

Conspiracy Theories & Historical Mysteries Writing Assignment

How can you present conflicting ideas without bias?

After researching multiple *conflicting* texts on a conspiracy theory or historical mystery, write a feature article that explains the conflicting information surrounding the researched conspiracy theory or historical mystery. Cite at least 2 sources, pointing out key supporting evidence from each source. Identify any gaps or unanswered questions in your article's conclusion without making any decisions for your readers.

SCORING RUBRIC

Scoring Elements	Not Yet		Approaches Expectations		Meets Expectations		Advanced	
	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	
Focus	Attempts to address prompt, but lacks focus or is off-task.		Addresses prompt appropriately, but with a weak or uneven focus.		Addresses prompt appropriately and maintains a clear, steady focus.		Addresses all aspects of prompt appropriately and maintains a strongly developed focus.	
Controlling Idea	Attempts to establish a controlling idea, but lacks a clear purpose.		Establishes a controlling idea with a general purpose.		Establishes a controlling idea with a clear purpose maintained throughout the response.		Establishes a strong controlling idea with a clear purpose maintained throughout the response.	
Reading/ Research	Attempts to present information in response to the prompt, but lacks connections or relevance to the purpose of the prompt.		Presents information from reading materials relevant to the purpose of the prompt with minor lapses in accuracy or completeness.		Presents information from reading materials relevant to the prompt with accuracy and sufficient detail.		Accurately presents information relevant to all parts of the prompt with effective selection of sources and details from reading materials.	
Development	Attempts to provide details in response to the prompt, including retelling, but lacks sufficient development or relevancy. Gap/unanswered question is missing or irrelevant.		Presents appropriate details to support the focus and controlling idea. Briefly notes a relevant gap/unanswered question.		Presents appropriate and sufficient details to support the focus and controlling idea. Explains a relevant gap/unanswered question.		Presents thorough and detailed information to strongly support the focus and controlling idea. Thoroughly discusses one or more significant gaps/unanswered questions.	
Organization	Attempts to organize ideas, but lacks control of structure.		Uses an appropriate organizational structure to address the specific requirements of the prompt, with some lapses in coherence or awkward use of the organizational structure		Maintains an appropriate organizational structure to address the specific requirements of the prompt.		Maintains an organizational structure that intentionally and effectively enhances the presentation of information as required by the specific prompt.	
Conventions	Attempts to demonstrate standard English conventions, but lacks cohesion and control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Sources are used without citation.		Demonstrates an uneven command of standard English conventions and cohesion. Uses language and tone with some inaccurate, inappropriate, or uneven features. Inconsistently cites sources.		Demonstrates a command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Cites sources using an appropriate format with only minor errors.		Demonstrates and maintains a well-developed command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone consistently appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Consistently cites sources using an appropriate format.	

Basic Steps to Writing this Feature Article

Step	Activity	Notes
1	Select a conspiracy theory or historical mystery that contains conflicting information (<i>i.e. the moon landing</i>)	Be sure to check with teacher on the validity of your topic.
2	Find multiple (at least 2) texts that contain conflicting views on your topic.	Use credible sources.
3	Read texts thoroughly.	Take notes on texts by annotating and using the double-entry journal.
4	Determine the main 3-4 ideas where the texts conflict.	Organize information with graphic organizer.
5	Read compare & contrast model essays.	Know the difference between point-by-point and block organizational patterns.
6	Outline writing according to selected ideas on conspiracy theory and selected organizational pattern.	Transfer ideas from graphic organizer.
7	Draft feature article according to feature article guidelines and using outline made in step #6.	Be sure to consult scoring rubric before and during this step.
8	Revise/edit feature article using teacher conference, peer & self editing.	Be sure to consult scoring rubric during this step/
9	Prepare feature article for publishing.	Use word processor, readwritethink.org's Printing Press interactive, or other approved source.

KY Core Standards

W.8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W.8.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

RI.8.3 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

Learning Targets

I can select a topic and identify and gather relevant information (e.g. well chosen facts, definitions, details, quotations, examples) to share with my audience.

I can present my information in a formal style that includes an introduction that previews what is to follow, supporting details, varied transitions (to clarify and create cohesion when I move from one idea to another), and a concluding statement/section that supports the information presented.

I can choose several sources (e.g. biographies, non-fiction texts, online encyclopedia) and gather information to answer my research question.

I can analyze the information found in my sources and determine if it provides enough support to answer my question.

