

UNIT OUTLINE

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

- The teacher presents the purpose of the unit and explains the skill of making EBCs.
- Students independently read part of the poem with a text-dependent question to guide them.
- Students follow along as they listen to the poem being read aloud and discuss a series of text-dependent questions.
- The teacher models a critical reading and thinking process for forming EBCs about texts.

PART 2: MAKING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

- Students independently read the rest of the poem and look for evidence to support a claim made by the teacher.
- Students follow along as they listen to the poem being read aloud and discuss a series of text-dependent questions.
- In pairs, students look for evidence to support claims made by the teacher.
- The class discusses evidence in support of claims found by student pairs.
- In pairs, students make an EBC of their own and present it to the class.

PART 3: ORGANIZING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

- Students independently read part of another poem and make an EBC.
- Students follow along as they listen to the poem being read aloud and discuss a series of text-dependent questions.
- The teacher models organizing evidence to develop and explain claims using student EBCs.
- In pairs, students develop a claim with multiple points and organize supporting evidence.
- The class discusses the EBCs developed by student pairs.

PART 4: WRITING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

- Students independently read the rest of the poem and develop an EBC.
- The teacher introduces and models writing EBCs using a claim from Part 3.
- In pairs, students write EBCs using one of their claims from Part 3.
- The class discusses the written EBCs of volunteer student pairs.
- The class discusses their new EBCs and students read aloud portions of the text.
- Students independently write EBCs.

PART 5: DEVELOPING EVIDENCE-BASED WRITING

- Students review the two poems and make a new EBC.
- The teacher analyzes volunteer student evidence-based writing from Part 4 and discusses developing global EBCs.
- Students discuss their new claims in pairs and then with the class.
- Students independently write a final evidence-based writing piece.
- The class discusses final evidence-based writing pieces of student volunteers.

PART 1

UNDERSTANDING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

“We slowly drove, he knew no haste”

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 poem with a text-dependent question to guide them.

3- READ ALOUD AND CLASS DISCUSSION

Students follow along as they listen to the poem 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 Lit Handout
Forming EBC Tool
EBC Criteria Checklist I
Making EBC Tool



ALIGNMENT TO CCSS

TARGETED STANDARD(S): RL.9-10.1

RL.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): RL.9-10.2 RL.9-10.4 RL.9-10.5 SL.9-10.1

RL.9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail 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.

RL.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

RL.9-10.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

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.

Discuss other fields and areas in which making claims supported by evidence is central to what practitioners do (e.g., lawyers, historians, movie critics, etc.). Then transition and focus discussion into the realm of claims made about literary works and the close reading skills of literary analysis - the domain of scholars and critics, but

also that of active and skillful readers who intuitively sense and appreciate the multi-dimensional aspects of writing craft when they read a poem, short story, novel, play, or essay. Let students know that in this unit they will be focusing and applying their skills of reading closely for textual details and making evidence-based claims in the realm of literary analysis. Use an example text read recently by most students to suggest what it means to read a literary work for meaning while also attending to its craft.

When reading and analyzing a literary work (as with any text), a reader attends to details that are related to comprehending the text, finding meaning, and understanding the author’s perspective. But a skillful reader of a literary work also pays attention to what authors *do* – the language, elements, devices, and techniques they use, and the choices they make that influence a reader’s experience with and understanding of the literary work - the craft of writing. Explain that literary scholars classify, name and discuss the elements, devices, and techniques characteristic of a literary genre to help us analyze and think about texts. Students should already be familiar with some of these techniques (i.e. plot, characterization, imagery, rhyme). Throughout this unit, they will discuss specific techniques, develop their ability to identify and analyze the use of those techniques, and make evidence-based claims about the effects of those techniques on textual meaning.

It is important for students to come to understand that in a great literary work, the many aspects of its craft are interdependent, creating what Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren have described as the “organic unity” of a work, where all aspects “are significant and have some bearing on the total significance” of the work. [See Brooks’ and Warren’s anthology *The Scope of Fiction*, Prentice Hall, 1960.]



ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCTION TO UNIT (CONT'D)

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

However, students will also need to practice and develop the skills of examining specific aspects of a work, and the relationship of those aspects to other aspects – and to the overall meaning of the work. Thus, this unit will focus on specific elements, devices, or techniques that seem particularly relevant and students will initially make claims related to those targeted aspects of craft. The text notes and text-dependent questions are designed to emphasize these targeted techniques, but teachers and students are also encouraged to extend beyond or outside of the unit's models, into the study of other literary techniques, themes, and meanings that transcend what is suggested here. No matter what approach is emphasized during reading, discussion, and analysis, the close reading process should be guided by these broad questions:

1. What specific aspect(s) of the author's craft am I attending to? (Through what lense(s) will I focus my reading?)
2. What choices do I notice the author making, and what techniques do I see the author using? What textual details do I find as

evidence of those choices and techniques?

3. How do the author's choices and techniques influence my reading of the work and the meaning that emerges for me? How can I ground my claims about meaning in specific textual evidence?

