Shift 5: Increase Writing from Sources

Writing instruction emphasizes *use of evidence* to *inform* or to *make an argument*; it includes short, focused research projects K-12.

### Three Types of Writing

1) Argument
2) Informational/Explanatory Writing
3) Narrative

### Who’s Responsible?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argument</th>
<th>Informational</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>P.E.</td>
<td>Math</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>P.E.</td>
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<td>Social Studies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
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</table>

**Argument:** This week we will focus on argument writing.

Arguments are used for many purposes—to change the reader’s point of view, to bring about some action on the reader’s part, or to ask the reader to accept the writer’s explanation or evaluation of a concept, issue, or problem. An argument is a reasoned, logical way of demonstrating that the writer’s position, belief, or conclusion is valid. *In English language arts,* students make claims about the worth or meaning of a literary work or works. They defend their interpretations or judgments with evidence from the text(s) they are writing about. *In history/social studies,* students analyze evidence from multiple primary and secondary sources to advance a claim that is best supported by the evidence, and they argue for a historically or empirically situated interpretation. *In science,* students make claims in the form of statements or conclusions that answer questions or address problems. Using data in a scientifically acceptable form, students marshal evidence and draw on their understanding of scientific concepts to argue in support of their claims.

See it in action: [https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/literacy-analysis.lesson](https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/literacy-analysis.lesson)
40% of the writing should be argument during high school.

**Logical argument vs persuasive writing**

- Both argument and persuasion have as their goal persuading people to believe something is true or change their beliefs or behavior.
- **Persuasion relies on persuasive strategies.**
  - Appeals to audience’s self interest, sense of identity, emotions, credibility or authority of the writer, etc.
- **Argument relies on logic.**
  - Convinces audience because of the perceived merit and reasonableness of the claims and proofs offered.

Student writing should focus on argument **NOT** persuasive.
Choosing an arguable issue

- Arguments need...
  - An issue
  - An arguer
  - An audience
  - Common ground
  - A forum
  - Audience outcomes

- Arguments fail with...
  - No disagreement or reason to argue
  - Risky or trivial issues
  - Difficulty establishing common ground
  - Standoffs or fights that result in negative outcomes

Creating an argument

 Claim: A Miner would be a good mascot selection for our school.

 Evidence: Mascots should be strong or tough and represent the area. They should be something people would be proud to be.

 Explanation: Our area has mining as one of its primary industries, so the choice would represent our area. In addition, miners need to be tough because they do strenuous work—and dangerous work. They work hard to fill a need for people everywhere. That’s something to be proud of.
Four corners

- The Supreme Court was right this week to reverse the ban on the sale of violent video games to children.
- Strongly Agree? Agree? Disagree? Strongly Disagree? Write for 3 minutes on your opinion.
- Go to corner of room matching your response. In your groups, you have several minutes to create an argument: claim, convincing evidence (yes, you can use your laptops), and explanation to present a two-minute argument to the rest of the groups.
ARGUMENTS
Generates additional revenue
Some people don't have time to search
Time so valuable are willing to pay double (\$150/year)
But you don't want faculty to be late to class, hurts dozens of students.

QUESTION
Should the university lease personal parking spaces?

COUNTERARGUMENTS
Leaves fewer spots for others.
Many spots unoccupied half the time.
Poorer people unable to pay as much even if time is valuable.
Like students, average pay \$10,000 vs. faculty, \$50,000 to \$70,000+

INTEGRATE
Which side is stronger and why?
Is there a compromise or creative solution?

Final Conclusion
Rationale
The arguments for are stronger, because if a faculty member is late to class, it wastes the learning time for dozens of students, whereas if a student is late, only he/she is usually affected.

It is true however, that leased spots are often unoccupied (when the renter is not in school). As a compromise or solution, spots should be leased for only part of the day (morning, afternoon, or evening).

NOTES: (1) Reasons and evidence that support other claims we indented.
(2) Arguments that counter other arguments are marked by an arrow.

Countered argument → Countering argument

Figure 2. Completed argumentation vee diagram on the question, "Should the university lease personal parking spaces to faculty and students?"
Student Sample: Grade 9, Argument

This argument was written in response to a classroom assignment. The students were asked to compare a book they read on their own to a movie about the same story and to prove which was better. Students had six weeks to read and one and a half weeks to write, both in and out of class.

