

PART 1

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF AN ISSUE

“What does it mean when we say something is ‘terrorism’ and why does it matter?”

OBJECTIVE:

Students apply their close reading skills to understand a societal issue as a context for various perspectives, positions, and arguments.



ACTIVITIES

1- INTRODUCING THE UNIT

The teacher presents an overview of the unit and its societal issue.

2- EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Students read and analyze a background text to develop an initial understanding of the issue.

3- DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUE

Students read and analyze a second background text to expand and deepen their understanding of the issue.

4- QUESTIONING TO REFINE UNDERSTANDING

Students develop text-dependent questions and use them to refine their analysis.

5- WRITING AN EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIM ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE ISSUE

Students develop and write an evidence-based claim about the nature of the issue.

MATERIALS:

Text Sets 1 and 2
Guiding Questions Handout
Forming EBC Tool
TCD Checklist
EBA Terms



ALIGNMENT TO CCSS

TARGETED STANDARDS:

RI.9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. **RI.9-10.2:** Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. **RI.9-10.3:** Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them. **W.9-10.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

SUPPORTING STANDARDS:

SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. **RI.9-10.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).



ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCING THE UNIT

The teacher presents an overview of the unit and its societal issue.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

INTRODUCE ARGUMENTATION

Introduce the central purpose of the unit: to develop, practice, and apply the skills of argumentation in the context of a societal issue by:

- 1) Understanding the nature of a challenging *issue* for which there are various *perspectives* and *positions*.
- 2) Understanding and comparing *perspectives* and *arguments* on the issue.
- 3) Developing an evidence-based *position* on the issue.
- 4) Developing, sequencing and linking *claims* as *premises* in an evidence-based *argument* for one's position.
- 5) Supporting one's premises with logical *reasoning* and relevant *evidence*.
- 6) Developing an argumentative *essay* through a series of guided editorial processes.

Emphasize that in this unit, students will learn and think about a complex societal issue for which there are many explanations, perspectives, and opinions, not simply two sides of an argument. Let them know that they will read and research to better understand the issue and various perspectives on it *before* they form a position of their own and develop an argument in support of that position. Explain that the unit will culminate in a collaborative process for developing and strengthening an argumentative essay that each student will write on the unit's societal issue.

- Establish a clear definition of the term *issue* in general. An issue can be defined as *an important aspect of human society for which there are many differing opinions on an appropriate course of action*. Brainstorming a list of societal issues might be helpful.
- Using examples from various fields and topical areas, discuss the general question: *"How do strategic thinkers discuss and understand challenging issues or problems?"* Brainstorm a list of approaches and skills used by experts who regularly have to propose and support responses to issues or problems.

TERRORISM

The topic area and texts focus on terrorism and more specifically, what is meant by terrorism, the events leading up to 9/11, an analysis of the responses to the attacks, and terrorism in context of the recent developments in war. Responses to terrorism, and policy related to and resulting from terrorism, is a complex topic with many perspectives and positions – not a simple “pro and con” arena for debate – which allows the teacher and students to approach and study the issue from many possible angles.

FORMULATE A PROBLEM-BASED QUESTION

Formulate a problem-based question from which students can begin their discussions, reading, and development of an argumentative position. Choose or develop a general, though still focused, question that causes students to think about the problem with many directions for argumentation, and that connects to students' backgrounds and interests. An example/option for a problem-based question is:

How does a government decide whether a violent attack can be considered terrorism and how does this decision influence the government's response? What are appropriate responses to terrorist attacks?

TEXT-BASED QUESTION

If this question is selected, or a similar one developed, provide a little background to get students thinking; in this case, showing them a video entitled “Proportional Response” from Season 1, Episode 3 on the television series *West Wing* may be enough of a start [video is 2:28 long and can be found on YouTube]. In this scene, President Bartlet asks his military staff in the situation room after the US has recently been attacked, “What is the virtue of a proportional response?”

The video on terrorists also provides a first opportunity for close reading and analysis, using a text-based question set such as:

In the video, President Bartlet asks his military staff what the virtue of a “proportionate response” is. How do he and his staff define the concept? How does “proportionate response” apply to the subject of terrorism?



ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCING THE UNIT (CONT'D)

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES (CONT'D)

Let students know that they will be returning to these questions often as they read texts related to terrorism. Emphasize that their task in this argumentation unit is not simply to answer them, but rather to use them as a stimulus for reading and discussion. Thinking about these question as they read, analyze, and discuss will eventually lead them to a perspective on terrorism, and finally to a position about current decisions in light of the 9/11 attacks from which they can build an evidence-based argument.

