

Creating an Informed and Argumentative Thesis Sentence

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Introduction

“How often are you asked to give your opinion? How often do you hear people offering their opinions on TV, the radio, or the Internet and realize these commentators are not informed on the subject? Today, we are going to learn how to ensure your opinion will always be taken seriously. How are we going to do that? In just a moment, you are going to become an art critic.”

Objectives & Materials Needed

After the activity, students will be able to

- learn to identify and write an informed opinion sentence (thesis).
- identify and edit poorly defended thesis sentences.

Materials needed:

- Projector,
- student journals,
- images to tape or pin around the classroom, and,
- handouts on art and thesis statements.

Steps/Procedure

Step 1: Establishing Opinions through Journal Work

- Step 1A: Writing Initial Thoughts
 - Define the word “art” in your own words.
 - How do you know if something is art?
- Step 1B: Sharing Student Opinions
 - Would you consider something to be art if your five-year-old niece/nephew/brother/sister created it?
 - Does a piece have to be in a museum to be considered art?
 - Does a piece have to be expensive for it to be considered art?
 - If you don’t like an art piece, would you still consider it art? Why?
- Step 1C: Making Connections

Step 2: Studying Art

- Step 2A: Viewing the Art Gallery
 - Create a classroom “art gallery” – see images on poster
- Step 2B: Making Quick Opinions
- Step 2C: Offering an Informed Opinion

Step 3: Writing an Opinion

Pass out the handout and go through the student thesis examples about Leonardo DaVinci’s *Mona Lisa* on the Word document projected in the classroom. Ask students to decide which of these thesis statements are the best and why. (Each of these sentences could still benefit from further edits.) Then, have them practice writing at least one original thesis statement based on the art they studied. Share with a partner and the class.

Step 4: Applying Opinions

Ask students to identify and edit some uninformed or poorly written thesis sentences on other topics. Review appropriate answers. (If students do not finish, assign the rest of the sentences for homework.)

Analysis

Students love to become an expert in class. While some students have no background in art and can find it frustrating to realize that all of the examples are art, other students love to show their knowledge if they recognize any images. After this activity, I tend to notice stronger thesis sentences for the next essay. However, this lesson should be paired with a lesson about essay organization to emphasize that the thesis is a roadmap for a well-structured essay.



Pearblossom Highway – David Hockney, 1986



Broadway and 68th – Oil on Canvas – Richard Estes, 2012



Onement I – Barnett Newman – 1948



Spiral Jetty – Robert Smithson, 1970

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