

Parlez-Vous Arguespeak?

A Presentation to the
Chicago Public Schools Social Science
Professional Development Academy

by

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Research Appendix A: The Special Place of Argument in the Standards

...the Standards put particular emphasis on students' ability to write sound arguments on substantive topics and issues, as this ability is critical to college and career readiness. English and education professor Gerald Graff (2003) writes that "argument literacy" is fundamental to being educated. The university is largely an "argument culture," Graff contends....He claims that because argument is not standard in most school curricula, only 20 percent of those who enter college are prepared in this respect....When teachers ask students to consider two or more perspectives on a topic or issue, something far beyond surface knowledge is required: students must think critically and deeply, assess the validity of their own thinking, and anticipate counterclaims in opposition to their own assertions.

Grades 11-12

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

- a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

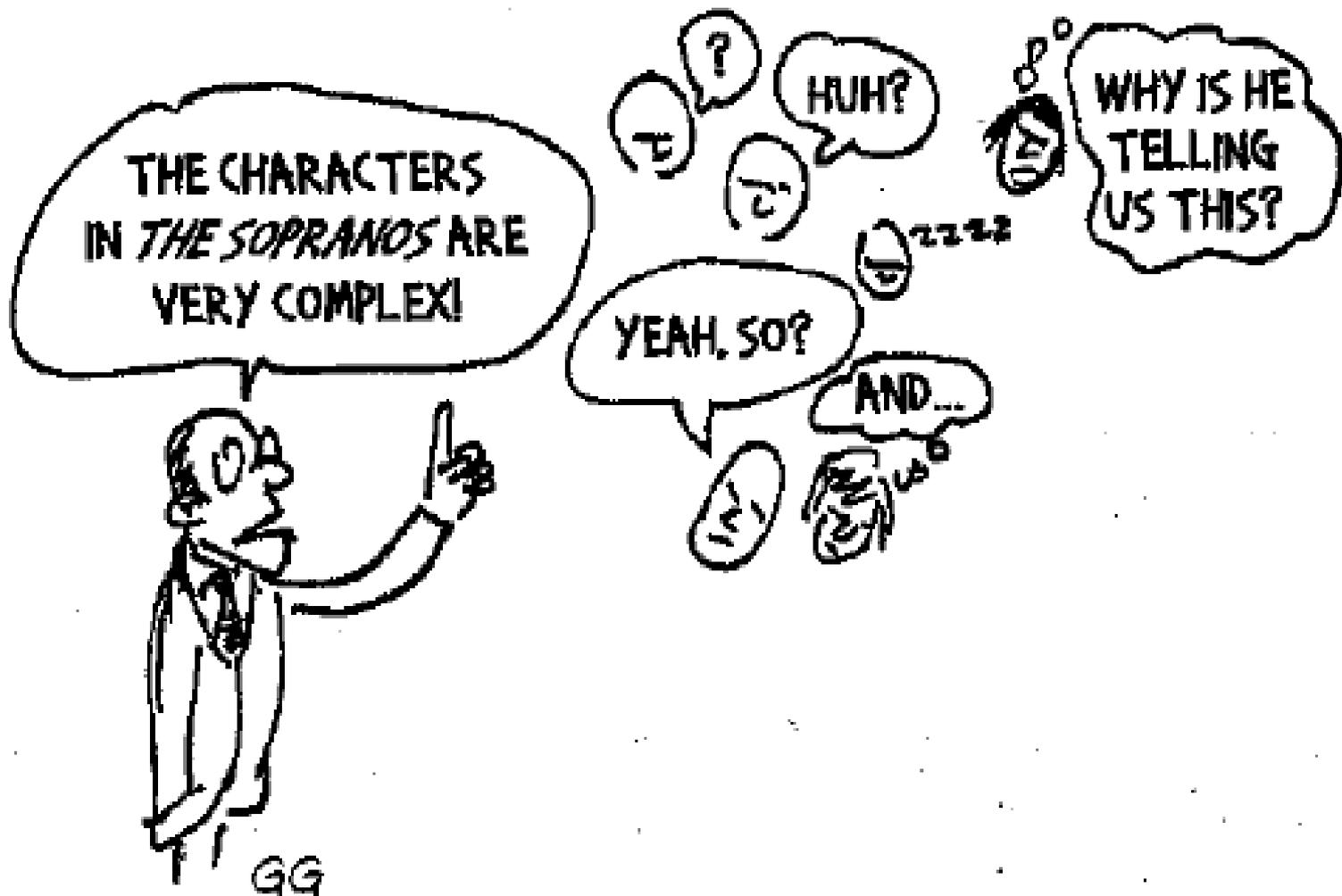


FIGURE 1

SOME SAY THAT *THE SOPRANOS*
PRESENTS CARICATURES OF ITALIAN
AMERICANS. IN FACT, HOWEVER,
THE CHARACTERS IN THE
SERIES ARE VERY
COMPLEX!



Let's
GG
Hmm... GOOD
POINT!
GEE, NEVER
THOUGHTA
THAT!

FIGURE 2

FURTHER “THEY SAY/I SAY” TEMPLATES

1. Although it is often said _____, I argue _____.
[DISAGREE]
2. X argues _____, and I agree because _____.
[AGREE W/A DIFFERENCE]
3. On the surface, this text suggests _____. But a closer analysis shows _____.
[LITERARY INTERPRETATION]
4. I used to think _____. Having read _____, however, I now see _____.
[I WAS LOST BUT NOW I'M FOUND]
5. X argues _____, and I have mixed feelings about it.
On the one hand, _____. On the other hand, _____.
[I'M OF TWO MINDS]
[CONTRADICTION SPOTTER]

7. Debates over ____ have long obscured the far more important issue of _____. [DISPLACE THE DEBATE]
8. Although fierce debates have raged over _____, the opponents all share a commitment to _____ that they may not recognize. [OPPOSITES CONVERGE]
9. Until now I've been suggesting that _____. But it's actually more complicated, because _____.
[IT'S MORE COMPLEX]
10. Of course it might be objected that _____. And I concede that _____, yet I would still maintain that _____.
[NAYSAYER]
11. We all agree nowadays that _____. Where the agreement ends, however, is on _____.
[WHERE CONTROVERSY BEGINS]