

Do I Need to Prove This? A Yes or No Activity

Students make claims in humanities essays so constantly that they often don't realize they need evidence to do so—peer reviewed sources who can corroborate those claims qualitatively or quantitatively. Many students have become used to the patterns of using 3-5 scholarly sources for the purpose of meeting the requirements of an assignment, rather than using sources to prove the claims that they make, and as a result their arguments may become derivative of these sources, the sources might not be too relevant to their argument, or the sources are only used in a few places throughout the essay instead of in each place they are necessary. Some of these will be more obvious than others, but what do you think about the following claims that hypothetical students are making—which ones need evidentiary support and which ones can stand on their own? Respond with “Yes” if the student can say this without having to quote sources/prove anything, or “No” if they need a source in order to make this claim.

- “The University of Florida was founded in 1853.”
- “The University of Florida was founded in 1853, though it was not until 1905, with the passing of the Buckman Act, that the state’s six precursor higher education institutions and their resources were consolidated into a single university.”
- “A recent study done by scholars at the Brookings Institute found that the number of people living in poverty in America grew by 12.3 million between 2000 and 2010, so that by the end of 2010, 15% of the population was living under the poverty line.”
- “Many point to the early Paleozoic era as a time of rapid and widespread diversification of life in Earth’s history.”
- “The Big Bang theory posits that the universe began billions of years ago with an enormous explosion.”
- “The phrase “Big Bang” was coined by Sir Fred Hoyle, an English astronomer. Hoyle used the term to mock the theory, which he disagreed with.”
- “According to the Big Bang model, the initial explosion was produced when an infinitely hot, dense center referred to as a singularity, began to expand, giving rise to the particles that eventually formed into our universe.”
- “In the 1950s, the dramatic rise of the popularity of the television in households, as well as the larger American familial expansion from urban to suburban and rural settings, lead to the downfall of the golden age of Hollywood cinema, an era of cinematic production that American has not since come close to replicating.”
- “I believe that Judith Butler’s theory of grievable life and dehumanization of the Other influenced waves of contemporary scholars that challenged more comfortable notions of gender, sexuality, and race from the late twentieth century.”
- “As a general term applicable to both watercolor work and acrylic painting, watermedia refers to artwork that uses water as a solvent applied with a brush, pen, or as a spray. Watercolor is often used for depicting landscapes and architecture perhaps for its lauded transparency. Acrylic painting, however, is regarded as a modern marvel because though it is water-soluble, it becomes water resistant when dried. Initially used in the early 1940s, acrylics became popular in the 1960s and 1970s for artists looking for near mechanical precision. Acrylic paint, now the most common synthetic paint, is a fast-drying paint where pigments are suspended in plastic, and it is used in wide range of genres because of its flexibility.”

- “Researchers have found that dispersants utilized to clean up oil spills can lead to lung damage when airborne particles of these dispersants combine with crude oil and are inhaled.”
- “Transcendentalism is a philosophical movement that developed in the late 1820s and 1830s in the eastern United States.”
- “It is often thought that Transcendentalism emerged from English and German Romanticism, German Idealism, and Immanuel Kant’s transcendental philosophy.”
- “I contend that, given the inextricable link between classical era Greco-Roman philosophy and contemporary American moral philosophical ideals, as outlined by Brandt, the works of Aristotle and Plutarch are as fundamentally tied to contemporary American legislature as they are extant in modern European legal settings.”
- “German expressionism is arguably one of the strongest inspirations of Hollywood film noir.”