The True Meaning of Friendship

John Boyne’s story, The Boy in the Striped Pajamas, tells the tale of an incredible friendship between two eight-year-old boys during the Holocaust. One of the boys is Bruno, the son of an important German commander who is put in charge of Auschwitz Camp, and the other is Shmuel, a Jewish boy inside the camp. Throughout the story their forbidden friendship grows, and the two boys unknowingly break the incredible racial boundaries of the time. They remain best friends until Bruno goes under the fence to help Shmuel find his father when they are both killed in the gas showers of the camp. By comparing and contrasting supporting characters, irony, and the themes in the movie and the book, it is clear that the movie, The Boy in the Striped Pajamas (Mark Herman, 2008) is not nearly as good as the novel of the same title.

Characterization is very important to a story and influences how a person interprets the novel or movie, and one important way that the book differs from the movie is how Bruno’s mother is characterized. In the movie, she is unrealistically portrayed as an honest woman with good moral values, and is almost as naive as Bruno is about what is going on at Auschwitz. When she discovers what her husband is doing to people at the camp she is deeply disturbed. Mortified by her husband’s cruelty, their relationship declines. In contrast, she is a far more sinister character in the book. Though Bruno is too young to understand what his mother is doing, one of the reasons he dislikes Lieutenant Kotler is that, “. . . he was always in the living room with Mother and making jokes with her, and Mother laughed at his jokes more than she laughed at Father’s” (162). Bruno’s mother is very unhappy in her new situation away from Berlin, and her discontent leads her to cheat on her husband. This also leads her to unknowingly hurt her son, for Bruno is upset that she is paying more attention to Lieutenant Kotler than she is to his father, and the damage she causes could be magnified if she continues to disrupt their family. Further examples of her abysmal character and unfaithfulness are revealed when Bruno’s mother finds the young lieutenant and says, “Oh Kurt, precious, you’re still here . . . I have a little free time now if—Oh! she said, noticing Bruno standing there. ‘Bruno! What are you doing here?’” (166). Her disloyalty further allows the reader to see that her character is far from virtuous, contrary to the opinion of a person who viewed the movie. Throughout the story, it also becomes apparent that Bruno’s mother is also an alcoholic, and, “Bruno worried for her health because he’d never known anyone to need quite so many medicinal sherries” (188). Unable to come to terms with her new circumstances and strained relationship with her husband, Bruno’s mother tries to drink away her problems, further conveying that she is a weak character. Bruno’s extreme innocence about his mother and situation at Auschwitz are magnified by the use of irony in both the movie and the book.

In some ways the book and the movie have similar aspects, and one of these aspects is how irony is used to emphasize Bruno’s innocence and to greatly emphasize the tragic mood of the story. In the final climactic scene of the movie—just after Bruno has gone under the fence to help Shmuel find his father—the two boys are led to the gas showers to be killed. Unaware of what is about to happen to them, Bruno tells Shmuel that his father must have ordered this so it must be for a good reason, and that they are going into the air-tight rooms to stay out of the rain and avoid getting sick. This statement is incredibly ironic because, unbeknownst to Bruno, his father has unknowingly commenced his own son’s death sentence. In addition to this, the soldiers have no intention of keeping their prisoners healthy. It never occurs to Bruno that anyone would want to destroy another human being or treat them badly, and his innocence makes his premature death all the more tragic. Although the movie may be incredibly ironic in a few specific instances, the book contains a plethora of ironic events that also accentuate Bruno’s childishness and naivety. A profound example of this is exhibited when Bruno thinks to himself that, “. . . he did like stripes and he felt increasingly fed up that he had to wear trousers and shirts and ties and shoes that were too tight for him when Shmuel and his friends got to wear striped pajamas all day long” (155). Bruno has no clue that the people in the “striped...
“pajamas” are being cruelly treated and murdered, and is jealous of what he thinks is freedom. Bruno once again reveals his innocence when he asks Pavel, the Jewish man from the camp who cleans him up after a fall, “If you’re a doctor, then why are you waiting on tables? Why aren’t you working at a hospital somewhere?” (83). It is a mystery to Bruno that a doctor would be reduced to such a state for no transparent reason, and his beliefs should be what all adults think. Though what he says is naive, it points out the barbarity of the German attitude toward the Jews. If an uneducated child could be puzzled by this, then how could learned adults allow such a thing? Through Bruno’s comment, John Boyne conveys the corruptness of the German leaders during the Holocaust, an idea that the movie does not relay to the watcher nearly as well. The book impels the reader to think deeper about the horrors of the Holocaust, and all this ties into the true theme of the story.

