EXAMPLES OF MICROTHEMES

1. Persuasive Microtheme: Landscape management
The Chief Planner at the Palmerston North City Council has contacted you and told you that major earthworks and roadworks are being planned for the Esplanade as part of a new traffic plan to relieve congestion on the bridge. Your area is likely to be destroyed if the plan goes ahead. The planner has asked you to write her a memo, summarizing the benefits of your area so that this can be used as evidence at the planning decision.

2. Data-based Microtheme: Horticulture production
Suppose that you are Professor Plant, the questions-and-answer person for a magazine targeted at non-professional horticulturalists called Plants like us. Readers of your magazine are invited to submit letters to Prof Plant, who answers them in a “Dear Abby” style in a special section of the magazine. One day you receive this letter:

Dear Prof Plant,

You’ve got to help me settle this argument I’m having with my cousin Nora from Christchurch. We are both involved in growing a crop of Gladiolus grandiflorus ‘Brigitte’ for our cousin’s wedding on the 1st May next year. We will both receive the corms from the supplier, Nora will grow her crop in her garden in Christchurch and I will grow mine here in my garden in Gisborne. Nora says that her Bert Fig’s Gardening Book says that if we are to have our plants flowering the day before the wedding, ie 30th April, we both have to plant them exactly 90 days before. I said she was wrong as the instructions on the packet said 1477 growing-degree-days required – whatever they are. Besides, if plants don’t have brains, how could they possibly know what the date was, and therefore know to flower in 90 days from planting? Ever since then she hasn’t been talking to me. Since we both have to work together on producing these flowers, we need to resolve this argument. We checked with some other plant books, but they weren’t very clear. We agreed that I would write to you and let you settle the argument. But, Prof Plant, don’t just tell us who is right and who is wrong. You’ve got to explain how we can both attempt to grow our crops for flowering on this date, so we both understand. Nora is so pig headed that unless it is explained clearly and simply she won’t believe anyone.

Your sincerely
Gladus and the Pips

Can this kindred friendship be saved? Your task is to write an answer to Gladus and the Pips. Because space in the magazine is limited, restrict your answer to a maximum of 500 words (excluding tables and figures). Don’t confuse Gladus and Nora by getting too technical. If you do need to use technical terms, explain what they mean. In preparing an answer, you might like to refer to the meteorological data for where Gladus and Nora live. If you think figures or tables might help, include them on a separate sheet.
3. Persuasive Microtheme: Physics

The illustrious governor of Utah is always looking out for the people of Utah — he takes his duty to protect the people of our state seriously, especially from scientists. One morning, you wake up see the headlines proclaim “Governor locks Larson up for good! State rejoices!” Clearly the governor had a good reason for this, but you think maybe you should check anyhow, and reach for your phone. “He's a fraud!” the governor exclaims. “We are trying to be more fiscally responsible than those fools in Colorado, and have gotten rid of all the phones in the capitol. Instead, we hang strings out the top window of the building and communicate by sending wave pulses up the string. Larson told me that messages from the third floor would get to the fourth floor quicker than messages from the first floor would get to the second floor! Fool! He’s the one who taught me all about speed last year – if it is the same distance between floors, it should take the wave pulse the same time to get between any two floors!” When you asked if your physics professor tried to explain himself, the governor said “Yes, he was yammering on about the tension in the string, but it was just a diversionary tactic. I locked him up before he started scaring people!”

In a short (1-2 page) essay, explain how your professor is most certainly correct, and why the governor should release him (for the continued safety of the world)! Do not use equations — this is a conceptual exercise. Use good examples or analogies to emphasize your points. If you think a picture would be helpful, you can include a single diagram.

4. Explanatory Microtheme: Chemistry

**Purpose of the assignment:** To understand the physical states or phases of matter and intermolecular forces (especially hydrogen bonding).

**Point of View:** A water molecule

**Audience:** Fellow water molecules

**Scenario:** You are a water molecule in the hot water heater along with your fellow water molecules. All of a sudden, you find yourself released for the water heater tank and violently expelled from the nozzle of a showerhead. Before you recover from that experience, however, you find yourself alone for a short period of time, until you meet up with a group of your water molecule friends on the surface of the bathroom mirror.

**Writing Assignment:** On the surface of the mirror, you and your friends all share similar stories. Since you are the most scientifically inclined of the group, you are assigned to write a short report explaining to your fellows what happened and why, all based on good sound fundamental molecular reasoning. Your report to the group should include a discussion of the forces that kept you all together and reunited you. You should also explain why you found yourself along for a period of time and how you ended up together again on the surface of the mirror. A couple of good paragraphs should suffice.

**Focusing questions:** You will need to formulate these as part of the prewrite analysis. Be sure to point out the inter-relationship between the physical states of matter and intermolecular forces, giving special attention to hydrogen bonding.

5. Summary Microtheme: Health sciences

You have been asked to give a three minute summary of the following paper to a meeting of local midwives: Leavitt, S. A. (2006). "A private little revolution": The home pregnancy test in American culture. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 80*(2), 317-345. Summarise the paper, identifying 3-5 take-home messages for your audience.