

## Lesson Plan

### Making an Argument

**Book:** *Saving Caribou*

**Series:** Saving Animals

**Level:** Navigator

### Objective

To help students write five-paragraph persuasive essays that give clear evidence to support a claim about the effect of human activity on caribou herds and ecosystems.

### Supplies

- *Saving Caribou* book
- Paper and pencils
- Whiteboard

### Before the Activity

Read through the *Saving Caribou* book, or assign it to students to read on their own. Pass out paper and pencils. Write the following sentence on the whiteboard: “Human activity is negatively affecting caribou herds, which in turn changes tundra and boreal ecosystems.”

### Activity

Explain that the sentence on the whiteboard is a thesis statement. A thesis statement is a single sentence that expresses the main idea of an essay or argument. It usually comes as the last sentence of the essay’s opening paragraph. It summarizes the claim that the rest of the essay will attempt to prove.

The thesis statement on the whiteboard has two parts. It makes two separate claims that would need to be proved in an essay. First, it says that human activity is having a negative effect on caribou herds. Second, it says the changes to caribou herds are having an impact on tundra and boreal ecosystems. So, an essay with this sentence as a thesis statement would need to prove both that human activity affects caribou and that caribou affect their environments.

Each student will write a five-paragraph persuasive essay using the sentence on the whiteboard as the thesis statement. The essay should include the following:

- An introductory paragraph that provides context for the essay’s topic and ends with the thesis statement
- Three body paragraphs that give evidence to support the thesis statement
- A concluding paragraph that summarizes the rest of the argument in an original way

Remind students that they can use the book to help make their arguments. If students appear to be struggling with this project, provide guidance by directing them to the following chapters:

- Chapter 3 (“Threats to Caribou”) describes how human activity is affecting caribou herds.
- Chapter 2 (“Habitat Helpers”) describes how caribou affect other animals in their ecosystems.

### **Evaluation**

Collect the papers at the end of the class period. Award students up to 24 points for their essays:

- 2 points for a clear introductory paragraph that provides context for the whole essay
- 1 point for including the thesis statement at the end of the introductory paragraph
- 3 points each for three well-organized body paragraphs that provide evidence for the thesis statement
- 3 points for successfully supporting the claim that human activity is affecting caribou herds
- 3 points for successfully supporting the claim that caribou affect their environments
- 3 points for a concluding paragraph that clearly and concisely summarizes the essay’s argument
- 3 points for writing that is relatively free of spelling and grammatical errors

### **Standards**

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards’ writing standards, grades 6 and 7 (W 6.1, 7.1), and the National Science Education Standards’ Content Standard C, grades 5–8.