Establishing the Significance of the Claim

Description: Students will understand the different between context and significance of their claims and how to effectively incorporate significance into their writing.

Rubric Category	Comprehensive Understanding
Grade/Scores	Grades 11-12 / Scores 3 and 4
CCSS Writing Standards	W1, W1a (11-12)
Argument Type	All arguments

Understanding Expectations

As you become a stronger writer, it is not enough to simply provide context for *understanding* the claim – you must also establish the claim's *significance*. This requires answering the question of relevance. Why does it matter? Why is this claim worth exploring? Providing *context* offers a sense of place or circumstance for a claim, while *significance* speaks to its weight.

Examine the following introduction. The claim is underlined. As you read, try to identify both the **context** and the **significance** of the claim.

Football is a game of inches, and not just on the field. Inches also matter when considering the distance between a full force hit impacting someone's helmeted head and the brain a mere inch and a half away. Football, an extreme contact sport, involves extreme numbers when it comes to head injuries, particularly concussions and hematomas. The football helmet has evolved in numerous ways over the past several decades, but not enough to stop the high rates of head injuries in the NFL or the devastating effects these injuries have on the players' overall health in retirement. If a genuinely safer helmet were engineered, it might spare many players the pain of serious neurological problems and mental health issues. Ultimately, an alliance between design engineers and neurologists is necessary to produce a more effective helmet and ensure a healthier future for NFL players.

1. What information in this paragraph is meant to give the reader basic important information – **context** – about the topic of football and helmets?
2. What information in this paragraph is meant to show the reader *how important or* ***significant*** this topic is?

Share your findings with a partner if possible. Discuss.

Trying It Out

Using a draft of a work in progress, consider your understanding of the difference between *context* and *significance* as they relate to a claim. Answer the following:

1. What is your claim in the paper you are writing or revising?

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2. What *context* do you provide the reader to help give them basic information about the topic of your argument?
3. What do you do in your writing to show *why your claim has significance or importance*? This can be done whether your argument is about a real-life topic – like football helmets – or a literary argument, like an essay arguing for how to interpret a character or story. In this situation, you might have to think about the alternatives – what makes *this* interpretation more significant than *a different* interpretation?

Exchange your draft with a writing partner. Answer the same three questions about your partner's draft. Exchange findings. How do your findings compare with your partner's? Where do you need to clarify significance? Where does your partner need to clarify significance? Exchange feedback and apply edits.

To expand your attention to the significance of your claim, where else in your paper could you demonstrate its impact or underscore its ideas?

Writing It Up

If you are still drafting in the early stages, plan where you can most effectively work in perspectives on the significance of your claim. If you are writing later drafts or revising, have you attended to the significance of your claim adequately? How effectively have you done so? What else can you add that might enhance this aspect of your argument?

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