

SUPPLEMENTAL SKILLS INSTRUCTION

WR.1.C ARGUMENT

Working with Words

Lessons WR.1.A–G offer direct instruction on discrete skills and should be implemented between Lessons 10 and 11. Students may benefit from some or all of the instruction in these lessons; only those lessons or activities that address student needs should be implemented.

Introduction

This lesson is composed of two distinct but related activities that center on skills for implementing effective word choice to improve argument writing. Each activity may last an entire class period.

Writing Instruction Options:

- Word Choice
- Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

In this lesson, the teacher provides direct instruction to students on using precise and specific words to improve their arguments. Instruction also includes work with dictionaries and thesauruses to help contribute to more compelling arguments. Students focus on revising their own argument drafts for word choice before transitioning to a peer discussion of revisions. Student learning is assessed via the completion of the WR.1 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words, on which each student records one example of a successful revision.

For homework, students choose three different passages from their arguments and revise each passage focusing on effectively incorporating word choice. Students also write a few sentences explaining whether or not they will keep the revisions they drafted and the impact this decision has on their arguments.

Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
W.9-10.1.c	<p>Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.</p> <p>c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create</p>

	cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
W.9-10.5	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
Addressed Standard(s)	
W.9-10.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.
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 <i>grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Assessment

Assessment(s)	
<p>Student learning is assessed via completion of the WR.1 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words. Students record the original passage from their arguments as well as the revised passage. Students then explain why the revision is effective.</p> <p> Consider assessing these revisions using the Argument Writing Checklist.</p>	
High Performance Response(s)	
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record the original passage (e.g., Distracted by the never-ending need to check their e-mail or texts, chained to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and neglecting homework in order to play the latest and greatest version of Grand Theft Auto, it is painfully obvious that today’s teenagers cannot live without their screens.). Revise the original passage, focusing on precise and specific word choices (e.g., Distracted by the constant need to check their e-mail or texts, chained to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and neglecting homework in order to play the latest and greatest version of Grand Theft Auto, it is painfully obvious that today’s teenagers cannot live without their screens.). Explain why the revision is effective (e.g., I opted to use the word “constant” instead of “never-ending” here, because it is a more specific word that means ongoing rather than never-ending, which more realistically supports my argument and does not clash with the other strong words throughout the first sentence.). 	

[See the Model WR.1 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words for more examples.](#)

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: W.9-10.1.c, W.9-10.5, W.9-10.6, SL.9-10.1 	
Learning Sequence:	
1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda	1. 5%
2. Homework Accountability	2. 0%
3. Writing Instruction Options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word Choice Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus 	3. 30%
4. Argument Writing Checklist	4. 5%
5. Individual Revision	5. 30%
6. Revision Discussion	6. 20%
7. WR.1 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words	7. 5%
8. Closing	8. 5%

Materials

- Student copies of the up-to-date Argument Writing Checklist (refer to WR.1 Lesson B Model Argument Writing Checklist)
- Copies of the WR.1 Revision Exit Slip: _____ for each student (refer to WR.1 Lesson A)—students will need additional blank copies
- One dictionary or thesaurus for each pair or small group of students (online or print copies)

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	Plain text indicates teacher action.

symbol	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. In this lesson, students learn how to incorporate precise and specific words into their writing or use dictionaries and thesauruses to strengthen word choice in their arguments. Students revise their own drafts before participating in a peer discussion of their individual revisions.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

0%

- ⓘ Students will be held accountable for homework during Activity 6: Revision Discussion.

Activity 3: Writing Instruction Options

30%

- ⓘ Based on student need, select from the two options below:
 - Word Choice (See Appendix 1)
 - Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus (See Appendix 2)

Activity 4: Argument Writing Checklist

5%

- ⓘ The following activity addresses the expectations of SL.9-10.1.

Instruct students to take out their copies of the Argument Writing Checklist.

- ⓘ Consider posting or projecting the Argument Writing Checklist.

Instruct students to Think, Pair, Share about the following questions:

Based on this lesson’s writing instruction, what items should the class add to the Argument Writing Checklist? In which categories do these items belong and why?

