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Writing Bootcamp Unit

Developing a Thesis and Utilizing Supporting Evidence

Abstract:

Allow students more experience with formulating a thesis statement and drawing on specific textual evidence to support it. Students can utilize any reading they are familiar with—this familiarity allows them to already have knowledge of the piece’s content, and ability to use the most appropriate points as support. This activity assumes some prior exposure to and practice with thesis statements.

Standards:

W.11-12.1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

- Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

Procedure:

Prior to class, “section off” a reading, essay, or novel (if using a novel, students will especially need to have read and recalled the work) into six units (more or less depending on class size—optimal group size is three or four). Each individual group will be assigned a specific section. Instruct the groups to consider what “key” element or occurrence is evident in their section. This will then provide the materials for them to formulate their thesis statement. Instruct them to use those key ideas or theme and then create a thesis statement. They must then use the materials within their specific section to determine what their evidence for that thesis statement will be.

Example: Six groups take the first six chapters of *The Great Gatsby*. An example thesis statement for the group assigned with chapter two might be: “Tom Buchanan enjoys being a bully to those around him.” Supporting evidence (again, just from chapter two) could include Tom’s behavior to Wilson, his boorish behavior to Myrtle, the very fact he’s cheating on his wife.