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas and its movie counterpart both have different themes, but it is the book’s theme that accurately states the author’s message. The movie ends with a race against time as Bruno’s family searches for him in the camp, trying to find him before he is killed. They are too late, and Bruno and Shmuel die together like so many other anonymous children during the Holocaust. The theme of the movie is how so many children died at the ruthless hands of their captors; but the book’s theme has a deeper meaning. As Bruno and Shmuel are standing together in the chamber, “. . . the room went very dark, and in the chaos that followed, Bruno found that he was still holding Shmuel’s hand in his own and nothing in the world would have persuaded him to let it go” (242). Bruno loves Schmuel, and he is willing to stay with him no matter what the consequences, even if it means dying with him in the camp that his father controls. They have conquered all boundaries, and this makes the two boys more than just two more individuals who died in Auschwitz. The Boy in the Striped Pajamas is not the story of two children who died in a concentration camp; this story is about an incredible friendship that triumphed over racism and lasted until the very end. It is the story of what should have been between Jews and Germans, a friendship between two groups of people in one nation who used their strengths to help each other.

Based on the analysis of supporting characters, irony, and themes of John Boyne’s The Boy in the Striped Pajamas and the movie, it can be concluded that the book is far superior to the movie. Though Bruno’s mother is a dishonest woman in the book, her bad character is more realistic for the time when compared to the mother in the movie who is horrified by Auschwitz. John Boyne uses many examples of irony in the book to emphasize Bruno’s innocence and to magnify the tragedy of his death. Unlike the movie the irony in the book leads the reader to ponder on the barbarity of the German leaders during the Holocaust. The book’s theme of long lasting friendship gives purpose to the story, while the movie’s theme of the cruelty of concentration camps does not lead the viewer to delve deeper into the story. It is necessary for the person to read this book in order to understand the true message of friendship and cooperation in the story, a message that a person who had only seen the movie could not even begin to grasp.

Annotation

The writer of this piece

• introduces a precise claim and distinguishes the claim from (implied) alternate or opposing claims.
  ○ . . . it is clear that the movie, The Boy in the Striped Pajamas (Mark Herman, 2008) is not nearly as good as the novel of the same title.

• develops the claim and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s need for information about the book.
  ○ Reason: In the movie, she [the mother] is unrealistically portrayed as an honest woman with good moral values . . . she is a far more sinister character in the book.
  ○ Evidence: . . . one of the reasons he [Bruno] dislikes Lieutenant Kotler is that, “. . . he was always in the living room with Mother and making jokes with her, and Mother laughed at his jokes more than she laughed at Father’s”
(162). . . Bruno’s mother finds the young lieutenant and says, “Oh Kurt, precious, you’re still here. . . . I have a little free time now if—Oh!” she said, noticing Bruno standing there. ‘Bruno! What are you doing here?” (166). . . Bruno’s mother is also an alcoholic, and, “Bruno worried for her health because he’d never known anyone to need quite so many medicinal sheries” (188).

○ Reason: . . . it is the book’s theme that accurately states the author’s message. . . . the book’s theme has a deeper meaning. . . . The book’s theme of long lasting friendship gives purpose to the story . . .

○ Evidence: The movie ends with a race against time as Bruno’s family searches for him in the camp, trying to find him before he is killed. They are too late, and Bruno and Shmuel die together like so many other anonymous children during the Holocaust. . . . [In the book] [a]s Bruno and Shmuel are standing together in the chamber, “. . . the room went very dark, and in the chaos that followed, Bruno found that he was still holding Shmuel’s hand in his own and nothing in the world would have persuaded him to let it go” (242).

- uses words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim and (implied) counterclaims.

○ In the movie . . . In contrast . . . Though Bruno is too young . . . Further examples of her abysmal character . . . Throughout the story, it also becomes apparent . . . In the final climactic scene . . . because, unbeknownst to Bruno . . . A profound example of this . . . Based on the analysis . . .

- establishes and maintains a formal style and objective tone.

○ John Boyne’s story, The Boy in the Striped Pajamas, tells the tale of an incredible friendship between two eight-year old boys during the Holocaust. . . . Characterization is very important to a story and influences how a person interprets the novel or movie, and one important way that the book differs from the movie is how Bruno’s mother is characterized. . . . In some ways the book and the movie have similar aspects, and one of these aspects is how irony is used to emphasize Bruno’s innocence and to magnify the tragedy of his death. . . .

- provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

○ Based on the analysis of supporting characters, irony, and themes of John Boyne’s The Boy in the Striped Pajamas and the movie, it can be concluded that the book is far superior to the movie. Though Bruno’s mother is a dishonest woman in the book, her bad character is more realistic for the time when compared to the mother in the movie who is horrified by Auschwitz. John Boyne uses many examples of irony in the book to emphasize Bruno’s innocence and to magnify the tragedy of his death. Unlike the movie the irony in the book leads the reader to ponder on the barbarity of the German leaders during the Holocaust. The book’s theme of long lasting friendship gives purpose to the story, while the movie’s theme of the cruelty of concentration camps does not lead the viewer to delve deeper into the story. It is necessary for the person to read this book in order to understand the true message of friendship and cooperation in the story, a message that a person who had only seen the movie could not even begin to grasp.

- demonstrates exemplary command of the conventions of standard written English.
8 Strategies for Designing Lesson Plans to Meet the CCSS Opinion and Argument Writing Requirements

By Lauren Davis
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For years, teachers have been designing persuasive writing lessons for their students. The Common Core State Standards are changing that by asking teachers to move away from persuasion and toward argumentation. Argumentation (called opinion writing in the elementary grades) is preferred by the CCSS because it is more rigorous and more in line with the kind of writing students will be expected to do in college and careers. In this white paper, we’ll look at what argumentation really means, what the standards specifically require at each grade level, and how teachers can create lesson plans to meet these new requirements.

I’ll also outline the following eight strategies for designing lesson plans to meet the new requirements:

1) Identify Fact vs. Opinion
2) Determine Credible Sources
3) Acknowledge Alternate or Opposing Claims
4) Vary Syntax
5) Assign a Combination of Short and Longer Writing Tasks
6) Use Mentor Texts
7) Involve Content-Area Teachers
8) Don’t Forget Speaking and Listening
8 Strategies for Designing Lesson Plans to Meet the CCSS Opinion and Argument Writing Requirements

Shifting from Persuasion to Argument

Persuasive writing is based on emotional appeals to the audience, whereas argumentation is based on logic and evidence. According to the standards:

A logical argument ... convinces the audience because of the perceived merit and reasonableness of the claims and proofs offered rather than either the emotions the writing evokes in the audience or the character or credentials of the writer. (Common Core State Standards, Appendix A, p. 24)

Persuasive writing is not as rigorous because it allows students to write solely based on their experiences and emotions, without having to gather evidence and facts or consider the other side. Benjamin and Hugelmeyer provide an example of how the genres differ:

If a student were asked to persuade her parents to get her a four-legged pet, she might resort to whatever works between her and her parents. Whining, pouting, insisting, and threatening to run away would be fair game, assuming such techniques have worked in the past. If she were asked to create an argument for why she should have a four-legged pet, and if the audience were less subjective than her parents—let's say, the directors of an animal shelter—she should offer evidence about her suitability as a potential pet owner: her history taking care of someone or something that depended on her, her knowledge, her schedule, her physical strength. The Common Core definitely seeks to wean students from emotional responses and transition them into more substantial reasoning. (p. 59)

Since argumentation requires more “substantial reasoning,” teachers will need to show students age-appropriate ways to include reasons and evidence in their writing. The Common Core State Standards are very specific about the amount and kind of evidence students need to include at each grade level. Let’s take a look.

