

Writing an Argumentative Paragraph

Argumentative Writing

K20 Center, Paige Holden, Gage Jeter
Published by *K20 Center*

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 License

Grade Level	7th – 9th Grade	**Time Frame**	3-5 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	200 minutes
Course	American Literature, Composition		

Essential Question

Why is it important to be able to construct an effective argument?

Summary

Students will read both fiction and nonfiction to analyze arguments. They will practice annotating, writing for a variety of purposes, and working collaboratively with their peers. Students will understand argumentative structure and use that knowledge to construct arguments both as a class, within small groups, and individually. While this lesson is currently aligned only to 8th grade standards, it would be appropriate to teach in grades 7 through 9, adjusting standards as needed.

Snapshot

Engage

Students read a short story and and a short nonfiction article. Students also consider aspects of argument with which they are already familiar.

Explore

Students experiment with organizing arguments in various ways.

Explain

The teacher introduces argumentative structure in a presentation.

Extend

Students work in groups to practice argumentative writing about a story that the class read and discussed together.

Evaluate

Students read a piece on their own and formulate an argument.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts (Grade 8)

8.1.W.2: Students will work effectively and respectfully within diverse groups, show willingness to make necessary compromises to accomplish a goal, share responsibility for collaborative work, and value individual contributions made by each group member.
8.3.R.5: Students will evaluate textual evidence to determine whether a claim is substantiated or unsubstantiated.
8.3.W.3: Argument: Students will introduce a claim, recognize at least one claim from an opposing viewpoint, and organize reasons and evidences, using credible sources.
8.3.W.4: Students will show relationships among the claim, reasons, and evidence and include a conclusion that follows logically from the information presented.

Attachments

- Argument Practice-Tell Tale Heart - Spanish.docx
- Argument Practice-Tell Tale Heart - Spanish.pdf
- Argument Practice-Tell Tale Heart.docx
- Argument Practice-Tell Tale Heart.pdf
- Argumentative Paragraph Rubric - Spanish.docx
- Argumentative Paragraph Rubric - Spanish.pdf
- Argumentative Paragraph Rubric.docx
- Argumentative Paragraph Rubric.pdf
- Argumentative Writing Notes - Spanish.docx
- Argumentative Writing Notes - Spanish.pdf
- Argumentative Writing Notes.docx
- Argumentative Writing Notes.pdf
- Completed Student Notes - Spanish.docx
- Completed Student Notes - Spanish.pdf
- Completed Student Notes.docx
- Completed Student Notes.pdf
- Group Activity Arguments - Spanish.docx
- Group Activity Arguments - Spanish.pdf
- Group Activity Arguments.docx
- Group Activity Arguments.pdf
- Writing an Argumentative Paragraph.pptx

Materials

- Copy of (or device to access) "Watch This. No. Read It!" by Lauren Duzbow (linked in Engage section)
- Sample Arguments for group activity (see Attachments)
- Argumentative Writing PowerPoint (see Attachments)
- Class Notes on writing an argumentative paragraph (see Attachments for guided notes and a key)
- Copy of "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe (linked in Extend section)
- Argument Practice handout (see Attachments)
- Articles for assessment (linked in Evaluate section)
- Writing utensils

Engage

Prior Knowledge

Before engaging in this lesson, students should have an understanding of author's purpose, annotating, expository writing, and paragraph structure.

Students read the article "Watch This. No, Read It!" and use the Claim, Evidence, Reasoning strategy to unpack the argument. They will use this information to construct their first argumentative paragraph as a class, with guidance, during the Explain segment of the lesson.

Students will then participate in an I Think/We Think activity. First, students should write for a specified amount of time (at least 5 minutes but no more than 10) about the prompts below in their "I Think" column (these questions are also on PowerPoint slide four). They can answer all of the questions or the one or two they feel most strongly about, as long as they write the entire time.

- What does it mean to have an argument?
- What generally causes an argument?
- When you're having an argument, how can you convince someone to agree with you?
- Why is it important to be able to have a good argument?

Teacher's Note

Possible responses: An argument is when two people have a conversation about something they don't agree on. An argument is caused when people don't see eye-to-eye on an issue. You can convince someone to agree with you by providing them with good reasons that your argument is correct. It's important to be able have a good argument so you can get your point across in a respectful way.

Turn to slide five in the PowerPoint. Students will turn to an Elbow Partner to share their thoughts, adding new ideas into the "We Think" column. The teacher can then ask for volunteers to share with the whole class and students can add more information to that column.

