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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Write Now & Write On, Grades 6-12*, by Rebecca G. Harper.

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ATTACK OR DEFEND WRITING

Argument writing is a genre common to a number of subject areas and grade levels. This is a sophisticated genre, one that requires a solid understanding of a claim, but also a clear direction regarding the organization and positioning of evidence to support a claim. It's more than persuasive and more than just research. (And if your students don't know persuasive writing cold, then writing an argument may be difficult for them.) Instead, argument is the juxtaposition of components of both of those genres, yet with nuances exclusive to argument.

For many students, argument writing is one of the hardest genres to master. However, arguments are fully cemented in our daily lives whether we actively notice this or not. Here's where I have recently seen argument show up in my professional world:

- Budget justifications at work
- ESPN's *Pardon the Interruption*
- Editorials
- Proposals for board meetings
- Grant applications
- Responses to accusations
- Appeals
- Policy rebuttals

Now, granted, not all of these examples have all the components of a fully involved argument, but all of them have characteristics of an argument: claims, evidence, responses, rebuttals, research, and the like. All are necessary characteristics of well-developed arguments.

Despite the fact that these and many other real-world examples don't include all the required academic components of argumentative writing, they are excellent examples of this genre in the real world. Plus, this gives students another example of how writing is relevant and real.



Stop & Think:

Attack or Defend can bring in content that otherwise might not be included in instruction. For example, recently while taking my daughter to school, we saw a sign that said "Men Working." My daughter read it out loud and then said, "Men Working? Not Women Working or People Working. Hmmm." Showing students signs, commercials, or ads from their contemporary lives makes for great material to "argue" about.

⚡ Quick Tip!

When selecting quotes, be sure to carefully consider the person you are quoting, especially if the person is a contemporary figure. The purpose of this strategy is not to debate the merits (or lack thereof) of the individual but to examine what they said and how perspective may change when you know the author of the quote versus when you don't.

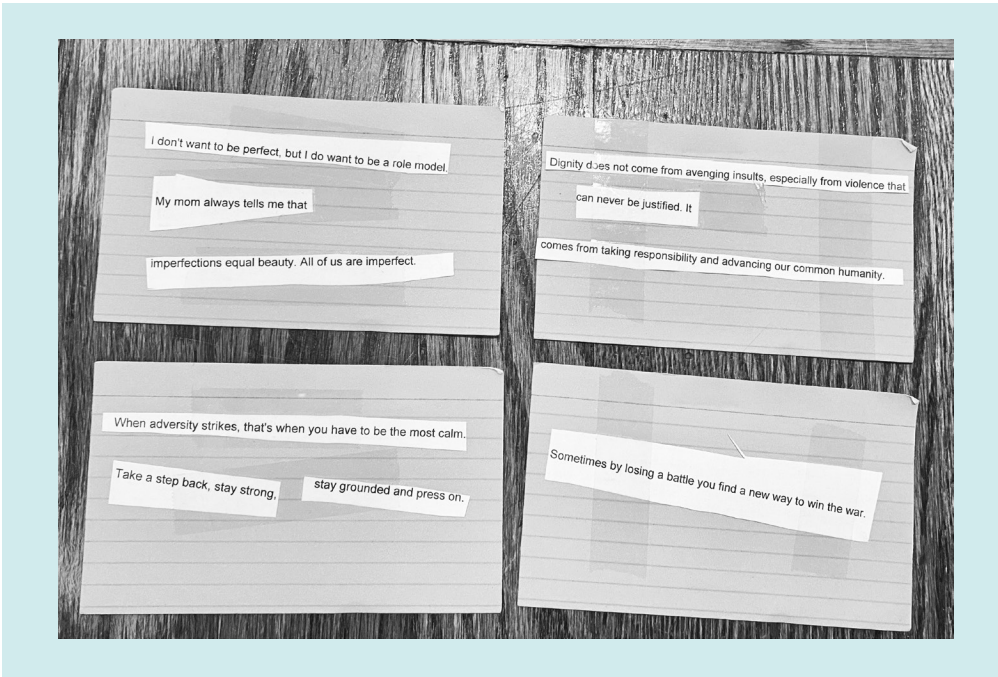
A favorite way to introduce students to the idea of argument is through Attack or Defend writing. This strategy allows students to practice taking a side while compiling evidence that supports their choice. I love this strategy because it has great benefits for all subject areas, can be completed in a short amount of time, and can serve as a springboard for fully involved writing. Plus, due to its nature, it's fantastic for incorporating unique information, sources, and quotes that otherwise might not be used in instruction. When I was a history teacher, I often found unique historical

facts, interesting primary sources, and supplemental material that either didn't really fit in with a big unit or wasn't meaty enough to warrant an entire lesson or unit. Attack or Defend is a great way to incorporate these types of materials that otherwise might fall into the periphery.

