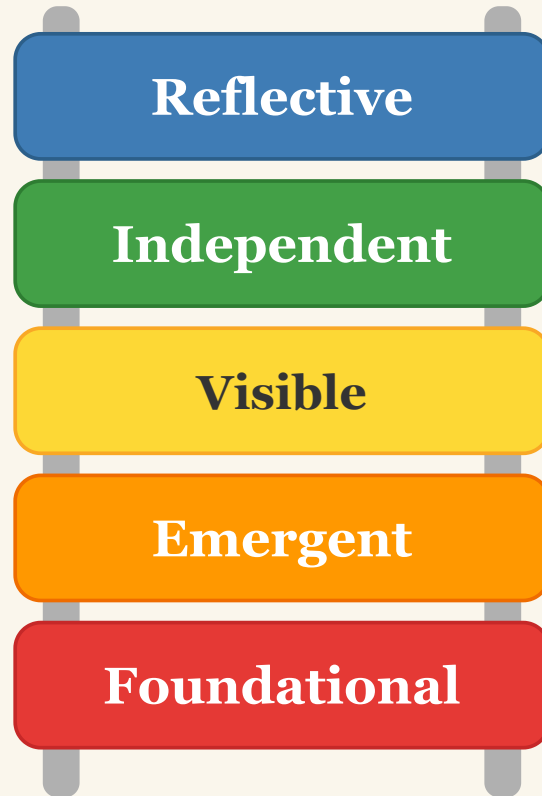


The Five Thinking Levels



Climb your thinking. Every writer starts where they are and reaches for the next rung, from remembering a fact to reflecting on what it all means.

"I think this is a great way to go and I love the consistency so much!"

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

The Two Types of Prompts

WHY?

- **Complex sentence** with subordinating conjunctions
- Answers with **reasons**
- Example: Explain **why** it is important to be kind.

Clue words:

importance · significance · reason ·
infer · meaning · most likely ·
whether · should, should not

**These ask: Why does this
matter?**

HOW?

- **Simple sentence** with prepositions
- Answers with **ways and methods**
- Example: Explain **how** to be kind to others.

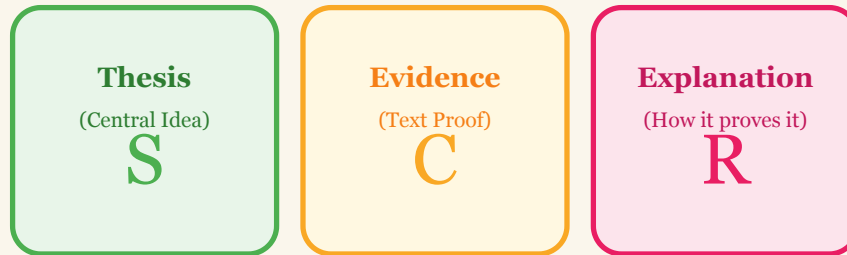
Clue words:

influence · reveal · similarities ·
differences · ways · develop · show
· demonstrate

**These ask: How are ideas
connected?**

SCR Structure

Thesis (Central Idea) + Evidence + Explanation



Thesis (Central Idea) Types

- **WHAT** = Simple sentence (facts/details)
- **WHY** = Complex sentence (subordinating conjunction + reason)
- **HOW** = Simple sentence (preposition + method/connection)

“Third, fourth, and fifth grade all use the same anchor charts set.”

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

Power Words for Stronger Writing

Subordinating Conjunctions

◇ because ◇ since ◇ when ◇
after ◇ so that ◇ although ◇
even though ◇ due to ◇ given
that ◇ in light of ◇ while ◇ if ◇
before ◇ unless

Common Prepositions

◇ by ◇ through ◇ in ◇ with ◇
during ◇ through the use of ◇ in
response to ◇ based on ◇ at ◇
under ◇ over ◇ between ◇
across ◇ on ◇ to

"I absolutely love the other graphic things you did with the boxes and the backgrounds of the boxes and all of that!"