How the Argumentation Requirements Get More Rigorous at Each Grade Level

In elementary school, 30 percent of the writing that students do should be opinion-based. In middle school, 35 percent should be argumentation, and in high school, 40 percent should be argumentation. It’s important for teachers to understand what’s required at all grade levels, not just their own, so they can build instruction appropriately and review where needed. The following table summarizes the Common Core’s opinion and argument writing requirements at each grade level. When something is a key shift from the previous grade level, I’ve highlighted it in boldface.
8 Strategies for Designing Lesson Plans to Meet the CCSS Opinion and Argument Writing Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Students need to <strong>form an opinion</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students need to <strong>include a reason</strong> for their opinion and provide a sense of <strong>closure</strong>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Students need to provide <strong>linking words</strong> to connect their opinion and reasons; they also need to write a <strong>concluding statement</strong> or <strong>section</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In addition to the above requirements, students now need to think about <strong>organization</strong>, and they need to use linking <strong>phrases</strong>, not just linking words.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Students need to use reasons, <strong>information</strong>, and <strong>facts</strong> to support their opinion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Students need to <strong>group their reasons</strong> in a logical way. They need to use linking words, phrases, and <strong>clauses</strong> to tie their opinions to their reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The requirements shift from writing opinions to writing <strong>arguments</strong>. Students need to make a <strong>claim</strong>. They must effectively introduce, support, and organize their claims and evidence. They must use <strong>credible sources</strong>, and they must maintain a <strong>formal style</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Now, students not only introduce, support, and organize their own claims, but they also <strong>acknowledge alternate/opposing claims</strong>. In addition, they must gather evidence by using <strong>accurate</strong>, credible sources. They need to maintain a formal style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Students not only acknowledge alternate claims, but they also <strong>distinguish</strong> these claims from their own. The other requirements from grades 6–7 still stand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>Once they are in high school, students make more <strong>precise claims</strong> in an analysis of <strong>substantive</strong> topics or texts, using <strong>valid</strong> reasoning and <strong>relevant and sufficient evidence</strong>. They develop claims and counterclaims <strong>fairly</strong>; they <strong>anticipate the audience's knowledge level and concerns</strong>; and they maintain a formal style and <strong>objective tone</strong> while attending to <strong>norms and conventions</strong> of the discipline in which they are writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>In addition to meeting the above requirements, students now make precise and <strong>knowledgeable claims</strong>; they establish the <strong>significance</strong> of their claims; they acknowledge the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, <strong>values</strong>, and <strong>possible biases</strong>; and they must use <strong>varied syntax</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table shows, the argument writing standards change in two main ways as you move up the grade levels. Students are expected to have higher-quality, more sophisticated evidence, and they’re expected to use more complex language and be more aware of audience and purpose.

**Creating Opinion- and Argument-Writing Lessons**

Once you understand the Common Core’s detailed requirements, you’re ready to create lesson plans. Look at the wording of your grade-level standard, and think about what lessons and mini-lessons are essential to helping students meet that standard. Here are some examples:
8 Strategies for Designing Lesson Plans to Meet the CCSS Opinion and Argument Writing Requirements

- In fourth grade, students need to use facts in their writing, so you may need to spend a class period or two reviewing the difference between fact and opinion. You can have students identify facts and opinions in what they’re reading (or in their own experiences) before you ask them to write their own facts and opinions. Integrating reading and writing is a key principle of the Common Core State Standards.

- In sixth grade, students must use credible sources. You might want to decide, as a class, on criteria for determining whether a source is credible and trustworthy (for example, when it was last updated, who the author or agency of the site is, whether the site is trying to sell you something, etc.) (Davis, Common Core Literacy Lesson Plans: Ready-to-Use Resources, 6–8, p. 70). Then give students practice analyzing sample websites as a class or with partners before they go to work selecting and evaluating their own sources.

- In seventh grade, students must acknowledge alternate or opposing claims. Teach a lesson in which you have students read one argument that acknowledges the other side and one that doesn’t. Have students decide which argument is stronger. That will help students discover the importance of acknowledging the other side. (Students need to know why something matters before they’re willing to try it!) Also have students look at the way that an author acknowledges conflicting evidence or viewpoints. While you’re at it, use this as an opportunity to teach academic vocabulary such as argument, evidence, claim, point of view, viewpoints, etc. (Davis, Common Core Literacy Lesson Plans: Ready-to-Use Resources, 6–8, p. 39). Then give students sentence frames or specific examples of how they can acknowledge the other side in their own writing.

- In eleventh and twelfth grades, teachers should include lessons on how to vary syntax. Share different ways of varying syntax, such as beginning each sentence with an introductory phrase or clause; using a question, exclamation, or command to vary a string of declarative sentences; placing a shorter sentence among longer ones and vice versa; and using varied punctuation to put words, phrases, and clauses together (Davis, Common Core Literacy Lesson Plans: Ready-to-Use Resources, 9–12, p. 163). High school students are also expected to anticipate their audience’s values and possible biases. Teach students to write for a variety of different audiences and see how their approach would change for each one. Using different audiences helps students learn to think critically, and it also helps make your teaching more authentic and therefore relevant to students. Students won’t just be writing “for the teacher” but for real purposes.

