

# Minnesota Writing Project

## --- Demonstration Lesson Template ---

**Title of lesson:** Argument Writing: Generating a Thesis

**Suggested grade/age:** Designed for 10<sup>th</sup> grade, adaptable for mid-elementary - 12

**Approximate time needed to complete lesson:** 60 minutes

### **Learning objective(s) and significance of lesson:**

(Why is this lesson important in the development of your students' skills or knowledge? What do you want students to learn or be able to do? What "best practice" does this lesson incorporate?)

CCSS 9.7.1.1 - I can create a preliminary thesis that takes a stance.

GOAL: Every student will leave Mr. LaMere's class with a thesis ready to go.

Saint Paul Public Schools asks 10<sup>th</sup> graders to write a summative argument paper at the end of quarter one. This lesson will prepare them for that writing by ensuring that each student can write a workable thesis statement.

Best Practices - modeling, many opportunities to attempt thesis writing, mentor texts, engaging poetry, group work, current events/controversies (engagement)

### **Brief summary/outline of lesson:**

(What steps do you take to implement this lesson in your classroom? Where is this lesson located in the school year or unit—beginning, middle, end? Does this lesson scaffold or build to a culminating assessment or demonstration of learning?)

Students read a poem as a class: "The New Bathroom Policy at English High School" by Martín Espada. Based on the poem, they Think Pair Share - step one: what does Espada believe? Step two: why does he believe it?

Next, students are shown a sample argument thesis on the board. They are asked to identify the author's beliefs, and then the author's support. They are then asked to write a sample thesis for Espada's poem based on what they now know about theses. They share these with one another as well, and write down any differences they discover. Whole class share.

Then, the class watches a video about a recent controversy at Whole Foods regarding a (now-reversed) policy barring non-English home languages to be spoken on the job. After the video, they write for 3 minutes detailing their opinion, reaction, etc. to the video.

Groups: sharing responses, followed by whole class share out.

Exit ticket: Thesis in response to the question: Should schools/workplaces require that English be the only language spoken?

This lesson would come at the beginning of the year, accompanying a Foundations (grammar) unit that uses students' home languages to examine the rules and conventions of standard academic English (inspired by Linda Christensen's work). The lesson builds up to a summative argument paper at the end of quarter one.

**Related Resources:**

(What technology, articles, books, or supplies do you recommend?)

Linda Christensen: *Reading, Writing, Rising Up* and *Teaching for Joy and Justice*

owl.english.purdue.edu

Martín Espada: *Rebellion is the Circle of a Lover's Hands* and *Zapata's Disciple*

Ernest Morrell: *Linking Literacy and Popular Culture* and *Becoming Critical Researchers*

Paolo Freire: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Film: *Precious Knowledge* - Ari Palos/Dos Vatos Films

**Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:**

This lesson could be modified to include a template for thesis construction for students who struggle with being asked to generate a thesis without parameters.

It could be extended to include references to opposing arguments (though that will follow in a future lesson as it addresses another CCSS standard and would need to be included in the summative). Students could play with different kinds of theses as well - those that include multiple pieces of evidence versus those that take one aspect of an issue and explore it in-depth.

**For additional information, contact:**

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