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

Evidence Citation Stems by Thinking Stage

Stage	Introduce the Source	Bring in Evidence	Tie to Claim	Verbs
Foundational	"The text says..." "The author says..."	"For example..." "One part shows..."	"This shows..." "This means..."	says, shows, tells
Emergent	"According to the text..." "In paragraph..."	"The passage states..." "The author writes..."	"This suggests..." "This reveals..."	states, explains, describes
Visible	"As [author] notes..." "The text indicates..."	"Specifically, the author writes..." "The scene illustrates..."	"This implies..." "This detail underscores..."	notes, illustrates, demonstrates
Independent	"Building on this, [author] argues..." "The text establishes..."	"The evidence corroborates..." "Consider the moment..."	"This pattern strengthens..." "Consequently..."	argues, contends, corroborates
Reflective	"Through diction, the text constructs..." "Critically, the passage..."	"The evidence converges on..." "The author's move foregrounds..."	"The evidence warrants..." "Synthesizing reveals..."	advances, synthesizes, warrants

Setting

Where and When a Story Takes Place

1. Historical Setting

- Time Period
- Real Events
- Past Locations

2. Cultural Setting

- Customs & Traditions
- Language & Clothing
- Food, Music, & Lifestyle

3. Scenery Setting (Location)

Where? Mountains, City, Farm, Beach, Forest, etc.

4. Time of Story

- Past, Present, Future
- Time of Day: Morning, Night, Season

Why Does Setting Matter?

- Creates Mood/Atmosphere
- Helps Characters
- Understand the Story Better!

Clues in the Text

Description Words · Character Thoughts · Dialogues · Historical/Cultural Details

CSI Habit

Strong writers think deeply and write with purpose!

C = Connect

The evidence **connects** to the prompt and thesis (central idea).

Does this evidence match what the prompt is asking?

S = Support

The evidence **supports** the reason.

Does this evidence back up my reason or way?

I = Infer

The evidence **infers** more ideas that I can explain.

Can I write more about this evidence, or is it a dead end?

“Please complete the anchor charts that we started a couple of days ago. You sent me four of them as samples and I love them.”

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

Three Pieces to a Thesis (Central Idea)

TOPIC

noun of importance
from the prompt

CHARGE

verb of importance
from the prompt

ANSWER

the writer's answer to
the charge

Habit for Building a Thesis (Central Idea)

1. Read the prompt.
2. Find the **TOPIC**.
3. Find the **CHARGE**.
4. Think of the **ANSWER**.
5. Match the prompt type to sentence type.
6. Write the thesis (central idea).

Thesis (Central Idea) Types

- **WHAT Prompt** → simple sentence; answer includes facts/details
- **WHY Prompt** → complex sentence; includes a subordinating clause
- **Relational HOW Prompt** → simple sentence with a preposition

Explanations Anchor Chart

What an Explanation Does

An explanation sentence helps me tell:

- what the evidence means
- why the evidence matters
- what I can understand from it

Explanation is NOT:

- another quote
- a copy of the evidence
- a random thought

Our Two Bookends

DEEP FACTS bookends for now:

D = Definition · S =
Story/Anecdote

Sentence Reminder

- ◇ Capitalize the first word.
- ◇ Punctuate the last word.

Signal Markers

Definition: This means · This shows

Story/anecdote: This reminds me of ·
This makes me think of

Why We Use "THIS"

- points back to the evidence
- is a demonstrative pronoun
- refers to something already named

Explanation Chant

"Wow! Wow! Wow! I'm explaining now!"

What Is Evidence?

What Is Evidence?

Evidence is proof from the passage that helps support an answer.

Evidence IS:

- words or sentences from the text
- details from the passage
- proof that supports a thesis (central idea)

Evidence IS NOT:

- a random detail
- a personal opinion not in the text
- a sentence copied without a reason

CSI HABIT for Strong Evidence

- **C** = Connects to the prompt
- **S** = Supports my thesis (central idea)
- **I** = Infers additional ideas

If my evidence does not connect, support, or help me infer, it is probably weak evidence.

