

PART 3

ORGANIZING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

“My boots are filling”

OBJECTIVE:

Students expand their ability into organizing evidence to develop and explain claims through a close reading of the text.



ACTIVITIES

1- INDEPENDENT READING AND FORMING EBCs

Students independently read the rest of the text and use the Forming EBC Tool to make an evidence-based claim.

2- READ ALOUD AND CLASS DISCUSSION

Students follow along as they listen to the text being read aloud and discuss a series of text-dependent questions.

3- MODEL ORGANIZING EBCs

The teacher models organizing evidence to develop and explain claims using student evidence-based claims and the Organizing EBC Tool.

4- ORGANIZING EBCs IN PAIRS

In pairs, students develop a claim with multiple points using the Organizing EBC Tool.

5- CLASS DISCUSSION OF STUDENT EBCs

The class discusses the evidence-based claims developed by student pairs.

ESTIMATED TIME: 1-3 days

MATERIALS:

Organizing EBC Tool
Forming EBC Tool
EBC Criteria Checklist I



ALIGNMENT TO CCSS

TARGETED STANDARD(S): RL.11-12.1

RL.11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

SUPPORTING STANDARD(S): RL.11-12.3 RL.11-12.5 RL.6 SL.11-12.1

RL.11-12.3: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

RL.11-12.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

RL.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

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 grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

≡ ACTIVITY 1: INDEPENDENT READING AND FORMING EBCs

Students independently read the rest of text and use the Forming EBC Tool to make an evidence-based claim.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES



Students independently read the final two sections of “The Red Convertible” (paragraphs 47-69). As students read, they should be thinking about several broad guiding questions, related to the author’s choices, the narrative’s resolution, and its impact on the meaning they derive from the story: What choices do we notice the author making? Where does the narrative end - with what details, events, or thoughts? What seems unexpected, troubling, or ironic about the resolution of the narrative? How does the ending influence/change our reading and understanding of the narrative?

Depending on scheduling and student ability, students can be assigned to read and complete the tool for homework. Teachers should decide what works best for their students. It’s essential that students have an opportunity to read the text independently. All students must develop the habit of perseverance in reading. Assigning

the reading as homework potentially gives them more time with the text. Either way, it might be a good idea to provide some time at the beginning of class for students to read quietly by themselves. This ensures that all students have had at least some independent reading time.

≡ ACTIVITY 2: READ ALOUD AND CLASS DISCUSSION

Students follow along as they listen to part of the text being read aloud and discuss a series of text-dependent questions.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES



The final sections of “The Red Convertible” present climactic scenes in which Lyman and Henry momentarily re-establish their brotherly bond, then fight about whose car the red convertible should become, until their animosity dissolves in laughter and too many beers. Erdrich dramatically describes the final moments of Henry’s life (and the convertible’s) through Lyman’s eyes, resolving the story in the poignant and ironic moment when Henry says simply, “My boots are filling” and thus connects the ending of the narrative to the foreshadowing in the first paragraph. The final two sections thus provide opportunities for students to look closely at descriptive details and language that are much more vivid and immediate than elsewhere in the story, and to analyze the narrative’s resolution and develop claims about its relationship to the narrative structure, point of view, character development, and meaning.

ACTIVITY 2: READ ALOUD AND CLASS DISCUSSION (CONT'D)

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

The first four paragraphs of section 9 (47-50) are almost cinematic in the unusual vividness with which Lyman recalls the scene; what details and images stand out when these paragraphs are read closely? Why might the author have chosen to make this scene so dramatic, and how does the mood of the description relate to the story's narrative sequence and meaning?

These paragraphs offer a powerful opportunity to pay close attention to Erdrich's use of imagery, in a story sometimes void of description. Students might make claims about the impact of the scene on their reading, and also about how the imagery presented both creates atmosphere and has symbolic meaning.

Why might Erdrich have chosen the words and images Lyman uses to describe Henry in paragraph 49: "His face was totally white and hard. Then it broke, like stones break all of a sudden when water boils up inside of them"? What happens with time (and verb tenses) in the very next sentence? Why might the author have chosen to make this shift?

