

# Worksheet: Claims Example

engl 131 / sec. O / autumn quarter 2010-11 / chang

The following worksheet is designed to help you generate a complex, arguable, academic claim. Begin simply. Identify what you see, understand, wonder about. Then begin to build critical analysis, complexity, stake. Keep in mind what an argumentative claim requires. Keep in mind the assumptions (warrants) you are making. Then attempt to flesh out the claim with direct references to your object of critique or to your readings and research.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Student Name:   | Edmond "Example" Chang   |
| Texts:  | <i>Harry Potter</i>  |
| <b>Descriptive Thesis</b> (one sentence):   | J.K. Rowling's popular children's series <i>Harry Potter</i> is full of social norms, including gender, race, and class. The novels critique social norms.   |
| What is important about your texts? How do they fit your main idea or question? What are your texts about?                                | Even the first few novels of the series sets up a world where certain social norms do not seem to matter. Hogwarts is the epitome of a multicultural and "diverse" school where skin color and where you come from do not seem to matter. However, even though the novels on the one hand try to present a open and diverse world, <i>Harry Potter</i> still depends on certain stereotypical logics that perpetuate normative views about gender, race, and class.  |
| What is significant about your texts? What do your texts argue? What main ideas are important to you?                                     | The novels still present a pretty masculinist and patriarchal view of the world. Though skin color or ethnicity does not seem to matter, the logics of wizard/muggle blood or of non-human blood do matter. Class is still at work even at Hogwarts. The novels connect these things together as a way to comment on good and evil, right and wrong, hero and villain.   |
| <b>Elaborate Thesis</b> (draw from above and from your texts to complicate your descriptive thesis):                                      | J.K. Rowling's popular series <i>Harry Potter</i> sets up a world where certain social norms do not seem to matter as if the world were "colorblind" or "genderblind." The novels complicate and critique norms about race and gender, yet simultaneously, rely on other stereotypical logics. These logics can be read and analyzed and challenged.   |
| What argumentative verbs (e.g. 'argues', 'claims', 'defines') can you use instead descriptive verbs (e.g. 'is', 'describes', 'portrays')? | argues, critiques, reveals, perpetuates, defines   |
| <b>Argumentative Claim</b> (now make an argument about your texts using your argumentative verbs):  | Although J.K. Rowling describes Hogwarts and the wizarding world as "colorblind" and "genderblind," the novels still perpetuate stereotypical logics of gender and race and class.   |
| What are the stakes of your argument? How do you answer the "so what?" question?  | Analysing gender, race, and class is important in <i>Harry Potter</i> because it reveals the ways the novels teach and perpetuate certain stereotypes and prejudices. As Giselle Liza Anatol says, "Neglecting the potency of the novels and relegating them to the category of childhood trivia can result in the dangerously mistaken conclusions that the books do not reflect and/or comment upon the cultural assumptions and ideological tensions of contemporary society" (xv). But since gender, race, and class are too big, this paper will just focus on gender.  |
| <b>Complex Claim</b> (incorporate a telling quote or piece of evidence and argue how your stakes fit in):                                 | Although J.K. Rowling describes Hogwarts and the wizarding world as "colorblind" and "genderblind," the <i>Harry Potter</i> novels still perpetuate certain stereotypical and prejudicial logics, particularly of gender. Close reading and analysis of the novels allow for articulation of the "cultural assumptions and ideological tensions" (Anatol xv) in <i>Harry Potter</i> . Looking at the characters of Hermione, Professor McGonagall, and Mrs. Weasley, the novels on the one hand try to present smart, independent, and capable women characters yet on the other hand still limit them, subordinate them, and caricaturize them. |