Signal Markers

- The text states,
- The author says,
- The passage explains,

Quoted Evidence Punctuation

Signal marker + comma + quotation marks

The text states, "There was also fresh water and land where crops could be planted."

Evidence Chant

"Hey! Hey! Hey! Evidence is on the way!"

Shaping the Prompt

Shape	What It Means	What to Look For
	Noun of Importance (NOI)	The topic or subject
	Verb of Importance (VOI)	The action the question asks
	Question Type Clue	WHAT, WHY, or HOW?

Three Types of SCR/ECR Questions

- **WHAT** · Identify or describe something
- **WHY** · Explain a reason or cause
- **HOW** · Explain a process, method, or way

“That is perfect advice! Thank you so much for being such a great team with me.”

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(ECR) TREES

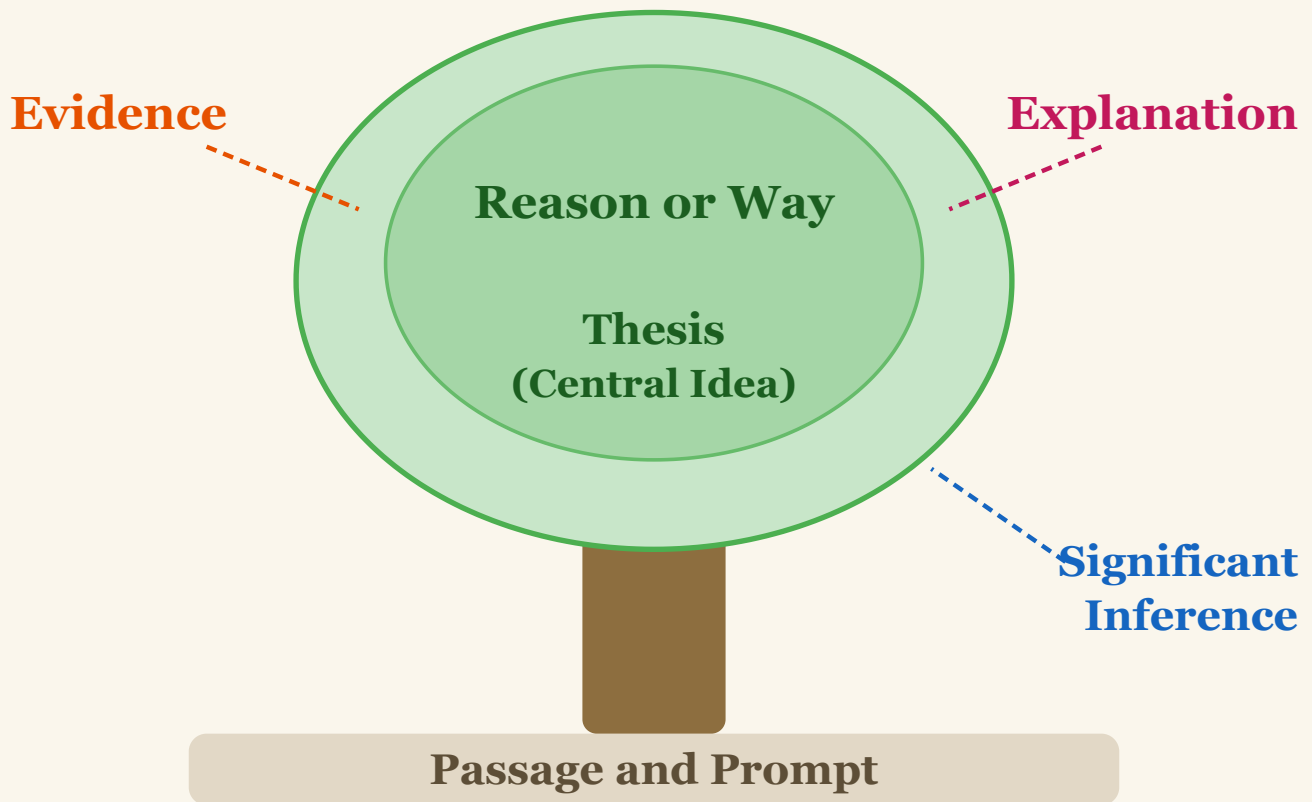
T **Thesis (Central Idea):** The answer to the prompt

