**Category**: Summarizing and Responding to Text Effectively

**Title**: Primary Colors: Breaking Down Arguments

Designed by Missy Wallace

**Lesson Objectives**: This activity will break down an argumentative text into its component parts so that the students can easily visualize the layout of the argument.

**Preparation and Materials**: A copy of an argumentative text for the entire class, an Elmo (optional), and many, many highlighters.

**Procedures**: I generally use a student-written text for this assignment since they are generally shorter, but you may consider using a text that the class has already read or another text that you feel would serve the class the best for this project. You can break the students into groups, work on this project individually, or work on it as a class together.

First, review the different parts of an argument to refresh the students’ memory. Then pass out the text and ask the students to choose at least three different highlighter colors. Students should choose one highlighter color for each of the following components of an argument: point, evidence, and refutation.

Ask students to first locate and mark the thesis by underlining it in pen or pencil. Then ask the students to highlight each of the parts of the argument accordingly.

Bring the class together after working alone or in groups and go through the text together by color. Ask students to talk about what they highlighted in each category and why. This activity should open up discussion to the balance between points and evidence, organization, and the need for refutation in an argument. This activity can continue to be used throughout the rest of the argumentative unit to analyze source texts, workshop their own argumentative papers, and for peer review. A lack of a point, evidence, or refutation will be clearly visible to the student viewing his text as a whole.

This activity can be further complicated by using different colors for different points and color-coding the evidence relevant to that point in the same color.

**Conclusion**: This activity will teach the students how to identify the different parts of an argument and how they are used in a model paper. It will teach them the layout of arguments, and they can apply this activity to their own work or texts that they analyze as a quick visual way of breaking down the work.