Putting It to Work

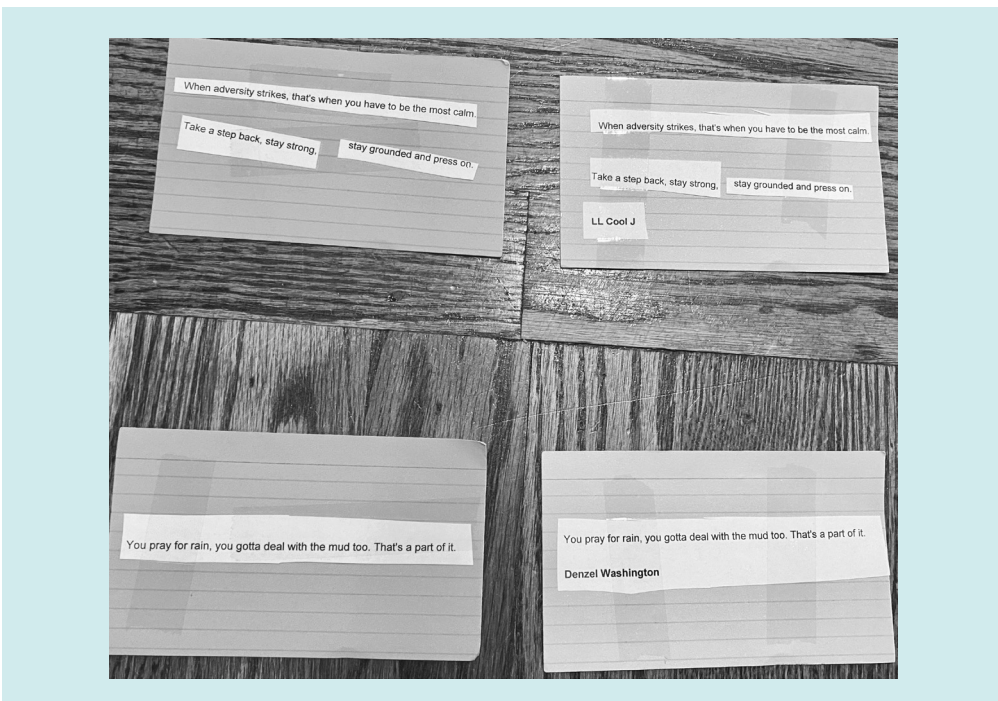
1. Identify several specific quotes that are content related (e.g., historical quotes) or quotes that are credited to popular contemporary figures. Make sure your students have some background information about the people who said the words you want them to examine. Otherwise, you will end up with just random guesses.
2. Create two notecard sets. One notecard set includes a quote and the name of the person who said it. The other notecard set should include the quote but not the name of who said it.

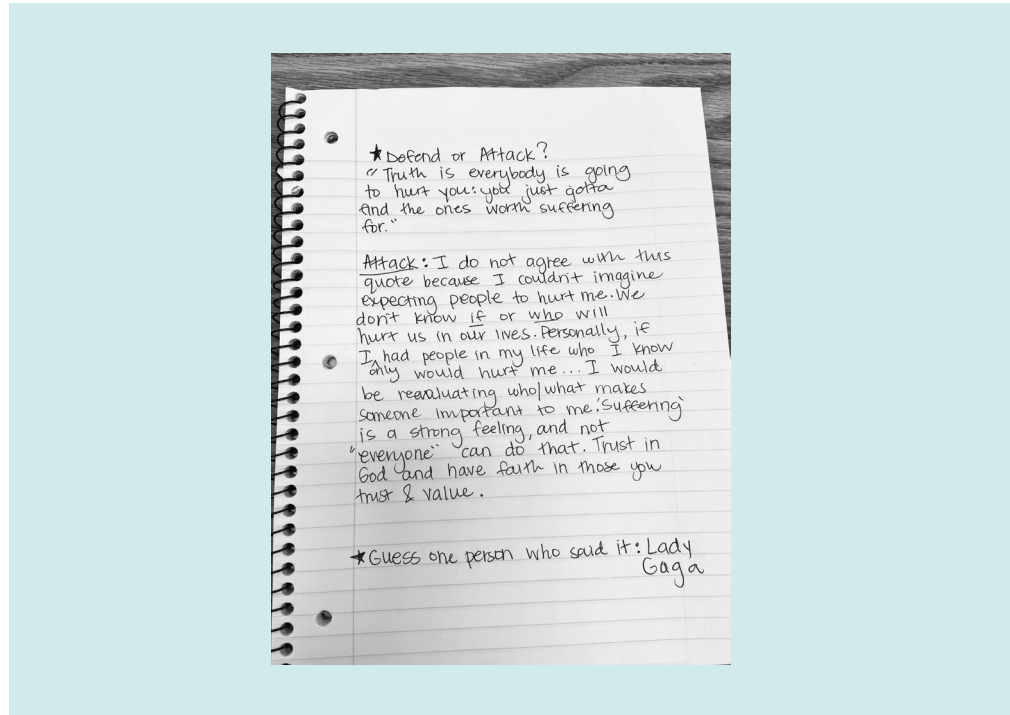




Quick Tip!

