Group Activity: Exploring the Rhetorical Situation: Using Sources to Respond to Questions

Purpose:
The following exercise is designed for two reasons: (1) to further your understanding of the rhetorical situation; and (2) to prepare you to respond critically to readings.

Directions:
You will have ______ minutes to complete each exercise. Each round offers key terms, a question, and some direct quotations. The key terms are associated with a rhetorical situation. Please work together to discuss and answer the question. In the course of answering the question, please draw upon one or more quotations in some way, either through paraphrase, summary, or direct quotation. You are encouraged to use the templates provided in They Say/ I Say to help you include what others say. Don’t forget to add what you say as well. After discussion, record your group’s response to the question on a piece of paper. Put all members’ names on the sheet of paper as well.

Round One: Rhetorical Situation
Key Terms: Writer’s Purpose, Exigency, Kairos

Q: Aside from a class assignment and a due date, what motivates writers to write?

“If you have been taught to write a traditional five-paragraph essay, for example, you have learned how to develop a thesis and support it with evidence. This is good advice as far as it goes, but it leaves out the important fact that in the real world we don’t make arguments without being provoked. We make arguments because someone has said or done something . . . and we need to respond. . . . If it weren’t for other people and our need to challenge, agree with, or otherwise respond to them, there would be no reason to argue at all” (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010, p. 3).

“Good writing requires good reading because writing grows out of and responds to other writing in myriad ways” (Wysocki & Lynch, 2007, p. 183).

“. . . King would not have written his famous letter [from Birmingham Jail] were it not for his critics, whose views he treats not as objections to his already-formed arguments, but as the motivating source of those arguments, their central reason for being” (Graff & Birkenstein, 2006, p. 6).

“Writing gives you the power to get things done with words and images. It allows you to respond successfully to the events and people around you, whether you are trying to improve your community, pitch a new idea at work, or just text with your friends” (Johnson-Sheehan & Paine, 2013, p. 4).