0:00 Hey there, and welcome to another Video with Chris Riseley about our Writing 121 class. You’ve just read and answered some questions about an essay called “Pit Bulls: Both Sides of the Fence.” This Video is designed to show you how that student writing sample of an informative essay will connect to the writing guidelines that you are about to see in just a few moments later in this course. So, that’s the essay that we are working on in this unit. It’s the informative essay, and the purpose of the informative essay is to inform your readers about what experts are saying regarding a controversial topic. Now one of the biggest challenges that students have with a paper like this is learning to narrow down a conversation. So, for instance, let’s use “Pit Bulls: Both Sides of the Fence.” Perhaps a new student writing such a paper might go “I wanna write about dog attacks”. Well, that’s too broad of a topic. So the students paper that you just read, they narrowed it down to a specific dog. They narrowed it down to pit bulls and from there they narrowed down that topic to just informing people about not how to deal with pit bull attacks. They could have done a number of things but instead they narrowed the scope of their papers down to just the conversation that experts are having about pit bull bans in a number of cities across the United States. So, you can see that this paper also relies heavily on an article that you have already read. You have already read “Troublemakers.” The reason I have set this series of readings up in this way is so you can encounter that as a Reading, study it a little bit and then you’ve seen how a student used Malcolm Gladwells very excellent article about racial profiling and all his research on pit bull attacks.

2:52 So you have seen how this writer of the student paper, “Pit Bulls: Both Sides of the Fence,” took quotes from experts in that paper or took quotes from the Malcolm Gladwell essay and integrated them into his student paper. So, you are going to be doing the same thing, but you do not have to write about pit bulls. You can write about any conversation that experts are having out there. You are going to make sure that you narrow down your topic. So this Video is really designed to, 1. remind you to narrow your topic, and 2. to connect your reading of our sample essay with the assignment guidelines that you are going to encounter later in the course.

3:41 So, things that I need you to know about the student example. One of those things is that “Pit Bulls: Both Sides of the Fence” is an essay that you need to read more than just once because as you know this, there are a lot of annotations. Those annotations, each annotation are kind of a mini lesson about how to structure your paper, it’s about how to use signal phrases to integrate material from other sources, and there are all kinds. Really I want you to go back and re-read the sample paper and make sure that you click on every single notation. You will notice that there are comments there about choice of language, MLA citations, all kinds of comments. What I wanna do with the rest of this Video is to talk about how this writer structured the essay.

5:04 So, what our student writer did was our student writer found this conversation that people are having out there and apparently there are certain cities that are banning pit bulls. There are certain experts who think that this is hysterical, that, that’s a hysterical reaction to these attacks. There are certain experts who feel like that’s the move to make. Now what our student writer did was that he started with an introduction. He wrote, “The crazed conversation surrounding pit bull bans is one that almost always starts with a toddler who has had their face torn off by a pitbull” (Watts).” Please notice that if you scroll to the bottom of that essay you will see that Watts is sorted alphabetically on the works cited page. You will also be including a works cited page with your essay.

6:10 So, this student paper begins with an introduction and then where does it go from there? The first place that this paper goes is basically a really clear summary. The summary that this paper offers you is a classic summary where he literally goes through “Troublemakers,” and watch how he does this, he goes through and grabs the main idea from almost every paragraph. He tell us “Malcolm Gladwell’s lengthy and thorough 2006 New Yorker essay entitled simply “Troublemakers” attempts to offer a logical perspective on the controversy surrounding pit bulls. He begins his essay by sharing about Jayden Clairoux…” So you’ve already read that, but in my opinion, my feeling about the way the student has structured this paper is that he has found a voice that is opposed to pit bull bans and I think that at the end of the day the Malcolm Gladwell essay also falls somewhere against pit bull bans.

7:14 What this writer of this paper does after showing us a voice that is against pit bull bans is he finds a voice that is neutral on the topic of pit bull bans, neither for or against. Actually, he finds an article by Clare Leschin-Hoar who writes an article called “Showing their Teeth,” and that essay turns out to be a compromised solution, or a voice in the middle. So that’s a very interesting move, and he writes “Clare Leschin-Hoar…” Oh, let me go back to the beginning of the paragraph, “Voices a little closer to the middle of this conversation belong to the trained professionals whose job it is to make parks safe and accessible for all kinds of people, including dog lovers of every stripe. Clare Leschin-Hoar, who wrote the essay…” Now that’s a signal phrase, “Clare Leschin-Hoar, who wrote the essay”. That’s a signal phrase, is a moment that allows you to identify the author of a source, you can identify the title of the source, you can identify the journal, or the newspaper, or the magazine where the source came from. Then, it allows you to introduce the quote. So what, structurally, what’s great about this particular move that he makes is that he starts his paper with a voice against, finds a voice in the middle of the controversial prompt, and then later in his essay he goes to people who are pro pit bull bans and he has a number of different sources that are pro pit bull bans.

9:01 And that’s the kind of work that you’re going to be doing as you write your own informative paper. You’re going to be looking for experts who are talking about the same topic and then you should identify them on a spectrum of agreement- where these people are for whatever it is and these people are against whatever it is, and maybe you’ll find some voices in the middle. But your informative paper is going to inform an audience of readers who do not know anything about this topic, what these experts are saying about the topic you’ve chosen.

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