

## Constructing an Argument for “Speculating about Causes” Paper

### **Step One: Choose a Trend or Phenomenon**

Think about things you’ve seen in your field experience, at your old high school, or issues that have emerged in other class readings/discussions. Present your trend/phenomenon as a question – you may wish to refer back to your assignment sheet for a list of examples.

TREND/PHENOMENON \_\_\_\_\_

- a) Which is it – a *trend* or *phenomenon*? At trend is usually signified by an increase or decrease (in test scores, divorce rates, etc.), whereas a phenomenon is something that can be widely observed over a longer period of time or seems to be “natural” (teenage rebellion, popularity of roller coasters, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

- b) How do you intend to prove that the trend/phenomenon actually exists?

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Step Two: Choose and consider your audience**

Since you’re working with education-related trends/phenomena, your audience should be those who would *most benefit* from greater understanding of what is causing the trend/phenomenon.

AUDIENCE \_\_\_\_\_

### **Step Three: Consider Possible Causes**

Consider a few possible causes for the trend/phenomenon you’ve selected.

POSSIBLE CAUSE #1 \_\_\_\_\_

- a) *Why is this not the main cause?* \_\_\_\_\_

POSSIBLE CAUSE #2 \_\_\_\_\_

- b) *Why is this not the main cause?* \_\_\_\_\_

POSSIBLE CAUSE #3 (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

- c) *Why is this not the main cause?* \_\_\_\_\_

### **Step Four: Decide which cause is the “main” cause (or “hidden” cause) for the trend/phenomenon**

This will be the most important part of your paper, to which you will devote the most space. Your primary goal will be to convince readers that this cause warrants the most attention, either because it is the *most important* cause for the trend/phenomenon or because it is a cause that *people don’t usually think about*.

MAIN CAUSE \_\_\_\_\_

**Step Five: Give reasons to convince your audience WHY your “main” cause warrants the most consideration. How does it contribute to the trend/phenomenon?**

REASON #1 \_\_\_\_\_

REASON #2 \_\_\_\_\_

REASON #3 \_\_\_\_\_

**Step Six: List Possible Counterarguments and Responses**

What kind of objections might readers have to your claim that your cause is the most important? Might they think it's not actually a cause for the trend/phenomenon? Might they think that a different cause is actually the most important?

COUNTERARGUMENT #1 \_\_\_\_\_

*Response/Rebuttal* \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTERARGUMENT #2 \_\_\_\_\_

*Response/Rebuttal* \_\_\_\_\_

**Step Seven: List Support Needed**

Now that you have outlined your argument, think about what kind of support you will need – remember, you need to use 3-5 sources for this essay. You may need to use sources to demonstrate the existence of the trend/phenomenon, you may need sources to demonstrate or rule out causes, you may need sources to provide examples, statistics, or other support for reasons to support your main cause, you may use source materials to acknowledge or refute your CA, etc., etc. Will you conduct an interview or survey for this paper? If so, with whom, and what kind of information will you seek? Think about what kind of information will add credibility to your argument.

*KIND OF SUPPORT #1* \_\_\_\_\_

*KIND OF SUPPORT #2* \_\_\_\_\_

*KIND OF SUPPORT #3* \_\_\_\_\_

Notes/doodling area: