

WRITING – CLAIM AND FOCUS WARM-UP

Preparation

- Carefully read the Investigation prompt you will be responding to. Be sure to have read and analyzed the documents prior to doing this warm-up activity.
- [Download the BHP Writing Rubric](#)

Purpose

As you develop your close reading, critical thinking, and historical thinking skills, you also build writing skills that will help you in a lot of other classes. This warm-up introduces the Claim and Focus row of the Writing Rubric and allows you to better understand those concepts and how they apply to thinking and writing.

Process

In this quick warm-up activity, you'll learn how to use the language of an essay prompt to make a claim, provide focus for that claim, and then make a counterclaim. Your teacher might ask you to do just some of the steps in this activity, so be sure to listen for instructions.

Part 1 – Claim

What is a thesis or major claim in an essay? Discuss your ideas with your class.

How do we figure out how to write a thesis/major claim in response to a prompt? One way to do this is by turning the essay prompt/question into the stem of a statement, and then adding a little more information to make it a claim. Then, you can make an even stronger claim statement by getting even more specific. Work through an example of this with your class.

Then, repeat this process using the prompt you are getting ready to respond to.

Part 2 – Focus

What is focus in an essay? Discuss your ideas with your class and refer to the BHP Writing Rubric for more information.

How do you maintain focus in an essay? One way to do this is by linking back to key words and ideas from the thesis/major claim. Review the thesis/major claim from Step 1 and underline the key points that were included that you could write more about in the body of the paper. Then, work with your class to create three supporting claims that mirror the language or ideas from the original claim.

Now, do the same thing using the thesis/major claim you wrote in Step 1 in response to the prompt you've been assigned.

Part 3 – Counterclaim

What is a counterclaim? Discuss your thinking with your class.

How do you make a counterclaim? To weave a counterclaim into your thesis/major claim statement, ask yourself this: Who would disagree with your statement and why? What alternative or opposing viewpoints might you encounter when discussing this topic? Once you've considered other viewpoints, try weaving them in. Work through the following example with your class.

Now, create a counterclaim related to the prompt you will be responding to.

Once you're done, you're ready to write!

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Name:

Date:

Directions: Work through each of the steps to help prepare yourself to respond to the essay prompt.

Step 1 – Thesis/Major Claim		
Write the essay prompt	Turn the prompt into the stem of a statement	Complete the sentence stem to produce a clear thesis/ major claim statement
Now, rewrite your thesis/major claim to make it more specific by including a preview into some of the reasons why you support your thesis/major claim.		

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Having trouble? The sentence stems below may help. These kinds of stems can also appear throughout the body of the argument, where you might address more than one counterpoint as you are building your argument.

- On one hand.... On the other hand....
- Though some historians argue..., a deeper analysis shows...
- Despite the fact that many people believe...
- While many say that..