

12.3.1 Lesson 13

Introduction

In this lesson, students continue to analyze *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, taking all excerpts into consideration in order to examine the author's counterclaims. Students first examine the role of counterclaims in argument and then work to identify Diamond's counterclaims and the evidence and reasoning that support those counterclaims. Students then identify the limitations of the counterclaims. Students pay particular attention to the way Diamond's counterclaims contribute to the persuasiveness of the text. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: Explain how one of the author's counterclaims contributes to the persuasiveness of the text.

For homework, students continue to conduct pre-searches for their 2-3 areas of investigation to gather potential sources for their research. Instruct students to find three more potential sources for at least one area of investigation and record the following information: author's name, issue, source, location, publication date, and general content/key ideas.

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Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
CCRA.R.8	Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
RI.11-12.6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.
Addressed Standard(s)	
SL.11-12.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

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Assessment

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Assessment(s)

Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. Students respond to the following prompt, citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences drawn from the text.

- Explain how one of the author’s counterclaims contributes to the persuasiveness of the text.

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Identify one of the author’s counterclaims (e.g., “[T]he peoples of northern Europe contributed nothing of fundamental importance to Eurasian civilization until the last thousand years” (p. 22)).
- Analyze how the counterclaim contributes to the persuasiveness of the text (e.g., In this section of text, Diamond attempts to disprove alternate, simplistic claims in response to Yali’s question about unequal distribution of global wealth and power. With this counterclaim, Diamond opposes the claim that climate has “stimulatory effects” or “inhibitory effects” on human creativity and energy (p. 22). To provide evidence of his counterclaim, Diamond explains that the “sole Native American societies to develop writing arose in the warm climate of Mexico, and the oldest New World pottery comes from near the equator in tropical South America” (p. 22). Additionally, he offers that the “New World society generally considered the most advanced in art, astronomy, and other respects was the Classic Maya society of the tropical Yucatan and Guatemala” (p. 22). Diamond’s reasoning explains that people in Northern Europe “simply had the good luck to live in a geographic location where they were likely to receive advances (such as agriculture, wheels, writing, and metallurgy) developed in warmer parts of Eurasia” (p. 22). Through his counterclaim, evidence, and reasoning, Diamond demonstrates that historical evidence is insufficient to support the claim that climate has “stimulatory effects” or “inhibitory effects” (p. 22) on human creativity and energy, thus contributing to the persuasiveness of the text.).

Vocabulary

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Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
• None.*
Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)
• None.*
Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)
• None.*

*Because this is not a close reading lesson, there is no specified vocabulary. However, in the process of returning to the text, students may uncover unfamiliar words. Teachers can guide students to make meaning of these words using the strategies outlined in L.11-12.4.a-d.

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: CCRA.R.8, RI.11-12.6, SL.11-12.1 Text: <i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i> by Jared Diamond, pages 13-25, 65-78, 229-249, and 439-446 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Lesson Agenda Homework Accountability Identifying Counterclaims, Evidence, and Reasoning Identifying Limitations Quick Write Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5% 10% 35% 30% 15% 5%

Materials

- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer 12.3.1 Lesson 1) (optional)

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Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
10%	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.
no symbol	Plain text indicates teacher action.
	Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.
	<i>Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.</i>
▶	Indicates student action(s).
☞	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.
ⓘ	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.

Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standards for this lesson: CCRA.R.8 and RI.11-12.6. In this lesson, students consider all excerpts read thus far in *Guns, Germs, and Steel* as they begin to identify and analyze the author's counterclaims, evidence, reasoning, and limitations of the counterclaims.

- Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Complete another multimedia journal entry, reflecting on your selected 2-3 areas of investigation and your work with pre-searches. Your multimedia entry should respond to the following prompt: Describe what you have learned from your pre-searches. What area of investigation looks most promising for further research?) Instruct students to form pairs and discuss their responses.

- Student responses vary according to the research conducted.

Activity 3: Identifying Counterclaims, Evidence, and Reasoning

35%

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Introduce the argument term *counterclaim* to students. Explain that a *counterclaim* is a statement that opposes or questions another claim. A *counterclaim* is used to call into question an author’s central or supporting claim, to create dialogue about the strength of those claims. Refuting or disproving counterclaims may contribute to the persuasiveness of the argument by providing an opportunity for the author to reassert the validity of the central or supporting claims.

Model the following relationship of *claim* to *counterclaim* as a way to provide students with an example of the role counterclaims play in argument.

- **Claim:** “Biological differences” in the “innate ability” of different groups explains the disparity in global wealth and power distribution (p. 18).
- **Counterclaim:** “However ... the peoples compared differ greatly in their social environments and educational opportunities.” (p. 19)

Consider explaining to students that authors use counterclaims in arguments where they work most effectively. Diamond provides counterclaims before he asserts his own claims. Students may choose to organize their own claims and counterclaims similarly or differently when they write their own research-based argument papers in 12.3.2.

Ask students the following questions:

How does this counterclaim oppose the claim?

