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2018

Mass Incarceration Writing on Demand Unit

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Writing On-Demand Arguments

Overview of Instructional Resource

This instructional resource supports the teaching of on-demand argument writing by supporting students in reading and quickly selecting evidence from multiple sources, developing a claim, and writing an argument of policy. C3WP instructional resources provide a variety of supports for students as they learn the skills of argument writing. The ultimate goal of C3WP is for students to apply those skills independently in a variety of college, career, and community situations. On-demand argument writing is one situation that provides students with an opportunity to apply the skills they have learned through C3WP resources. This resource is designed to support independent on-demand writing with strategies for scaffolding students' reading and writing with an first on-demand prompt. The instructional sequence concludes with students responding to a second on-demand prompt independently.

This resource is designed around a few key things to remember about on-demand writing:

- Students need instruction and practice to be successful in on-demand tasks
- A good plan emerging from reading supports a good writing day
- A good opening makes a big difference
- Practice with introducing and commenting on quotations is critical for students writing source-based arguments
- Conclusions have to move beyond the introduction

Skill Emphasis

- Read and respond to several sources representing a range of perspectives in a conversation around a single issue.
- Quickly construct a nuanced claim & support with evidence from nonfiction sources.

Duration: Four to seven 45-minute class periods. All listed times are estimates and can be adjusted based on different contexts and student needs. In classrooms where students are experienced with some of the strategies many of these days could be combined.

Sample Text Sets:

Each of these text sets is a supported reading packet, formatted similar to a packet students might encounter on any on-demand task. They are built with a focus on including a range of perspectives on an issue so that students have opportunities to write nuanced claims. You may also note that these are issues students may not already have deep knowledge about. In an on-demand situation students are often more successful and more likely to use evidence from sources if they are not as familiar with the topic. Each of these packets could be used as a supported reading packet or an independent reading packet. Note that there are 4 reading packets for this resource to support teaching this resource multiple times over the course of the year. You might also note that you could take students through supported reading and writing only as routine argument writing over the course of the year.

- Reading Packet #1: [Mass Incarceration](#)
- Reading Packet #2: [Prison Organ Donation](#)
- Reading Packet #3: [Paying College Athletes](#)
- Reading Packet #4: [Wild Horses](#)

Classroom Resources:

- Notebook or digital device

Digital Resources:

- [Note-Catcher](#)
- [Professional Development Resource: Teaching the Writing On-Demand Arguments C3WP Instructional Resource](#)

Overview of Lesson Sequence:

1. Supported Reading (Day One)
2. Supported Reading (Day Two)
3. Supported Planning
4. Supported Writing
5. Independent Reading Packet
6. Independent Writing

Lesson Sequence:**Becoming Aware and Getting Informed (45-50 minutes)**

Supported Reading

- To begin, pass out the reading packet for your chosen topic (wild horses, mass incarceration, prison organ donation, or paying college athletes). Explain to students that they will be writing an argument of policy using evidence from some readings. It is important for students to know that they are not taking a reading test, but that their reading is for the purpose of writing an argument from sources. Then read the prompt and directions with students, taking time to make sure all students understand what the task is.
- You might provide the following information about arguments of policy:
 - *Typically, the readings for an argument of policy take a variety of positions on:*
 - 1) *Keeping or changing an existing policy or*
 - 2) *Taking positions on new policies.*
- After this introduction to the task, model how to do the first read. Students will answer the first question in one quick skim of the readings:
 - *What is each article about?*
 - *Read the title of each article*
 - *Read/highlight the first sentence in each paragraph and annotate with a quick note about content.*
- Students will then use the [Note-Catcher](#) to support a second read of the sources. Start by modeling how to fill in the first two columns by using a think aloud strategy to show students how to gain information from the prompt, the titles, and the first lines of paragraphs. Individually or in partners, the students then complete the first two columns in the chart for the rest of the sources in the packet.

Teaching Tip

If students use writer's notebooks, they can create the chart on the note-catcher in their notebooks rather than as a copied handout.

Formative Assessment

Collect Exit Tickets to assess students' current understanding of the controversy. If necessary, spend additional time as a class discussing what each source is about and the overall controversy.

- Exit Ticket: As a closing, students complete a brief write at the end of the day: What is the controversy about? If time allows, students can share out to the whole class and ask the class to comment on strengths.

