

Triads:

A Scaffolding Exercise for Higher Order Thinking and Writing

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Two Problems

1. Vague responses to in-class prompts.
2. Googled responses to online prompts.

Triads as an alternate prompt

Rather than a formal writing prompt, a triad is a list of three terms that are connected in some way.

The student's response must explain and connect all three terms in a logical way that demonstrates mastery of the course material.

Example: Easy Version

- Libraries
- Gospel of Wealth
- Social Darwinism

Connection:

Andrew Carnegie and responses to inequality during the Gilded Age.

Example: Hard Version

- Rape of Nanjing
- Bonus Army
- *St. Louis*
- UN Declaration of Human Rights

Violence against civilians during World War II (Bonus Army is unrelated.)

Example: COVID-19, Face masks, Anthony Fauci

Response. COVID-19 is a new disease caused by a coronavirus. It first appeared in China at the end of 2019. Anthony Fauci is the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. When COVID-19 first spread to the US in early 2020, Dr. Fauci helped lead the national effort to stop the spread of the disease. One of his recommendations was that people wear face masks, which scientists had discovered would help prevent the spread of the disease by blocking saliva and respiratory droplets that may contain the virus. Unfortunately, the masks are uncomfortable, and many Americans refused to wear them. Many of them objected to the government asking them to do something they did not want to do. As a result, COVID-19 has been much worse in the United States than in many other countries. By February 2021, 500,000 Americans had died of COVID-19.

Instructions to students

For each triad you will be given a list of three terms. They are connected in some way. In the space provided, write a long paragraph in which you identify and explain the connections between them. This may involve defining or explaining one or more of the terms, but you should focus on how they are connected.

Tell me a true story that uses all three terms, adding any additional terms as needed.

Identifying the connections

All three terms will be linked to a major theme in the course. The theme might be a specific course topic, such as imperialism. It could also be a bigger concept that we have looked at in multiple topics, such as voting rights or reform efforts.

In addition to the big theme, look for relationships between the terms. The most common relationships are:

- Cause and effect
- Specific example of a bigger idea
- Personal involvement
- Exception or opponent

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