

Understanding Your Claim and Counterclaim

Definitions matter.

Definition has a variety of uses in academic writing. Definition paragraphs illustrate a term or show how it is misunderstood. Key terms are essential to understand. Definition can be used to explain a complex term or a technical term. The examples a writer uses explain the shades of meaning to clarify or emphasize a single meaning and build a common understanding for the reader. Clear definitions clarify the claim and counterclaim.

Shades of Meaning

To show the shades of meaning of a definition, writers use three strategies:

- 1) state what it is not
- 2) state a routine example from daily life
- 3) state an extraordinary example.

Directions: Define the type of power you have identified in your data using the three basic strategies below.

Example

Courage

- **IS NOT:** something that flies into your heart in emergencies.
- **ROUTINE:** a firefighter going to a fire and putting out the fire to save someone's life.
- **EXTRAORDINARY:** hiding a Jewish person during WWII.

TYPE OF POWER: _____

IS NOT:

ROUTINE:

EXTRAORDINARY:

Take a Stand

Directions: Explore your theory about power by stating it and then writing an assumption, comparison, and the consequences of this kind of power.

THEORY: Courage is a powerful attribute to a leader in a social setting.

ASSUMPTION: Followers respect the leader.

COMPARISON: A person with integrity is respected more than a leader that makes immoral choices.

CONSEQUENCES: A courageous person can evoke positive change, not just verbally but also through example.

THEORY:

ASSUMPTION:

COMPARISON:

CONSEQUENCES:

Imagining Action

Questions to Explore the Gap between *What IS* and *WHAT COULD BE*

1. What stands in the way of making this happen?

2. How can people make this happen?

3. Why don't things change?

4. Where do we start to make this change happen?

5. When is the best time to act?

6. Where is the best place to act?
