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Argument Essay: Author's Purpose

Discerning the Purpose and Bias of Hessler' Nonfiction about China

Content Area(s): English / Composition
This plan is used as part of the Argument Essay unit of ENG120: College Composition at Canaan Memorial High School and White Mountains Community College

Estimated length of lesson
1 -2 80 minute blocks for discussions and textual evidence analysis
1 block for draft review and feedback

Lesson Theme and Topic
Students will read Hessler's Oracle Bones and Country Driving

Statement of the broad theme of global education to which your specific lesson topic is related, and why you chose them, indicating their relevance to students
Students in ENG120 study nonfiction essays and articles of varied lengths on many topics. In the argument essay unit, students have analyzed several smaller works to determine the constructive components, essential elements, and central arguments in order to better prepare themselves for writing. Unlike the formulaic essays of previous school year expectations, students in College Composition are expected to write with skill and subtlety. The sophisticated nature of compositional requirements are built upon foundations of study and practice. In this part of the unit, students will study longer works about China and Hessler's interpretation and presentation of it.

Students are expected to have read Hessler before class begins.

This sequence of study is at the ending third of the Argument Essay unit.

CC Standards and Objectives

Text Complexity

10. By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Key Ideas and Detail

5. Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
- Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.
- Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

Writing Types and Purposes

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.
- Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
- Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Central Question and Global Discussion

Spence noted, “How can one catch today's China in words? It is a country in constant motion, defying the laws of economic gravity, reaching out insistently around the world for raw materials to fuel its growth, eating up its land and its past, enticing outsiders to help it achieve new levels of wealth and power, opening up class fissures that were thought to be closed, testing the limits of rapid urban growth while giving its people chances for self-exploration and intellectual transformation they have not known for over half a century” (see attached NY Times book review).

Assessment

Students will complete an Argument Essay where they present the author’s argument and bias. See attached WMCC rubric for Argument Essay.

Instructional Strategies and Activities

1. Collaboration: Reflect on the central question and discuss the book review. What elements/statements made by the reviewer resonate? Are any of them accurate? Discuss your reactions and thoughts with small group and note page numbers of the textual evidence to which you refer. Share notes and thoughts for feedback and guidance. Is your evidence convincing? Organize textual evidence to support an original, concise focus/thesis statement about Hessler’s nonfiction. (RI.11 – 12, RL.11-12, W.11-12). *20 - 30 minutes*.
2. Discuss the concept of China’s present as an “Echo of its distant past.” What evidence in Hessler exists for this assertion? *10 minutes*.
3. Analyze Hessler’s view and presentation of China’s past as expressed in Oracle Bones and Country Driving. Organize textual evidence to support a concise focus statement (RI.11 – 12.2, W.11-12.1). *10 – 20 minutes*.
4. Is it helpful or misleading to define Chinese culture based upon these two extended metaphors/analogies? What did Hessler seem to intend (W.11-12.1, SL.11 – 12.4). *10 – 20 minutes*.
5. In small groups, discuss Hessler’s structure and purpose.