

Minnesota Writing Project

---Demonstration Lesson---

Title of lesson: Predict & Reveal: Sequencing Topic Sentences towards a Thesis

Suggested grade/age: Designed for high school (specifically, 10th grade), I believe this lesson could be adapted for any grade levels working on sequencing an argument.

Approximate time needed to complete lesson: ---

Learning objective(s) and significance of lesson

- To explore how persuasive topic sentences and thesis statements can work together for maximum effect, by using topic sentences to predict thesis statements and then making revisions. Note: This lesson prepares students for the concept of a synthesis thesis, but does not explicitly address it.

This lesson is designed around ideas about experiential learning, valuing students as creators of knowledge. It is also intended to use the principles of the learning cycle such that students activate prior knowledge, engage in new creation of knowledge, and have time for reflection at the end both about what they learned and how they learned.

Possible Common Core standards: [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8](#), [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.A](#).

Brief summary/outline of lesson

This lesson is designed for the middle of a long research paper unit. Students have spent significant time reading, crafting and revising research questions, researching, creating an annotated bibliography, drafting a thesis and outlining before this lesson. After this lesson, they will turn their outline into a draft, revise the draft into a final product, and present their findings to the class. This lesson came at the end of the year, which included lots of practice on one-paragraph writing and shorter research projects but nothing yet of this length or breadth.

0. Students come prepared with a completed outline for their research papers. This includes a research question, thesis, topic sentences, evidence, and citations.
1. **Warm up:** free write. “What are characteristics of a fantastic thesis statement? What are characteristics of excellent topic sentences? Consider their similarities and differences.” Pair-share. Write characteristics on slips of scrap paper.
 - a. Create Venn diagram together as a class. Have students share what surprises them or ideas they disagree with. Discuss what makes thesis statements and topic sentences strong.
 - b. Extension: capture class definitions and post for review.

2. **Prepare:** Writers get ready to share from their outlines with each other. Every writer prepares a document (handwriting or typed) that will:
 - i. Present your research question.
 - ii. Present your topic sentences in order.
 - iii. Does NOT share your thesis statement (yet).
3. **Teacher model:** teacher demonstrates what students will do with own writing or student exemplar. Read research question and topic sentences; think aloud about possible topic sentence revisions for clarity. Predict thesis statement. Compare to drafted thesis statement.
4. **Group work:** In pairs or small groups, review the first author's work. "Is each topic sentence the author's opinion, at least a little bit? Which sentences could use clarity? (not wordsmithing yet, though that is tempting, but focusing on one central idea)"
5. **Predict:** Each student drafts a thesis statement, including the author (without looking at the actual thesis statement!). "What do you think the thesis is? In one sentence, capture the argument you think the author wants to make, based on the topic sentences and research question."
6. **Share:** "Show your predictions to each other. How similar or different are these thesis statements? What do you notice?"
7. **Compare:** Read the author's draft thesis statement. "Is it similar to anyone's predictions? Why or why not?"
8. **Reflect:** "What revisions could be useful to the thesis statement or topic sentences to make this argument as effective as possible?"
9. **Repeat:** make sure each author in the group has a chance to share their sequence of topic sentences, revise them, and collect predictions about the thesis statement.
10. **Wrap-Up:** "What did you learn about topic sentences today? What did you learn about thesis statements today? What goals will you set for yourself about revising your writing?"

Related Resources

- Very brief overview to 5E lesson planning model: <http://enhancinged.wgbh.org/research/eeeeee.html>
- 5E Instructional Model Overview from NSTA: <http://static.nsta.org/files/PB186X-4.pdf>
- Professional learning module about brain science about teaching and learning (for free redistribution): <http://beetlesproject.org/resources/for-program-leaders/teaching-and-learning/#1449353906589-0eaf37a4-c482>
- 1-page explanation of the Learning Cycle from UC Berkeley project on experiential learning (licensed for free redistribution): <http://beetlesproject.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Brief-Learning-Cycle-Background.pdf>
- 2-page explanation of each element of the Learning Cycle (same attribution as above): <http://beetlesproject.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/The-Learning-Cycle-Explained.pdf>
- Digital tool for outlining in web or brain map form: www.popplet.com

- *Write Like This*, Kelly Gallagher — see Chapter 7, “Take a Stand/Propose a Solution” for Gallagher’s step-by-step guide to coaching students through real-world writing from research

Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs (*with gratitude to my fellow MWP 2017 cohort for many of their ideas reflected in this list!*)

- Using graphic organizers to scaffold directions (“Put research Q here. List topic sentences here,” etc.)
- Use responses to Venn diagram activity to create a class-generated rubric for topic sentences and thesis statements
- Reframe the activity to work within one paragraph: list supporting sentences in a paragraph and predict the topic sentence
- Interactive Venn diagram could be used for many other topics
- “Predict and reveal” with narrative writing or literature reviews in support of a research Q
- Discussion about the thesis statement and 5-paragraph essay as Western constructs valued in writing
- Discussion about author bias and how to avoid “white savior” syndrome in arguments

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