R **Reason/Way:** Why or how it is true

E **Evidence:** Text proof

E **Explanation:** How the evidence proves it

S **Significance:** Why it matters



TREES: Reason/Way Branch

Reason/Way Branch

- A reason tells **why**
- A way tells **how**
- Each reason or way must **prove** the thesis (central idea)

Topic Sentence Connection

- Thesis (Central Idea) ↓ Reasons/Ways ↓ Topic Sentences

“The anchor charts are the same for all three grade levels.”

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

Thesis (Central Idea) Construction

Shaping the Prompt

- ● Red Circle = Noun of Importance (NOI)
- □ Yellow Box = Verb of Importance (VOI)
- ▲ Green Triangle = Clue Words

SCR vs. ECR

- **SCR** = Question **ECR** = Statement **WHY/HOW**

How Prompt = Simple Sentence

- must include a preposition
- frame: through, by, with

Why Prompt = Complex Sentence

- must include subordinating conjunction
- frame: Because / Since / Although

Prompt to Thesis (Central Idea) Transformation

- Read the prompt
- Find the noun of importance
- Find the verb of importance
- Decide if it is why or how
- Add your answer
- Build the thesis (central idea)

DEEP FACTS

Nine Ways to Explain a Piece of Evidence

Type	How to Explain	Example Signal
D Definition	Define or clarify what the evidence shows literally.	<i>This means</i> the doors are made of metal...
E Example & Illustration	Add a specific instance or sensory detail.	<i>This means</i> the writer wants readers to imagine...
E Expert Testimony	Reference an authority to validate.	<i>This means</i> , as architects often note...
P Process / Step-by-Step	Break down why or how it creates meaning.	<i>This means</i> the door opens automatically...
F Facts & Statistics	Support with data or factual context.	<i>This means</i> the school's investment...
A Analogy	Compare to something familiar.	<i>This means</i> the doors function like...
C Comparison & Contrast	Show how it differs from something else.	<i>This means</i> unlike the warm creak of old doors...
T Tipping Point	What caused it and what results from it.	<i>This means</i> because the school installed...
S Story / Anecdote	Illustrate with a short story or moment.	<i>This means</i> every time these doors open...

"These are absolutely fantastic!"

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

How to Magnify a Reason or a Way!

1. Brainstorm Reasons or Ways

- Write down as many reasons or ways as you can think of.

2. Group your like Reasons or Ways

- Put similar ideas together into groups.

3. Decide on only ONE idea per group

- Pick the strongest idea from each group.

4. Narrow it down: Only use 3 groups!

- These 3 ideas become your Main Body Paragraph topic sentences!

"I don't want there to be empty space on the page."

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

WHY Prompt Thinking

1. Why Prompts

- Why prompts ask for reasons, importance, significance, purpose, meaning, or value
- Strong writers do not stop at one reason
- Strong writers magnify their ideas before choosing their best three

2. Magnifying Process

- Layer 1: Brainstorm as many reasons as possible
- Layer 2: Place reasons into like-minded groups
- Layer 3: Narrow each group to one strong idea
- Final Step: Keep the best three; turn them into topic sentences

3. Topic Sentence

- names one strong reason
- connects clearly to the thesis (central idea)
- prepares the reader for the paragraph

4. Chant

- "Hear ye! Hear ye! Reasons are near me! Brainstorm wide! Group with pride!
Narrow with care! Choose the best three there!"

