

PROBLEM | ARGUMENT | IDEA

PROBLEM

A PROBLEM is a genuine question, puzzle, or dilemma that, in the reader's estimation, emerges from the topic or text. This puzzle arises from the writer's encounter with evidence, from the identification or apprehension of something that is curious and that, therefore, provokes further investigation and research. The problem thus prompts and motivates the writer's inquiry. In a piece of writing, the problem provides context for the argument and forms an essential aspect of the idea. Initially articulated clearly in the beginning of the essay, the problem should catalyze readers' interest and curiosity as well as represent what initially intrigued the writer.

Exercise: What is the PROBLEM in our reading from *The Conquest of Bread*? Quote, paraphrase, and summarize the PROBLEM to which Kropotkin's text is responding. Also address this: what evidence does he draw upon to support his pursuit of this problem?

Exchange with a partner (peer review)

Partner up, and consider the following and leave some notes for your partner:

- Has your partner set up context for _____'s essay before jumping right into the problem? If not, leave a comment showing them where to do this, and reminding them of the info needed. Double check spelling and title!!
- How fully, accurately, and effectively is your partner representing the problem in _____? What do you think of the textual evidence they've selected? If you hadn't read this essay, would you be able to understand the problem _____ is pursuing?
- Is your partner missing a representation of the problem all together? That's ok! Take some notes for them about where they need to add it, what they need to include.

ARGUMENT

An ARGUMENT is a mode of discourse that advances a thesis or claim about how an audience should view and respond to a problem. An argument nevertheless is not one-sided – it is capacious, thoroughly considering multiple views and a variety of evidence. Although an argument often appears to drive the essay's presentation of evidence, analysis, and even structure, it develops from preceding analysis: writerly work that is rigorous, patient, and open-minded.

Exercise: Find the ARGUMENT in our reading from *The Conquest of Bread*. Again, draw on specific textual evidence. What is Kropotkin analyzing to develop and support his argument?

Exchange with a partner (peer review)

Partner, consider the following and leave some notes for your partner:

- Has your partner set up context for _____'s essay before jumping right into the argument? If not, leave a comment showing them where to do this, and reminding them of the info needed. Double check spelling and title!!

- How fully, accurately, and effectively is your partner representing the argument in _____? What do you think of the textual evidence they've selected? If you hadn't read this essay, would you be able to understand the problem _____ is pursuing?
- Is your partner missing a representation of the argument all together? That's ok! Take some notes for them about where they need to add it, what they need to include.

Writer's Memo: *Take some notes about what you need to revise/add/alter. If you feel like you represented the problem the best way you can, work on making the beginning of your representation more stylish, interesting, attention grabbing.*

IDEA

An idea is an insight into a specific question or problem. It therefore encompasses both problem and argument, and reflects on the larger implications of the essay's claims. The essay's idea articulates the conceptual issues of the essay's argument, identifying its implications in the context of a specific conversation or discourse community. While the idea rarely appears verbatim in the essay itself, the writer should be able to encapsulate it in a sentence or two; likewise, a reader should, from reading the whole text, gain a clearly articulable sense of its idea.

Exercise: Find the *idea* in our reading from *The Conquest of Bread*. Again, draw on specific textual evidence. What's at stake for the author (the "so-what"/why this matters)? What is the big take-away for Kropotkin?

Problem / Argument / Idea

Take Home Assignment

Following are links to the readings for Week 01 of the course. As you read, you should take notes. I'm never asking you to read these as an expert, but I do expect you be able to answer the following questions in one or two sentences:

1. What PROBLEM is the author "writing toward," what ARGUMENT is the author making and what is the IDEA they are engaging with?
 - The PROBLEM in a piece of writing is a question, puzzle, or dilemma that provokes further investigation and research. The PROBLEM is the motivation behind a piece of writing.
 - An ARGUMENT advances a thesis or claim related to the problem. The ARGUMENT considers multiple views and a variety of evidence—in other words, it does not begin at ground zero, but rather builds on previous approaches to the problem.
 - The IDEA in a piece of writing includes the problem the author is responding to, the argument the author is pursuing, and adds in the implications or stakes of that argument. The IDEA is often not as clearly stated as the problem and argument, but a reader should be able to encapsulate the idea in no more than a sentence or two.

As a *reader*, the ability to grasp the idea reflects close attention to the piece; as a *writer*, your reader's ability to grasp your idea reflects strong organization and clarity.

2. What are some kinds of evidence or lines of reasoning that the author engages with as they explore the problem, make their argument, and pursue their idea? Select a couple of the most compelling examples.
3. What questions do you have after reading the article? What thoughts did it provoke in you?

Submit your writing via the "Assignments" portal on Canvas before the start of class on 9/12. Please also *print it out* and come prepared to share your results with the class on 9/12.