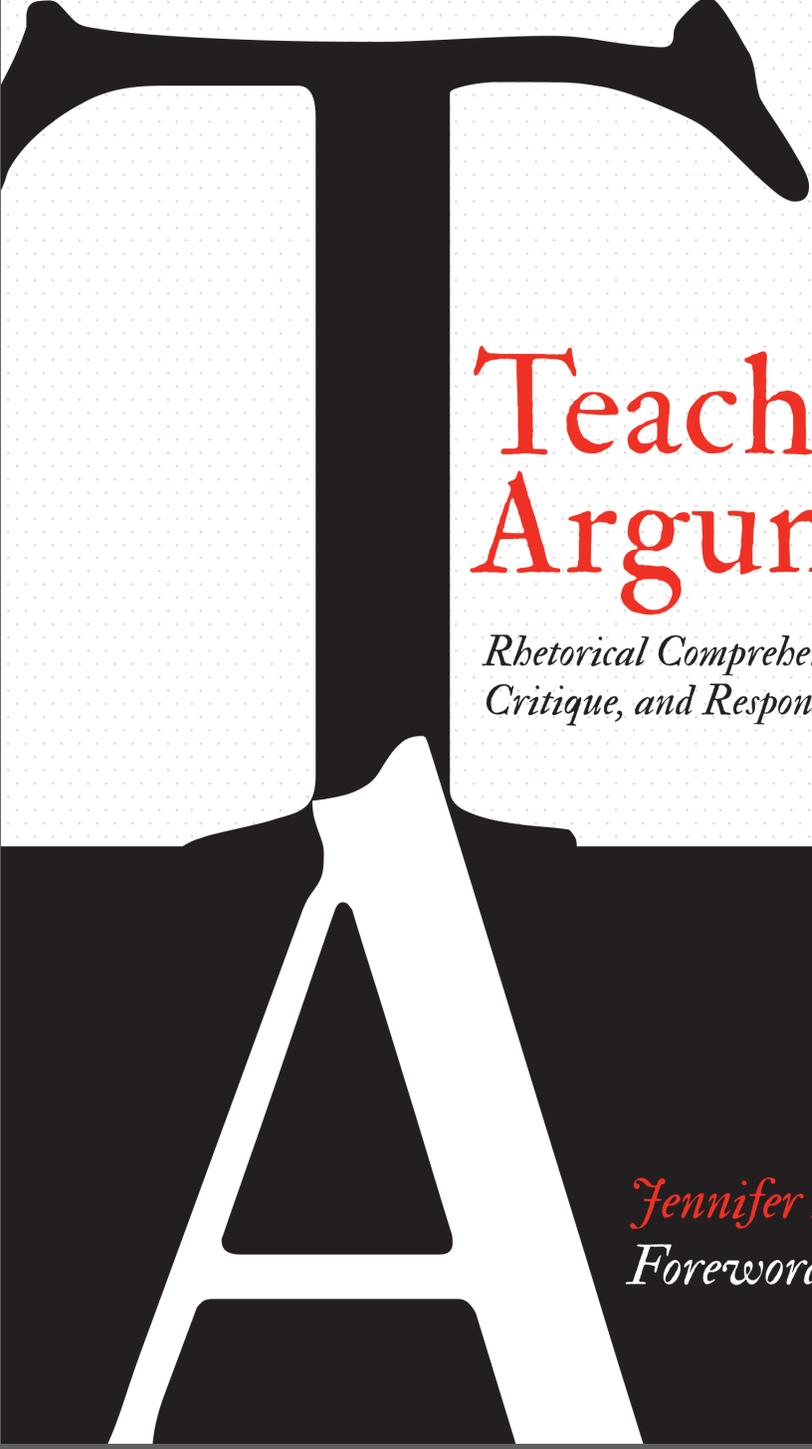


Study Guide

A large, stylized graphic of the letters 'T' and 'A' is centered on the cover. The 'T' is black and the 'A' is white, both set against a background of a white dotted pattern. The 'T' is positioned above the 'A', and they are partially overlapping.

