

Modeling an Argument: The Toulmin Method

Targeted Standards:

WHST.6-8.1 – Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

WHST.9-10.1 – Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

WHST.11-12.1 - Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

The Toulmin Method of argumentation was developed by Stephen Toulmin. His method is designed to assist in analyzing or constructing the logic of an argument, whether it is spoken or written. The strategy below is a way to introduce the basic structure of an argument. The teacher can use the graphic organizer attached below to model for students how an argument is constructed. It is important that the teacher makes sure students know and understand the vocabulary used in an argument. The following words are integral to understanding the components of an argument.

claim, evidence, counterclaim, warrant, reasons

Procedure:

1. The teacher should model how to structure an argument by enlarging the attached graphic organizer. Each student can also have a copy in order to take notes. The graphic organizer (attachment) becomes a note-taking device for students as they think through the argumentation process.
2. Read aloud an argument. See samples below. Fill out the graphic organizer after reading. This will show students how the writer did or did not do the following:
 - Take a stand.
 - Develop a position or claim.
 - Convince the reader. What convinced the reader to agree with the claim? Were reasons why, data, evidence, and facts given?
3. After discussing the article shared above, discuss the strengths and limitations of the claims and counterclaims. What might have made a better argument?

Attachments/Resources:

Argument Sample from Toulmin:

<http://blog.wsd.net/gllewis/2011/01/31/argumentation-graphic-organizer/>

Graphic Organizer:

<https://mwmsteacherweb.wikispaces.hcpss.org/Ms.+Cohen> Scroll down to find the graphic organizer.

Reference/Research:

Toulmin, S. (1958). *The uses of argument*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.