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| **Rhetorical Categories** | **Analysis** |
| Consider the author:   * Stance * Authority * Style * Tone | * The author’s stance is that we can improve the educational process by allowing students to express themselves through topics they are more interested in, rather than “academic” ones. * The authority(?) here is someone looking back at their education and reflecting on ways it could have been better. * The author uses a   + Thesis + General idea (1-4)   + Anecdote (5-11) to clarify/strengthen his argument.   + “Keyword” examples (12 -community, 13, 14 - competition, 15 -enjoyment/absorb)   + Potential outcomes (16,17)   + Conclusion (18) reiterating his initial point.   So, persuasive?   * The tone is of someone who feels that there’s something obvious that others can’t see but no one will listen. |
| Think about the audience:   * Who is being addressed and what factors make you think so? * What do you know about the audience’s values? | * I would say this is addressed to basically anyone who deals with education. As a subset of that, people who have a smart child struggling in school. * Everyone loves their kids, everyone thinks they’re smarter than they are, everyone feels “undervalued” by the system, virtually all parents with troubled children do not blame themselves and are looking for some excuse. |
| Take note of your reactions:   * What is your first impression? * Do you agree/disagree/or both? Why? * Surprising or challenging thoughts? * How well does the text achieve its purpose? | * I generally agree with the author, but his solution is very simple and doesn’t account for any barriers that have caused the problem. Of course, it would be better if we could tailor each child’s education directly for their needs, so why don’t we? * Why do our kids have to share schools with other people at all? Why don’t they just get all their own teachers who dedicate their lives to them? Why is our education system one of the most funded in the world but one of the least effective? Why is teaching as a profession so undervalued and poorly utilized?   I don’t think there’s going to be a large audience who are in favor of *less* individualized education and allowing kids to express themselves how they want. Because of that I have to assume the excerpt is either written for praise or is part of a larger expose’ on the topic.  Consider,  *Unicorns are awesome; therefore, children should get unicorns.*  *When I was a kid I had a hard time dealing with the other kids. I really liked fantasy and it wasn’t until I started talking to people about unicorns that I hit my groove. I got to spend time with my own private doctor and had tons of friends!*  *Why don’t school’s focus more of our education on unicorns instead of math (yuck!). I mean math is not nearly as interesting as unicorns.*  *It just makes sense to spend more class time on unicorns. Give me the student who loves unicorns over the student who understands calculus any day.*  Solid logic, but shallow. |
| Text design:   * Does the design affect your understanding of the text? Why? * Are there visuals? If so, how do they contribute to the message? * What design features would make the text more compelling in your opinion? | * Absolutely. The format of Thesis, arguments, conclusion is great. Additionally, anecdotal stories are great for building a sense of personal connection with the author. * No visuals. * In my opinion, the article needs more of a focus on overcoming the obstacles to an idea we already agree on. Much of the early body of the article could have been cut out (as we already agree) to make more room for his opinion on why it’s not the case now. |
| Talking back to the text:   * Note strengths and weaknesses of the argument/message. * Do you have points you would like to remember or challenge? * Consider other possible views. | * Message is clear and easy to understand. Builds emotional connection with the reader. Point is well made and adequately proven. * (Some weakness’ above) * The author never adequately defines “street smarts” which is an abstract term. He writes as though street and academic smarts are mutually exclusive like on a slider bar. * In paragraph 9, he describes “unwittingly training to be an intellectual”. Isn’t the whole paragraph basically arguing for biological determinism? He was smart, and he found that he could not be any other way. On the other hand, they were “street smart” and couldn’t be any other way. Or is he saying that without his environment he wouldn’t have wound up “intellectual”? Is the argument here that “street smart” people refuse to conversate about “how to make an argument, weigh different kinds of evidence, move between particulars and generalizations, summarize the views of others, and enter a conversation about ideas.” That seems elitist. Regardless, I think paragraph 9 should have been re written or removed. * On paragraph 14, I agree with the author almost completely, but I was surprised to find it in the writing here. He seems to be suggesting that the milieu environment in teaching may be having unintentional side effects due to the lack of “stakes”. Is forcing kids to participate in school and then telling them they don’t have to try because they can’t lose providing the right incentives? |