**Argument and Thesis Statements**

*Every essay needs an arguable point. A position that has a point and counterpoint. Two equal sides that can be researched and debated.*

***Arguments cannot be:***

1. *Factual statements: a statement of fact cannot be debated. Example: Puppies are baby dogs. This is a fact, there is no debate, this is not an argument.*
2. *Biased in such a way so as to make the counterargument unreasonable. If your argument is so biased, or twisted that the counterargument would be unreasonable, this is not a good argument. Example: We should not kick puppies. The only counterargument is that we should kick puppies, which is an unreasonable point of view.*
3. *Vague and nebulous so that so the counterargument is unprovable. If your argument is too vague, too general, or not specific enough - it is impossible to form a strong counter position. Example: Puppies are life. This statement could mean one of a million things, there is no way to form a coherent counter position to this statement.*

***Arguments should be:***

1. *Strong, exacting and based on evidence that will be presented in the rest of your essay. Example: Puppies are more easily trained than kittens. You can prove this with research but there is also a strong counterpoint that can also be intelligently debated.*
2. *Specific and focused. Example: Puppies are an essential component of a happy family as they help children to bond and form caretaking skills. I know exactly what your essay will be about. There is a healthy counterargument to this point as well as lots of research that will support your position.*

*Read the following passage from Hermann Hesse’s Siddhartha.*

“…When you throw a stone into the water, it hurries the quickest way down to the bottom of the water. So it is when Siddhartha has a goal, a purpose. Siddhartha does nothing, he waits, he thinks, he fasts, but he passes through the things of the world as the stone passes through the water, without doing anything, without touching anything; he is pulled, he lets himself fall. His goal pulls him toward it, for he admits nothing into his soul that would resist the goal…This is what fools call magic and what they think of as the work of demons. Nothing is done by demons, there are no demons. Anyone can work magic, anyone can reach his goals, if he can think, if he can wait, if he can fast” (Hesse 50).

*What is the argument that Hesse is making? Consider the guidelines above*

*What is the counterpoint to this argument?*

*Can you rewrite your argument as a thesis statement that would be appropriate at the top of an essay?*

*Read the following passage from Hermann Hesse’s Siddhartha.*

“If a person has nothing to eat, fasting is the most prudent course. If, for example, Siddhartha had not learned how to fast, today he would have had to accept some kind of – any kind of – employment, whether with you or somewhere else, because hunger would have driven him to it. But as it is Siddhartha can wait calmly, he knows no impatience, he knows no distress, he can let hunger besiege him for a long time and laugh as well. For that reason, Sir, fasting is good” (Hesse 54).

*What is the argument that Hesse is making? Consider the guidelines above*

*What is the counterpoint to this argument?*

*Can you rewrite your argument as a thesis statement that would be appropriate at the top of an essay?*

*Let’s try it with a more factual article: Courtesy of Washington Post*

“Yasmin Behbehani had just walked into her third-period health class when her friend asked her if she had seen the list.

“There’s a list of the girls’ names,” her friend Nicky Schmidt, a fellow senior at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School in Maryland, said. “And we’re ranked.”

Behbehani didn’t want to see the list, or know whether she was on it. She had spent the past four years recovering from an eating disorder, working hard to avoid comparing herself with others, she said. But by her sixth-period class on that Monday earlier this month, a text message appeared on her phone with a screenshot of the list, typed out on the iPhone Notes app.

It included the names of 18 girls in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School’s International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, ranked and rated on the basis of their looks, from 5.5 to 9.4, with decimal points to the hundredth place. There, with a number beside it, was Behbehani’s name.

A group of male students in their program created the list more than a year ago, but it resurfaced earlier this month, through text messages and whispers during class. One male classmate, seeing the name of his good friend Nicky Schmidt on the list, told her about it, and within 24 hours, dozens of girls had heard about the list.

Lists like this one had silently circulated among teen boys for generations, and it has happened in more recent years at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School, too, the students said. But it was happening *now*, in the era of the #MeToo movement. Women had been standing up to harassment in workplaces and on college campuses and the high school girls, who had been witnessing this empowerment, decided they weren’t going to let the issue slide” (Schmidt).

*What is the argument that Schmidt is making? Consider the guidelines above*

*What is the counterpoint to this argument?*

*Can you rewrite your argument as a thesis statement that would be appropriate at the top of an essay?*

*Consider your Senior Research Paper topic, research and the rough outline you are working on.*

*What argument are you making? Consider the guidelines above*

*What is the counterpoint to this argument?*

*Can you rewrite your argument as a thesis statement that would be appropriate at the top of your essay?*