- ☞ Student responses will vary but should include points that address the following:

- Use precise language to clearly explain the topic and claims? This item belongs in the Coherence, Organization, and Style category, because precise language helps explain topics and claims more clearly, which contributes to coherence and style.
- Incorporate effective word choice to strengthen my writing? This item belongs in the Coherence, Organization, and Style category, because it is about word choice for cohesion and clarity in arguments.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Guide students to a consensus on what items the class will add to the Argument Writing Checklist and in which category each item belongs. Instruct students to add the new items in the appropriate categories to their copies of the Argument Writing Checklist.

- ▶ Students add new items in the appropriate categories to their copies of the Argument Writing Checklist.

① Consider adding the new items in the appropriate categories to the displayed copy of the Argument Writing Checklist.

Activity 5: Individual Revision

30%

Instruct students to independently revise their drafts focusing on whichever of the following writing skills they learned in this lesson:

- Word Choice
 - Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus
- ① For example, if students completed the writing instruction activity on Word Choice, then their revisions will focus on word choice rather than on using a dictionary or thesaurus.

Explain to students that they should revise at least three passages for precise and specific word choice. Remind students to refer to the Argument Writing Checklist as they revise their drafts.

Transition to individual revision.

- ▶ Students independently revise their drafts to include precise and specific words and phrases.
- 🗨 For sample revisions, see the Model WR.1 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words.

Activity 6: Revision Discussion

20%

① The following activity addresses the expectations of SL.9-10.1.

Instruct students to form pairs or small groups to share at least one of the passages they revised during the previous activity and one passage they revised during the previous lesson’s homework assignment. Explain to students that in addition to receiving feedback on their revisions, this discussion is also an opportunity to consider how they can use similar revisions or try similar techniques as their peers in their own papers. In this discussion, students provide brief constructive criticism to their peers. Remind students that constructive criticism helps them share advice with their peers in a positive and academic manner.

① Refer to Lesson 8 for a discussion of constructive criticism.

Instruct students to follow these steps to complete the revision discussion:

1. Show your peers the original passage and the revised passage.
 2. Explain to your peers how the revision improves your draft.
 3. Ask your peers to provide brief constructive criticism on your revisions.
 - ▶ Students share and discuss with peers at least two effective revisions they made to their drafts.
- ① In lessons that include the Revision Discussion, consider maintaining the same peer pairs or small groups for several lessons, so that students can benefit from a reviewer who is familiar with their drafts.

Activity 7: WR.1 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words

5%

Explain that for this lesson’s assessment, students record and explain one example of a successful revision. Distribute blank copies of the WR.1 Revision Exit Slip: _____ to each student. Instruct students to fill in the title “Working with Words” on their exit slips. Instruct students to complete the exit slip independently. Inform students that their revisions will be assessed with the Argument Writing Checklist.

- 🗨 See the High Performance Response and Model WR.1 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words for sample student responses.

Activity 8: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to choose three different passages from their drafts. For each passage, students revise their drafts focusing on whichever of the following writing skills they learned in this lesson:

- Word Choice
- Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following questions for each revision:

Will you keep the revision you drafted? Why or why not?

Explain the impact of your decision on your argument.

① If an online writing community has been established for the class, instruct students to post their revised drafts for sharing with peers and/or assessment. (Students' use of the online writing community addresses the expectations of W.9-10.6.)

- ▶ Students follow along.

Homework

Choose three different passages from your draft. For each passage, revise your draft focusing on whichever of the following writing skills you learned in this lesson:

- Word Choice
- Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Respond briefly in writing to the following questions for each revision:

Will you keep the revision you drafted? Why or why not?

Explain the impact of your decision on your argument.

Model Argument Writing Checklist

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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Directions: Use this template to record the checklist items that convey the components of an effective argument established as a class.

Command of Evidence and Reasoning	Drafting	Finalization
Does my response...	✓	✓
Use relevant and sufficient evidence to support my claims?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use valid reasoning to demonstrate clear relationships between claims and evidence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop counterclaims fairly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integrate evidence (quotations and paraphrasing) to support claims and counterclaims?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anticipate and address the audience’s knowledge level and concerns?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Coherence, Organization, and Style	Drafting	Finalization
Does my response...	✓	✓
Introduce a precise central claim?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop supporting claims that reinforce or advance the central claim?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adapt content and language to my specific audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adapt style of writing to convince my audience of my central claim?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrange claims, counterclaims, evidence, and reasoning to create clear relationships among all the components of the argument?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have an introduction that captures the readers’ attention and interest?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have an introduction that establishes the topic and central claim of my argument?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide a conclusion that follows from and supports the argument?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use precise language to clearly explain the topic and claims?*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incorporate effective word choice to strengthen writing?*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Control of Conventions	Drafting	Finalization
Does my response...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cite sources using proper MLA style and formatting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use proper punctuation for quotations and citations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Asterisks indicate new items added in this lesson.

