

INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 7

TASK 7 CLOSE READING Focus Question

Through the specific use of a focus question, students develop viewpoints about a text response to the focus question and the effectiveness of the author's structure and argument. This task is different from Wrestling with the Argument in that it asks students to consider how well the content is presented rather than the content itself; it is important to note that these two areas of focus cannot be easily separated.

Steps Outlined:

1. Select an argumentative or explanatory text and construct a focus question for use with students.
Alternatively, this could be used to critique their own writing or as a peer writing analysis exercise.
2. Students should read the entire work through without stopping. Once they have completed the first read introduce the focus question.
3. Students then go back and re-read the passage, prepared to annotate.
4. As they re-read, students should identify the following elements:
 - a. a specific claim that is direct and concise
 - b. evidence in the form of examples, facts, or reason
 - c. commentary/reasoning that explains what the evidence has proven about a claim
 - d. passages or sentences that best address the focus question
 - e. points that clear, convincing and engaging
 - f. points that are unclear or include weak evidence/explanations
5. After a pair or class discussion of the merits of the selection, students write an argumentative paragraph in which they develop a claim about the quality of the author's writing structure/style and provide evidence supporting their claim.