Other Tips for Creating Opinion and Argument Lesson Plans

- **Assign a Combination of Short and Longer Writing Tasks.** Not every argument writing assignment has to be a long one. For example, in elementary school, you can “create quick writing tasks by having students write (or draw) for three or five minutes in response to a prompt such as ‘What is your favorite toy (or book or whatever)? Why is it your favorite?’ These quick tasks let students focus on forming an opinion and giving an opinion or two” (Davis, Common Core Literacy Lesson Plans: Ready-to-Use Resources, K–5, p. 207). In the older grades, students can create a T-chart or do a quick freewrite in response to a prompt, in addition to completing longer, more in-depth writing assignments.
8 Strategies for Designing Lesson Plans to Meet the CCSS Opinion and Argument Writing Requirements

• **Use Mentor Texts.** As mentioned earlier, it’s important to have students read argument texts before they write their own. These texts can then serve as models, or mentors, for their own writing. Benjamin and Hugelmeyer recommend having students analyze editorials on a regular basis. Students should determine the main issue in the editorial, say why the issue is important, and explain why it’s controversial. Then students should analyze the writer’s argument and techniques by highlighting sentences or questions that state the author’s main point (opinion); circling any statistics in the editorial; looking at cause-effect and if-then relationships; checking for logical fallacies; and looking at diction, especially words with positive or negative connotations (Benjamin and Hugelmeyer, p. 60).

• **Involve Content-Area Teachers.** English teachers can create writing tasks that take into consideration what students are studying in science and social studies classes. Students should also be reading mentor texts in those content-area classes. Social studies teachers can have students analyze arguments in historical texts, and science teachers can have students analyze arguments in magazine or newspaper articles. Argumentation should be taught across the curriculum because in real life, the genre is indeed used for all kinds of subjects and purposes.

• **Don’t Forget Speaking and Listening.** The writing standards are not meant to be taught in isolation. We’ve discussed how to incorporate reading standards; don’t forget to consider speaking and listening standards, too. For example, students can flesh out their topics with a partner or group. Students can work with partners to find holes in one another’s logic and point out opposing arguments that might have been overlooked. Students can present their arguments using multimedia rather than just typing up their final drafts.

**Conclusion**

Teaching argument will give students the skills they need to read and write critically and logically. This kind of writing will not only prepare students for college and careers, but also help them understand the importance of considering other perspectives in life.
References


For information about permission to reproduce and distribute this white paper, please contact Toby Gruber, Director of Professional Services, Eye On Education, at (914) 308-0520 or tgruber@eyeoneducation.com.
Focus: “Convince Me”! An Introduction to Argumentative Writing
Common Core Writing Standard 1

Overview
This lesson is intended to introduce students to the art of argumentative writing by familiarizing them with basic terms; allowing students to practice establishing the relationship between claims, reasons, and evidence; and analyzing an author’s use of argument in a text.

Standards
9-10.WS.1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
   a. Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claim(s) and create an organization that establishes clear relationship among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
   b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level and concerns.
   c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
   d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
   e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Objectives
- Differentiate between persuasion and argument
- Introduce (or review) language of argumentation
- To recognize argumentative techniques in a variety of text
- To formulate an argument with a claim and counter-claim
- To reach a logical conclusion
Materials

- Access to the Internet for the Interactive Persuasion Map exercise
- Access to the Internet for this helpful information on organizing claims and counter-claims

Activity 1: What is an Argument?

Discussion
Solicit students’ answers to the question, “What is an argument?” Put answers on board. Answers may range from “a fight” to “trying to get someone to believe your point of view” or other possibilities.

For the purposes of English, an argument is defined as follows:

An argument is a reasoned, logical way of demonstrating that the writer’s position, belief, or conclusion is valid. In English, students make claims about the worth or meaning of a literary works, defending their interpretation with evidence from the text, for example.

In short, arguments seek to make people believe that something is true or to persuade people to change their beliefs or behavior.

