

Introduction to Arguing Effectively

Argument Writing

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Published by *K20 Center*

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Grade Level	10th – 11th Grade	**Time Frame**	240 minutes
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	4-5 class periods

Essential Question

How can we effectively argue a point when there is more than one valid option?

Summary

This lesson serves as an introduction to writing effective arguments. Students will engage in a Four Corners Debate, differentiate between the various elements of argument writing, and understand how to effectively argue their own claims by using supporting evidence. Students will also create a multimodal representation of their argument. While this lesson is currently aligned only to 10th grade standards, it would be appropriate to teach in grades 10 through 11, adjusting standards as needed.

Snapshot

Engage

Students participate in a Four Corners debate.

Explore

Students determine what argument is and what argument is not with the Example, Nonexample instructional strategy.

Explain

Students write a brief argument on a given prompt.

Extend

Students create a multimodal representation of their argument.

Evaluate

Students' written and multimodal compositions are evaluated on the basis of argument techniques.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

ARG401: Analyze how one or more sentences in somewhat challenging passages offer reasons for or support a claim

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 10)

10.3.R.6: Analyze how informational text structures support the author's purpose.
10.3.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

10.7.W: Create engaging multimodal content that intentionally addresses an audience and accomplishes a purpose.

Attachments

- Argument-Examples - Spanish.docx
- Argument-Examples - Spanish.pdf
- Argument-Examples.docx
- Argument-Examples.pdf
- Argument-IntroductionPP.pptx
- Argument-Writing-Grading-Rubric - Spanish.docx
- Argument-Writing-Grading-Rubric - Spanish.pdf
- Argument-Writing-Grading-Rubric.docx
- Argument-Writing-Grading-Rubric.pdf
- Potential-Opinion-Statements-for-Four-Corners - Spanish.docx
- Potential-Opinion-Statements-for-Four-Corners - Spanish.pdf
- Potential-Opinion-Statements-for-Four-Corners.docx
- Potential-Opinion-Statements-for-Four-Corners.pdf
- Study-Awesome - Spanish.docx
- Study-Awesome - Spanish.pdf
- Study-Awesome.docx
- Study-Awesome.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Potential Opinion Statements for Four Corners (attached)
- Argument Examples (attached)
- Argument Writing Rubric (attached)
- Study Awesome (attached)
- Four Corners labels: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
- Student-generated argument prompts/opinion statements
- Writing materials: pen, pencil, paper, etc.
- Highlighters

Engage

This lesson begins with a Four Corners activity, which allows participants to learn to determine strong justifications for their arguments. Here's a rundown of how the Four Corners instructional strategy works:

- Create and place signs around the room (in each corner) titled Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.
- Guide students through opinion statements. Initially, low-stakes statements, such as "Chik-fil-A serves the tastiest chicken sandwiches," allow for a relaxed debate. The teacher could also ask students to write opinion statements, then pull from those for this activity (and future activities).

Teacher's Note

Examples of low-stakes opinion statements are attached (see "Potential Opinion Statements for Four Corners") and include prompts like, "The iPhone is the best phone on the market," and, "Dr. Pepper is better than Coke." These opinion statements should be relevant and meaningful to students, so asking them to create their own opinion statements will make this activity more authentic. If students write their own statements, give them a low-stakes topic (such as food, sports, hobbies, TV shows, movies, etc.) and ask them to write a "best" or "worst" opinion statement about an example in that category (i.e., Braum's serves the best hamburgers; McDonald's hamburgers are the worst). These opinion statements can then be used in this Four Corners activity.

- Once an opinion statement has been read, the student should choose his or her level of agreement and go to that corner of the room.
- In agreement groups, students should formulate justifications for their beliefs, then share with the larger group. The teacher should allow for sustained, deep conversation.
- Students should be allowed to move corners if their classmates persuade them. This demonstrates how arguments grounded in reasoned evidence can cause us to change our viewpoints.

Teacher's Note

The Four Corners activity can last as many rounds as time allows. Be sure students get to engage in this activity for an adequate amount of time as they start discovering the various aspects of argument: opinion statements, reasons, support, objections, etc.

