

Prompt-Think-Thesis

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| Lesson Objective | (Prewriting) Students will analyze an essay prompt, define and think about key terms, and write a thesis statement for an essay. | |
| Vocabulary | <p>thesis: the writer’s opinion about the topic and the main idea of the essay</p> <p>key words: the important ideas in the essay prompt that the composition must address</p> | |
| Reviewed Vocabulary | essay prompt | |
| Instructional Materials | Teacher | Student |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Masters • Demonstrate— <i>Prompt-Think-Thesis Poster</i> • Timer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Booklet • Practice—Dictionaries, one for every student • Practice—An expository, analytical, or persuasive essay prompt that you would like students to answer for your class; the prompt might connect thematically with reading from your class. |

Teacher Note

Students may require additional time in order to achieve mastery of this material. Consider covering the lesson over two or three days, depending on the scaffolds needed to promote understanding. Additionally, this lesson presupposes that students can find words in a dictionary and thesaurus. Review this content as needed prior to beginning this lesson.

Preview

When you read an article or an essay, you understand it best when the writer clearly explains ideas and supports those ideas with proof. As a writer, when you are assigned an essay to write about a specific topic, it is important to think carefully about the assignment before you begin writing. You should think about the ideas you will consider and how you will provide evidence to support those ideas. This lesson will help you determine what the important ideas in an essay assignment will be, as well as helping you organize your thoughts about those important ideas into a thesis statement. Thinking carefully about your ideas is an important part of making sure that your essay is well organized and easy to read.

Engage Prior/Informal Knowledge

1. Students complete a silent warm-up to review what they already know about writing essays.

Have students complete *SB#1: Engage Prior Knowledge—Silent Warm-Up*. Set the timer for 3 minutes.

2. When 3 minutes have passed, have students share responses.

In the past, when you have been given an assigned essay topic, how have you begun? (*Answers will vary.*)

Today you will learn to plan an essay by first thinking carefully about the prompt and then writing your thesis.

3. Review vocabulary.

What is an essay prompt? (a question or instruction that tells you what you are going to write)

What is a thesis, and how is it connected to the prompt? (*The thesis is the writer's opinion about the topic and the main idea of the essay.*)

Demonstrate

1. Display *TM#1: Demonstrate—Prompt-Think-Thesis Poster* and introduce the first step.

It is important to begin an essay by thinking carefully about your assignment. You must be sure that you understand what you are being asked to do and the key words in the topic.

Look at the *Prompt-Think-Thesis Poster*. What is the first step? (*Prompt: Underline what you will do.*) Again, the prompt is your essay assignment. You must underline the part of the prompt that tells you what you must write.

2. Display *TM#2: Demonstrate—Prompt-Think-Thesis Organizer*.

Look at this example. The prompt is the information in the boxes at the top of the page.

Read the prompt.

I have underlined “explaining what items you would choose to enclose in a time capsule and why” because the first step is “Underline what you will do,” and that is the part of the prompt that tells me what I have to write about.

What is the second step? (*Think: Circle the key words that you think are important.*) The key words are the important terms in the essay prompt that the composition must address.

Look at the example. I circled three key terms. I cannot write a response to this essay without thinking about *society*, *items*, and a *time capsule*. Before you write, you must know what those key words mean. Here, I have defined the key words in this prompt.

Point to the definitions in the column headed “What do they mean?”

Look at the column next to the words, under the heading “What do they mean?” What does *society* mean? (*community, people in general*) What does *items* mean? (*things*) What is a *time capsule*? (*a container with documents or objects typical of the current period, for discovery in the future*)

You must look up the definition of any word that you don’t know. Where can you find definitions? (*in a dictionary*) Many students do not like to stop and look up words. However, you must take the extra time to stop and find the definitions of the key words, because you cannot write the essay without understanding the key words in the prompt.

Point to the notes in the column headed “What are my thoughts?”

After we define the key words, we have to note our thoughts about them. The essay must contain our own unique thoughts about the prompt. So before we begin writing, we must consider what we already think or know about the key words and what they mean.

My thoughts about the first word, *society*, which means “community, or people in general”: “Our communities are very dependent on technology. People in general are struggling to reach their goals.” You might have other thoughts about the key words.

The next word is *items*, which means “things.” Notice that in this step you think about the key words *together*. This is important. You are not thinking about *items* in general. You are thinking about *items* as they connect with this prompt and with the words *society* and *time capsule*.

When I thought about *items* and *society* together, I thought about electronic devices or computers. Look at the table. What are my thoughts about a time capsule? (*I would want the time capsule to show us in a positive way.*)

What is the last step? (*Thesis: Write your thesis for your essay.*)

In the last step, you use the information you identified in the prompt, along with your thoughts about the key words, to write your thesis for the essay. Remember, the thesis is the writer's opinion about the topic. What is my thesis? (*The items I would choose to enclose in a time capsule are iPhones and other electronic devices, because our society is very dependent on technology.*)

Does my thesis state my opinion about the topic? (*yes*) **Does my thesis connect the three key words and answer all of the parts that I underlined?** (*yes*)

Teacher Note

Students may require additional examples of model thesis statements for each prompt. Consider providing possible thesis statements for each prompt in the lesson. For each thesis statement, point out that it connects the key words and answers the underlined part of the prompt.

Practice

1. Students work in partners to practice the strategy.

Students may use *SB#2: Practice—Teacher-Provided Prompt* to respond to a prompt provided by the teacher, or *SB#3: Practice—Alternate Essay Prompt*.

Have students restate the instructions, and check for understanding. Set the timer for 15 minutes.

Circulate among the students, check for understanding, and provide corrective feedback as needed. Remind students to use the dictionaries to look up unknown words.

2. Students share responses.

When 15 minutes have passed, stop students. Ask for volunteers to share their responses. If students completed *SB#3: Practice—Alternate Essay Prompt*, refer to *TM#3: Practice—Alternative Essay Prompt Answer Key* as needed. Have students make corrections or additions to their papers, as needed.

Independent Practice

1. Have students complete *SB#4: Independent Practice*.
2. Collect the materials, score the work using *TM#4: Independent Practice Answer Key*, and check for mastery.