

Chapter 6: The Moves of Argument in Social Media

Taking It to the Classroom

On her blog, [TEaCHitvity](#), Katharine writes about the many ways that she and her students use digital reading and writing in a workshop environment and, in January 2016, she shared a post entitled “Branding Student Writing.” While she was alluding specifically to blogging, her advice could be made for any form of digital writing:

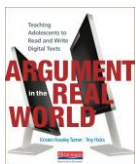
I challenge you to rethink how you use blogs in your classroom. Let go of the weekly prompts or the writing assignments. Instead, spend a long week helping students develop their brand. Help them list potential topics and then push them to double check that their topic is sustainable by creating a list of 5 blog posts they could already write in relation to that topic. A good brand takes time.

Also, she pushes our thinking more by suggesting that:

It [branding] is definitely different than what we have been taught to do as writing teachers. We are taught to inspire students to write by giving them lots of writing themes or ideas. Unfortunately, no matter how brilliant our writing topics are, our topics are ours, not theirs. We must teach students how to find their own writing topics by sifting through their own life and their own stories.

Social media, then, must be embraced as a form of reading and writing. By helping our students to be MINDFUL, we can shift their participation. A few more ideas to get started with this work:

- Print out or snapshot the comments in one thread of a news article or blog. Have students trace the argument through annotations. Who makes a claim? Who provides evidence? Who counters? After annotating, students can adopt roles of individuals they read in the discussion and hold the conversation in the classroom. In a fishbowl setting, the rest of the class can critique the arguments being made, calling for more evidence, attention to rebuttals, etc.



Downloaded with permission from Turner, K. H. & Hicks, T. (2016). *Argument in the Real World: Teaching Adolescentsto Read and Write Digital Texts*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann