## Preparation

* Carefully read the DBQ prompt you will be responding to. Be sure to have read and analyzed the documents prior to doing this warm-up activity.
* Download the [WHP Writing Rubric](https://www.oerproject.com/OER-Materials/OER-Media/PDFs/Teacher-Resources/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 explores 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

1. In this quick warm-up activity, you’ll practice using 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.
2. Review the Claim and Focus row of the WHP Writing Rubric with your class.
3. What is a thesis or major claim in an essay? 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.
4. Repeat this process by completing Step 1—Thesis/Major Claim of the Claim and Focus Warm-Up worksheet using the prompt you are getting ready to respond to.
5. What is focus in an essay? Discuss your ideas with your class and refer to the WHP Writing Rubric for more information.
6. 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.
7. Now, repeat this process by completing Step 2—Focus of the worksheet using the thesis/major claim you wrote in Step 1 in response to the prompt you’ve been assigned.
8. What is a counterclaim? Discuss your thinking with your class.
9. 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.
10. Now, repeat this process by completing Step 3—Counterclaim of the worksheet and create a counterclaim related to the prompt you will be responding to.
11. Once you’ve completed all three steps of the worksheet, you’re ready to write your essay!

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| Name: |  | Date: |  |

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

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| 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.** |
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| 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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| Step 2—Focus |
| **Now, look at your thesis/major claim from Step 1 and underline the key points that you’ll support in your writing. Using the key points, develop three supporting claims that mirror the language or ideas from your thesis/major claim. You may revise your thesis/major claim throughout the drafting process as your reasons become more fully developed.** |
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| Step 3—Counterclaim |
| **Identify one or more counterclaims to your thesis/major claim.** If you’re stuck, work with a classmate or friend. Through a quick dialogue, ask them to listen to your claim and try to change your viewpoint. Ask them to take on the role of “naysayer.” In this role, they can keep asking questions such as, “Why?” “Yes, but have you considered…?” “What about those who would say….?” **In a revised thesis/major claim statement or using multiple sentences, introduce this counterclaim.** |
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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…