

Fight for What You Love: Using Pop Culture to Write an Argument

Tommy Jolly, Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project

Grade level: 6-12 and teachers (a variation can be used for K-5)

Overview: Using their consumption from popular culture, students will compose arguments for pop culture “artifacts” they love that they believe deserve a wider audience.

Materials: Paper, pens, wits, technology for internet research (if needed)

Time: Varies. This could be an in-class writing assignment or a longer process writing that extends for days or more.

Instructional Sequence:

1. Quick Write: Have students spend five minutes listing anything from popular culture (movies, TV shows, books, music, video games, etc.) that they love.
2. As the students write, the teacher will create a similar list, either on paper or on the board.
3. After the five minutes have elapsed, students can share their lists first in groups of two or three.
4. The teacher and students share everything they listed.
5. Everyone must now pick one item from their list that they believe deserves a wider audience. By definition, this item is probably not the most popular one on the list. However, popular culture is what it is because it is popular, so if students insist on picking something that is already wildly successful (an Avengers film, for example), they may wish to write about that item for an audience that may not be familiar with it—their grandparents, perhaps. This is also a great opportunity for students and teacher alike to share with music, films, or games that they love, but with which others may not be familiar.
6. Distribute the four-square argument sheet.
7. The teacher will demonstrate for the class (using a projector, document camera, or whiteboard) how to fill out the four spaces on the chart. In the upper-left square, write out why a particular item is deserving of a wider audience.
8. In the upper-right square, write out why some might not like the item. Students may already be aware of the detractors of something they love. If they are not, they can talk the counterarguments over with their classmates or look online for bad reviews of the item.
9. The bottom two spaces are for extending the original argument and counterargument and responding to the detractors. The teacher can demonstrate filling these spaces out beforehand, or students and teachers can fill out their sheets simultaneously.
10. Everyone in class now has the raw material to write an argument about something in popular culture. From here, the group can write shorter pieces like capsule reviews, or they can write longer essays arguing on behalf of what they love.

Four-Square Argument Chart

<p>Why do you like this movie/TV show/book/album? Why should somebody else experience it?</p>	<p>Why don't some people like it?</p>
<p>How might the haters respond to your love?</p>	<p>How will you respond to the haters?</p>