

Motivating Moves

Match the “motivating moves” at right with writing samples from the disciplines at left. Please note that each writing sample makes more than one motivating move.

Published Writing from the Disciplines

Sociology: How does one explain the seeming inconsistency between the responses by the Hispanic community to the 1992 poll, on the one hand, and the general pride that most Americans express about their immigrant roots, on the other?

History: New York’s American Art-Union offers an opportunity to examine, in one significant context, the struggle that defined the social role of art and artists in the antebellum North.

Environmental Science: Although the origin of these sources [of oxygenated organic compounds] is still unclear, we suggest that oxygenated species could be formed via the oxidation of hydrocarbons in the atmosphere, the photochemical degradation of organic matter in the oceans, and direct emissions from terrestrial vegetation.

Psychology (Freud, in fact!): The play is built on Hamlet’s hesitations over fulfilling the task of revenge that is assigned to him; but its text offers no reasons or motivations for these hesitations, and an immense variety of attempts at interpreting them have failed to produce a result.

Some Motivating Moves

1. The truth isn’t what one would expect, or what it might appear to be on first reading.
2. The knowledge on the topic has heretofore been limited.
3. There’s a mystery or puzzle or question here that needs answering.
4. Published views of the matter conflict.
5. We can learn about a larger phenomenon by studying this smaller one.
6. This seemingly tangential or insignificant matter is actually important or interesting.
7. There’s an inconsistency, contradiction, or tension here that needs explaining.
8. The standard opinion(s) need challenging or qualifying.