Teaching Arguments

*Rhetorical Comprehension,
Critique, and Response*

Jennifer Fletcher
Foreword by Carol Fago

Professional development training for
teachers provided by Stenhouse Publishers



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Overview

“Teaching Arguments will assist teachers in helping students learn to write deeper and more sophisticated responses to texts. The end result is that students will craft more persuasive arguments time and time again about issues that are personally relevant and rewarding to them.”

—NCTE English Journal, March 2018

No matter where students' lives lead after graduation, one of the most essential tools we can teach them is how to comprehend, analyze, and respond to arguments. Knowing how writers' and speakers' choices are shaped by elements of the rhetorical situation—including audience, occasion, and purpose—prepares students to be effective communicators and problem solvers. In *Teaching Arguments*, Jennifer Fletcher provides teachers with engaging classroom activities, writing prompts, graphic organizers, and student samples to help students at all levels read, write, listen, speak, and think rhetorically.

Jennifer believes that, with appropriate scaffolding and encouragement, all students can learn a rhetorical approach to argument and gain access to rigorous academic content. *Teaching Arguments* opens the door and helps them pay closer attention to the acts of meaning around them, to notice persuasive strategies that might not be apparent at first glance. When we analyze and develop arguments, we have to consider more than just the printed words on the page. We have to evaluate multiple perspectives; the tension between belief and doubt; the interplay of reason, character, and emotion; the dynamics of occasion, audience, and purpose; and how our own identities shape what we read and write. Rhetoric teaches us how to do these things. This book will help students learn to move beyond a superficial response to texts so they can analyze and craft sophisticated, persuasive arguments—a major cornerstone for being not just college- and career-ready but ready for the challenges of the world.

This study guide for *Teaching Arguments* offers quotations to ponder, points to remember, and questions to consider for each chapter in the book. As you explore the rhetorical concepts and strategies in the book, you can use the guide to reflect on your own teaching practice. The guide can also serve as a resource for hosting a book study with colleagues.

INTRODUCTION

Crossing the Threshold

Quotes to Consider

“Once learned, threshold concepts are difficult to unlearn because they transform the way we think about our subject matter—and sometimes our world.” —page xiii-xiv

“Helping students to read and write rhetorically is thus largely about bringing the conversations they’re joining to life.” —page xx

“The shift to a full understanding of a text’s rhetorical context is one of the most important developmental milestones on the road to academic preparation.” —page xxi

“Our students need appropriately rigorous instruction in inclusive classrooms—instruction that invites and prepares them to critically engage arguments in a variety of postsecondary contexts.” —page xxiv

Points to Remember

1. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have shifted instructional focus to argument literacy and rhetorical knowledge, concentrating on rhetorical analysis and evaluation of arguments.
2. Threshold concepts help students develop the skills to read and compose rhetorically effective texts as they view arguments through a rhetorical lens.
3. Engaging students in cooperative argumentation means helping them see past the surface.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. This introduction suggests that teaching rhetoric is about teaching students to “see past their first impressions” and “build up their powers of observation” (page xvii). Consider some of the circumstances where you engage in seeing past the superficial exterior of an argument and really observe it and consider it more deeply.
2. What are some ways to help students observe the world around them rather than just reacting to it?

Considering Classroom Applications

1. As you read this book, what opportunities for engagement within your own classroom community do you see that may help students understand the *value* of rhetoric beyond understanding the *definition* of rhetoric?
2. On page xxii, Fletcher provides two examples of opening sentences written by the same author but from two different texts. She calls attention to the “rhetorical style makeovers” writers engage in as they address different audiences for different purposes on different occasions. The samples in the book are from a formal business letter and an op-ed. What kinds of relevant, real-world scenarios could you ask students to write short statements about that offer different purposes, audiences, and occasions? For example, writing an email to a teacher regarding a missing assignment grade versus writing a text message to a friend about why they can’t hang out on Friday night.

CHAPTER 1**Starting with an Open-Minded Inquiry****Quotes to Consider**

“ . . . it’s hard to ask a question about an ongoing conversation if you don’t listen to the conversation first.”
—page 1

“Texts bear traces of other voices in the conversation the writer is joining.” —page 12

“Students who begin by reading authentic arguments from other writers (instead of choosing a topic from a list) can see that questions of fact can be just as contentious and exciting as questions of policy.”
—page 21

“When academic writing begins with open-ended inquiry, students have an authentic opportunity to understand and respond to real-world arguments.” —page 24

Points to Remember

1. Academic writing begins with academic reading.
2. When we read and write for academic purposes, we join a conversation already in progress.
3. Reading “with the grain” enhances our ability to understand the arguments of other writers.
4. Argumentation involves asking and answering questions.
5. The question at issue is the point of disagreement (or pivot point) on which an argument hinges.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Stasis is critical for effective argumentation as it establishes a sense of common ground and ensures that all parties are addressing the same problem as opposed to arguing entirely different questions. The chapter notes that “[a]chieving stasis means the speaker/writer and audience agree on the question at issue. In other words, they’re engaged in the same conversation, not addressing separate topics” (25). How can stasis be achieved between disagreeing parties? How does determining stasis help all participants engage in respectful debate and dialogue?

2. Although the chapter focuses on paying attention and having patience while working with a text, we know that students today have many things competing for their attention. How do we shift their expectations for engaging with a text from the “once-and-done” reading approach to a more open-minded inquiry style that incorporates multiple engagements with the text?

Considering Classroom Applications

1. How can increasing students’ writing-to-learn opportunities help them develop their thinking on a topic? How can you incorporate more of these opportunities in your daily curriculum?
2. Consider the “Checklist for Listening to a Think-Aloud: Playing the Believing Game and the Doubting Game” on pages 7–8. What is a text your students will be reading that they might use this checklist with next time? How is it likely to change their engagement with that text?
3. On page 15, Fletcher outlines four different kinds of stasis questions. How can understanding and being able to identify these four types of questions help students ascertain the *real* question at issue in a text and more successfully join in the conversation about the topic?

CHAPTER 2**From Comprehension to Critique****Quotes to Consider**

“When we shift from reading a text supportively to reading it critically, we are strategically choosing to reorient ourselves.” —page 27

“Asking how a text functions—what it does in addition to what it says—is a critical part of reading rhetorically.” —page 48

“Sometimes we get a good argument going in our classroom, and all of a sudden it’s a little *too* good. Things get heated. Feelings get hurt. Lines get crossed. And we’re no longer engaged in just the academic conversation.” —page 49

“Finding answers doesn’t necessarily mean that the answers are already out there, waiting to be discovered. Often, the search for knowledge leads to the production of knowledge; it’s a generative, constructive process of knowledge making as much as it’s a process of knowledge finding.” —page 50

Points to Remember

1. The ability to read “against the grain” is critical to college and career readiness.
2. A descriptive outline captures both the *what* (content) and the *how* (rhetorical function) of a text’s structure.
3. Using ethos, pathos, and logos to think critically about a text can help students find answers to the question at issue.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. On page 40, figure 2.2 shows a graphic organizer where students are invited to critique a writer’s claims and identify claims that the student would like to see modified to better represent their own thinking. To what extent does this invitation to critique a writer give students a sense of power or authority in their learning and change how they interact with a text?

2. Academic reading is a challenging task that takes time and effort on the part of the student. How can we support and encourage students to take on this difficult work?
3. Chapter 2 offers several strategies to help move students from simply comprehending what they read to really understanding it in a way that allows them engage with the text on a deeper level and critique it. Which strategy from Chapter 2 caught your attention and might you incorporate in your teaching to help students move “from comprehension to critique”?

