

# The Nature of Art

## Lesson 4: Writing a TOK Essay

*Focus: How can knowledge users develop strong, structured arguments?*

<b>Objective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Write a fully developed essay claim.</b></li><li>● <b>Apply real-world examples and counterclaims to support arguments.</b></li><li>● <b>Engage critically with TOK concepts (e.g., justification, interpretation, perspective).</b></li></ul>
<b>Steps</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Introduction (5 mins)</b><p><b>Guiding Question:</b> "How do we develop a strong argument in a TOK essay?"</p><p><b>Recap:</b> What makes a TOK essay unique?</p><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Focus on knowledge (not merely opinions).</li><li>● Use real-world examples drawn from multiple Areas of Knowledge (AOKs).</li><li>● Include counterclaims.</li><li>● Refer to TOK concepts (e.g., justification, interpretation, perspective).</li><li>● Reflect on the implications and limitations of your argument.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Teacher Tip: Show a quick visual of the TOK essay structure (introduction, body claims, conclusion), highlighting where this developed paragraph fits in.</li></ul></li></ul></li><li><b>2. Examining a Strong TOK Essay Claim (10 mins)</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Break down an example paragraph of your choice with students. Ask them to annotate:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Claim: The stance or argument addressing the TOK prompt.</li><li>○ Example: A real-world situation supporting or illustrating the claim.</li><li>○ Counterclaim: A contrasting perspective that challenges the claim.</li><li>○ TOK Links: Explicit connection to TOK concepts and reflection on how knowledge is produced or validated.</li></ul></li><li>● Discussion Questions:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ How does the example strengthen the claim?</li><li>○ Which Ways of Knowing (WOKs) or Areas of Knowledge (AOKs) are relevant here?</li><li>○ Does the counterclaim effectively challenge the claim, encouraging deeper exploration?</li></ul></li></ul></li><li><b>3. Writing Task: Drafting a TOK Paragraph (15 mins)</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Select a prompt: Provide students with a list of essay prompts to choose from. These could be prompts that you have prepared (e.g., "Does the rejection of street art as 'true art' reflect bias in how artistic knowledge is validated?") or a prescribed title from the official IB list that ties to the topic.</li><li>● Students plan the paragraph, including notes on:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Claim: A statement connecting directly to the prompt.</li><li>○ Example: A real-life scenario (e.g. Diego Gonzalez's school murals or Banksy's public installations) that demonstrates the claim.</li><li>○ Counterclaim: An alternative viewpoint or critique that challenges the initial argument.</li><li>○ TOK Link: Reference how the TOK concepts of justification, perspective, or interpretation influence what is considered valid artistic knowledge.</li></ul></li><li>● Write the paragraph: Emphasise clarity, coherence, and the TOK focus (not just describing the event but analysing how it affects knowledge).</li></ul></li></ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher Tip: Remind students to refer to the AOK: The Arts, and avoid simply praising or criticizing the artwork—instead, focus on how knowledge is formed, judged, and communicated through it.</li> </ul> <p><b>4. Peer Review &amp; Refinement (10 mins)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students exchange their writing in pairs or small groups, and use the essay checklist to give feedback. Use the following discussion points to help students’ develop their feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Claim: Is it clearly stated, and does it tie back to the prompt?</li> <li>○ Example: Is it concrete, relevant, and well-explained?</li> <li>○ Counterclaim: Is it meaningfully different or just a weaker version of the claim?</li> <li>○ TOK Link: Does it show awareness of how knowledge is justified, constructed, or challenged?</li> <li>○ Language and Clarity: Are there any vague statements or unclear references?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● If time permits, students revise immediately based on peer feedback.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflection</b>	<p><b>Reflection (5-10 mins)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What was the most challenging part of writing this?</li> <li>● How do different perspectives influence debates on the legitimacy of art?</li> <li>● How does this practice help prepare for the TOK essay assessment?</li> </ul> <p><b>Extension / Homework</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Option A: Expand the paragraph by adding another real-world example or a deeper analysis of the counterclaim.</li> <li>● Option B: Research a different context (another region or era) to see if the claim holds universally or changes with cultural/political conditions.</li> <li>● Option C: Draft an introductory or concluding paragraph linking the argument to a broader TOK theme (e.g., the categorisation of art as “high art” or “low art” and the authorities that determine this).</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lesson Slides</li> <li>● Example TOK Essay prescribed titles</li> </ul>
<b>TOK Concepts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Justification:</b> To what extent does institutional recognition justify the status of an artwork as legitimate or credible?</li> <li>● <b>Interpretation:</b> How do cultural, political, and social contexts influence the interpretation of graffiti as either art or vandalism?</li> <li>● <b>Perspective:</b> Whose perspectives are privileged in defining what counts as “real art,” and how are these shaped by power, class, and race?</li> </ul>
<b>Critical Thinking Concepts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Confronting Biases and Assumptions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Challenging Bias: Students reflect on why some styles (e.g., realism vs graffiti) are seen as more “artistic.”.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Exploring Contexts and Expert Opinions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Analyzing Artistic Credibility: Students consider how factors like audience, medium, and institutional validation shape perceptions of credibility and legitimacy.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Responsiveness and Flexibility of Thought</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recognizing Contextual Influence: Students explore how setting (school walls vs galleries) and intention (beautification, protest, education) influence interpretation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Extrapolation and Reapplication of Principles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Applying to Social Issues: Students connect street art debates to broader questions of censorship, civic voice, and brand messaging in urban environments.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>