What is the difference between argument and persuasion?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An argumentative essay</th>
<th>A persuasive essay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Makes claims based on factual evidence</td>
<td>May make claims based on opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes counter-claims. The author takes opposing views into account.</td>
<td>May not take opposing ideas into account</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutralizes or “defeat” serious opposing ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convinces audience through the merit and reasonableness of the claims and proofs offered</td>
<td>Persuades by appealing to the audience’s emotion or by relying on the character or credentials of the writer – less on the merits of</td>
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Often compares texts or ideas to establish a position

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<th>Logic-based</th>
<th>Emotion-based</th>
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<td>her or his reasons and evidence.</td>
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Lecture, Continued

Define important terms for argumentation below. Ask students to generate independent examples of all of the following and put them on the board for discussion and reflection.

**Key Terms for Argumentation**

- **Claim** – Your basic belief about a particular topic, issue, event, or idea
- **Counterclaim** – A solid and reasonable argument that opposes or disagrees with your claim
- **Rebuttal** – A written or verbal response to a counterclaim. The object of the rebuttal is to take into account the ideas presented in the counterclaim and explain why they aren’t persuasive enough, valid enough, or important enough to outweigh your own claim.
- **Support** – Your specific facts or specific evidence used to support why your claim is true
- **Refute** – Argue against a position or prove it to be wrong
- **Qualify** – A “partly-agree” stance in which you agree (in part) with another person’s argument or position but also disagree with part of it.

If students are reluctant to participate, ask someone to make a claim regarding the dumbest video on Youtube (or some other student-friendly topic). Have others make counterclaims, rebuttals, offer support, refutation, qualification, et cetera.

As discussion continues, teachers may need to clarify understanding and emphasize the need for evidence – that is, specific facts, not hypothetical situations (e.g., “Let’s say you have a guy who...”), not opinions, not generalities (e.g., “Well, people always...”). Without solid evidence, an argument lacks merit.
Teachers may also need to emphasize an idea many students may resist: that their argument is made stronger by introducing a good, solid counterclaim. (Note: Some students will think this idea is whackadoo – why, they’ll reason, should you put words in the mouth of your opponent?) Teachers will need to demonstrate the value of the “preemptive strike,” the virtue of framing the other person’s argument to one’s own advantage.

Conclusion
Review crucial terms and discuss the progression of the unit from this point, giving a preview of the use of argument in the classroom. Rapid question-and-answer in a “class Jeopardy” format to review key terms might also conclude the class.

Activity 2: Playing With Arguments
Discussion
Review key terms or ideas (e.g., claim, counterclaim, argument vs. persuasion, etc.) before proceeding.

Persuasion Map
For this activity, students will need independent use of computers and access to the Internet. In order to play around with (and reinforce) the idea that argumentation needs to be based on facts, students will play with the Interactive Persuasion Map on the linked site.

Students should be encouraged to have fun with the site. The purpose (as of now) is to familiarize students with the logical process of thought involved in creating an argument. Students may generate deliberately silly topics to defend (e.g., “Boxing dinosaurs is far superior to all other summertime sports”) or choose more serious ones if they choose.

Conclusion
Have students print their Persuasion Maps on the website for future reference. The graphic on the site is helpful as a way of visualizing the relationship between the thesis, the evidence, and the explanations.

Later Use
As students develop (more serious) argumentative essays later, the Interactive Persuasion Map site may be a very helpful tool to aid students in outlining or brainstorming.
Activity 3: Analyzing Arguments

Opener
Teachers will choose an appropriate speech from the resources below to read aloud. Note: Provide students with copies of their own to follow along with during the reading. Teachers may choose to read examples or short selections from several speeches instead of just one, making sure that each selection presents sufficient information for students to discover in the group-work activity below (i.e., the selection should contain a claim, reasons, facts, et cetera).

Small Groups
Following the reading, students can separate into small groups to discover the following information:

1. What is the speaker’s claim? What does s/he want you to believe?
2. What reasons does s/he give for his claim?
3. What facts, quotations, evidence, or specific details does s/he give to support those reasons?
4. Is there a counterclaim? What is it?

Whole-Group Discussion
Following the group-work, the entire class can reconvene. Some groups will disagree about the claims and counterclaims, et cetera. The teacher’s focus should be to get students to use specific evidence from the text to support their points, e.g., “Okay, Billy, what do you think Patrick Henry is arguing? Can you point out the part of the speech that made you come to the conclusion you did? Can you read it for us, please?”