This sentence, and what follows, may be among the most technically interesting aspects of the narrative for students to analyze. Lyman, who has rarely been particularly poetic in his previous descriptions, now describes Henry using vivid figurative language – with his images and similes powerfully connected to the meaning of the entire narrative. Most students (most readers?) will not immediately notice that Erdrich also changes the verb tenses (and thus time frame) following this sentence, from the past tense through which the story has previously been recounted to the present, through which the final events are now immediately presented. She has previously foreshadowed this time shift in the very first paragraph, when Lyman shifts from "owned" to "owns" when talking about Henry and the car. This sort of small, but ultimately very significant, aspect of the story's craft presents an opportunity for students to think, and make claims about, how subtle choices by the author can greatly impact the reading experience – even sometimes when a reader is not at first consciously aware of them.

Paragraph 64, which begins with Lyman's statement that "I think it's the old Henry again" offers more vivid description – this time of Henry's last "dance" before he shouts, "Got to cool me off!" and jumps in the river. What claim might a reader make about Henry's state of mind in his last moments, based on evidence drawn from this and previous descriptions?

This paragraph is another powerful opportunity to do close reading of Erdrich's use of descriptive language, as filtered through Lyman's eyes. It also represents what might be seen as the final, climactic scene before the story's denouement. Students may read the scene differently, and make a range of claims about Henry's state of mind before he enters the river. As long as they can support those claims with evidence from the text, that is a good thing – because Erdrich has allowed for many readings of the final part of the narrative.

ACTIVITY 2: READ ALOUD AND CLASS DISCUSSION (CONT'D)

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

Henry's last words, "My boots are filling," ironically connect back to Lyman's statement in the opening paragraph of the narrative; how does this final scene make us re-read and re-think the story's beginning? What claim might a reader make about why Erdrich has chosen to structure the narrative in this circular fashion, and why the author has used foreshadowing and flashback to set up the narrative's ironic ending?

For many readers, coming to Henry's last words in the final climactic scene of his life can produce "goose bumps," the jarring recognition of how the story has inevitably (though cryptically) led to this point from its first paragraph. Erdrich's brilliant connecting of the foreshadowed sentence from paragraph one, "We owned it together until his boots filled with water on a windy night" and these final words presents a chilling and poignant example of her craft as a writer. It also provides textual evidence students can use to make claims about the story's circular narrative structure, and the impact of that structure on the meaning that emerges for them as readers.

What specific words does Erdrich choose in the final paragraph to heighten its drama, irony, and meaning? How does the convertible's final moment add additional meaning to the story?

Some readers may see the final scene, in which Lyman drives the car into the river, as troubling or anticlimactic – others as inevitable or even triumphant. However students read this last paragraph, it presents opportunities to examine textual detail and description, and to make claims about both the symbolic meaning of the Red Convertible and the impact of the final image, its "searching" then "finally dark" headlights, on the experience and meaning of Erdrich's story.

Whose story ultimately is it: Henry's, Lyman's, or the Red Convertible's?

- ◇ *If the story is about its central character, Henry Junior, and his post-Vietnam unraveling, what claim might a reader make about how the author has structured and crafted the story to suggest this reading?*
- ◇ *If the story is about its narrator, Lyman, and why he ends by telling us he now "walks everywhere he goes," what claim might a reader make about how the author has structured and crafted the story to suggest this reading?*
- ◇ *If the story is ultimately about the car and its symbolic meaning, what claim might a reader make about how the author has structured and crafted the story to suggest this reading?*

The three alternative readings of the story suggested by this set of questions may seem artificial to some, since the narrative's power is that it can present, encompass, and intertwine all three stories at once. However, to take a stand as to "whose story it is" presents students with a good opportunity to think more specifically about how to use evidence to support and "argue for" a claim which differs from someone else's reading and interpretation of a literary work (which is what scholars and critics spend their careers doing!). This question also sets up the possibility for an interesting final discussion/debate about the story and its various meanings – and how Erdrich's craft as a writer contributes to each and all of those meanings.



ACTIVITY 3: MODEL ORGANIZING EBCs

The teacher models organizing evidence to develop and explain claims using student evidence-based claims and the Organizing EBC Tool.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

The central focus of Part 3 is learning the thinking processes associated with developing an evidence-based claim: reflecting on how one has arrived at the claim; breaking the claim into parts; organizing supporting evidence in a logical sequence; anticipating what an audience will need to know in order to understand the claim; and, eventually, planning a line of reasoning that will substantiate the claim. This is a complex set of cognitive skills, challenging for most students, but essential so that students can move from the close reading process of arriving at a claim (Parts 1-2 of the unit) to the purposeful writing process of explaining and substantiating that claim (Parts 4-5).