Getting More Informed and Joining the Conversation (45-50 minutes)

- To begin, students take out their packets and the note-catcher from the previous lesson. Again, using a think aloud strategy, the project the chart and model taking notes in columns 3-5. Then students return to their own chart, taking notes and filling in the “They Say,” “I Say” and “Good Evidence” columns. Be sure to circulate among students helping them select evidence especially. After students have completed the packet, you can choose a couple of students to share their responses from the “I Say” column. Using these as examples, the work together with students to write two or three variations of claims based on what students wrote in the “I Say” column.
- Students then write their own claim—many of them will be exactly the same, which is completely fine for a collaboratively written essay.

Making a Plan (45 minutes)

- In preparation for students' planning process, they return to their charts. You can then share the basic structure for arguments of policy (below) and note that they have also finished the first part of the structure.
 - Basic Structure for Arguments of Policy:
 - Tell the reader why there is a controversy over the policy.
 - Make a claim about the policy. This is in the “I Say” column.
 - Discuss the evidence for and against the claim. Choose only the relevant evidence found in the evidence column.
 - Conclude with a recommendation.
- The students then make a plan for writing. Again, model it first, using student input. The class will likely have very similar beginnings, which is perfectly fine in a modeled essay. Then work together as a class to make a plan with boxes, making sure that the evidence boxes are filled in with evidence that supports the claim. Students then make their own plans, copying or modifying it as they see fit. [Click here to see an example of a plan.](#)
- If time allows, students can start on the writing itself, writing an opening paragraph or two that states the controversy and makes a claim.

Formative Assessment

Collect students' plans to assess their claims and selection of evidence. Consider if each student has what he or she needs to write the essay. Plan for whole class, small group, or individual writing conferences before drafting if necessary.

Writing an Argument with Support (90 minutes)**Teaching Tip**

If students need support in the Harris moves, consider teaching the [Making Moves with Evidence](#) C3WP Instructional Resource.

- In final preparation for writing the argument, students practice working with quotations. Have students choose the evidence from the text and model how to introduce and comment on quotations, attributing the text to the author (or title) and commenting afterwards to tie it to the claim of the paper. If they have been previously introduced, remind students of the “Harris moves” to expand their understanding of why writers quote and that they also quote people with a purpose.
 - To practice with quotations, students work in partners or small groups to write 2-3 paragraphs citing evidence and supporting their claims.
- If time allows, model types of conclusions.
 - Students then use all the writing they have gathered to write the full draft of the essay. As a class, review the prompt and directions.
 - **DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENTS**
 - *Take five minutes to review your reading packet, notes and planning.*
 - *Use the space provided in the packet if you want to plan and organize before you write.*
 - *Begin writing your argument on the lined pages in the packet. Use as much space as you need to complete your argument.*

Formative Assessment

Collect student essays and do a quick scan to make sure that students wrote full essays that are on topic. If students seem to be on track, move to the next step in the sequence. If not, they may need more support or time for writing.

Writing an Argument Independently (90 minutes)

- This is the step where students will apply what they learned in the supported reading and writing activities to a completely different prompt. Again, note that you may complete all the steps above as routine argument writing over the course of the year without taking this step to writing an argument independently.
- Hand out a different reading packet and students do the process on their own. Possible directions to give:
 - *The last few days we have been practicing reading multiple texts to gain information to use in our argument.*
 - *Now you will be demonstrating what you have learned in that process with a completely different topic.*
 - *Today is the reading and planning day.*
- Depending on the length of the class period, students can complete the writing the same day or the next day. In preparation for writing, review the prompt and directions. Students then write their full arguments.
 - **DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENTS**
 - *Take five minutes to review your reading packet, notes and planning page from Day 1.*
 - *Use the space provided in the packet if you want to plan and organize before you write.*
 - *Begin writing your argument on the lined pages in the packet. Use as much space as you need to complete your argument.*

Formative Assessment

Depending on your focus or the students' needs, utilizing the [Claim, Evidence, Reasoning Protocol](#) may be useful in describing what students are doing in their full drafts and in determining next steps to instruct revision or to identify a next resource to engage students in more argument writing. The [Using Sources Tool](#) will provide specific information on student progress toward integrating source material to fully support the argument's claim. Or you might have students reflect on their own writing or the writing of a peer with the [Student Using Sources Tool](#). Use one of these tools, or another formative assessment tool to analyze the student writing and make decisions about next instructional steps.

Revision Options

Depending on the analysis of student writing, you can provide specific teaching and revision around the elements of an argument essay: claim, reasons, support, evidence, and source development. Consider using the [Revising Arguments](#) supplementary resource to support students in revising their essays.