

## **WRITING AN EXPOSITORY ESSAY**

### **TOPIC**

This lesson will provide students with general skills in writing an expository essay, such as formulating a thesis statement, structuring an argument, and providing citations.

### **AUDIENCE**

The intended audience for this lesson is students who are just starting to write expository essays, particularly high school students and perhaps freshmen in college.

### **FORMAT**

Since this lesson has a collaborative approach, it would work best for a small group of students, ideally around 10 students but up to 20 students is acceptable. It is estimated that this lesson should take about one hour and 25 minutes to complete. Students should be allowed five minutes at the end of the lesson to complete a short survey in order to assess whether the lesson was successful.

The pedagogical approach to this lesson is an active one. Students will be asked questions and be asked to volunteer their answers with the class. They will also work together as a group to come up with a thesis and create an outline. By following this approach, students should find it less intimidating to approach the task. Writing can often seem like a solitary activity, but it actually involves obtaining feedback and receiving ideas from others. This approach will also allow the instructor to assess where students are at and whether they are comfortable with the skills being taught.

One anticipated challenge will be getting students to volunteer their answers. There may be a lull in the conversation if students are not sure of themselves or are unwilling to engage verbally. In this case, it could be helpful for the instructor to provide their own suggestions to the questions to get the conversation going or to have students participate in other ways, such as having them write on the board. Another method could be allowing students to formulate their ideas on paper before being asked to share them.

Another challenge could be a time issue. Depending on how comfortable students are with their skills, they may want to spend more time on certain topics and less on others. It is important to remember that this is an introductory lesson that cannot be very in-depth, but try to adapt to the students' needs as much as possible while considering the time restraints.

## **LESSON OBJECTIVES**

After this lesson, students should be able to:

- Formulate a thesis statement
- Create an outline for an expository paper which includes an idea of how their argument should be structured
- Know when citations are needed and how to provide a citation in various citation styles

## **EXPOSITORY VS. NARRATIVE WRITING (5 MINUTES)**

- Briefly describe the differences between expository and narrative writing
  - Write these on the board in two different columns under “expository” and “narrative”

Questions: What kind of writing are you more exposed to in your personal and academic life? Which do you find easier or more challenging and why?

## **EXAMPLE PROMPT (5 MINUTES)**

- Provide an example prompt to have students write about. For example, “Describe why it is important for students to develop good writing skills.”

## **FORMULATING A THESIS STATEMENT (20 MINUTES)**

Questions: What is a thesis? How long should it be and what should it include?

- Ask students to raise their hands and provide one reason why it is important for students to develop good writing skills
  - Write these answers on the board
- Allow students five minutes to formulate a thesis using the answers written on the board

## **CREATING AN OUTLINE AND STRUCTURING YOUR ARGUMENT (30 MINUTES)**

Questions: What is the value of creating an outline before writing a paper? What are the elements of an outline?

Questions: What is an argument? Why is it important to structure your argument before you start writing?

- Provide an example of an outline and discuss the different elements, while emphasizing how the argument is structured/outlined
- Using the white board, create an outline together as a group
  - Focus on structuring the argument using the elements of the thesis statement. For example, each paragraph could be outlined according to one reason why it is important for students to develop good writing skills. Consider outlining three body paragraphs together.
  - Have students suggest topic sentences for each paragraph.

## **CONCLUSION (15 MINUTES)**

- Discuss a few points about what a conclusion should NOT be
  - Should not just be a restatement of the introduction/argument in different words
  - Should not end on an overly grand note, like “Writing skills are the single most important thing for students to learn in order to succeed in life no matter what they want to do with their lives”
- Show some examples of effective conclusions and ask about the characteristics that they have
  - Do they just restate the argument?
  - How do they end? Are they forward-looking?
  - How do they start? With transition words? What are the pros and cons of using phrases like “in conclusion” and “to conclude”?

## **CITATIONS (10 MINUTES)**

Questions: When is it necessary to provide citations? What are the different kinds of citation methods?

- Find a source related to the example prompt and write a citation together
  - Choose a citation style (APA, MLA, Chicago) and project the appropriate part of a citation guide
- Point out citation generators that students can use

## **SURVEY (5 MINUTES)**

- Allow students time to complete a short survey designed to assess the success of the lesson
- Possible questions to include:
  - How comfortable were you with the topic before the lesson and how comfortable are you now?
  - What would you have liked to spend more time on/learn more about?

- Did you enjoy the format of the lesson? Why or why not?
- Provide any other comments/suggestions