In this unit, reading, discussion, and literary analysis will focus on the literary techniques of meter and the use of imagery as symbolism in the genre of poetry. Students will analyze two poems beginning with Emily Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for Death" followed by Robert Frost's "Home Burial." Students will read each poem closely, search for evidence for meter and symbolism, and develop claims about specific words, phrases or passages in the poems, eventually forming and writing more global claims about how the techniques and choices they have identified contribute to the overall meaning and unity of each poem. Broad guiding questions, specific textual notes, and text-dependent questions will guide teachers and students as they examine how Dickinson and Frost have crafted their works.



ACTIVITY 2: INDEPENDENT READING

Students independently read the first three stanzas of the poem with a text-dependent question to guide them.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES



Briefly introduce Emily Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for Death," limiting the information to the author, title and the time it was published. Students independently read the first three stanzas of the poem and answer the following general questions, "What actors are introduced and what are they doing? What words in the poem tell you this?" After all students have finished reading the stanzas, lead a brief discussion in which students volunteer something they learned about the characters and setting of the poem. Ask the students to identify what specific words or lines helped them arrive at their comment and write those on the board. The intention is to gather a good image of the scene Dickinson describes. Stress that there is no wrong or right observation here, but that they should use the text to explain their thoughts.

ACTIVITY 3: READ ALOUD AND CLASS DISCUSSION

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

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

The close reading of the first section of poem serves three primary purposes: to ensure comprehension of an important part of the poem, to orient students to the practice of close reading, and to guide students in using questions to search for textual evidence.

Use the discussions about both the guiding and text-specific questions to help students learn the essential skills of selecting interesting and

significant textual details and connecting them inferentially. Also encourage students to develop and use their own text-specific questions related to the guiding and modeled questions. This process links directly to the close reading skills they may have practiced in the Reading Closely for Textual Details unit or a previous EBC unit, and to the forming of evidence-based claims they will do in Activity 4.

What impression does the reader have of Death? What specific words or lines lead to that impression?

Because poetry is a form of condensed writing, every word counts and is methodically placed. The teacher can point this out by asking this first question that focuses on word choice. The students might have already picked up on the unlikely characterization of Death in the first stanza. Again, in line 8, the reader is drawn to the word “civility,” not only because of the rhythm of the poem and location of the word at the end of a stanza, but because it further describes Death as a pleasant person. Finally, line 5 suggests a certain pleasantness in the way Death drives the carriage. By focusing on these specific word choices, students will be able get in the mind set of entering into the text on a deeper level. Throughout the poem, Dickinson makes some intriguing word choices such as “gazing” to describe the grain. Have a discussion about these words, their meaning, and their effect on the poem itself.

What meter does the poem follow? How does the rhythm make the poem feel?


Meter is just one of many techniques at a poet’s disposal to craft a poem’s tone, meaning, and rhythm. Remind students that meter, like other poetic techniques, can follow a strict form or no form at all. “Because I could not stop for Death,” written in iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter, seemingly follows a strict form but it also occasionally veers from its meter. Remind students that poets make use of this device to not only give flow to the poem, but also to highlight specific words and phrases, and therefore ideas. When read aloud, students should note that certain words are stressed more than others, including *Death, kindly, me, Carriage, and Immortality*. Many

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

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

of these words are capitalized giving them even more potency. At this point, it is important that students identify and feel the cadence of the poem, and even perhaps its exact meter, including syllable and feet counts. Be sure to read the poem slowly, stressing the syllables so that the students will feel the rhythm of the poem.

Line 3 contains the word “carriage.” Considering the actors, what do you think this carriage symbolizes?



Poetry often uses imagery to both speak about something concrete, but also to symbolize another meaning. Already in the first stanza, the reader can pick up on how Dickinson uses particular objects to talk about something else more abstract. Leading with such characters as Death and Immortality, the reader might look at the word “carriage” with increasing interest (in particular, it is highly stressed given the poem’s meter). Ask the students what an actual carriage is used for. They will most likely know that it is used as a means of transportation. Now ask again who the other people are and what impact that has on the meaning of the word carriage. Students will begin to realize that carriage is probably used to signify or represent a passing from life to death, rather than simply an afternoon ride. If the students do not come to this realization, that is okay – it is still the beginning of the poem. The point should be to bring them to the realization of the difference between literal and figurative or symbolic meanings.

In the third stanza, Dickinson uses the word “passed” repeatedly. What kind of word is it and what effect does it have in the third stanza?

Students should be directed towards the word via a discussion on how critical readers are always on the lookout for words that are repeated as they probably hold a clue to discover meaning. In this case, the word “passed” is a verb, so it ascribes movement in the poem; the word not only is used to describe the action of the characters, but it also propels the reader forward. Ask the students what this word might mean, especially after having discussed the meaning of carriage in the question above. In this case, the use of the word passed hints at a certain remoteness from the reality that the author observes; the author by passing by and not taking part is already leaving the physical realm.



ACTIVITY 4: MODEL FORMING EBCs

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

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 Lit 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 independently read stanzas 4-6 and use the Making EBC Tool to look for evidence to support a claim made by the teacher. 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.