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Effective Arguments: *Julius Caesar* and Current Opinion Pieces [10th Grade]

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UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN

Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: Effective Arguments: Julius Caesar and Current Opinion Pieces

Grade Level: 10th

Subject/Topic Area(s): English II

Designed By: Valerie Vied

Time Frame: 6 Weeks

School District: Rutherford County Schools

School: Smyrna High School

School Address and Phone: 100 Bulldog Drive
Smyrna, TN 37167

Brief Summary of Unit (Including curricular context and unit goals):

This unit takes place at the end of the first quarter and carries us into the beginning of the second quarter. Students have not and will not read the entire text of *Julius Caesar*. Instead, to better fit the demands of Common Core, we will focus on select speeches and persuasive portions of the text. We'll also examine opinion pieces from the New York Times Room for Debate collection. Each week bell work consists of adapted exercises based on *Sentence Composing for High School* by Don Killgallon. The unit ends with students composing a structured 11-sentence paragraph response to a Room for Debate topic of their choice.

Essential Questions: Why is it important to be able to analyze an argument? Why is it important to be able to build a strong argument? What makes an argument strong? How do my research skills strengthen my arguments? How do the arguments delivered by Shakespeare's characters relate to modern day arguments?

Unit: Effective Arguments
Grade: 10th English

Stage 1: Desired Results

Understandings

Students will understand that...

- incorporating relevant, accurate, clear and specific evidence is critical to constructing a sound argument
- careful manipulation of syntax and diction leads to an argument that is appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience
- every word of an argument carries enormous power; syntax, tone, diction, evidence, and commentary can be designed to sway an audience
- although Shakespearean language can prove to be challenging, it is not beyond understanding
- the 11 sentence paragraph structure has limitations; authentic arguments have no universal structure

Essential Questions

- Why is it important to be able to analyze an argument?
- Why is it important to be able to build a strong argument?
- What makes an argument strong?
- How do my research skills strengthen my arguments?
- How do the arguments delivered by Shakespeare's characters relate to modern day arguments?

Knowledge

Students will know...

- a basic argument is composed of a claim, evidence, and commentary
- Aristotelian appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos
- logical fallacies: ad hominem, slippery slope, appeal to ignorance, red herring, begging the question
- the 11 sentence paragraph structure

Skills

Students will be able to...

- identify the components of a strong argument
- identify missing or faulty components of an argument
- construct reasonable and valid arguments in speaking and writing
- deconstruct arguments for valid reasoning, relevant, and sufficient evidence
- consider digital and print sources as evidence and support for one's own arguments

Standards

W4-Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
RI8-Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning
SL4-Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can following the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.
W8-Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation

Stage 2: Assessment Evidence

Performance Task:

New York Times-Making Our Own Space for Debate

-Students will choose one of the previously covered NYT Room for Debate topics and write an 11 sentence Jane Schaffer paragraph of their own opinion in response. They may use the opinion pieces from New York Times as evidence to support their claim or research credible sources on their own. Students will be expected to integrate evidence using transitions and cite their sources using MLA format.

Other evidence:

(quizzes, tests, academic prompts, self-assessments, etc.

note – these are usually included where appropriate in Stage 3 as well)

- Analysis of Speeches from Julius Caesar
- New York Times Room for Debate Articles, Analysis, and Arguments
- 11 Sentence Paragraphs modified from the Jane Schaffer model
- Writing Templates from [iTeach. iCoach. iBlog.](#)
- Bell Work – adapted from Sentence Composing for High School and quizzes

Stage 3: Learning Activities

(Steps taken to get students to answer Stage 1 questions and complete performance task)

Lesson 1 (90 min)

- Bell Work 1-Absolute Phrases
- Introduction/Hook to Argument
- Introduction to Julius Caesar – video spark notes
- Cassius' Speech to Brutus (I.ii) – together as a class via document camera

Lesson 2 (90 min)

- Bell Work 1-Absolute Phrases
- Current Event Opinion Piece – NYT Room for Debate
[“Is Testing Students the Answer to America’s Education Woes?”](#)
- Analysis of appeals used in each piece (ethos, pathos, logos)

Lesson 3 (45 min)

- Bell Work 1-Absolute Phrases
- Timed Writing-Writing Template

Lesson 4 (90 min)

- Bell Work 2-Appositive Phrases
- Introduction to Ethos, Pathos, Logos (mini-lesson)
- Break Exit Ticket over Ethos, Pathos, Logos
- Brutus' Soliloquy (II.i) – mixed ability groups assigned by teacher based on informal data gathered during whole class annotation/analysis of first speech

Lesson 5 (90 min)

- Bell Work 2-Appositive Phrases
- Current Event Opinion Piece – NYT Room for Debate
[“A Blurred Line in Copyright Law”](#)
- Purpose, Audience, Speaker, Tone, Author Bias Analysis

Lesson 6 (45 min)

- Bell Work 2-Appositive Phrases
- Timed Writing-Writing Template

Lesson 7 (90 min)

- Bell Work 3-Participial Phrases
- 11 Sentence Paragraph Notes & Hamburger Graphic Organizer
- Brutus' Funeral Speech (III.ii) – partners assigned by teacher based on informal data gathered during small group annotation/analysis of second speech

Lesson 8 (90 min)

- Bell Work 3-Participial Phrases
- Current Event Opinion Piece – NYT Room for Debate
[“Is It Smart to Delay Adulthood?”](#)
- Purpose, Audience, Speaker, Tone, Author Bias Analysis

Lesson 9 (45 min)

- Bell Work 3-Participial Phrases
- Timed Writing-11 Sentence Paragraph

Lesson 10 (90 min)

- Bell Work 4-Gerund Phrases
- Antony's Funeral Speech (III.ii) - individually

Lesson 11 (90 min)

- Bell Work 4-Gerund Phrases
- Current Event Opinion Piece – NYT Room for Debate
[“Are Conspiracy Theories All Bad?”](#)
- Purpose, Audience, Speaker, Tone, Author Bias Analysis

Lesson 12 (45 min)

- Bell Work 4-Gerund Phrases
- Socratic Circle/Fishbowl Discussion

Lesson 13 (90 min)

- Bell Work 5-Infinitive Phrases
- Begin drafting performance task: 11 Sentence Paragraph that incorporates absolute, appositive, participial, gerund and infinitive phrases

Lesson 14 (90 min)

- Bell Work 5-Infinitive Phrases
- Color Coding and Feedback Rounds-Students will be grouped together based on the topic they chose to write about. In groups, their papers will rotate around with each student identifying a different requirement.

Lesson 15 (45 min)

- Bell Work 5-Infinitive Phrases
- Final draft of 11 Sentence Paragraph