

sample CPN 101 assignment: analysis/evaluation of source

Writing Assignment
CPN 101, section 086

Analysis/Evaluation of Source

You have been asked to write a two- to three-page analysis of "Sorting Out the Self-Esteem Controversy" for the *Cortland Composition Review*, a publication that features students' interpretations of articles and books assigned in composition courses.

Your purpose is to interpret the article for someone who has not yet read it. To do this, you should do a systematic examination of the article in which you summarize the author's purpose and thesis and explain how he gets his points across to readers.

To that end, you will explain how the writer does the following: 1) organizes and arranges his ideas; 2) uses certain textual features, and 3) establishes credibility and authority. In other words, you want to explain what the writer's thesis is and how the writer makes his argument convincing to his readers.

To document your source, include APA-style parenthetical citations and a "Reference" page.

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CPN 101, section 086
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Brief Analysis of James A. Beane's "Sorting Out the Self-Esteem Controversy"

Does self-esteem help make a better person, or does it make an arrogant, rebellious individual? If self-esteem has good effects, who should have the task of cultivating it? Should schools be responsible for this, and if so, how should they go about teaching it? Questions such as these are addressed by James Beane, a professor in the National College of Education at National-Louis University. In his well-written article entitled "Sorting Out The Self-Esteem Controversy" (1993), Beane convincingly argues that we should teach self-esteem in our schools.

Until I read Beane's article, I was unaware of the heated controversy regarding the development of self-esteem. Apparently, there are two main points of controversy. One point concerns whether to enhance self-esteem in schools; the other point concerns how, if we intend to enhance self-esteem, we should go about doing so. Those for enhancement, such as Beane, state that self-destructive acts like suicide and drug abuse are the products of low self-esteem. They also say that good self-esteem promotes healthy academic habits like task completion and class participation. Another argument is that people will become better citizens if they believe in themselves because they will have faith that their individual efforts will make a difference. According to Beane, many of the people who

essay heading: does not include instructor's name (according to portfolio guidelines)

essay title: uses key terms to clarify the focus of essay (see Troyka 53-54)

opening strategy: writer engages readers by asking series of provocative questions (see Troyka 104-06)

writer introduces source: stating author's full name, title of article

writer cites date of source at first mention--according to APA-style guidelines (see Troyka 607-08)

brief indication of writer's thesis

writer summarizes key points in controversy--with clear acknowledgments of source

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argue against teaching self-esteem in schools are educators themselves. They argue that schools exist to teach children academic material, not emotional well-being. They say that self-esteem should be taught by other socializing agents, such as the family. These teachers argue that educating is their main goal. And because of increasing academic standards and other demands being placed on them, Beane acknowledges that such teachers feel frustrated and overworked. For those holding such views, teaching self-esteem becomes yet another burden.

Beane cites another argument against teaching self-esteem: that self-esteem often fills an individual with false hope. When confident individuals from poor surroundings interact and try to change something in their environment, they usually fail because the environment is always the dominant force. Beane points out that "[a] debilitating environment is likely to squash fledgling self-confidence no matter how much we exhort the individual to persist" (p. 143).

Even among those such as Beane who favor enhancement of self-esteem, controversy exists. The disagreement revolves around the method to use for enhancing self-esteem. Beane's main purpose in writing his article is to bring to light the many facets of this self-esteem controversy, which he refers to as a "mess." By carefully examining opposing views, Beane attempts to sort it out thoroughly.

Beane gets his point across in a friendly, logical, and articulate manner. His agreeable tone also helps make the article understandable and interesting. Beane also uses effective methods of organization; I particularly liked

continuing paraphrase—with clear acknowledgments of source

quotation from source—with APA-style parenthetical citation (see Troyka 522-28, 607-12)

writer analyzes specific rhetorical characteristics of source

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the way he opened the article with part of his thesis and ended by developing his thesis thoroughly.

¶16 Equally important to the success of Beane's article is his easy-to-follow enumeration of ideas and reasons. This enumeration makes his argument very comprehensible. Within the first two pages, he clearly states his reasons for favoring self-esteem education. Then he lucidly enumerates three different ways of teaching self-esteem and explains why there is a conflict. For example, when he discusses the "fluffy" pop-psychology method of improving self-esteem by having kids make self-affirmations (a technique developed by the California Task Force), he contrasts it with the "get tough" view of pedagogy advocated by the new "Conservative Restoration" (a group that embodies puritan ideas of self-denial) (p. 144).

¶17 Midway through his article, Beane gives his opponents' views along with refutations that are polite and logical. For example, as he is discussing a proposal for teaching self-esteem within a structured class, he presents the views of Mike Schmoker, a critic who is against teaching self-esteem in schools altogether. Schmoker says that structured classwork makes self-esteem seem like something that is given, not earned, and therefore valueless. Beane agrees that self-esteem should not be presented as a given, but he argues that neither should it be earned. Beane believes that everyone has the right to self-esteem; however, he contends that it should be learned, not given and not earned (p. 144).

¶18 In the final pages of his article, Beane makes suggestions about the forms of self-

writer continues to analyze specific characteristics of source

quotation from source—with APA-style parenthetical citation (see Troyka 522-28, 607-12)

writer uses paraphrase in evaluating characteristics of source—with APA-style parenthetical citation (see Troyka 528-32, 607-12)

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*quotation from source—with APA-
style parenthetical citation
(see Troyka 522-28, 607-12)*

*writer more fully develops thesis
about the value of the source*

*concluding strategy: calling for
awareness and action
(see Troyka 107-09)*

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esteem education he thinks would be most beneficial. Beane would like people to understand self-esteem in a broader sense; he believes self-esteem will benefit society more if we no longer look at it in such a personal and close-minded manner. According to Beane, we should view it in terms of our larger social relations and cultural ties. Beane believes that teaching self-esteem in schools would help us achieve this. Specifically, he suggests that schools "place a premium on authentic participation, collaborative action, a problem-centered curriculum, and interdependent diversity" (p. 145).

Even if you disagree with Beane, you cannot help being attracted to the carefully thought out ideas, clear organization, and polite tone he carries throughout the article. He convinces readers of his position by using many supportive facts and numerous references to authorities. Especially impressive is Beane's use of a broad range of expert testimony, ranging from researchers such as Hartshorne and May (they showed the negative effects of teaching in a class setting) to educational critics like Schmoker (pp. 143-144). Beane's evidence comes from a variety of studies, including Lickwood's research on moral development and the research comparing the United States math scores with those of Japan.

After you read Beane's article, you should sort out how you feel about self-esteem and then act upon your opinions. If you side with James Beane and strongly feel that self-esteem should be taught, then write to your congressman or attend school board meetings and suggest that instruction in self-esteem become a part of your school's curriculum.

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Reference

Beane, J. A. (1993). Sorting out the self-esteem controversy. In A. E. Woolfolk (Ed.), Readings and cases in educational psychology (pp. 141-147). Boston: Allyn-Bacon.

APA-style "Reference"
(see Troyka 612-26)

