Subject Areas: English/Language Arts and Social Studies

Grade Level: 6 – 12 (ages 11-18)

Time: At least three 45-minute class periods; time outside of class as necessary

Lesson Objective:
Students will be better able to compose effective essays.

Common Core State Standards¹:
Writing Standards for Grades 6-12 in English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Standard 5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Standard 6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Overview:
Writing essays is much easier with the right tools. Use the Essay Planner template (Webspiration Classroom™ Starter>Starter Docs>English Language Arts>Essay Planner) with your students to help them organize their ideas and break the process down into manageable steps. Webspiration™’s tools will enable students to collaboratively brainstorm, develop and organize their ideas.

¹ https://www.corestandards.orgorthandbooks
Preparation:
• This lesson requires Internet access and the Webspiration Classroom™ software application published by Inspiration® Software, Inc. It can be accessed by visiting <http://www.webspirationclassroom.com>.

Lesson:
1. Explain that writing is a process involving many steps. Open the Writing Process template (Webspiration Classroom™ Starter>Starter Docs>English Language Arts>Writing Process) and discuss the steps with students in detail: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing.

2. Explain that Webspiration™ offers many other tools and templates to help with the writing process, including the Essay Planner template which they will be using today. Open it and explain the areas of the template to the students.

3. Open the Essay Planner Example (Webspiration Classroom™ Starter>Examples>English Language Arts>Essay Planner) so students have an idea of a finished diagram. Be sure students understand that they will be developing this plan for their essay before they begin to write it in paragraph form.

4. Prewriting: Have students choose a general topic to begin writing about and record it in the space provided. Then they can brainstorm ideas about it in a blank area to the side of the diagram using the RapidFire tool.

5. When students have a topic they like, they should continue the prewriting process by developing a working thesis statement. Explain to them that a thesis statement is
normally one sentence that states what one will attempt to argue in the paper. Explain that it is called a “working” thesis statement because it may change as students conduct their research.

6. Explain that throughout the prewriting and writing process students should obtain feedback from the teacher and their peers using the collaboration tools. Documents can be shared with others using the Collaborate Tab. The Comment Tab can be used to comment on the document, or the Chat Tab can be used, if it is turned on at your school, to discuss ideas in real time.

7. Students can complete the diagrams and go to Outline View to finish organizing their essays (part of the drafting process).

8. It is very important to check student progress as they undertake the multi-step process of writing an essay. For example, students should obtain feedback on their completed diagrams using the collaboration tools described above.

9. After students have organized their work in outline form, they can download their project to Inspiration® or a word processor, or transfer it to a Google Doc to complete their papers (revising, editing and publishing).

Adaptations / Extensions:
• Students can “publish” their work by making an oral presentation to the class about it. They can read their completed essays or explain their major points using Diagram or Outline View. Subtopics can be hidden or viewed using the Subtopic Quick Control in the upper-right corner of Symbols with subtopics (or in the left margin in Outline View).

• After presenting, students could answer questions and facilitate a discussion about the topic.

• Rather than complete an essay in paragraph form, students could submit a completed diagram or a completed outline.

• This lesson can be used in any content area that requires students to write essays.