- This counterclaim suggests that perceived “[b]iological differences” or variations in “innate ability” are actually due to diverse social factors (p. 18). In this way, the counterclaim calls into question the accuracy of the claim and undermines its validity.

What other counterclaims from pages 18-21 does Diamond provide that challenge the previous claim about “biological differences” (p. 18)?

- Student responses may include:
 - “Racist explanations” for “human differences” are “loathsome ... [and] wrong” (p. 19).
 - “Sound evidence for the existence of human differences in intelligence that parallel human differences in technology is lacking.” (p. 19)
 - The “cognitive abilities [of] adults are heavily influenced by the social environment ... experienced during childhood, making it hard to discern any influence of preexisting genetic differences” (pp. 19-20).
 - “[T]he usual racist assumption” for “developmental *disadvantages*” “has to be turned on its head” (p. 21).

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Lead a brief, whole-class discussion of student responses.

Explain to students that they are going to identify other counterclaims Diamond presents in the text. Instruct students to form pairs and answer the following prompt using one of the excerpts they read previously from *Guns, Germs, and Steel*.

- To provide a quick point of reference for students, consider posting or projecting the page numbers of all *Guns, Germs, and Steel* excerpts read in 12.3.1: pp. 13-25, 65-78, 229-249, and 439-446.

Choose a previously read excerpt from *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. Identify another counterclaim Diamond provides in response to a claim cited in the text. Include both the claim and the counterclaim in your answer, and explain how the counterclaim opposes the claim.

- Student responses may include:
 - **Claim:** Climate has “stimulatory effects” or “inhibitory effects” on human creativity and energy (p. 22).

Diamond’s counterclaim: “[T]he peoples of northern Europe contributed nothing of fundamental importance to Eurasian civilization until the last thousand years.” (p.22)

How the counterclaim opposes the claim: The counterclaim opposes the claim by denying the claim’s validity, indicating that “luck” and “geograph[y]” had more to do with the development of certain societies than did the climate (p. 22).

- See additional possible student responses below.

Explain to students that similar to a central or supporting claim, a well-developed counterclaim often includes its own supporting evidence and reasoning. Inform students that they are going to identify evidence and reasoning for each counterclaim they identified in the previous activity, and explain how the evidence and reasoning supports the counterclaim. Explain that not every claim or counterclaim provides both evidence and reasoning.

- Students listen.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider reminding students that *reasoning* is the logical relationships among ideas, including relationships among claims and relationships across evidence.

Model the following counterclaim, evidence, reasoning, and explanation of support for the counterclaim.

- Students follow along.
 - **Claim:** Colder climates have “stimulatory effects” on human creativity and energy, whereas “hot, humid, tropical climates” have an “inhibitory” effect (p. 22).
 - **Diamond’s counterclaim:** “[T]he peoples of northern Europe contributed nothing of fundamental importance to Eurasian civilization until the last thousand years.” (p. 22)
 - **Evidence:** “The sole Native American societies to develop writing arose in Mexico south of the Tropic of Cancer; the oldest New World pottery comes from near the equator in tropical South America; and the New World society generally considered the most advanced in art, astronomy, and other respects was the Classic Maya society of the tropical Yucatan and Guatemala in the first millennium A.D.” (p. 22)
 - **Reasoning:** People in Northern Europe “simply had the good luck to live in a geographic location where they were likely to receive advances (such as agriculture, wheels, writing, and metallurgy) developed in warmer parts of Eurasia” (p. 22).
 - **How does the evidence and /or reasoning support the counterclaim?** The evidence uses historical facts about “Native American societies” to prove that people from colder climates did not necessarily have more “creativity and energy” when it came to innovation (p. 22). The reasoning supports the counterclaim by describing how Europe did not contribute any “fundamental” advances and rather benefitted from the advances of other nations because of their geographical location (p. 22).

Instruct student pairs to identify evidence and reasoning that supports the counterclaim that they identified earlier in the lesson.

- Student responses may include:
 - **Claim:** Lowland river valleys in dry climates were instrumental in spurring the development of irrigation systems and centralized bureaucracies.

Diamond’s counterclaim: “None of the crucial developments preceding political centralization in those same parts of the world were associated with river valleys or with complex irrigation systems.” (pp. 22-23)

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How the counterclaim opposes the claim: The counterclaim opposes the claim by explaining that commonly held ideas about what led to “political centralization” are incorrect (p. 22).

Evidence: “[D]etailed archaeological studies have shown that complex irrigation systems did not *accompany* the rise of centralized bureaucracies but *followed* after a considerable lag.” (p. 22)

How does the evidence and/or reasoning support the counterclaim? Diamond’s evidence supports the counterclaim by referencing “archaeological studies” that show the commonly accepted timeline of the development of “complex irrigation systems” in relation to “the rise of centralized bureaucracies” to be incorrect (p. 22).

- **Claim:** “[I]nventions supposedly arise when a society has an unfulfilled need.” (p. 232)

Diamond’s counterclaim: “[M]any or most inventions were developed by people driven by curiosity or by a love of tinkering in the absence of any initial demand for the product they had in mind.” (p. 232)

How the counterclaim opposes the claim: The counterclaim opposes the claim by stating that “curiosity” or a “love of tinkering” explains the development of inventions (p. 232).