How a reader develops and organizes a claim is dependent upon the nature of the claim itself – and the nature of the text (or texts) from which it arises. In some cases – simple claims involving literal interpretation of the text – indicating where the claim comes from in the text and explaining how the reader arrived at it is sufficient. This suggests a more straightforward, explanatory organization. More complex claims, however, often involve multiple parts, points, or premises, each of which needs to be explained and developed, then linked in a logical order into a coherent development.

Students only learn how to develop and organize a claim through practice, ideally moving over time from simpler claims and more familiar organizational patterns to more complex claims and organizations.

Students can be helped in learning how to develop a claim by using a set of developmental guiding questions such as the following: [Note: the first few questions might be used with younger or less experienced readers, the latter questions with students who are developing more sophisticated claims.]

- What do I mean when I state this claim? What am I trying to communicate?
- How did I arrive at this claim? Can I “tell the story” of how I moved as a reader from the literal details of the text to a supported claim about the text?
- Can I point to the specific words and sentences in the text from which the claim arises?
- What do I need to explain so that an audience can understand what I mean and where my claim comes from?
- What evidence (quotations) might I use to illustrate my claim? In what order?
- If my claim contains several parts (or premises), how can I break it down, organize the parts, and organize the evidence that goes with them?
- If my claim involves a comparison or a relationship, how might I present, clarify, and organize my discussion of the relationship between parts or texts?

ACTIVITY 3: MODEL ORGANIZING EBCs (CONT'D)

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

Students who are learning how to develop a claim, at any level, can benefit from graphic organizers or instructional scaffolding that helps them work out, organize, and record their thinking. While such models or templates should not be presented formulaically as a “how to” for developing a claim, they can be used to support the learning process. The Organizing EBC Tool can be used to provide some structure for student planning – or you can substitute another model or graphic organizer that fits well with the text, the types of claims being developed, and the needs of the students.

Begin by orienting students to the new tool and the idea of breaking down a claim into parts and organizing the evidence accordingly.

Ask for a volunteer to present his or her claim and supporting evidence. Use the example as a basis for a discussion. Based on the flow of discussion, bring in other volunteers to present their claims and evidence to build and help clarify the points. Work with students to hone and develop a claim. As a class, express the organized claim in the Organizing EBC Tool. The provided teacher version is one possible way a claim could be expressed and organized.

ACTIVITY 4: ORGANIZING EBCs IN PAIRS

In pairs, students develop and organize a claim using the Organizing EBC Tool.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

When the class has reached a solid expression of an organized evidence-based claim, have students work in pairs, using the tool to develop and organize another claim.

You might want to give students some general guidance by directing their focus to a specific section of the text.

≡ ACTIVITY 5: CLASS DISCUSSION OF ≡ STUDENT EBCs

After students have finished their work in pairs, regroup for a class discussion about their EBCs.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

Have pairs volunteer to present their claims and evidence to the rest of the class. Discuss the evidence and organization, evaluating how each piece supports and develops the claims. Repeat the process from activity two, using

student work to explain how evidence is organized to develop aspects of claims. The teacher version of the Organizing EBC Tool is one possible way a claim could be expressed and organized.

≡ INDEPENDENT READING ACTIVITY

Students read Tim O'Brien's "On the Rainy River," and use the Forming EBC Tool to make any claim and support it with evidence. This activity overlaps with the first activity of Part 4 and can be given as homework or done at the beginning of the next class.

≡ ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Students are now beginning to develop more complex claims about challenging portions of the text. Their Forming EBC Tool should demonstrate a solid grasp of the claim-evidence relationship, but do not expect precision in the wording of their claims. Using the Organizing EBC Tool will help them clarify their claims as they break them into parts and organize their evidence. How they have transferred their information will demonstrate their grasp of the concept of organizing. Their second Organizing EBC Tool should show progress in all dimensions including the clarity of the claim and the selection and organization of evidence. Use the EBC Criteria Checklist I to structure the evaluation and feedback to students.