**Using Writing into the Day to Jumpstart Argument**

**Overview**

The purpose of this resource is to integrate daily argument writing into a class day by using short, sequenced *writing into the day* activities, sometimes called “bellringers.” These activities are designed to build toward a short argument that students write or, through extension, to a longer researched argument. These kinds of warm-up activities make efficient use of classroom time because they build fluency for students and, by sequencing the prompts, give students experience with more complex tasks.

**The Use of “Writing into the Day”**

Researchers and classroom teachers attest to the value of low-stakes, ungraded writing for fluency and learning. All writing, however, needs to be purposeful and eventually lead somewhere. Many teachers use the format of “Writing into the Day,” where students write informally during the first 5-7 minutes of the class period. Students settle down, get quiet, and start thinking. This mini-unit draws on the practice of “Writing into the Day” as a means to support students’ learning to write arguments.

**Argument Writing as Participation in a Conversation**

This mini-unit focuses on understanding a conversation among sources. Students start by reading and understanding various voices in the conversations, their positions and perspectives. Students create a graphic, the purpose of which is to help students understand the “geography” of the conversation, where the different contributors stand, and, ultimately, where the students stand. As students begin to understand the exchanges among authors, they try out their own voice, their own opinion, by locating it among the other voices. Citing the other voices, by forwarding or countering, is the way that students enter these conversations. This mini-unit gives students a brief experience of how to enter a conversation.

**Readings**

The readings for this mini-unit could be easily changed by topic or reading level. The selection of reading is designed to give students a multi-voiced conversation for them to participate in.

**Extensions**

When students complete several mini-units like this one, they can choose one that they are especially interested in and bring it to completion as a short argument. Additionally students could extend one of their arguments into a longer piece by augmenting it with their own research. Alternatively, the class can choose one of the topics that they wish to pursue together.

**Day 1: Becoming Aware** (15 minutes)

During the normal “Writing into the Day” give students the following directions:

1. Read “[Unleashing the Power of Creativity and Intelligence](http://thisibelieve.org/essay/22868/)”
2. Underline or note in the margin the main claim of the article.
3. Highlight what you consider to be the writer’s strongest evidence.
4. Then write informally for 5-7 minutes:
5. What do you want to know more about?
6. Where do you stand on this issue today?

Keep your writing in your notebook.

**Days 2-5: Getting Informed and Joining the Conversation**

**Day 2** (15 minutes)

During the normal “Writing into the Day” repeat the process with a new article:

1. Read “[Disrupting My Comfort Zone](http://thisibelieve.org/essay/22868/)”

2. Underline or note in the margin the main claim of the article.

3. Highlight what you consider to be the writer’s strongest evidence.

4. Then write informally for 5-7 minutes, adding on to what you wrote yesterday.

Keep your writing in your notebook.

**Day 3** (15 minutes)

During the normal “Writing into the Day” give the students the following directions:

1. Read “[The Joy And Enthusiasm Of Reading](http://thisibelieve.org/essay/31/)”

2. Underline or note in the margin the main claim of the article.

3. Highlight what you consider to be the writer’s strongest evidence.

4. Then write informally for 5-7 minutes, adding on to what you wrote yesterday.

Keep your writing in your notebook.

**Day 4** (15 minutes)

During the normal “Writing into the Day” give the students the following directions:

1. Read “[There Is Such a Thing as Truth](http://thisibelieve.org/essay/28/)”

2. Underline or note in the margin the main claim of the article.

3. Highlight what you consider to be the writer’s strongest evidence.

4. Then write informally for 5-7 minutes, adding on to what you wrote yesterday.

Keep your writing in your notebook.

**Day 5** (15 minutes)

During the normal “Writing into the Day” give the students the following directions:

1. Draw a simple graphic that represents the relationship among these articles.

2. Write a short explanation of your graphic.

Keep your graphic and your writing in your notebook.

**Day 6: Making a Plan and Writing an Argument** (15 minutes)

On the final day, use the “Writing into the Day” timeslot and give the following directions:

1. Take out the graphic and explanation that you composed during the last class and read it over. On the graphic, mark your own position in the conversation.

2. Write a short argument that makes a claim and cites evidence from the readings to support your argument.

**Assessing Formative Growth and Next Steps:** Teachers and students can revisit the argument later to analyze the writers’ use of textual evidence. What you notice from the analysis of the writing should inform your decisions about what C3WP instructional resource to teach next.

Note: This adaptation focused on “education” readings selected from the [*This I Believe*](http://thisibelieve.org/) collection to support our [literacy narrative](http://metawriting.deannamascle.com/3-reasons-rewrite-literacy-narrative/) assignment. The next week I extended the conversation to include “literacy” and “the humanities” with these reading selections:

* + Ted Gup: [In Praise of the "Wobblies"](http://thisibelieve.org/essay/30/) ~
  + Frank X Walker: [Creative Solutions to Life's Challenges](http://thisibelieve.org/essay/21253/) ~
  + Gregory Orr: [The Making of Poems](http://thisibelieve.org/essay/21249/) ~
  + Kay Redfield Jamison: [The Benefits of Restlessness and Jagged Edges](http://thisibelieve.org/essay/1/) ~
  + Alan Lightman: [The Power of Mysteries](http://thisibelieve.org/essay/20733/)

Students wrote two blog posts (short arguments about education then literacy and the humanities) at the conclusion of each mini-unit.