Try using two different color notecards for the two sets. This makes it easy to see that you have distributed the appropriate number of matching sets. Plus, you can quickly look at the room and see which students have the information with the speaker listed as well as those who only have a quote in front of them.





3. Distribute the notecards so that half of the students receive ones that include the quote and name and half receive cards that include only the quote.
4. Tell the students that they are not to use any technology to search for information about the quotes.
5. Give students the following instructions: Read the quote on your notecard. Talk with your partner or group about the quote. Decide whether you want to attack or defend the quote. “Attack” means you do not agree with the message of the quote while “defend” means you do support the message of the quote.
6. Model an appropriate response to the entire class if they are new to this strategy so that they understand your expectation.
7. Once students have determined whether they are going to attack or defend the quote, have them provide one to three sentences or evidence or justification as to why they took that position.

8. For students who do not know who said their quote, also have them brainstorm two or three people who they think might have said those words. (This is where the prior knowledge and background information come in handy.)
9. After students have had time to discuss and write, provide time for each group to share.
10. Begin with a group that had an anonymous quote. Once that group has shared their response, invite the group that knew the speaker to give their position without revealing the speaker to the class.
11. Following the discussion, return to the original group and ask them to share who they thought might have said the quote. Then, invite the other group to reveal the true owner of the quote.
12. Repeat this sharing process for the other groups and quotes.

When to Use It

- To explore both sides of an issue
- As a lead-in to crafting a succinct argument
- To practice using one source of information
- As practice for argument throughout the year
- As a way to explore bias

Why It Works

- Attack or Defend is a brief, confined writing task.
- Contemporary topics and current events can be integrated into the strategy.
- Students are given specific instructions: either attack the statement or defend it. They then have to give a reason to justify their answer.
- The debated topic can be extended or dropped after the Attack or Defend strategy is completed; the teacher and students decide which route to take.

Modifications

- Use one quote without a speaker as a Quick Write or bell ringer for the whole class.
- After students have practiced this strategy, allow them to complete this individually, and then locate their partner for a think-pair-share.
- Use quotes with similar thematic messages and have students find their partners in theme instead of determining who said the quote.
- Use signs or other images (propaganda, ads, commercials, etc.) to build students' critical literacy skills.

Extensions

- Have students conduct a mini-inquiry on their speaker.
- Extend this into an ESPN-inspired argument using the show *Around the Horn* as a model.
- Use this as a springboard for the Say What? strategy (page 40).
- Have students develop this assignment into a fully involved argument.

Content Area Connections

- Debate the best methods for solving a particular math problem.
- Use nutrition, exercise regimens, or healthy lifestyle habits as content for this strategy during physical education.
- Use this strategy to compare viewpoints on environmental issues in science.
- Examine historical figures, war battles, or court decisions in history.
- Use quotes from characters in novels and have students determine who said it and why.

Equation- Way #1

$$\begin{array}{r}
 2r - (5-r) = 13 + 2r \\
 2r - 5 + r = 13 + 2r \\
 \hline
 - r - r \\
 2r - 5 = 13 + r \\
 + 5 + 5 \\
 \hline
 2r = 18 + r \\
 - r - r \\
 \hline
 r = 18
 \end{array}$$

Attack or Defend:

I am going to attack this way to solve the equation.

Write 1-3 sentences explaining your position.

You can solve this problem in many ways, but I do not like this way to solve it. On the second line, it automatically subtracted the "r" on the left side whereas I would have combined all of my like terms before I solved the equation. In my opinion, it is easier to single out the variable if you combine your like terms first.

Equation- Way #2

$$\begin{array}{r}
 2r - (5-r) = 13 + 2r \\
 2r - 5 + r = 13 + 2r \\
 3r - 5 = 13 + 2r \\
 - 2r - 2r \\
 \hline
 r - 5 = 13 \\
 + 5 + 5 \\
 \hline
 r = 18
 \end{array}$$

Attack or Defend: Defend

Write 1-3 sentences explaining your position.

I would like to defend the way she solved this equation for a few reasons. First off, she combined like terms, making it easier to solve. She also used the distributive property first, also making it easier to solve.