KWL

Teachers might choose to use an activity to help students access their prior knowledge of the subject while also making sure to be careful of erroneous prior conceptions of the topic (KWL, class brainstorm, image brainstorm, free write, etc.).



ACTIVITY 2: EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Students read and analyze a background text to develop an initial understanding of an issue.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

READING

- Students read the text independently, annotating and making notes on how it relates to the unit's problem-based question.
- The teacher introduces one or more text-based questions to drive a closer reading of the text. Students then follow along as the text is presented to them.
- In reading teams, students discuss the text-based questions and search for relevant details, highlighting and annotating them in their text (and might use a *Forming EBC* tool to record their thinking).

WRITING CLAIMS

- The teacher models the development and writing of an explanatory claim that addresses something the text has presented about the unit's issue. The claim is explanatory not argumentative at this point.

- Students individually develop explanatory claims about the text's presentation of the issue (a *Forming EBC* tool can be used).
- In reading teams, students compare claims and the evidence they have found to derive and support them.

Students write a short claim-based synopsis of the text and the information it presents about the nature of the issue or problem, citing specific details and evidence to support their explanatory claim. [NOTE: Emphasize that at this point in the process, student claims should focus on interpreting what the text says about the nature of the issue, not on the validity of the text's perspective or position and *not* on articulating the student's own, still-developing position. Those sorts of claims will come later.]



ACTIVITY 2: EXPLORING THE ISSUE (CONT'D)

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES (CONT'D)

NOTE ON TEXT SETS

Instruction in this unit links to a sequence of *text sets*. Each text set provides multiple entry points into the issue, giving teachers and students flexibility with respect to the time and depth with which they wish to explore the topic.

Teachers may choose to use the text sets in a variety of ways:

- Select one of the three texts for all students to read, analyze, and discuss. Provide links to the other two so that students can do additional reading if desired.
- Have all students read, analyze, and discuss all three texts (or two of the three) in a more extended instructional time sequence.
- Place students in “expert groups” and have them read and analyze one of the three texts. Then have students “jigsaw” into cross-text discussion groups to share and compare what they have learned from the text each has read. [Note: students might be grouped by reading level and assigned texts based on their complexity/difficulty.]

TEXT SET #1: TEXTUAL NOTES

Text Set I includes three texts that can be used to provide initial background information about terrorism including what constitutes an act of terror (terrorist act), whether foreign or domestic, and whether all acts that cause fear can be considered as terrorism.

TEXT 1.1: “WHAT IS TERRORISM”

Author: Laura Beth Nielsen - Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of Legal Studies, Northwestern University, and research professor for the American Bar Foundation;

Source/Publisher: Al Jazeera - English; **Date:** May 17, 2013

Complexity Level: Measures at 980L. This text should be accessible to 9th grade students.

Text Notes: This text introduces the question of what constitutes a terrorist act. It lifts up several historical acts and makes claims as to whether they are terrorist acts or not. Apart from pointing out complexity where students might have otherwise not found it, the author also comments on why it is important to arrive at a clearer understanding of the term “terrorism.”

Sample Text-Dependent Questions (to drive closer reading and discussion):

1. According to paragraph 5, why does the author think it is important to know when an act of violence is an act of terror?
2. What elements of terrorism does the author identify in her article?
3. Throughout the article, the author asks several questions. Why does the author do this? How do they help the reader understand the subject at hand?
4. Towards the end of the article the author asks, “What work is the word “terrorism” doing in these conversations?” What does she mean by ascribing the word “work” to terrorism?
5. What evidence does this text provide that influences your understanding of terrorism? In what ways?



ACTIVITY 2: EXPLORING THE ISSUE (CONT'D)

TEXT SET #1: TEXTUAL NOTES

TEXT 1.2: "TERRORISTS VS. FREEDOM FIGHTERS"

Author: John Bolt; **Source/Publisher:** Action Institute; **Date:** November 14, 2001

Complexity Level: At 1110L, this text should be accessible to 9th grade students.

Text Notes: This text objectively distinguishes the difference between a terrorist and a freedom fighter, while maintaining a blurry line between the two. The difference between the two will be important for students to discern. This text will also invite students to put themselves in the shoes of the one committing the acts in order to determine what kind of act it is.