Quick Reference

Key Ideas

- Poetry and drama can both develop big ideas.
- The literary thread is problem/conflict.
- Writers move from prompt to thesis (central idea) to reasons/ways to evidence to explanation: **TREES**

Prompt Analysis

- Circle the task.
- Box the topic.
- Underline what the response must include.
- Ask: Is this asking for reasons/importance or ways/development?

Thesis (Central Idea)

- A thesis (central idea) answers the prompt clearly.
- A thesis (central idea) names the main idea the writer will prove.
- A thesis (central idea) prepares for the body paragraphs.

"I think this is a great way to go and I love the consistency so much!"

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

Significant Inferencing

What is Significant Inferencing?

- combine what the text shows
- combine what you know or have experienced
- create a bigger idea not directly stated
- connect the learning to others
- reflect on the moral, lesson learned, theme, or takeaway

MICE

- **M**y **I**nference = **C**onnections I have + **E**vidence I have found

Signal Phrases for Significance

- As you can see,
- Ultimately,
- The big picture is,
- As everyone can benefit,
- This reminds us that,
- What this shows is,
- In the end,
- One lesson we can learn is,

Signal Marker Phrases

Hear ye! Hear ye! REASONS are near me!

- One reason...
- Building on that idea...
- At first glance...

Hear ye! Hear ye! WAYS are near me!

- The first way this happens is...
- Beyond that...
- Upon deeper consideration...

Hey! Hey! Hey! EVIDENCE is on the way!

- The author says, "..."
- "The scene illustrates that..."
- "Synthesizing these details reveals..."

Wow! Wow! Wow! EXPLANATION is Now!

- This shows...
- Based on the evidence that..., I can infer...
- This helps me see that...

HOW Writing with MICE

HOW Body Paragraph Pattern

- 1. Way Sentence
- 2. Evidence
- 3. Explanation
- 4. Significance

MICE

- **M**y **I**nference = **C**onnections I have + **E**vidence I have found

A strong significance sentence for HOW writing:

- reflects on the process or pathway
- connects to others
- shows the lesson learned
- reveals the big picture

"That is perfect advice! Thank you so much for being such a great team with me."

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

Solution and Resolution Thinking

When we think about solution and resolution, we ask:

- How did things **change**?
- How did people **solve** a problem or **shape** an outcome?
- How did **actions** lead to a **result**?
- How did the ending reveal a **lesson** or **impact**?

The Flow

- ● PROBLEM ↓ ● ACTIONS ↓ ● SOLUTION ↓ ● LESSON / IMPACT

“Third, fourth, and fifth grade all use the same anchor charts set.”

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

What a Statement of Purpose Does

A statement of purpose:

- **opens** the paper
- sounds **broad and meaningful**
- **prepares** the reader for the topic
- **connects** to a big idea
- does **not** retell the passage
- does **not** answer the prompt directly

Remember:

- It sets the stage for the *topic* and the *thinking* to come!

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Introduction Paragraph: Get S.E.T.

S = Statement of Purpose

- Opens with a broad, meaningful idea about the topic.

E = Evidence Reference

- Mentions the passage(s) as a whole, bridging to the thesis (central idea).

T = Thesis (Central Idea)

- Your main idea! The answer to the prompt.

A STRONG INTRO starts with S.E.T.!

- Statement of Purpose → Evidence Reference → Thesis (Central Idea)

"I absolutely love the other graphic things you did with the boxes and the backgrounds of the boxes and all of that!"