Model WR.1 Revision Exit Slip: Working with Words

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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Directions: In the first column, record the original passage from your argument. In the second column, record the revised passage. In the third column, explain why the revision is effective.

Original Passage	Revised Passage	Explanation
Distracted by the never-ending need to check their e-mail or texts, chained to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and neglecting homework in order to play the latest and greatest version of Grand Theft Auto, it is painfully obvious that today’s teenagers cannot live without their screens.	Distracted by the constant need to check their e-mail or texts, chained to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and neglecting homework in order to play the latest and greatest version of Grand Theft Auto, it is painfully obvious that today’s teenagers cannot live without their screens.	I opted to use the word “constant” instead of “never-ending” here, because it is a more specific word that means ongoing rather than never-ending, which more realistically supports my argument and does not clash with the other strong words throughout the first sentence.
It is bad enough that the use of screens distracts people and causes stress, but evidence shows that the constant use of these devices is also eroding people’s interactions with others.	It is bad enough that the use of various screens distracts people and causes stress, but evidence shows that the constant use of these devices is also eroding people’s interactions with others.	I chose to add the word “various” because I think the rest of the argument does a good job of describing the varieties of different screens referenced in the articles.
In an extremely distracted world, using technology can affect brains and towns in pretty bad ways.	In a world full of distractions, it is clear that people’s constant use of technology is doing actual damage to brains and communities.	I changed this by removing the extra words that decrease emphasis. Now the sentence includes more precise language.

Appendix 1: Word Choice

Post or project the following examples of a sentence that includes specific words and phrases and one that does not.

- ① Example 1 is taken from paragraph 1 of the Model Argument (refer to Lesson 10). Example 2 has been modified from the model.
- **Example 1:** Distracted by the constant need to check their e-mail or texts, chained to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and neglecting homework in order to play the latest and greatest version of Grand Theft Auto, it is painfully obvious that today’s teenagers cannot live without their screens.
 - **Example 2:** Distracted by the need to check their e-mail or texts, and not doing homework so they can play video games, it is obvious that today’s teenagers cannot live without their screens.

Instruct students to Think, Pair, Share about the following question:

Which of these examples is clearer and why?

- 💬 Student responses may include:
- The first example is clearer because it uses strong verbs like “chained” and “neglecting.” These precise verbs have negative connotations and create images in the readers’ minds to convey how much teens rely on their screens.
 - Proper nouns like “Facebook,” “Instagram,” “Twitter,” and “Grand Theft Auto” help connect the audience to the argument, because they are precise examples of programs in the audience’s day-to-day lives.
 - The first example includes specific adjectives and adverbs like “constant” and “painfully,” which make it clearer, because it vividly shows how problematic screen use is.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Then, explain to students that using precise words and phrases can help explain the topic and clarify the claims, making the argument more compelling for the reader. Unclear writing with weak and unspecific words can make an argument difficult to follow, which can make it challenging for the writer to convince the reader and thus achieve his or her purpose in writing an argument.

Post or project the following example sentence.

- Using technology all day, every day often makes people multitask, and lots of multitasking is dangerous.

Instruct students to work in pairs or small groups to replace the imprecise or unspecific words and phrases with more precise and specific ones. Instruct students to also explain why replacing imprecise or unspecific words and phrases makes the sentence more effective.

- Student responses will vary but should demonstrate students' ability to replace the words and phrases "all day, every day," "makes," and "lots" with more specific words and phrases. A possible student response:
 - Using technology frequently throughout the day often requires people to multitask, and excessive multitasking is dangerous for the brain.
 - The revised sentence is more effective, because it specifies how people use technology: "frequently throughout the day" is more accurate than "all day, every day." Also, "requires" is a stronger verb than "makes," so the revised sentence suggests that people must multitask to manage their lives when they use technology so frequently. The sentence also clarifies that it is "excessive" rather than "lots of" multitasking that is dangerous.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider identifying the words and phrases "all day, every day," "makes," and "lots" for students to practice replacing.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Explain to students that "precise" and "specific" do not necessarily mean more words or longer sentences. Explain that sometimes writers can inadvertently weaken their writing by adding imprecise or nonspecific descriptive words.