Explore

After the Four Corners activity, students should complete a 5 minute quickwrite over the word "argument." Students should consider what the word means to them based on their prior knowledge and experiences. After 5 minutes, students should share with an elbow partner, then volunteers should share out with the class.

Teacher's Note

It is likely that students without much experience working with arguments will define argument as right/wrong, debate, yes/no, for/against, pro/con, etc. The goal of this exploration activity is to right those misconceptions.

Using the Examples and Non-Examples strategy, ask the students what an argument is and what it is not. The ultimate goal is to create a list of rules for what an argument is.

Based on Ramage and Bean's Writing Arguments textbook, the teacher should point out the three defining features of an argument: it requires justification of its claims (reasons, support, backing); it is both a process and a product; and it combines truth seeking and persuasion. Emphasize that arguments are not fights, quarrels, or pro-con debates. It would be helpful if this information were on the board as the whole-class discussion occurs.

Teacher's Note

Alternatively, you could lead students through the attached Lesson Slides, "Argument Introduction PP." Depending on your teaching style, this slide deck could serve as an effective teaching tool.

For each of the features listed above, students should be able to generate Examples and Non-Examples of argument. Students are encouraged to rely on prior knowledge and experiences, including information they've seen, heard, or read about.

Chick-Fil-A Revisited

Use the process to extend the Chick-fil-A example, making a supportive argument of the claim "Chick-fil-A serves the tastiest chicken sandwiches." (Why? What reasons support this claim?) Offer justification for the claim, determine who that claim is true for and why, and write a polished product (an essay or advertisement, for example), all while trying to persuade an audience that the claim is correct. (Get people on board with the Chick-fil-A chicken sandwich!)

Explain

In this stage, students will write a short argument based on one of the previous prompts from Four Corners. Students should choose a prompt that was discussed during the activity and expand it into a written piece. Alternatively, students could revisit the opinion statement they created at the beginning of the lesson, even if it wasn't included in the Four Corners activity.

However, before students write, they should look at an example argument (plenty of examples are located in the "Argument Examples" attachment). Ask students to highlight specific portions of the argument while they are reading. Highlight the claim in yellow, the reasons in blue, the research-based support in green, and the counterargument in pink. This will help students locate different aspects of the argument in relation to its structure and organization. The teacher should model this highlighting activity in a whole-class setting, especially if students are unfamiliar with arguments.

When it comes time to write their own argument, students should make a claim, back up their claim with reasons, evidence, and support, and include a counterargument in which they acknowledge and respond to objections. Students should be encouraged to research their topic in order to gain an informed stance. Through research, students can create a pitchfork strategy (see the "Study Awesome" attachment for more information) to sift through and organize details, facts, and opinions supporting their claim.

Chick-Fil-A Revisited

Using the Chick-fil-A example, students now need to construct a counterargument. Students should challenge their own logic, asking questions like, "What about those who disagree with me? What about people who dislike Chick-fil-A's chicken sandwiches? What about people who like them just fine, but prefer Wendy's chicken sandwiches instead?" Students will then need to think about how to handle those objections/alternative opinions in their writing. Students can practice conceding and refuting the opposition.

Teacher's Note

Though not a formal argument, this practice will allow students to work through the defining features of argument writing that will assist them in future writing assignments. The focus for this assignment is not on research integration or citation, but students can use this assignment as a jumping-off point when a formal research paper is assigned.