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Color-Coding the Exemplar Paper

Introduction

- ● Statement of Purpose (blue = broader thinking)
- ● Evidentiary Transition (yellow = evidence)
- ● Thesis (Central Idea) (green = main answer)

Main Body Paragraph

- ● Reason or Way Statement (green)
- ● Evidence (yellow)
- ● Explanation (red/pink)
- ● Significant Inference (blue)

Conclusion

- ● R1 Restatement of Thesis (green)
- ● R2 Reference Back to Evidence (yellow)
- ● R3 Reflection Statement (blue)

Broad vs. Specific

Broad Statements

- sound global
- express a big idea
- can fit many topics
- do not mention exact passage details
- feel like a lesson, truth, or takeaway

Specific Statements

- mention exact people, events, or inventions
- connect directly to the essay prompt
- focus on the exact topic being discussed
- sound narrower and more precise

“Please complete the anchor charts that we started a couple of days ago. You sent me four of them as samples and I love them.”

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

What the Thesis (Central Idea) Statement Does

A thesis (central idea) statement:

- **comes after** the evidentiary transition
- **bridges** the prompt to the paper
- **answers** the prompt directly
- **sets the stage** for the evidence and explanation
- **guides** the whole response
- **keeps** the writing focused
- does **not** retell the passage
- does **not** list every piece of evidence

“The anchor charts are the same for all three grade levels.”

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

What the Evidentiary Transition Does

The evidentiary transition:

- **comes after** the statement of purpose
- **comes before** the thesis (central idea)
- **mentions** the evidence as a whole
- does **not** list every reason
- **helps bridge** broad ideas to the exact claim

Think of it as:

- The bridge between a big picture idea and your specific claim. It sounds like a grouped preview of the evidence.

"I don't want there to be empty space on the page."

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

Paired Passages

Paired Passages Need Paired Evidence

- A complete answer uses information from **both** texts.
- Do not stay in only one passage.
- Match your evidence to the question.

Similarity and Difference Signal Words

- **Similar:** both, alike, similarly, in the same way
- **Different:** however, but, unlike, while, on the other hand

Reminders

- Evidence from one passage is not enough.
- A complete answer must include **both** texts.
- Compare carefully, not quickly.

"I think this is a great way to go and I love the consistency so much!"

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Listing vs. Collectively Referring

Too Listed (avoid)

- art changed
- government changed
- people studied Greece and Rome

Collective (use this)

- changes during the Renaissance
- ideas from the past
- important details from the passage
- examples of change and learning

Do not dump the reasons. Group them.

- Helpful collective nouns: details from the passage · examples from the text · changes during this time · ideas from the past · stories and achievements · evidence from the text · actions and experiences · examples of influence

“That is perfect advice! Thank you so much for being such a great team with me.”

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Paired Passage Structure

Parts:

- ● **Thesis (Central Idea)** (WHY = complex; HOW = simple with preposition)
- ● **Topic Sentence** / Reasons or Ways
- ● **Evidence** (from BOTH passages)
- ● **Explanation**
- ● **Significant Inference** / Closing Thought

A complete answer must use information from BOTH texts to fully answer the prompt.

- Why Prompt Habits: Read, Circle people/topics, Underline what to explain, Prove with evidence from both passages, Explain how evidence supports your answer

How Prompt Habits

- Read, Circle what is being compared, Underline if similar or different, Prove with evidence from both passages, Explain how evidence proves the comparison

Parts of a Plot

Linear

- Beginning
- Rising Action
- Climax
- Falling Action
- Resolution

Nonlinear

- Flashbacks
- Twists and Turns
- Flashforwards

The Plot Elements

- Characters · Setting · Conflict · Theme · Resolution

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ECR Structure

Paragraph 1 = Introduction

- ● Statement of Purpose
- ● Evidentiary Transition
- ● Thesis (Central Idea)

Paragraphs 2, 3, 4 = Main Body

- ● Reason / Way (green)
- ● Evidence (yellow)
- ● Explanation (red/pink)
- ● Significant Inferencing (blue)

Paragraph 5 = Conclusion

- ● R1 Restatement (green)
- ● R2 Reference (yellow)
- ● R3 Reflection (blue)

"These are absolutely fantastic!"