Sample Text-Dependent Questions (to drive closer reading and discussion):

1. The author uses the word "perception" to help think about the difference between a terrorist and freedom fighter. What does he mean by "perception" and how does this contrast with a "metaphysical difference"?
2. How does the author use two of the seven deadly sins to characterize terrorists and freedom fighters? Which does he use to ultimately categorize those who carried out the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on 9/11?
3. What evidence does this text provide that influences your understanding of terrorism? In what ways?

TEXT 1.3: "MILITANT EXTREMISTS IN THE UNITED STATES"

Author: Jonathan Masters; **Source/Publisher:** Council on Foreign Relations; **Date:** February 7, 2011

Complexity Level: 1380L. While this text is more complex, the headings and subheadings help organize the information into sections. Students could jigsaw or focus on one particular section at a time to make it more accessible.

Text Notes: This text is an overview of the distinction between "domestic terrorism" and violent extremism. It also lists four categories of domestic extremists that will help students understand the different nuances to the concept of terrorism. The article also introduces or reinforces students' knowledge of several cases of violent acts that are often included in conversations around terrorism.

Sample Text-Dependent Questions (to drive closer reading and discussion):

1. The author uses the words "terrorist" and "extremist" throughout the article. What distinctions, if any, are drawn between the two words?
2. According to the article, what are some of the outcomes of this new era of facing terrorism?
3. What evidence does this text provide that influences your understanding of terrorism? In what ways?

ACTIVITY 3: DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUE

Students read and analyze a second background text to expand and deepen their understanding of the issue.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

READING

- Students read the text independently, annotating and making notes on how it relates to the unit’s problem-based question.
- The teacher introduces one or more text-based questions to drive a closer reading of the text. Students then follow along as the text is presented to them.
- In reading teams, students discuss the text-based questions and search for relevant details, highlighting and annotating them in their text (and might use a *Forming EBC* tool to record their thinking).

WRITING CLAIMS

- The teacher models the development and writing of an explanatory claim that addresses something the

text has presented about the unit’s issue. The claim is explanatory not argumentative at this point.

- Students individually develop explanatory claims about the text’s presentation of the issue (a *Forming EBC* tool can be used).
- In reading teams, students compare claims and the evidence they have found to derive and support them.

Students write a short claim-based synopsis of the text and the information it presents about the nature of the issue or problem, citing specific details and evidence to support their explanatory claim. [NOTE: Emphasize that at this point in the process, student claims should focus on interpreting what the text says about the nature of the issue, not on the validity of the text’s perspective or position and *not* on articulating the student’s own, still-developing position. Those sorts of claims will come later.]

TEXT SET #2: TEXTUAL NOTES

Text Set #2 includes three texts that can be used to provide additional background information about terrorism and the events of September 11th, 2001.

TEXT 2.1: “FBI MAJOR TERRORISM CASES: PAST AND PRESENT”

Author: FBI; **Source/Publisher:** FBI.com - Stories; **Date:** NA

Complexity Level: This text measures at 1150L and should be accessible to all 9th graders.

Text Notes: This website by the FBI has several links under the “Terrorism” subtitle that access stories and accounts of many different terrorist attacks in the United States. This site should be used prior to learning about 9/11 as it gives students background information on different types of terrorist attacks as defined by the FBI, including the USS Cole bombing, the World Trade Center bombing 1993, and the Oklahoma City bombing. This website can be used for students to learn about other terrorists acts including domestic acts of terrorism.

Sample Text-Dependent Questions (to drive closer reading and discussion):

1. How are the attacks detailed by the FBI similar and different from one another?
2. What evidence does this text provide that influences your understanding of terrorism? In what ways?

ACTIVITY 3: DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUE (CONT'D)

TEXT SET #2: TEXTUAL NOTES

TEXT 2.2: "9/11: TIMELINE OF EVENTS"

Author/Source/Publisher: History.com; **Date:** NA

Complexity Level: NA.

Text Notes: This website has several multimedia sources that students can use to explore the events of 9/11. The videos should be used in conjunction with the background text. These are primary source and informational videos that include some footage from the day and also re-enactments of some of the events of the day.

Sample Text-Dependent Questions (to drive closer reading and discussion):

1. How do the images and information presented in the timeline video fit the description of terrorism that you are familiar with or have read about in this unit?
2. What evidence does this text provide that influences your understanding of terrorism? In what ways?

TEXT 2.3: "SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS TIMELINE"

Author/Source/Publisher: National September 11 Memorial & Museum - 911memorial.org; **Date:** NA

Complexity Level: Measures at 1260L. Very accessible because it is a timeline.