Evidence: The “inventions in search of a use include most of the major technological breakthroughs of modern times, ranging from the airplane and automobile, through the internal combustion engine and electric light bulb, to the phonograph and transistor” (p. 232).

Reasoning: “Once a device had been invented, the inventor then had to find an application for it. Only after it had been in use for a considerable time did consumers come to feel that they ‘needed’ it.” (p. 232)

How does the evidence and/or reasoning support the counterclaim? The evidence provides a concrete list of well-known “inventions” that had to “search [for] a use” (p. 232). The reasoning supports the counterclaim because it explains the long process involved for an invention to become something “consumers ... feel that they ‘need[.]’” (p. 232).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 4: Identifying Limitations

30%

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Explain to students the importance of recognizing and pointing out the limitations of any counterclaim. Inform students that *limitations* means “real or imaginary points beyond which a person or thing cannot go.” Explain to students that when they contemplate counterclaims, they are also assessing the strengths and limitations of the counterclaim in relation to the claim it opposes. In the context of argument, *limitations* may be points the author does not consider or does not develop fully or effectively. In considering a counterclaim, instruct students to evaluate how the counterclaim is limited as compared to the claim it opposes. Remember that identifying the limitations of a counterclaim can strengthen a claim and/or add to the persuasiveness of a text.

Display the following example of claim, counterclaim, evidence, and reasoning from the previous activity and model how to identify limitations:

- **Claim:** Climate has either “stimulatory effects” or “inhibitory effects” on human creativity and energy (p. 22).
- **Counterclaim:** “[T]he peoples of northern Europe contributed nothing of fundamental importance to Eurasian civilization until the last thousand years.” (p.22)
- **Evidence:** “The sole Native American societies to develop writing arose in Mexico south of the Tropic of Cancer; the oldest New World pottery comes from near the equator in tropical South America; and the New World society generally considered the most advanced in art, astronomy, and other respects was the Classic Maya society of the tropical Yucatan and Guatemala in the first millennium A.D.” (p. 22)
- **Reasoning:** People in Northern Europe “simply had the good luck to live in a geographic location where they were likely to receive advances (such as agriculture, wheels, writing, and metallurgy) developed in warmer parts of Eurasia” (p. 22).
- **Limitation:** The limitation of this counterclaim is that it is constructed entirely around Diamond’s opinion of what an “important[t]” “contribut[ion]” (p. 22) is. Not everyone may share his viewpoint, and since his opinion about what constitutes an “important[t]” “contribut[ion]” (p. 22) cannot be formally measured or evaluated, the counterclaim is ineffective in disproving the claim.

Inform students that pointing out the *limitations* of a counterclaim is about finding flaws or weaknesses in the counterclaim.

- Students listen and follow along with the modeling.

Instruct student pairs to review the counterclaim, reasoning, and evidence they identified in the previous activity and analyze the possible limitations of the counterclaim.

- Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of SL.11-12.1 through the process of participating effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.
 - Student responses may include:

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- **Counterclaim:** “[M]any or most inventions were developed by people driven by curiosity or by a love of tinkering in the absence of any initial demand for the product they had in mind.” (p. 232)
 - **Limitation:** A limitation of this counterclaim is that rather than being based on fact, it is built on a generalized statement that begins with “many or most,” which reflects uncertainty (p. 232). It also rests on the unsupported assumption that “curiosity” and “a love of tinkering” motivates inventors (p. 232).
 - **Counterclaim:** “None of the crucial developments preceding political centralization in those same parts of the world were associated with river valleys or with complex irrigation systems.” (pp. 22-23)
 - **Limitation:** The limitation of this counterclaim is its lack of specific supporting evidence. Diamond references “crucial developments” and “those same parts of the world,” but does not explain what “developments” he refers to or precisely what “parts of the world” his counterclaim is speaking about (p. 22). This lack of evidence leaves the reader to make assumptions to fill in these gaps, thus making the counterclaim less effective.
- Students will consider strengths and limitations of claims and counterclaims in their own writing in 12.3.2.

Activity 5: Quick Write

15%

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

Explain how one of the author’s counterclaims contributes to the persuasiveness of the text.

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. Ask students to use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses.

- Students listen and read the Quick Write prompt
- Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

Transition to the independent Quick Write.

- Students independently answer the prompt using evidence from the text.
- See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

- Consider using the Short Response Rubric to assess students' writing. Students may use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

Activity 6: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to continue to conduct pre-searches for their 2-3 areas of investigation to gather potential sources for their research. Instruct students to find three more potential sources for at least one area of investigation and record the following information: author's name, issue, source, location, publication date, and general content/key ideas.

- Students follow along.

Homework

Continue to conduct pre-searches for your 2-3 areas of investigation to gather potential sources for research. Find three more potential sources for at least one area of investigation and record the following information: author's name, issue, source, location, publication date, and general content/key ideas.