Working through AXES as a Scholar of Color

THRIVE + Center for Writing and Rhetoric

“Finding Your Writer Voice”

**AXES Method of Paragraph Development**

In essays, you must find evidence, introduce it, explain it, and weave it into your big picture argument. You must *also* make sure that your own voice and perspective is clear. Utilizing AXES as a method of paragraph development can also help identify where your own voice can emerge in your writing.

**Assertion:**

- The assertion (or topic sentence) states the specific arguable point you will make in the paragraph.

- Moreover, the assertion connects the paragraph to your thesis (claim).

- Assertions must be arguable – the point that YOU are making about something.

**eXample:**

- The examples are the evidence that supports (or "proves") your assertion.

- These could be a direct quote from the text, a detailed description of a visual object, data, etc.

- Examples should be introduced and briefly contextualized.

-Examples are relevant to where you write from, in relation to your interests and identity.

**Explanation:**

- Examples NEVER speak for themselves: you must provide explanations, which clarify how and why the evidence relates to your assertion and subsequently your central claim.

- Explanation is the clearest place where your voice can come in. This is where you can explain your examples and claims and how they link to what you’re writing.

**Significance:**

-If you simply state, support and explain the assertions, your reader may respond with indifference unless you also tell them why they should care by showing the significance.

- Statements of significance anticipate and answer the question "So What?" In other words, why is the point made in the paragraph important in light of your thesis?

- Providing significance is crucial to making an argument that says something, has a purpose, or is interesting.

-How can you make your work stand out and be unique? What are you saying here that no one else is?

How can we read Gloria Anzaldúa through AXES?

**Assertion eXample Explanation Significance**

*Color coding paragraphs to find your AXES gives you a visual accounting of whether you are integrating each element in your work. If too many of your sentences are the same color, or there are not enough of one color, it may be time to revise and reshape your content and notice where your perspective is missing.*

Writing produces anxiety. Looking inside myself and my experience, looking at my conflicts, engenders anxiety in me. Being a writer feels very much like being a Chicana, or being queer – a lot of squirming, coming up against all sorts of walls. Or its opposite: nothing defined or definite, a boundless, floating state of limbo where I kick my heels, brood, percolate, hibernate, and wait for something to happen.

(Excerpt taken from Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

*Utilizing the four parts of AXES can help identify where voice fits in. This example breaks down how academic writing needs to incorporate personal points of view and perspectives.*

**Assertion:** Writing produces anxiety.

- The assertion is a clear and active statement that is arguable.

- It is specific to the topic of anxiety that is covered throughout the paragraph.

- The main themes are clear.

- This reflects a mixture of scholarly writing and the incorporation of voice through it being an argument but from a clear perspective.

**eXample:** Looking inside myself and my experience, looking at my conflicts, engenders anxiety in me. Being a writer feels very much like being a Chicana, or being queer

- Voice becomes integrated through the expression of Anzaldúa on the page in her references to herself and her experience.

- She explains her identity directly and links it to an elaboration of the direction of her main ideas.

- Her use of experience and identity anchor the paragraph as a tangible example that comes from herself.

- Note key signal words she uses: *myself, my conflicts* and *feels very much like.*

**Explanation:** – a lot of squirming, coming up against all sorts of walls. Or its opposite: nothing defined or definite, a boundless,

- Her explanation is a key area of how her voice and perspective come about, where defines what she means by identity and experience.

- She links her example back to her topic sentence through terms related to anxiety.

- She introduces new and interesting concepts like walls and boundlessness that represent her analysis from her point of view.

**Significance:** floating state of limbo where I kick my heels, brood, percolate, hibernate, and wait for something to happen.

- The author links back to the main themes of the text of the borderlands, states of in- between and limbo.

- Her paragraph adds new significance with her explaining the anxiety in relation to that topic – mentioning brooding and waiting.

- She embraces her style in her short phrases, terminology, tone, and repetition of theme.

- She links everything back to the significance and stakes of identity and experience.

*While we spend time on the analytical, critical, and review components of writing, everyone tends to forget about integrating voice. This approach to AXES allows all students opportunities to write their perspectives and themselves into their work while creating paragraphs at the graduate level.*