practices help you with your studies?
 - *Consider having a brother come into the meeting and share ideas too*
- Fivefold Obligations (discuss one of the Fivefold Obligations per week)
 - Have the Courage to Follow Your Convictions
 - When could following one's convictions be a bad thing?
- Have New Members research the University's mission statement and compare it against the fraternity's strategic plan and mission statement.

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Finance

Potential topics for Reflection Essays and Group Discussions

- Fivefold Obligations (discuss one of the Fivefold Obligations per week)
 - Follow Instructions
 - When might this be tough?
 - Why do you think it's important to follow the instructions, even if you don't agree?
 - When might it be ok to not follow instructions?
- Why is it important to pay one's dues literally as well as figuratively?
- What are some of the most successful fundraising efforts you've seen before? What made them successful? How might we be able to learn from that success so that we too can fundraise well?
- What are the line items that make up our budgets? Which are most important and why?
- How can we apply the concept of a Return on Investment (ROI) into the decisions we make daily?

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Character

Potential topics for Reflection Essays and Group Discussions

- Board of Directors Reflection
 - Who is your personal Board of Directors; how have they influenced you; do they know you are on your board; whose board are you on?
- What is “Character”
 - What does it mean to be a man of character? What behaviors demonstrate “character”?
- Fivefold Obligations (discuss one of the Fivefold Obligations per week)
 - Always be a Gentleman
 - What does it mean to be a gentleman?
 - What characteristics do you think make a great man?”
 - *Consider writing down their answers on a whiteboard for all to see*
 - *Connect the listed characteristics to our values based selection criteria and how we expect these things of a Pilam*
- What are good guidelines for email etiquette?
- What are good guidelines for phone etiquette, including voicemails?

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Leadership

Potential topics for Reflection Essays and Group Discussions

- How do you define leadership?
 - What does successful leadership look like?
- Leadership
 - What were some of the things listed with the new member manual as being needed for continued prosperity?
 - Why must we never lose sight of the fact that we're part of a larger community?
 - What characteristics and traits make for a good follower?
- What do you want PLP to look like “x” years from now when you come back?
- How will you leave a legacy within our colony/chapter?
- Fivefold Obligations (discuss one of the Fivefold Obligations per week)
 - Respect Authority
 - Who are examples of authority (law enforcement, parents, Greek Life Director, IFC, E-Board, alumni, IHQ/IEC)
 - What if we disagree with authority?
 - How do we show disagreement while still showing respect?
 - What does this mean about our role with the IFC, school, and IHQ?
- Have New Members contact members of the IEC or IHQ with a preset list of questions about their role within Pilam and about their respective Pilam experience.
- What are the roles of the IHQ, IEC, and Educational Foundation?
- What do you think it takes to be a good member of the IHQ or IEC?
 - What then do you think makes a good undergraduate executive board member?
- Have a member of the IEC or IHQ come in and talk to the new member class.

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Equality

Potential topics for Reflection Essays and Group Discussions

- Creed Discussion
 - Have New Member class break into teams with each team getting a stanza or two from the Creed. Then have them analyze that stanza with the following questions
 - What does the stanza mean?
 - Why is the stanza included?
 - In what ways can we live by the stanza in our everyday lives?
 - Would the Creed be as meaningful if the stanza was not included – Why or why not?
 - In what ways can we take the stanza one step further and make it even better?
 - After each group is done, have them present to the rest of the New Member class what they came up with

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General

Potential topics for Reflection Essays and Group Discussions

- Are we as an individual/chapter upholding the values this organization was founded on?
- How can our organization begin/continue to work toward our Founder's vision?
 - Locally
 - Internationally
- How are the founding values and principles of Pilam relevant today?
- What happened to the Original Chapters?
 - What can we learn from their outcome?
- Have New Members interview various alumni from your colony/chapter and then have them write a reflection essay on what they learned
 - Consider providing a list of questions the NM should ask the alumnus
- Why do you think alumni involvement is essential to our continued success?
- Have alumnus come in and talk to the group about his experience as a Pilam
 - Have alumnus lead a dialogue about a fraternal topic
- Learn a fraternity song from page 46 of the New Member Manual
- What fraternity award would you like to win and why?
 - Who won the award you want to win, most recently?
 - *Could have new member interview the winner*
 - *If a chapter won the award, find out what that chapter had to accomplish to win that award*
- If you could meet any famous Pilam alumnus, who would you want it to be and why? Could also ask what things the new member would do with the alumnus or what things he would want to ask the alumnus.
- Have each New Member take an award and write about it.
 - What does it take to win the award?
 - Who were the most recent winners?
 - Which award seems like the most prestigious?
 - Has anyone from your colony/chapter won it?
 - *Could have New Member interview the winner*

History

Potential topics for Reflection Essays and Group Discussions

- What role did fraternities play after the Civil War?
- Why did anti-fraternity legislation occur in the 1890s
 - How is that occurrence relevant to today?
- What effect did World War II have on the Fraternal world?
- What was the culture of Greek Life in the 1960s and 1970s?
- Review and discuss Commonly Used Greek Terms
- Have an alumnus from the chapter talk to the new members about the history of the colony/chapter.

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