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

Conclusion Paragraph

The RRR Conclusion HABIT

- **R1** = Restate the thesis (central idea)
- **R2** = Reference the evidence
- **R3** = Reflection sentence

Color Code the Conclusion

- ● R1 = Green (thesis/reasons)
- ● R2 = Yellow (evidence)
- ● R3 = Blue (significance)

What Each Part Does

- **R1** reminds the reader of the main answer.
- **R2** points back to the proof from the paper.
- **R3** leaves the reader with a thoughtful big-picture idea.

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Full ECR Flow

From Prompt to Response!

- ● 1. Prompt
- ● 2. Thesis (Central Idea) / Claim
- ● 3. Reasons / Ways
- ● 4. CSI Evidence
- ● 5. Explanation
- ● 6. Significant Inference

Remember the Writing Colors

- ● Green = Thesis (Central Idea) and Reasons
- ● Yellow = Evidence
- ● Red/Pink = Explanation
- ● Blue = Significance

“Please complete the anchor charts that we started a couple of days ago. You sent me four of them as samples and I love them.”

Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

Argumentative Correspondence Structure

Introduction

- **S** = Statement of Purpose / Big General Truth
- **E** = Collective Evidence Statement
- **C** = Claim / Thesis (Central Idea)

Body Paragraphs

- Reason
- Evidence
- Explanation
- Significant Inference when natural

Conclusion

- Reflective Statement / Big Picture / Lesson Learned

Prompt Analysis Questions

- What am I being asked to decide?
- What side will I take?
- Why do I believe that side?
- What three reasons can support my side?
- Which evidence from the text best proves each reason?

Parts of a Letter

1. Greeting

- Addresses the reader
- Ends with a comma

2. Introduction

- States why the letter is written
- Includes the claim (why response)
- Must be a complex sentence

3. Body

- Each section: reason, evidence, explanation, inference

4. Conclusion

- Restates the claim in a new way
- Includes reflection or big idea

5. Closing

- Ends politely
- Ends with a comma

Argumentative Writing

If You Have to Decide, Declare the Why

- if the prompt says should or should not
- if the prompt asks whether or not
- if the prompt asks you to choose between ideas
- Then it is a **WHY** prompt!
- A WHY prompt needs a claim, reasons and proof

Strong Reasons

- match the claim
- are different from one another
- proven with evidence
- connect to the big picture or theme

Theme in Argumentative Writing

- Theme helps writers connect their side to a bigger idea.
- A strong argument is not only correct; it is meaningful.
- The ending should leave the audience with a lesson learned or a big picture.

All About Characters!

How do we learn about a character?

- **Their Words:** What they say!
- **Their Actions:** What they do!
- **Their Clothes:** What they wear!
- **Their Friends:** Who they hang out with!
- **Body Language:** How they show feelings!
- **Their Thoughts:** What they think!

Evidence of a Character

- Clues that tell us who they are!
- Look for what a character says, does, thinks, and feels.
- Compare how they act at the beginning and the end.

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Randi Whitney, The Writing Academy®, LLC

Ways to React

Actions: What do you DO?

- jumping, crossing arms, frowning

Words: What do you SAY?

- No way! Okay, fine... Maybe later

Denial

- You refuse, or ignore.
- That's not true! I don't want to!

Acceptance

- You go along with it calmly.
- Good idea... I guess so.

Compromise

- You find a middle ground.
- Let's both take a turn. How about this...

Theme

What is a Theme?

- The central message or lesson the author wants the reader to learn.

Common Themes

- Loyalty · Courage · Kindness · Honesty
- Responsibility · Adaptation · Friendship · Perseverance

How to Find the Theme

- What lesson does the main character learn?
- What message is the author sending?
- What big idea connects the beginning to the end?

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Types of Problems

Types of Conflict

- **Man vs. Man** · A character faces another character
- **Man vs. Self** · A character struggles with their own feelings
- **Man vs. Nature** · A character faces forces of nature
- **Man vs. Society** · A character challenges a rule or group
- **Man vs. Technology** · A character faces a machine or system
- **Man vs. The Unknown** · A character faces something mysterious

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