Explore

For this group activity, cut argumentative paragraphs into sentence strips and put out of order (see "Group Activity Arguments" under Attachments). Students organize the strips into the argument they think would be most effective. The teacher leads students in a discussion about WHY they ordered the argument that way. The groups are bound to have differences in their decisions, and the teacher should encourage students to explore those differences, and maybe even try to come to a consensus as a class about the best choices.

Teacher's Note

Teachers print out and cut arguments into strips ahead of time. Groups should be small, four students at the most, or some students are likely to become disengaged. Five arguments have been included in the attachment. If there has to be more than five groups for the groups to be kept small, similar ones could be created or those included could be repeated, as long as the groups don't do more than five rotations.

After a few minutes, the groups mix up their strips, switch tables, and repeat the process. To keep students' engagement levels high, three rotations is optimal. Mixed-ability groups would work best for this activity.

Explain

Present information and examples about how to construct an argument (these begin on slide seven of the attached PowerPoint).

Students complete the guided notes ("Argumentative Writing Notes" can be found under Attachments) according to what they learn through the PowerPoint presentation's slides seven and eight, which review paragraph structure and identify how writing an argument is similar to expository writing. Next, the notes introduce the idea of a counterclaim and explain how to address the opposite point of view without undermining one's own argument (PowerPoint slides nine through 11). Examples are provided in the presentation.

Teacher's Note

See "Completed Student Notes" under Attachments for a key.

Students refer back to the important information they identified in the "Watch This. No. Read It!" article (from the Engage portion of the lesson). Then, lead the students in constructing an argumentative paragraph as a class using the paragraph structure outlined earlier. PowerPoint slides 12-13 address argument structure and give an example paragraph.

Teacher's Note

Some possible prompts for class paragraph are as follows: Is it more beneficial for students to read information than to get it in other ways? What was the author's purpose in this article? (The latter is useful only if the class has previously discussed author's purpose.)

Extend

Students read the short story "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe. Engage students in a discussion about whether or not the narrator of the story is reliable.

Present slide 14 of the PowerPoint, which contains an argumentative prompt about "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe. Students work in groups to structure their argument using the argument practice handout (see Attachments for "Argument Practice-Tell Tale Heart"). Have the groups number off. Even numbered groups will be arguing yes, and odd numbered groups will be arguing no.

Evaluate

Students read an article on their own and write an argumentative paragraph independently.

Teacher's Note

The articles are hyperlinked below, and URLs are provided in the Resources section. Feel free to print these for students to use, or allow students to use devices to access the articles.

An example is the article "Bottle Flipping Becomes the Rage with Middle Schoolers." Students answered the question "Should our school ban bottle flipping? Use evidence from the text to support your claim." Other possibilities include:

- "How Writing by Hand Makes Kids Smarter" from The Week, which explores the difference between writing information by hand and typing it and how that impacts learning, which is relevant to students as more of their education involves devices.
- Another article that could be used is "I Won't Hire People Who Use Poor Grammar-Here's Why" by Kyle Wiens. Grammar instruction has changed a great deal as education evolves, and it typically evokes strong reactions from students.

You can evaluate student learning by grading their paragraphs according to a rubric (a sample rubric can be found under Attachments, "Argumentative Paragraph Rubric").

Students evaluate their own learning by engaging in a What Did I Learn Today activity and taking time to reflect upon their progress toward the essential question.

Students participate in a final quick write to answer the essential question: Why is it important to be able to construct an effective argument? You can ask for volunteers to share their thoughts with the class.

Resources

- Arnett, D., & Rao, S. (2016, September 30). Bottle flipping becomes the rage with middle schoolers. The Boston Globe. Retrieved from https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2016/09/29/bottle-flipping-becames-rage-with-middle-schoolers/1INRaYEj9dQILseR5cgVUK/story.html
- Duzbow, L. (2008, June). Watch this. No. Read it! O, The Oprah Magazine. Retrieved from http://www.oprah.com/health/how-reading-can-improve-your-memory
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Claim, evidence, reasoning (CER). Strategies. Retrieved from https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f506fc09
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow partners. Strategies. Retrieved from https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/ccc07ea2d6099763c2dbc9d05b00c4b4
- K20 Center. (n.d.). I think / we think. Strategies. Retrieved from https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5065bfd
- K20 Center. (n.d.). What did I learn today? Strategies. Retrieved from https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5078797
- Poe, E. A. (1843). The tell-tale heart. Poe Museum. Retrieved from https://www.poemuseum.org/the-tell-tale-heart
- The Week Staff. (2010, October 6). How writing by hand makes kids smarter. The Week. Retrieved from http://theweek.com/articles/490493/how-writing-by-hand-makes-kids-smarter
- Wiens, K. (2012, July 20). I won't hire people who use poor grammar. Here's why. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2012/07/i-wont-hire-people-who-use-poo