Extend

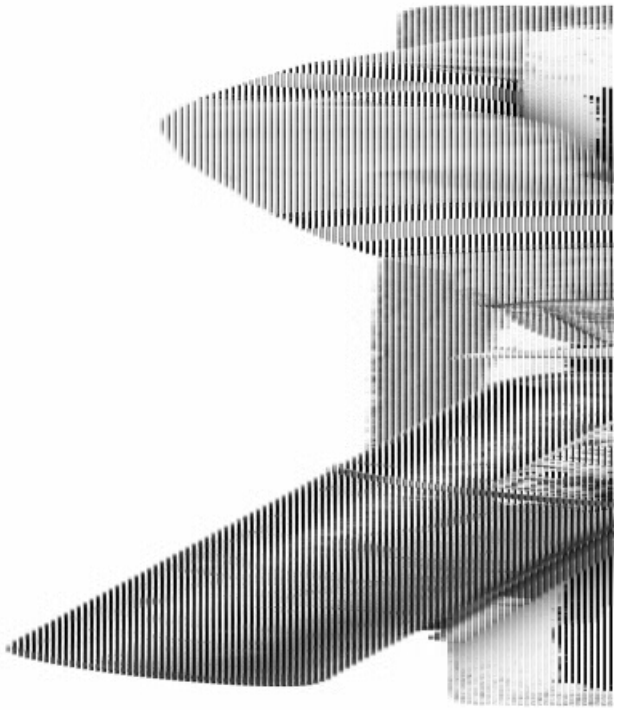
As an extension to the written argument, students will create a multimodal representation of their argument. Creating a multimodal argument allows students to use mediums other than (and in addition to) words. Students can use images, videos, text, sound, etc. to compose a multimodal argument. Students should rely as little as possible on words and focus more on other mediums of composition.

The students' multimodal pieces should still include all of the important aspects of their written work (claim, reasons/support, counterargument, etc.). Students can present their multimodal piece to their classmates, for the consideration of a wider audience.

To promote authentic writing, students should be encouraged to design their multimodal piece to a wider, real-world audience. Students could consider advertisements in magazines and newspapers, podcasts, commercials, billboards, etc.

Chick-Fil-A Revisited

An example of a multimodal Chick-fil-A composition:



Chick-fil-A [Advertisement]. (2015). 20 Years of Cows. Inside Chick-fil-A. Retrieved from http://inside.chick-fil-a.com/20-years-of-cows/

Students can use magazines, newspapers, technology, or other mediums to create their multimodal composition. The website easel.ly offers free templates for visual representations, but students should feel free to explore whatever medium best suits them and their arguments.

Evaluate

Students' written arguments and multimodal compositions will be evaluated. The student should have included the basic features of an argument.

Teacher's Note

When assessing student writing, it is beneficial to create a rubric collaboratively, as students work through the writing process. A sample argument rubric is attached (see the sample rubric, "Argument Writing Grading Rubric," under Attachments). As this assignment serves as an introduction to writing effective arguments, the rubric will need to be tailored to students' current knowledge.

Students can complete a self or peer evaluation using highlighters. After writing their arguments, they should highlight their claim in yellow, their reasons in blue, their research-based support in green, and their counterargument in pink. This will help students determine if they included all of the elements of an argument and will also assist with organization and structure. The teacher should model this highlighting evaluation activity with his/her own argument writing piece.

Teacher's Note

It is so important for students to see their writing teachers write. Students should see the teacher participate in the various stages of the writing process and not just view the teacher's final product. What is one way athletes improve? By watching the best athletes in their respective sports. Let your students see you write. You can be an effective model for how a writer goes through the writing process.

Aligning with authentic writing, students could compose a reflective letter in which they address the choices they made in the design process of their multimodal composition. Students should reflect on their own audience awareness, answering, "Who is the intended audience of this argument?" and, "How did the intended audience affect the process?"

Resources

- Chick-fil-A [Advertisement]. (2015). 20 Years of Cows. Inside Chick-fil-A. http://inside.chick-fil-a.com/20-years-of-cows/
- Flores, J. (2015). Study Awesome. http://elaokteachers.com/strategycards/
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Examples and Non-Examples. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/163
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- Ramage, J., & Bean J. (1998). Writing arguments: A rhetoric with readings (4th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Utah ELA Core Academy. (2011). Argumentative Writing Grading Rubric. http://www.uen.org/core/languagearts/writing/downloads/argumentative_writing_rubric.pdf
- The Vermont Writing Collaborative, Student Achievement Partners, & CCSSO. (2013). In Common: Effective Writing for All Students Collection of All Argument/Opinion Samples, K-12. http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/ArgumentOpinion_K-12WS.pdf
- For further assistance, see: Wingate, U. (2012). 'Argument!' helping students understand what essay writing is about. Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 11(2), 145-154. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1475158511000762