Considering Classroom Applications

1. Descriptive outlining identifies both *what* a text says (the content) and *how* it says it (the rhetorical function) to determine the organizational pattern used by a writer. When students create a descriptive outline for a text, it changes how they view that text and how they interact with it. How might students’ conversations about a text change if discussed by rhetorical chunk as opposed to paragraph by paragraph?
2. Engaging students in classroom discussion can be rewarding but also challenging. Do you ever hesitate about allowing students opportunities for discussion because you’re afraid lines may get crossed?
3. Considering the familiar scenario shared in the Quote to Consider from page 49, how do you work to create a safe space where these important dialogues can take place, and what remedies do you have in place to guide students back from the edge when the line begins to get crossed?
4. How can the steps of critical thinking help encourage respectful discourse when people don’t agree?

CHAPTER 3

Fostering a Deeper Understanding of the Occasion

Quotes to Consider

“In rhetoric, the concepts of occasion, audience, and purpose represent learning thresholds that require students to cross into new intellectual territory.” —page 52

“To really understand occasion, audience, and purpose, students have to see and feel far more than the words in a text; they have to reconstruct the messy social worlds in which acts of communication take place.” —page 53

“Another way of thinking about occasion, audience, and purpose, then, is that all three are about opportunity: the opportunity to respond to something, to reach someone, or to change something.” —page 54

“*Kairos* is all about a precise combination of timing and action; it’s about recognizing or creating just the right moment to make the right move, and in order to do that, students have to be able to tell one unique moment from the next. They have to be aware of when things change.” —page 58

Points to Remember

1. Each rhetorical situation is unique and calls for a customized response.
2. Threshold concepts like occasion, audience, and purpose require new ways of thinking and seeing the world.
3. The classical concept of *kairos* helps students understand the dynamics of an opportune moment for persuasion.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. The rhetorical strategy of *kairos* refers to a writer’s timeliness or their “window of opportunity” to present an argument so that it is introduced in a space and time that makes it relevant and meaningful to the audience. How does understanding and applying the idea of *kairos* enhance our appreciation for, understanding of, and analysis of an argument?

2. What are your thoughts about the questions regarding *kairos* listed on page 61? How might those questions help students better understand the rhetorical situation as a whole? Are there other questions you might add to this list to help students identify the *kairos*?

Considering Classroom Applications

1. Students likely have a deeper appreciation for *kairos* than they realize when they are first introduced to the term. They often know when and how to ask for something they want from a parent, or know when and how to interact with a troubled friend. As students consider the idea of *kairos*, how might analyzing a time when they picked the **wrong** moment to engage with an audience better help them understand the concept of *kairos* and dive deeper into an analysis of occasion?
2. Figure 3.5 on page 63 offers a visual to analyze rather than a text. Figure 3.2 on page 55 is a cartoon. What are some alternative sources besides an article or essay that you might bring in to help students analyze the rhetorical situation, including *kairos*, and engage them in a discussion about this subject?
3. What struggles or questions do you anticipate your students might have if you asked them to complete a *kairos* analysis sheet like the one found in figure 3.6 on page 65?

CHAPTER 4**Fostering a Deeper Understanding of Audience****Quotes to Consider**

“The ability to anticipate an audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases involves a good deal of detective work that won’t happen if we assume the audience is ‘everyone.’” —page 75

“When we ask students to recontextualize an article or short story in an anthology by imagining—or actually researching—the audience of its original publication, we breathe social life back into what teenagers often see as dead texts.” —page 85

“Unlike my own generation, twenty-first century students often do have extensive experience writing for authentic audiences because of social media; they just need help transferring this experience to academic tasks and contexts.” —page 92

“When we’re joining a conversation already in progress, we need to take extra care to listen for the way past voices, concerns, and counterclaims are invoked by writers or speakers. An audience is a sound archive, a composite record of not everyone in general, but everyone involved in a very specific discussion.” —page 105

Points to Remember

1. Understanding the audience is an act of imagination and empathy.
2. Audiences are specific to unique rhetorical situations.
3. Different audiences have different values, motives, interests, beliefs, and experiences.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Fletcher shares an activity, “Translating for Outsiders,” that helps students distinguish between different audiences (85–86). It serves, in part, as a strategy for spotlighting students’ expertise and linguistic agility and helps them recognize the different “layers” of audience they may encounter. How does trying on these different personas as “insiders” and “outsiders” help students better understand and identify the rhetorical situation of a text?

