

PART 1

UNDERSTANDING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

“The Question of Our Time”

OBJECTIVE:

Students learn the importance and elements of making evidence-based claims through a close reading of part of the text.



ACTIVITIES

1- INTRODUCTION TO UNIT

The teacher presents the purpose of the unit and explains the proficiency of making EBCs.

2- INDEPENDENT READING

Students independently read part of the text with a text-dependent question to guide them.

3- READ ALOUD AND CLASS DISCUSSION

Students follow along as they listen to the text being read aloud, and the teacher leads a discussion guided by a series of text-dependent questions.

4- MODEL FORMING EBCs

The teacher models a critical reading and thinking process for forming EBCs about texts.

ESTIMATED TIME: 2-3 days

MATERIALS:

Forming EBC Handout
Forming EBC Tool
EBC Criteria Checklist I
Making EBC Tool



ALIGNMENT TO CCSS

TARGETED STANDARD(S): RI.9-10.1

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.

SUPPORTING STANDARD(S): RI.9-10.3 RI.9-10.6 SL.9-10.9 SL.9-10.1

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.

RI.9-10.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

RI.9-10.9: Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington's Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail"), including how they address related themes and concepts.

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.



ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCTION TO UNIT

The teacher presents the purpose of the unit and explains the proficiency of making evidence-based claims, making reference to the first five criteria from the EBC Checklist I.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

Introduce the central purpose of the unit and the idea of a “claim” someone might make. The following is a possible approach:

Introduce the first characteristic of an evidence-based claim: “States a conclusion you have come to... and that you want others to think about.” Pick a subject that is familiar to students, such as “school lunches” and ask them to brainstorm some claim statements they might make about the subject. Introduce the fourth characteristic: “All parts of the claim are supported by specific evidence you can point to” and distinguish claims that can be supported by evidence from those that are unsupported opinions, using the students’ brainstorm list as a reference.

Move from experience-based claims to claims in a field like science. Start with more familiar, fact-based claims (For example, the claim “It is cold outside” is supported by evidence like “The outside thermometer reads 13 degrees F” but is not supported with statements like “It feels that way to me”). Then discuss a claim such as “Smoking has been shown to be hazardous to your health” and talk about how this claim was once considered to be an opinion, until a weight of scientific evidence over time led us to accept this claim as fact. Introduce the third characteristic/criterion: “Demonstrates knowledge of and sound thinking about a topic” and with it the idea that a claim becomes stronger as we expand our knowledge about a subject and find more and better evidence to support the claim.

Move from scientific claims to claims that are based in text that has been read closely. Use an example of a text read recently in class or one students are likely to be familiar with. Highlight that textual claims can start as statements about

what a text tells us directly (literal comprehension) such as “Tom Sawyer gets the other boys to paint the fence” and then move to simple conclusions we draw from thinking about the text, like: “Tom Sawyer is a clever boy” because (evidence) “He tricks the other boys into doing his work and painting the fence.” Then explain how text-based claims can also be more complex and require more evidence (e.g., “Mark Twain presents Tom Sawyer as a ‘good bad boy’ who tricks others and gets into trouble but also stands up for his friend Jim.”), sometimes – as in this example – requiring evidence from more than one text or sections of text.

Explain that the class will be practicing the skill of making evidence-based claims that are based in the words, sentences, and ideas of a text by closely reading and analyzing the text (or texts) selected for this unit.

In the activities that follow, students will learn to make a text-based claim by moving from literal understanding of its details, to simple supported conclusions or inferences, to claims that arise from and are supported by close examination of textual evidence. This inductive process mirrors what effective readers do and is intended to help students develop a method for moving from comprehension to claim. In addition, the guiding questions, model claims, and movement through the text over the course of the unit are sequenced to transition students from an initial, literal understanding of textual details to:

- Claims about fairly concrete ideas presented in short sections of the text;
- Claims about more abstract ideas implied across sections of the text;
- More global claims about the entire text and its meaning.



ACTIVITY 2: INDEPENDENT READING

Students independently read part of the text with a text-dependent question to guide them.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES



Students independently read paragraphs 1-5 of King's Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech and answer a text-dependent question: How does King describe the current state of the civil rights movement?

Briefly introduce students to the text. The introduction should be kept to a short explanation of the prize and the year of the

Students should be allowed to approach the text freshly and to make their own inferences based on textual content. Plenty of instruction and support will follow to ensure comprehension for all students. The question helps orient students to the text and begins the focus on searching for textual evidence.



