

# Students' Right to Their Own Writing Infographics

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## Culturally Sustaining Approach



Asks questions about students' choices rather than directly correcting



Uses explicit descriptions to help students understand feedback



Highlights your subjectivity as a reader, acknowledging alternative audiences



Rewards linguistic flexibility

## Traditional Approach



Penalizes usage of African American English (AAE) through direct corrections



Labels AAE as "informal," "confusing," "unclear," or "off-topic"



Assumes only a White, standardized- English speaking audience



Rewards linguistic assimilation



# WORD CHOICE



Usage of first- and second-person pronouns

## LITERARY FUNCTION

- Facilitates a connection with the audience
- Allows students to intersperse their writings with engaging personal testimonies



## EXAMPLES

- "Economic inequity is a major problem in America. I am sure you have seen this in your community."
- "We must work together to fight against this issue."
- "I only recently learned that..."

## HOW TO RESPOND

- Ask questions which prompt students to reflect on the rhetorical function of their language (e.g., "Does your usage of 'you' serve to draw in the audience here?")

## HOW NOT TO RESPOND

- "~~We~~" → "Students"
- "~~You~~" → "Delete"
- "~~I often wonder...~~" → "Delete 'I' from all academic writing."



The usage of first- and second-person pronouns plays a **valuable role** in student writing and can contribute to important class discussions about **strategic word choice**.



# GRAMMAR PATTERNS

Features Ranging From Double Subject to Regularization



## LITERARY FUNCTION

- Preserve meaning
- Reach an intended audience
- "Convey a specific cultural idea" (Perryman-Clark)



## EXAMPLES

- Double subject: "*People that love the beach scene, they* can visit..."
- Existential "it": "*It's* way more than one thing going on at a time."
- Preterite "had": "'What happened to you?' ...Edward *had* told her the whole story."

## HOW TO RESPOND

- Offer explicit description that is non-evaluative and helps the writing preserve specific meaning (e.g., "This grammar pattern is known as preterit 'had' or sometimes innovative 'had'; it can be useful for indicating a pivotal point in a narrative, such as your hitting a breaking point here").

## HOW NOT TO RESPOND

- "*I know that-it might be different fun places*" → "Replace 'it' with 'there.'"
- "Confusing sentence structure"
- "Use a more formal tone."



African American English has many **unique grammar patterns** which students often employ for **specific rhetorical purposes**. Grading approaches which do not take this into account might penalize students for their language variety.

# ORGANIZATIONAL STYLES

*Narrative Approaches in African American English*

## LITERARY FUNCTION

- Make the writing engaging to multiple audiences
- Preserve powerful African American rhetorical traditions
- Demonstrate linguistic dexterity



## EXAMPLES

- Circumlocution and topic association: organizational structures that imply rather than explicitly state claims, topic connections, and transitions



## HOW TO RESPOND

- Emphasize how students can make strategic choices about organization based on their intended messages (e.g., "The pacing of your narrative slows down, just as [topic of paper] slows down. Nice stylistic move").

## HOW NOT TO RESPOND

- "Clear" / "Unclear"
- "Readable" / "Unreadable"
- "Focused" / "Unfocused"
- "Confusing"
- "Get to..." / "Stick to the point."
- "Off-topic"
- "Be more direct."

Students often use organizational styles such as **circumlocution** or **topic association** in order to draw in their intended audience and formulate ideas in ways that linear structures might not allow.