

Proposing a counternarrative: It's gotta have SASS!

An effective argument for the significance of the counternarrative you've chosen will include a clearly defined SUBJECT, ACTION, SCOPE, and STAKES, or SASS. Below, I've listed some questions that might help craft an argument that encompasses all of those elements. Your explanation need not (and realistically should not) answer all of these questions, but a clear and precise answer to one question in each category will set up a strong overall argument.

(Note: This model works well for thesis statements and introductions to longer writing pieces, too; feel free to use SASS in your other assignments and classes!)

Subject:

What or who are you talking about? Get as specific as you can.

Action:

What did the subject DO to or for a specific group of people/community?

What did the subject DO to affect widespread cultural or political change?

What did the subject DO to affect or sustain change in their local community or organization?

What verb fits best with what you have observed about the subject?

Stakes: (Why does this matter?)

Why does this counternarrative, this perspective, this detail of the story need to be told?

How and/or why does this story challenge, complicate, or make an intervention in our dominant cultural narratives surrounding civil rights activism?

What was the impact of this cultural text or act of protest? Who was impacted most?

How does this cultural text/act of protest illustrate broader trends or patterns?

Scope: (What's the context?)

When does the story of this cultural text or act of protest start and end? (Are you focused on a single day? An ongoing, repeated public display? The publication date?)

Where are you arguing the main impact took place? (A single neighborhood? A whole country?)

What details does the reader need to know to understand your argument?

If there are many similar examples, which specific event/text are you focusing on and why?