2. What strategies have you employed to help students differentiate between a variety of audiences?
3. Consider the third quote above about the advantage twenty-first century students have in writing to “authentic audiences.” To what extent do you agree or disagree with the idea that the audiences on social media are valid, “authentic” audiences that give students a true experience when engaging with specific audiences?

Considering Classroom Applications

1. The text suggests that “[n]ewspapers . . . are a great starting point for helping students learn about nuances in audience” (77). What newspapers do people in your students’ communities read? What can the headlines, advertisements, and articles in these newspapers teach your students about audience needs, interests, and values? What can different kinds of newspapers (e.g., local, metropolitan, school, daily, weekly, etc.) teach students about community-based writing and audience complexity?
2. Pages 93 and 94 list questions from the Textual Analysis Template developed by the California Reading and Literature Project, which Fletcher suggests are the same types of questions students should be asking themselves as they prepare to write. Key among them is “Will my audience be motivated to read about my topic?” If the answer is “No,” what support or guidance can be offered to the student writer to achieve an affirmative answer? What will need to change, and how?
3. The chapter offers an activity suggestion for the mock rejection letter (95) as a way to engage students in thinking not only about how they write, but how their audience reads (92). What value do you see in having students write this kind of letter? What kinds of scenarios might you offer to them to engage with different audiences who will read these letters with different lenses?

CHAPTER 5**Fostering a Deeper Understanding of Purpose****Quotes to Consider**

“Rhetoric’s eminently practical focus means that rhetorical acts of communication target real audiences, situations, and outcomes—outcomes that Aristotle sees as entirely dependent on context.” —page 108

“. . . the key idea to share with students is that a writer’s sense of purpose is shaped by the particularities of the rhetorical situation—especially audience, occasion, and exigence.” —page 110

“It’s important to help kids recognize that texts can have primary, secondary, and even tertiary purposes.” —page 128

“Writing a preface is a measure of how genuinely engaged students are with their subject. If they’re just going through the motions—in other words, if their purpose is just to get a decent grade—it’s going to show.” —page 131

“By directing high school students’ attention to authentic writing situations, we’re trying to shift their focus from ‘What do I need to do to get an A?’ to ‘Does this work?’” —page 133

Points to Remember

1. A writer’s purpose is shaped by the contingencies of the rhetorical situation, especially the audience and occasion.
2. Writers make choices about their style, structure, and means of persuasion based on their purpose.
3. Aristotle’s three ends of rhetoric—deliberative, forensic, and epideictic—can help students see how purpose relates to specific settings and time provinces.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Once students understand *why* they write, and that the reason goes beyond the grade or completion of the assignment, they begin to write more effectively. How do you explain the purpose of writing to your students to engage them in authentic communication with their audience? How do you get them to move beyond the grade and consider the effect their writing has based on audience and occasion?
2. On pages 130–131, Fletcher describes a classroom activity she uses that asks students to write a preface for the writing they have done to explain their purpose and what they hope the audience takes away from reading it. How might writing a preface help students streamline their writing? Do the prompts we assign students always allow them an authentic purpose to write? How do we help them focus on functionality and assessing their writing to determine if it has accomplished what they set out to accomplish?
3. Many students have formed the habit of writing for the grade as they try to determine what their teacher will “like” and how they can earn that A in response to a topic-based prompt from which they may feel entirely removed. “In place of decontextualized, perfunctory writing, we can engage students in meaningful academic conversations. We can help them see that writing starts with reading and that reading starts with listening” (133). How can focusing on reading-based writing as opposed to topic-based writing help students set their purpose and develop their rhetorical situation?