ACTIVITY 3: READ ALOUD AND CLASS DISCUSSION

Students follow along as they listen to the text being read aloud, and the teacher leads a discussion guided by a series of text-dependent questions.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES



The teacher reads paragraphs 1-5 of King's speech aloud and leads a discussion guided by three text-dependent questions:

- 1- How does King describe the current state of the civil rights movement?
- 2- What is nonviolence according to King?
- 3- To what societal (moral and political) debate is King responding?

The close reading of these paragraphs serves three primary purposes: to ensure comprehension of an important part of the text, to orient students to the practice of close reading, and to guide students in searching for textual evidence.

Use the discussion about the questions to help students learn the essential skills of selecting interesting and significant textual details and connecting them inferentially. This process links directly to the forming of evidence-based claims they will begin in Activity Four.

≡ ACTIVITY 3: READ ALOUD AND ≡ CLASS DISCUSSION (CONT'D)

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

1- How does King describe the current state of the civil rights movement?

King states that he is receiving the prize not for himself but for a “movement,” which he then briefly describes. Students can look through the opening paragraph for the descriptive details King uses to describe the civil rights movement at that point in 1964. The images King gives are ones of violence and deep struggle between two sides: those for equal rights and those for segregation. The fact that the movement is ongoing causes King to ask the rhetorical question: if the movement has not yet achieved peace, why then has it been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize? Discuss with the students why King begins with such a negative and violent picture of the movement and how it helps him introduce the idea of nonviolence.

2- What is nonviolence according to King?

King answers his own question by claiming that nonviolence is the answer to the political and moral question of how to overcome violence without resorting to violence. King describes nonviolence as a “moral force” opposed to “sterile passivity,” and the only “method” to establish peace. Ask the students what words King associates and disassociates with nonviolence (“creative battle,” “love,” “moral force,” “revenge,” “aggression”). Once students can identify these points, discuss how King juxtaposes the idea of nonviolence with the violent description given in the first paragraph.

3- To what societal (moral and political) debate is King responding?

Now that the students have a clearer understanding of the violence in the movement and King’s idea of nonviolence, point out that King is responding to a debate in society. Ask the students how they know there is a debate in society by looking closely at the words used by King (“question of our time,” “recognition”). Discuss how the Peace Prize helps King’s argument and how he uses it as a platform to make his case for the nonviolent movement. Ask what evidence King provides to prove the legitimacy of his solution (Prize “bears witness,” “Civil Rights Bill”).



ACTIVITY 4: MODEL FORMING EBCs

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

Based on the class discussion of the text, the teacher models a critical reading and thinking process for forming EBCs: from comprehension of textual details that stand out, to an inference that arises from examining the details, to a basic EBC that is supported by specific references back to the text.

Once the class has reached an understanding of the text, use the Forming EBC Handout to introduce a three-step process for making a claim that arises from the text.

Exemplify the process by making a claim with the Forming EBC Tool. The tool is organized so that students first take note of “interesting” details that they also see as “related” to each other. The second section asks them to think about and explain a connection they have made among those details.

Such “text-to-text” connections should be distinguished from “text-to-self” connections readers make between what they have read and their own experiences. These “text-to-text” connections can then lead them to a “claim” they can make and record in the third section of the tool – a conclusion they have drawn about the text that can be referenced

back to textual details and text-to-text connections. Have students follow along as you talk through the process with your claim.

To provide structured practice for the first two steps, you might give students a textual detail on a blank tool. In pairs, have students use the tool to find other details/quotations that could be related to the one you have provided, and then make/explain connections among those details. Use the EBC Checklist 1 to discuss the claim, asking students to explain how it meets (or doesn't yet meet) the criteria.

[Note: Here and throughout the entire unit, you are encouraged to develop claims based on your own analysis and class discussion. The provided models are possibilities meant more to illustrate the process than to shape textual analysis. Instruction will be most effective if the claims used in modeling flow naturally from the textual ideas and details you and the students find significant and interesting. Also, while the tools have three or four places for supporting evidence, students should know that not all claims require three pieces of evidence. Places on the tools can be left blank.]



INDEPENDENT READING ACTIVITY

Students read paragraphs 6-12 of King's speech and use the Making EBC Tool to find evidence to support the teacher-provided claim. This activity overlaps with the first activity of Part 2 and can be given as homework or done at the beginning of the next class.



ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Forming EBC Tool should be evaluated to get an initial assessment of students' grasp of the relationship between claims and textual evidence. Even though the work was done together with the class, filling in the tool helps them get a sense of the critical reading and thinking process and the relationships among the ideas. Also make sure that students are developing the habit of using quotation marks and recording the reference.