

## **Introductions: Formulating Problem Statements**

**Unit Targets:** Students will produce an argumentative research paper that responds to either a practical or a conceptual problem.

### ***Materials/Resources Needed:***

- At least three or four well-written papers from previous years' students (anonymously presented and with the students' consent), with introductions omitted.
- *Student's Guide* 7.2.2: "Sketch a Working Introduction" and Chapter 13: "Writing your Final Introduction and Conclusion"
- Argument Boxes handout:  
[http://press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/student/Argument\\_Boxes.pdf](http://press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/student/Argument_Boxes.pdf)
- TCC Topic sheet 19:  
<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/tcc/topicsheet19.pdf>
- TCC Topic sheet 20:  
<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/tcc/topicsheet20.pdf>
- (Optional) TCC Topic sheet 8: How to Position Your Idea:  
<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/tcc/topicsheet8.pdf>

### ***Activities:***

1. Split students into pairs or small groups. Assign each group an essay to read and complete. First, they should fill out the Argument Boxes (picking out the claim, major reasons, and evidence for their paper).
2. Have each pair or group formulate a problem statement for their paper (see page 78), including the current situation, the research question, the significance of the question, and, ideally, the paper's answer to the question (see page 77).
3. Re-convene the class and discuss the problem statements students came up with for each paper. Each group should explain how the problem they have identified anticipates the paper, and, conversely, how the argument in the paper resolves the problem. As a class, discuss whether each problem matches the paper and why or why not. (What is the scope of the problem relative to that of the rest of the paper? Does the paper or outline adequately respond to the problem? Does the problem speak to the

significance of the paper's claim, reasons, and evidence, or does it undersell these things?)

**Objective/Purpose:** In this activity, students learn how to derive a problem statement from a well-written assemblage of claims, reasons, and evidence. This can prepare them to come up with their own problem statement later in the term, or to recast a problem statement that does not match the rest of the paper.

***Illinois Common Core ELA:***

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
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***NCTE Standards:***

- Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. (4)
- Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. (5)
- Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience. (7)
- Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities. (11)
- Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information). (12)