Post or project the following paragraph and instruct students to Think, Pair, Share about the questions below.

① This example has been modified from paragraph 2 of the Model Argument (refer to Lesson 10).

- Events like "Shut Down Your Screen Week" are really important for preventing addiction to a lot of digital media. The act of checking e-mail or refreshing the mini-feed on Facebook sort of gives people's brains a jolt of dopamine; this is a reaction "researchers say can be addictive" (Richtel). As a result, teens sometimes find it kind of hard to look up from their phones because they just need the feeling of getting a new e-mail or text: these teens become bored without the stimulation of digital media and that surge of dopamine (Richtel). Studies show that this addiction is a pretty big problem for most teens. In fact, as Amy Norton reports in the article "Kids Still Getting Too Much Screen Time," the researchers at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that "nearly three quarters [of teens] spent at least two hours a day watching TV and using a computer" (Norton).

What words or phrases seem weak or vague in this passage?

- Student responses should include:

- “really”
- “a lot of”
- “sort of”
- “kind of”
- “just”
- “pretty”

How do these words and phrases weaken the claim?

- These words and phrases are not specific or precise. The words suggest that the claims are not fully supported by evidence.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Explain to students that words that increase emphasis (e.g., “really,” “very”) or decrease emphasis (e.g., “sort of,” “just”) can be avoided by using more specific nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

Explain to students that in order to make appropriate word choices in their writing, they must have an understanding of connotation, as well as the explicit or primary meaning of the word. Explain to students that *connotation* refers to the feelings associated with a word. Provide students with the following example: The words “cheap” and “inexpensive” both describe something that does not cost a lot of money. The connotation of “inexpensive” suggests this same meaning, but the connotation of “cheap” implies that the object is also of low quality.

- ▶ Students write the definition of *connotation* in the appropriate section of their vocabulary journals.

Post or project the following examples and ask students to Think, Pair, Share about the questions below.

① Example 1 is taken from paragraph 1 of the Model Argument (refer to Lesson 10). Example 2 has been modified from the model.

- **Example 1:** Wandering the halls like zombies glued to their smart phones, these young minds are scattered and distracted.
- **Example 2:** Walking around the halls like robots looking at their smart phones, these teens’ minds are confused and troubled.

How are the examples similar and different?

- Student responses may include:
 - Both sentences are about the negative impact of students always being on their phones and how this action makes them seem not like humans.

- The sentences use different words to describe the same situation. The first sentence includes the words and phrases “zombies,” “glued to,” “young,” “scattered and distracted,” and “distracted,” but the second example includes the words “robots,” “looking at,” “teens’,” “confused and troubled.”

Which example is more effective? How does connotation contribute to the effectiveness of this example?

🗨 Student responses may include:

- While both “zombies” and “robots” have similar meanings, “zombies” implies a creature who does not talk or think and is being controlled by something unexplainable, and “robots” conveys a creature that is intelligent and responds to commands.
- While both “glued to” and “looking at” have similar meanings, “glued to” works better in this context because it implies a connection between “zombies” and “smart phones” that is difficult to break. “Looking at” is a weaker version of the same idea; “glued to” is a stronger, figurative way to describe just how much teens look at their smart phones.
- While both “young” and “teens’” have similar meanings, “young” is a better reminder than “teens’” that the people who are so reliant on smartphones are not adults. They are impressionable, and still growing, youth.
- While both “scattered and distracted” and “confused and troubled” are phrases with similar meanings, “scattered and distracted” more closely aligns to the claim of how smartphones impact “young minds.” The “young minds” are not necessarily “confused and troubled,” which implies an emotional reaction caused by using smartphones. Rather, “these young minds” are unable to clearly focus and seemingly cannot remove themselves from their smartphones.
- The first example includes words with stronger, more precise connotations, so it better conveys the argument that the writer is trying to make about the impact of smartphones on “young minds.”

