

## Lesson Plan

### Supporting a Side

**Book:** *Parkland Students Challenge the National Rifle Association*

**Series:** Taking a Stand

**Level:** Voyager

### Objective

To help students write an argumentative essay in which they craft a debatable thesis and support it with evidence and examples.

### Supplies

- *Parkland Students Challenge the National Rifle Association* book
- Whiteboard

### Before the Activity

Have students read *Parkland Students Challenge the National Rifle Association*.

### Activity

After the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, students in Parkland, Florida, called for stricter gun control laws. But not everyone agreed with them. Some people opposed stricter laws. Call on students to list some of the facts or examples from the book that are used to support the two sides of this debate. Use their answers to make two columns on the whiteboard, labeling them “For stricter gun control” and “Against stricter gun control.”

Then, ask students to choose a side of the gun control debate. Students will write an essay in support of this side. Every essay should include a thesis statement. A thesis states the author’s position. Rather than being just a statement of fact, a thesis must be debatable. In other words, it must give an opinion or make a claim. To help students think through what makes a sentence debatable, write the following sentences on the whiteboard:

- Stronger gun control laws are crucial to preventing future school shootings.
- School shootings happen each year in the United States.
- Instead of creating stricter gun laws, people should use other ways to reduce violence.
- Some people support stricter gun control, but others oppose it.

Explain that the first statement is a valid thesis. It says the laws are crucial, which is an opinion. The second statement is not a thesis—it simply states a fact. The third statement is a valid thesis. It makes a claim about what people should do. The fourth statement is not a valid thesis. Although it mentions opinions, it simply states two of them without taking a side.

Students should craft a debatable thesis statement that expresses their opinion about gun control. Then they should conduct research to gather evidence and examples to support this thesis. Students can use the *Parkland Students Challenge the National Rifle Association* book as one source. They should consult at least two other sources. These sources should be listed in a Works Cited page at the end of their essay. Students should include specific facts and examples from all three sources in their essay. Students should make sure to explain how each fact or example supports their thesis. The completed essay should be three pages long.

### **Evaluation**

Collect the essays and give each student up to 40 points:

- 5 points for creating a debatable thesis
- up to 10 points for supporting this thesis with specific facts and examples from the sources
- up to 10 points for explaining how each fact or example supports the thesis
- up to 10 points for organizing the essay in a way that is clear and easy to follow
- 5 points for turning in writing that is free from mechanical errors

### **Standards**

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' writing standards, grade 7 (W 7.1).