
Unit 4 Research Writing

Unit Overview:

Students will turn their attention to the most demanding yet potentially most rewarding essay mode, the research essay. Students will begin by (re)acquainting themselves with basic research elements, including topic selection and topic narrowing, information gathering, citation, and avoiding plagiarism. Students will write the essay itself by again going through all the stages in the writing process (prewriting, organization/development, conferencing/revising, editing, final draft). While the most demanding of all essay modes, the research writing combines one's own personal passion for an issue with objective analysis. While the primary focus of this unit is composing a persuasive/argumentative research essay, Students will take another look at punctuation trouble spots before taking a test on active vs. passive voice, hyphen use, and proper punctuation. In the middle of the research essay composition process, students will play a classmate's vocabulary game. Finally, after composing the research essay, in pairs students will choose a research essay to transform into a web page, PowerPoint, or display.

Lesson 4-1: Day 27

Topic: Introduction to the Research Essay, Part I

Objective, skills attained & motivation:

Students will be introduced to the basics of the research essay, including the overall process and the characteristics of an arguable thesis.

Directions:

Collect the vocabulary game, reminding students to put their ID numbers only on all portions of the game, including the answer key.

Procedural Support:

Since students will play each other's vocabulary games on Day 41, it is up to you how thoroughly you look over the vocabulary games. For bookkeeping purposes it may be best to document who has turned in a game vs. who has not. I find it best to let the students play and evaluate each other's games on Day 41 and *then*, given a peer's input, to grade the game. You have enough to do grading papers anyway. It would also be beneficial to inform the students that they will be held accountable for knowing their words 15 and how to use them on Day 42. This is the day students will write a story that correctly and effectively uses all 15 of the words. Students may come to class with the 15 vocabulary words and its part of speech (noun, adj., v.) written on a piece of paper. (Students may NOT have the definitions written down.) The quiz is to write a story that includes the 15 words used correctly. The context should convey to the reader that the student knows how to correctly use it.

Unit 4 Research Writing Daily Lesson Plans

Directions:

Introduce students to the research essay by way of Class Notes 4:1. Reading through the Class Notes, which then directs students to Activity Book 4.1, should suffice. The material there is sufficient as it introduces students to the argumentative/persuasive research essay, potential topics, and an effectively stated thesis. The activity book soon presents students with essential punctuation practice, focusing on areas where students tend to make the most mistakes. Inform students that the day after tomorrow (on Day 29) there will be a 30-item quiz over active vs. passive voice, hyphen use, and the punctuation issues that this activity addresses.

Homework:

Students should finish the punctuation practice in Activity Book 4.1. Also remind students that their college essay revision is due. Stress to students the importance of following the directions they have already been given and that the revised draft will be stapled on top of their previous drafts.

Lesson 4-2: Day 28

Topic: Introduction to the Research Essay, Part II

Objective, skills attained & motivation:

Students will fine tune their understanding of punctuation usage.
Students will learn how to fine tune their topic and working thesis.

Directions:

Collect the college essay revision stapled to the top of previous drafts. First go over the punctuation practice (Activity Book 4.1). There is a variety of ways you could go over the punctuation practice. My suggestion is to make an overhead of the answers and go over each one as students grade their own with a different color writing utensil (to keep students honest if you are grading not just for completion but for accuracy). (Probably the best way to ensure everyone stays with you and learns from his own mistakes.) If you are grading the work for accuracy (I recommend it), then if the worksheet is worth 20 points, take off a point for every two or three mistakes. Have students hold on to their punctuation practice (Activity Book 4.1) to be turned in tomorrow after the quiz.

When finished with the punctuation practice, direct students to Activity Book 4.2, which helps students come up with a thesis/focus for their research essay topic. Some students will be ready to dive right in; others will need more time for ideas to germinate. Consequently, Activity book 4.2 is due the day after tomorrow, Day 30. Take the rest of class time to let students think, visit websites (if available), and/or confer with you about workable topics that lend themselves to arguable theses.

Unit 4 Research Writing Daily Lesson Plans

Homework:

All students should spend time doing whatever preliminary research or soul searching they might need to come up with a topic that lends itself to an *arguable* generalization, or thesis statement, with these three characteristics:

- 3 It should attempt to convince readers of something, change their mind about something, or urge them to do something
- 3 It should present a problem for which no easy solution exists
- 3 It should present a position that readers could disagree with

Students should also study to prepare themselves for tomorrow's active vs. passive voice, hyphen, and punctuation quiz. I often look at the quiz beforehand, letting students know the exact format of the 30-item quiz so that they know better how to review for it.

Finally, students should be working on Activity Book 4.2 (topic narrowing, thesis forming) due the day after tomorrow, Day 30. It is something I count as a completion grade: a student receives whatever portion out of 5 or 10 that she completes.

Lesson 4-3: Day 29

Topic: Anatomy of the Research Essay; Passive Voice, Hyphens, and Punctuation Quiz

Objective, skills attained & motivation:

Students will fine tune their understanding of punctuation usage.
Students will learn how to fine tune their topic and working thesis.

Directions:

There are two versions of the passive voice/hyphens/punctuation quiz should you need both. If students can be sufficiently spread out, giving version A may suffice and would be advantageous if you choose to grade the quiz in class at the end of the class period.

The 30-item quiz should take around 20 minutes to complete. When students are done with the quiz, have them start to work on Activity Book 4.3, which is a model research essay entitled "Cry, Wolf." It is a valuable teaching tool, one that shows students the anatomy of an effective research essay by asking important questions about the essay. This approach requires students to actually read the essay and learn important elements of the research essay. It is an assignment due the day after tomorrow, Day 31.