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Appendix 2: Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Instruct students to form pairs or small groups. Explain to students that as they try to remove imprecise and nonspecific words from their writing, they may want to consult a dictionary or thesaurus to find powerful, specific words to incorporate in a way that makes their argument more sophisticated and compelling. Explain to students that they can use dictionary definitions to rework sentences and phrases in their writing, and they can use thesauruses to replace words with synonyms. Remind students that just because a word appears as a synonym in a thesaurus or dictionary, it may not necessarily be the right fit for the context of the writing, and they should consider the connotation of the words in context.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If necessary, explain to students that *connotation* refers to the feelings associated with a word. Provide students with the following example: The words “cheap” and “inexpensive” both describe something that does not cost a lot of money. The connotation of “inexpensive” suggests this same meaning, but the connotation of “cheap” implies that the object is also of low quality.
- ▶ Students write the definition of *connotation* in the appropriate section of their vocabulary journals.

Explain to students that with the correct use of dictionaries and thesauruses, they have the opportunity to expand not just their written vocabulary but also their active vocabulary, which they use on an everyday basis.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If necessary, explain to students that dictionaries generally provide definitions and synonyms of words whereas thesauruses generally only provide synonyms. Students who need both definition and synonym suggestions should consult a dictionary. Consider explaining that the dictionary and thesauruses each classify words by parts of speech, so students should ensure that they are looking up the correct part of speech for their word, based on the context in which it appears.

Encourage students to use credible online dictionaries like <http://dictionary.com> and <http://learnersdictionary.com> as well as an online thesaurus like <http://www.thesaurus.com> as they adapt their vocabulary.

- ① Consider explaining the benefits of online dictionaries and thesauruses as they allow students to quickly and easily access definitions and synonyms.

Post or project the following example sentence:

- Overdoing digital media can discourage social development by prohibiting people from developing meaningful links with each other.

Instruct student pairs or small groups to consult a dictionary and/or a thesaurus to determine which words or phrases in the sentence can be replaced to strengthen the accuracy and effectiveness of the sentence.

- Student responses will vary but should demonstrate students' ability to use a dictionary or thesaurus to make writing more precise or specific. Possible student responses include:
 - “Overdoing” includes the verb “do,” which does not make sense for digital media, so replace “overdoing” with “overusing.”
 - “Discourage” is not an appropriate word to use when talking about stunted development. “Inhibit” is more precise and context-specific, so replace “discourage” with “inhibit” to contribute to a stronger, more compelling sentence.
 - “Prohibiting” is too strong of a word to use in this sentence. Digital media cannot forbid people from being friends, but it can contribute to struggles people have as they try to establish and maintain relationships. Change “prohibiting” to “preventing” in order to use a more context-specific verb.
 - “Links” represents an incorrect understanding of the sentence, as well as the wrong synonym of a word like contact or network, which is what this sentence calls for. Change “links” to “connections” in order to more effectively emphasize the difficulty of establishing and maintaining a new relationship.

Instruct students to record different ways to revise the example sentence with the words or phrases they identified in the dictionary and/or thesaurus.

- Student responses may vary but should demonstrate students' ability to use a dictionary or thesaurus to make writing more precise or specific. Possible student response:
 - Overusing digital media can inhibit social development by preventing people from making and developing meaningful connections with each other.

- ① The possible student response above is taken from paragraph 5 of the Model Argument (refer to Lesson 10).
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students have little experience using a thesaurus or dictionary, explain the steps of replacing words: first students identify words in the sentence that seem nonspecific or imprecise (*overdoing, discouraging, prohibiting, links*). Then students look up each word in the dictionary or thesaurus and choose more precise or powerful words. Explain to students that they must choose words that they understand, so they can be sure they have the correct meaning and connotation. Students can check the meaning of words in a dictionary. Consider modeling this process with the word *without* in the sentence above.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Then post or project the students' suggested versions of the same sentence and lead a discussion comparing the original sentence with their suggested revisions.

Instruct students to discuss how each of the more specific words impacts the meaning or emphasis of the sentence. For example, ask:

How does the word “inhibit” impact the meaning or emphasis of the sentence?

- The word “inhibit” adds strength to the sentence because the word more clearly conveys how “social development” can be impacted by “overus[e] [of] digital media.” This contributes to the serious tone of the sentence and is more in line with the entire argument.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.