Text Notes: This timeline is part of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum and provides a rich and detailed account of the events of 9/11. At each "slide" in the timeline, students are able to click on sound, photo and video files that are all accompanied by short descriptions.

Sample Text-Dependent Questions (to drive closer reading and discussion):

1. How many planes were involved in the terrorist plot on September 11, 2001?
2. At what times did people begin to understand that an attack was at hand?
3. Where did each plane crash?
4. What evidence does this text provide that influences your understanding of terrorism? In what ways?

ACTIVITY 4: QUESTIONING TO REFINE UNDERSTANDING

Students develop text-dependent questions and use them to find additional evidence and further refine their claims.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

QUESTIONING TEXTS

Students now apply skills they have developed in a *Reading Closely for Textual Details* unit to frame their own, more focused questions about the issue and texts. They use these questions to drive a deeper reading of the previous texts, or of additional texts providing background and perspectives on the topic.

- Starting from the unit’s problem-based question, students work in reading teams to develop a set of more focused, text-based questions to drive further inquiry into the issue. (Students can use the *Reading Closely for Details: Guiding Questions* handout to help them develop their questions.)
- Individually, students use these new questions to re-read one of the two background texts, find additional details, and further refine their explanatory claim.
- *If additional background information is necessary or desired*, students then use their question sets to drive close reading and analysis of one or more additional texts. (Note: Suggested texts are listed in the Instructional Notes or may be identified by the teacher or found by the students. Students might work in teams to become “experts” and develop explanatory claims about one or more of these additional texts, then “jigsaw” into new groups and share what they have learned. In this way, all students can become familiar with a wider range of background texts.)
- Students write or revise one or more explanatory claim(s) based on additional evidence they have found through further or deeper reading.

TEXTUAL NOTES

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND TEXTS

To expand their understanding of the topic, students might be assigned any of the texts from Text Sets #1 and #2 that have not been read by the class. They might also access other sources found by the teacher (or by students themselves) or the additional source texts listed in the unit plan.

Those listed source texts provide additional, and different, information about both terrorism as a legal term and events that shape our understanding of terrorism, and can be used to expand students’ understanding and/or as independent reading/research assignments. The definition of “international terrorism,” as provided by Cornell Law, is from the U.S. Code and can be used to provide students with further clarity about how terrorism is defined while also reminding them that the term is a legal one that is vital for court cases. “A Brief History of Terrorism in the United States” by Brian Resnick gives a brief summary of several attacks, both domestic and international, on the United States. CNN’s “USS Cole Bombing Fast Facts” provides information on the USS Cole attack in Yemen, which many consider to be part of the lead-up attack to 9/11. Finally, the About.com timeline, *The History of Terrorism* by Amy Zalman, gives an even broader historical view of terrorism and helps further define the term in its modern development.

ACTIVITY 5: WRITING AN EBC ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE ISSUE

Students develop and write an evidence-based claim about the nature of the issue.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

In the culminating activity for Part 1, students now develop a synthesis claim about the nature of the issue that they will expand and revise when drafting their final argument. Before they can take a position and make their case for a response, they must be able to use evidence to explain their understanding of the issue or problem.

- The teacher models the development of an evidence-based claim that synthesizes information from multiple sources and presents the writer's understanding the unit's issue.
- In reading teams, students go back to the background texts to find additional evidence/details that support this synthesis claim. (An *Organizing EBC* tool can be used).
- In reading teams, students review the explanatory claims they wrote about each text.
- In reading teams, students brainstorm alternative ways of viewing or understanding the problem, based on evidence from the background texts.
- Individually, students develop a multi-part claim that synthesizes how they have come (so far) to view and understand the nature of the issue and its components. (An *Organizing EBC* tool can be used).
- In reading teams, students compare their synthesis claims and the evidence that supports them.
- If teachers and students are familiar with the *Evidence-Based Claims Criteria Checklist* and the *Text-Centered Discussion Checklist* from work in previous units, students can use them as criteria for evaluating their claims and reflecting on their discussions and participation in their reading teams.
- As a class, return to the unit's problem-based question to consider revising it based on the emerging understanding of the issue.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

As a formative assessment, and a building block for their final argument, in Activity 5, students draft a written, multi-part claim that:

1. Synthesizes what they have learned about the nature of the unit's issue.
2. Presents their current way of understanding the issue and its components.
3. Cites evidence from multiple sources that explains and substantiates their perspective.
4. Represents their best thinking and clearest writing.

Teachers can use an *EBC Criteria Checklist* to evaluate student writing as well as each student's initial comprehension of the background texts and understanding of the issue.