

Lesson 2.3 – Question Analysis

“The result was a paper that amounted to what we call ‘patch-writing’—a patchwork of quotes and paraphrases from source materials stitched together by a few sentences of the student’s own.... Patchworked papers don’t make their own arguments. They just present ideas collected from sources until a page limit is met” (105).

“...question analysis (QA)...offers a series of analytical prompts as a start-up routine for a research project.... The QA process of freewriting in response to these prompts will enable you (1) to make a preliminary map of the terrain you need to cover in your search for relevant source materials, and (2) to consider in advance what kinds of sources are going to be most useful for you to retrieve, read, and eventually integrate into your paper” (107).

- Bean, Chappell & Gillam, Reading Rhetorically

Rationale: The Question Analysis is step three in the flow from writing process to topic ideas. The students have had 2 to 3 days to think about topics for their persuasive essay; they have developed their writing process (2.1) and recognize their role in the academic conversation (2.2). The QA is designed to encourage students to apply their intrinsic knowledge, to lead themselves in the search for their topic instead of creating a patchworked research paper.

Goal: Students will complete a Question Analysis through which they will develop the topic and focus question for their persuasive essay. In addition, they will use the QA to begin their research.

Objective: Students will be able to

1. Fill in the answers to each question on the QA handout before the next class session, and use their completed QA to begin research for their persuasive essay.
2. State one of their focus questions from their QA.

Assessment:

1. The instructor will walk around the classroom while students are working on their QA to answer questions and to make sure all students are on-task. Students will receive journal points for their work, which the instructor will assess by checking the progress of each student’s work during the workshop. The completed QA will count as homework points, and students must submit this, and one source, to the instructor before the next class session.
2. The instructor will initiate a round-robin dialogue during the final 5-10 minutes of classtime to demonstrate that every student has established at least one focus question for their research.

Preparation: Print out copies of essay prompt and QA worksheets

Process/Procedures:

1. Hand out persuasive essay prompt and QA worksheets. Discuss directions, and allow time for questions. Explain to class that this will be a working class session. (10 min)
2. Individually, or in pairs, have student brainstorm their research while filling in as much of the QA as possible. (25-30 min)
3. Take a break from the QA work, and invite a short dialogue, round-robin style. Ask each student to state one focus question from their QA. (5-10 min)
4. Homework: Students must type out their QA and one source they have found, and E-mail me a copy before the next class session.

Materials: Handouts, computer, source material

Modifications/Accommodations: For students who need help finding a topic, have a corner of the room designated to subject research. I will be overseeing this section. This will give students the opportunity to look at the school library database for research ideas, as well as allow them to come to me with questions during the breakout session.