WRITING: REVISING CLAIM AND FOCUS

Purpose

Deepen your understanding of the elements of good writing by focusing on the Claim and Focus row of the OER Project Writing Rubric. You'll analyze a sample student essay for its major claim and focus, and then revise those elements. Revising someone else's claim will help you advance your own claim-making skills so you can generate well-crafted thesis statements and claims.

Process

1. Review the Claim and Focus portion of the OER Project Writing Rubric below. These are the elements you should look for when you review the sample essay.

Make a fully developed claim that is historically defensible and responds to the assignment.
Establish a strong line of reasoning and maintain a precise focus on defending the described claim.
Develop the claim and counterclaims while thoroughly addressing the demands of the prompt.
Make a fully developed claim that is historically defensible and responds to the assignment.
Establish a strong line of reasoning and maintain a precise focus on defending the described claim.

2. As you read the sample student essay on the next page, make sure you:
   - Circle the major claim/thesis statement in the essay.
   - Underline anywhere you find focus in the essay.
   - Pick two areas of focus to revise. Put a star (★) next to the text you will revise.
   - Highlight one counterclaim in the article.

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Essay prompt: How did industrialization impact society during the long nineteenth century?

Student sample essay:

Industrialization was one of the most important developments of the nineteenth century and, as such, made a significant impact on all aspects of human existence. During this period of factories and machines, the new working class was subject to harsh treatment and Western imperialism created a scramble for colonial expansion. There were many significant impacts of the Industrial Revolution and people of all classes felt the effects of an industrializing world.

Working class people were impacted by industrialization as companies tried to make as much money as possible. As the rise of capitalism led the government to take a step back from limiting a free market, they also ignored how workers should be treated. In a book by a health reformer, he details the plight of the working class in England stating that they had to do the "prolonged labor of an animal" (Doc 1). They were paid very low wages, not allowing them to do anything more than survive on their meager living. In an account of Egypt's factories, workers "arrive at the factories in good health, the unhealthy nature of their employment, … render[s] them diseased and despicable" (Doc 2). Workers were considered dispensable to their employers because one person was overworked or injured, they could be replaced. Industrialization led to widespread mistreatment of the working class, which then became the reason that new ideas like political revolutions and reform movements spread and took root in the communities that had been mistreated. If the system would not allow them to better their lives, workers would push for reform to change the system to make it better for themselves.

Additionally, industrialization caused Western powers to abuse their colonies because they wanted access to their raw materials. These colonies provided raw materials and a larger market for European goods, which accelerated industrialization. European nations often acquired colonies for a large sum of money, but they were "confident that in the future these [colonies] will repay the outlay" (Doc 5). This "repayment" usually occurred due to the mistreatment of the indigenous people of the colony through forcing them into hard labor for little to no pay. A Chilean labor movement leader said that he "worked twelve hours a day, in the full sun" (Doc 7). Workers in colonies were forced to work long

hours in difficult conditions, day in and day out. Similar to the workers in England, the workers in colonies had little to no time for other activities, rest, or family. Often, they were not paid a livable wage in order to maximize profits for an employer or the mother country.

Overall, the working class was oppressed in both the colonies and the mother countries due to industrialization in the long nineteenth century which in turn led to an increase in revolutionary ideology and a push for reform. While industrialization united workers against their mistreatment and spurred the development of revolutionary ideology and labor reform, the negative impacts of industrialization on working conditions continue to be felt today. Even now in many nations around the world, workers such as factory workers or service and retail workers are forced to work long hours for low pay and with scant breaks. Also due to the low minimum wages in many places, workers are frequently attempting to survive on unlivable wages.

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3. Look back at the claim you circled. Revise the major claim and write your revision in the space below.

Revised claim:

4. Look back at the two areas of focus you placed a star next to, and revise them below:

Revised focus 1:

Revised focus 2: