



Arguing With Evidence

Part 1: Deconstructing Arguments



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Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	Time Frame	100 minutes
Subject	English/Language Arts	Duration	2–3 class periods
Course	Composition, Creative Writing		

Essential Question

What issue is possibly one of the most important to the current generation of youth in America?

Summary

Students will work collaboratively to examine and deconstruct published arguments based on social issues important to them. Students will then evaluate each other's analysis of published arguments and reflect on issues in today's society. While this lesson is currently aligned only to 10th-grade standards, it would be appropriate to teach in grades 9 through 12, adjusting standards as needed.

Snapshot

Engage

Students attempt to answer the essential question, "What issue is possibly one of the most important to the current generation of youth in America?" They will then use the Sticky Bars strategy to pair up according to their topics.

Explore

Students watch a video introducing argumentative writing and, in pairs, discuss essential elements of argument.

Explain

Students deconstruct a published argumentative article focusing on the claim, evidence, and counterarguments.

Extend

Students create a visual representation of their selected topic.

Evaluate

Students participate in a Gallery Walk to evaluate their peers' work and offer feedback. They conclude the lesson by reflecting on their own learning.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 9)

9.3.R.2: Evaluate authors' perspectives and explain how those perspectives contribute to the meanings of texts.

9.3.R.5: Evaluate the validity of a speaker's argument:

- distinguish the kinds of evidence (e.g., logical, empirical, anecdotal)
- distinguish substantiated from unsubstantiated claims
- analyze rhetorical appeals (i.e., ethos, logos, pathos)
- identify bias
- identify logical fallacies

9.3.R.6: Analyze how informational text structures support the author's purpose.

9.3.W.3: Compose argumentative essays, reviews, or op-eds that:

- introduce precise, informed claims
- include a defensible thesis
- acknowledge counterclaims or alternate perspectives
- organize claims, counterclaims, and evidence in a logical sequence
- provide the most relevant evidence to develop balanced arguments, using credible sources
- use sentence variety and word choice to create clarity and concision
- use style and tone that suits the audience and purpose

Attachments

- [Arguing with Evidence—Arguing with Evidence - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Arguing with Evidence—Arguing with Evidence - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Arguing with Evidence—Arguing with Evidence.docx](#)
- [Arguing with Evidence—Arguing with Evidence.pdf](#)
- [Argument Essay Notes—Arguing With Evidence - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Argument Essay Notes—Arguing With Evidence - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Argument Essay Notes—Arguing With Evidence.docx](#)
- [Argument Essay Notes—Arguing With Evidence.pdf](#)

Materials

- Argument Essay Notes (attached; one per student)
- Arguing With Evidence (attached; one per student)
- Poster board for each pair of students
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- Sticky notes
- Computer with projector
- Student devices (Chromebook, laptop, tablet, etc.; one per pair of students)
 - If devices are not available, you may print the articles for students

Engage

Have the essential question, "What issue is possibly one of the most important to the current generation of youth in America?" posted in the classroom when students enter. Give students a minute to construct a response to the question. Assure students there are no right or wrong answers. They are to simply answer the question to the best of their ability.

On the board or on poster paper, display the following categories for students: education, social media, gender issues, politics, health, and personal character. Explain that most of their answers to the essential question will fall into one of these large categories. Pass out a sticky note to each student and ask them write their name on the sticky note. Ask them to think about which category would best fit their answer to the essential question. Using the [Sticky Bars](#) strategy, students will place their sticky note within the category that best fits their answer to the essential question. As students place their sticky notes within a category, the sticky notes should move up the wall like a bar graph. This will allow you and your students to see which category is of most interest to students of this generation. It will also help with pairing students based on their interests.

Based on student answers, group students into pairs. These pairs work together for the rest of the lesson.

Teacher's Note

A visual example of Sticky Bars is located in the resources section. This visual will assist in showing what Sticky Bars will look like after students have placed their sticky notes.

Explore

Distribute the attached **Argument Essay Notes** handout. Play the [How to Write an Argumentative Essay](#) video. Students should complete the handout independently as they watch, with extra time following the video. Have students discuss with a partner and share out some of the most significant components of argumentative writing.

Embedded video

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=-lzGy5gizKg>

Alternative Option

If technology does not allow for viewing of the video, display the following infographic for student use: [Building a strong argument infographic](#). This infographic shares similar information from the video in a visually appealing way but does not require internet if printed.

Explain

Pass out the attached **Arguing With Evidence** handout. Each group of partners should get a handout to share. Explain to students that they will be using the handout to deconstruct argumentative articles. Each group should be allowed to choose an article that fits their issue of concern from the beginning of the lesson (e.g., If the students chose an issue dealing with gender issues, they should search for an article dealing with gender issues). Students should use the handout to record the main thesis of the article and evidence that supports the main thesis. In addition, they will consider possible counterarguments.

Pass out an electronic device to each student. Direct them to the News ELA website:

<https://newsela.com/articles/#/category/opinion>. On the Opinion page of the News ELA website, students can examine hundreds of articles that have an argumentative stance. Instruct each group to choose an article under their issue/topic. Give students approximately 15–20 minutes to analyze the article they have chosen and complete the handout.

Teacher's Note: Modifications

If students are in need of assistance, you may model the activity with the whole class using one of the News ELA articles. Lead a class discussion to complete the **Arguing With Evidence Handout** on the board. Allow class discussion to develop the thesis, evidence supporting the thesis, counterarguments, and conclusion. This will assist students in deconstructing their own arguments in groups later. Choose a topic from the Opinion section that might not be used so students can choose any topic without fear of copying the example.

If electronic devices are not available for each group, print copies of a variety of articles for each group to choose from.

Extend

Once students are done deconstructing the argument in the real life articles from News ELA, they will create a visual representation of the argument.

Direct each group of students to create a poster to represent their argument. Ask them to use the information on their handout to construct their poster. Each poster must include the following: thesis, evidence, counterarguments.

Students can create their posters using creative, artistic symbolism or use a more concrete approach by creating more of a visually appealing outline. Allow approximately 10–15 minutes for the creation of the posters. Inform students that their work will be presented to their peers and evaluated.

Evaluate

Once student partners are done with their posters, each group will hang their poster around the room.

Students will now participate in a strategy called [Gallery Walk](#). Give each pair of students sticky notes of two different colors.

Inform students that they will use the sticky notes to give their peers feedback on their deconstruction of an argument. Instruct students that they are to either say one thing they agree with about the argument (using one color), or one thing they disagree with about the argument (using the other color). Their feedback should be meaningful and constructive.

Each partner group will stand in front of a poster that is not their own. They will have 2 minutes to leave feedback on the poster using their sticky note.

After 2 minutes, the groups will rotate to the next poster and repeat the process, until all the posters have been reviewed.

Teacher's Note

Guide a class discussion on appropriate feedback. Feedback such as "Great job!" or "I don't like this" is not meaningful or constructive. Give some examples of the kind of feedback you hope to see.

Examples:

- "I agree with the argument that this issue affects many Americans."
- "I disagree with this argument because _____."
- "The thesis is interesting, but I'm not sure how the second piece of evidence supports the thesis."

Once the Gallery Walk is complete, ask students to return to their desks and complete a 2-minute quick-write reflection on the following question:

Has your opinion of what is most important to America's youth changed during this lesson? Why or why not?

Teacher's Note

During the 2-minute paper, students are to write constantly. The purpose of a quick-write is for students to dump their thoughts, focusing on their ideas and not grammar or mechanics. Their pencils should not stop moving the entire time. Ensure students they will not be graded on spelling or grammar, but on ideas.

Possible Extension

Once students have deconstructed an argument and understand some of the significant elements to argumentation, they can start constructing their own arguments. A great resource for argumentative writing is the [New York Times 200 Writing Prompts](#). Also, see the Resources section for information on entering student arguments in the *New York Times* Student Open Letter Contest.

Resources

- Building a strong argument infographic: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/ac/48/6c/ac486c4e1ab5273177cf9875bcc1f620.jpg>
- Gonchar, M. (2014, February 4). 200 prompts for argumentative writing. *New York Times*. <https://archive.nytimes.com/learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/04/200-prompts-for-argumentative-writing/> PDF: <https://static01.nyt.com/images/blogs/learning/pdf/2014/200PromptsArgumentativeWriting.pdf>
- IgniteED: Fueling Great Minds. (2014, September). Visual of sticky bars strategy. <http://fuelgreatminds.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/formative-assessment.jpg>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Sticky bars. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/12>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Gallery walk / carousel. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/118>
- The Learning Network. (2024, August 8). Open letters: Our opinion-writing contest. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/08/learning/open-letters-our-opinion-writing-contest.html>
- News ELA website, Opinion section: <https://newsela.com/articles/#/category/opinion>
- Reference guide on teaching evidence-based arguments: <http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/developing-evidence-based-arguments-31034.html>
- Shmoop. (2013, March 26). *How to write an argumentative essay by Shmoop* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-lzGy5gizKg>