Considering Classroom Applications

1. Consider the quote above from page 108 about communication targeting “real audiences, situations, and outcomes.” What opportunities for this type of “real writing” do you offer students? Consider the types of writing and writing tasks that you ask students to complete. Do they target “real audiences, situations, and outcomes”? How might you incorporate more opportunities for students to practice real communication with authentic writing situations?
2. Page 126 offers a list of eight rhetorical purposes that writers seek to accomplish in academic contexts. Which of these purposes do your students have the most experience with? Which do they have the least experience with? What kind of prompts might you develop that would allow them increased opportunities to engage with these types of rhetorical purposes?

CHAPTER 6**Analyzing and Integrating Ethos, Pathos, and Logos****Quotes to Consider**

“Teaching students to think rhetorically about literacy tasks isn’t about teaching them formulas for academic writing; it’s about teaching students how to figure stuff out.” —page 137

“Approaching writing rhetorically is about being aware of what works for a particular audience, occasion, and purpose (not what is intrinsically right or wrong) and knowing when the expectations for that rhetorical situation change.” —page 137

“Providing support for claims sometimes seems like something students do for teachers because they know we like it. . . . These students see quotations, paraphrases, and summaries as ways to accessorize their writing after they’ve already put the basic ensemble together.” —page 161

“. . . the effectiveness of our rhetorical choices depends on how we finesse the relationships among the writer (through ethos), the reader (through pathos), and the text (through logos).” —page 178

“Students need to read a wide variety of texts before they can understand that effective writing is based on choices, not rules.” —page 179

Points to Remember

1. Ethos, pathos, and logos are threshold concepts that require students to see texts differently.
2. Threshold concepts can be troublesome because they represent disciplinary ways of thinking that may be alien to many students (Meyer and Land 2003).
3. A deep understanding of ethos, pathos, and logos includes the ability to analyze, evaluate, integrate, and apply them.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Students tend to compartmentalize concepts like ethos, logos, and pathos and see each as a different entity. How can understanding the “blurred lines” and symbiotic relationship of ethos, logos, and pathos help students use these rhetorical strategies more effectively and view them not as stand-alone concepts, but as tools that overlap and work together?
2. On page 158, Fletcher coins the term “logic radar” to describe the feeling students get when they analyze their own work and identify where something doesn’t look right, sound right, or is lacking support. Have you seen students employ this “logic radar”? What happens when it goes off? What actions do students take as a result?
3. On page 170, Fletcher explains the value and importance of “backing” and the common mistake teachers make of assigning students to write on topics about which they have insufficient background knowledge. As she notes on page 170, “how can students argue whether or not it’s right or wrong to censor books if they don’t know anything about constitutional law or the history of intellectual freedom?” Sometimes these types of questions “invite students to invent facts” (170). What kinds of prompts invite students to engage in inquiry into their prior knowledge rather than inviting them to make things up? What kinds of argument prompts can they be asked to participate in fairly so they can be successful?
4. Writing, rhetorically effective writing, takes a lot of time. Fletcher concedes on page 177 that the project she outlines to support students through the process of writing “takes a lot of time and effort both in and out of class,” so how do teachers overcome the guilt and fear of spending “too much time” on writing one particular assignment? With administrative, district, parental, and even student expectations to keep things moving and cover a wide breadth of materials, how can we justify spending the time necessary to do writing “right”? What are the potential pros and cons for you and your students to dedicate the necessary time on writing activities and processes like the ones shared in Chapter 6?

Considering Classroom Applications

1. On page 160, Fletcher includes several “challenge questions” she offers students when she sees them make assertions they haven’t yet backed up. The goal is that posing these questions will “activate students’ ‘logic radar’” and have them address their use of evidence. Consider what kinds of “ethos radar” or “pathos radar” questions you might ask to challenge students’ application of those rhetorical concepts.