Great Speeches

- Patrick Henry “Speech to the Second Virginia Convention”
  http://www.history.org/almanack/life/politics/giveme.cfm
- Thomas Jefferson “Declaration of Independence”
  http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/AMERICA/DECLAR.HTM
- Edgar Allan Poe “Sonnet—to Science”
  http://library.thinkquest.org/11840/Poe/science.html
- Theodore Roosevelt “The Proper Place for Sports”
Conclusion
Draw students’ attention to the fact that we use argument throughout our lives. Learning to assemble arguments, fairly deal with opposing ideas, and support those ideas with facts is crucial. Praise students for identifying elements of argument in professional speeches and alert them to the idea that writing, like many other things, is a game of strategy.

Activity 4: Making Arguments
Opener
Have students read the example student essay from p. 57 of the Common Core State Standards, Appendix C on the true meaning of friendship. Building on the skills from the previous lesson, have the students identify the writer’s claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
Writing Assign topics or let students choose from a list of possibilities such as the following:

Compare a book you have read with the movie version of that same book. Prove which one was better.

Some books, such as Fahrenheit 451, Of Mice and Men, or Huckleberry Finn arouse controversy when they are taught at the high school level. Think of a high-quality piece of literature with controversial elements and prove it should be included in the high school curriculum.

Students may need to use the Interactive Persuasion Map or refer to this very helpful site that gives several different organizational strategies for argumentative essays.

Conclusion
As a follow-up to this exercise, students can switch papers and identify crucial elements (claim, counterclaim, reasons, and evidence) in each other’s papers. Emphasize the importance of thinking of themselves not just as writers, but active strategists who choose approaches and deal with opposing ideas in writing.

Resources Included:

Inaugural Address speech by Nelson Mandela
May 10th 1994

Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, Distinguished Guests, Comrades and friends:
Today, all of us do, by our presence here, and by our celebrations in other parts of our country and the world, confer glory and hope to newborn liberty.
Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud.
Our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all.
All this we owe both to ourselves and to the peoples of the world who are so well represented here today.
To my compatriots, I have no hesitation in saying that each one of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld.
Each time one of us touches the soil of this land, we feel a sense of personal renewal. The national mood changes as the seasons change.
We are moved by a sense of joy and exhilaration when the grass turns green and the flowers bloom.
That spiritual and physical oneness we all share with this common homeland explains the depth of the pain we all carried in our hearts as we saw our country tear itself apart in a terrible conflict, and as we saw it spurned, outlawed and isolated by the peoples of the world, precisely because it has become the universal base of the pernicious ideology and practice of racism and racial oppression.
We, the people of South Africa, feel fulfilled that humanity has taken us back into its bosom, that we, who were outlaws not so long ago, have today been given the rare privilege to be host to the nations of the world on our own soil.
We thank all our distinguished international guests for having come to take possession with the people of our country of what is, after all, a common victory for justice, for peace, for human dignity.
We trust that you will continue to stand by us as we tackle the challenges of building peace, prosperity, non-sexism, non-racialism and democracy.
We deeply appreciate the role that the masses of our people and their political mass democratic, religious, women, youth, business, traditional and other leaders have played to bring about this conclusion. Not least among them is my Second Deputy President, the Honourable F.W. de Klerk.
We would also like to pay tribute to our security forces, in all their ranks, for the distinguished role they have played in securing our first democratic elections and the transition to democracy, from blood-thirsty forces which still refuse to see the light.
The time for the healing of the wounds has come.
The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come.
The time to build is upon us.
We have, at last, achieved our political emancipation. We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination.
We succeeded to take our last steps to freedom in conditions of relative peace. We commit ourselves to the construction of a complete, just and lasting peace.
We have triumphed in the effort to implant hope in the breasts of the millions of our people.
We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity--a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.
As a token of its commitment to the renewal of our country, the new Interim Government of National Unity will, as a matter of urgency, address the issue of amnesty for various categories of our people who are currently serving terms of imprisonment.
We dedicate this day to all the heroes and heroines in this country and the rest of the world who sacrificed in many ways and surrendered their lives so that we could be free.
Their dreams have become reality. Freedom is their reward.
We are both humbled and elevated by the honour and privilege that you, the people of South Africa, have bestowed on us, as the first President of a united, democratic, non-racial and non-
sexist South Africa, to lead our country out of the valley of darkness. We understand it still that there is no easy road to freedom. We know it well that none of us acting alone can achieve success. We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world. Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all. Let each know that for each the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfil themselves. Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world. Let freedom reign. The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement!

God bless Africa!

The Inaugural Address speech
by Nelson Mandela

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

William Ernest Henley