2. As the quotation on page 161 notes, “students see quotations, paraphrases, and summaries as ways to accessorize their writing after they’ve already put the basic ensemble together.” They view the meaningful and purposeful inclusion of evidence and support as a laborious process, which it can be. How do we engage students in this critical step of supporting their claims with meaningful evidence before and as they write rather than sticking it in as an afterthought? How can we help them see its value to build their argument around the evidence rather than bending the evidence to fit their argument?

CHAPTER 7**Aristotle's Guide to Becoming a "Good" Student****Quotes to Consider**

"Many of us, in fact, have given up assigning difficult texts for independent reading because we know our students simply won't do their homework, and we don't want the next day's lesson derailed by incomplete assignments." —page 181

" . . . we are what we practice. . . . if we accept this idea, then we have to believe that teenagers become independent and critical thinkers by repeatedly doing independent and critical brain work." —page 181

"Personal attributes such as motivation, discipline, and perseverance—in other words, a high sense of self-efficacy—can be even more important indicators of academic preparation than traditional aptitude tests." —page 184

"Becoming a literate individual involves learning how to acquire habituated 'virtues' in the midst of all the stresses high school students experience every day." —page 192

"Well-prepared students . . . often enjoy their schoolwork precisely for these reasons; they are totally engrossed in challenging, attainable activities that offer them immediate feedback." —page 195

"Becoming a 'good' student or a 'good' teacher just means showing up again and again for the things that matter." —page 208

Points to Remember

1. Threshold concepts mark a dividing line between insider and outsider knowledge.
2. Well-prepared students have regular routines for academic work.
3. Well-prepared students take responsibility for their own needs and growth.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Fletcher begins the chapter with the statement that “[t]his is not a chapter that you’ll find in other books on rhetoric” (180). With that disclaimer, why do you think she chose to include this chapter and why situate it as the final chapter of the text? What purpose does it serve and how does it connect with the theme of *Teaching Arguments*?
2. Teenagers are concerned with how they are viewed by others, especially their peers. For many, it’s not considered “cool” to do brain work and to be perceived as smart, to put in the work of homework or studying, because it makes them vulnerable to being labeled by their peers as “smart” or “good students,” just as not doing so might earn them credibility as being “rebels.” On page 182, Fletcher offers a point made by James Paul Gee that “students who have been ‘hailed’ or identified as ‘problem students’ because they struggle academically may find it particularly hard to create a credible ethos for themselves when it comes time to write or speak in a classroom.” Think about the labels that have been put on students, not just by their peers, but by their teachers, by school administrators, or by the students themselves. What role do parents, friends, teachers, and so on have in students’ identification of the “type” of student they are? How can we change that identification and help them see themselves through a more confident, compassionate, and self-forgiving lens?
3. The idea of “feeling the flow,” being “in the zone,” or “on a roll” refers to that energized and excited feeling that comes when we are completely engrossed in a task we enjoy. Beginning on page 193, Fletcher shares some insight about helping students find their “flow,” based on the work of psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. With so many factors beyond our control, beyond our students’ control, how can we help students find their “flow” in their academic work?

Considering Classroom Applications

1. Chapter 7 closes with the thought that “We want all our students to repeatedly do academic work that is personally relevant and intrinsically rewarding” (208). Reflect on the types of activities and assignments you ask students to complete. Do they all fit this description? If not, what can be eliminated or modified to be more engaging to students? How can focusing on work that is “personally relevant and intrinsically rewarding” increase student engagement and success?
2. Think about one of the most popular or well-received activities or assignments you give your students. How does this task help them find their “flow”?

3. Chapter 7 includes several examples of activities designed to help students find their “flow” and harness that energy to improve academic performance. Students are more likely to be engaged and find their “flow” when they feel empowered by strong habits they develop as readers and writers. What habits, routines, or procedures have you implemented in your classroom that help students feel empowered and able to master the task at hand rather than just finish it? How do you build in time for important academic work in an already impacted daily bell schedule? How do you structure your classroom environment in a way that gives students a sense of comfort and familiarity?