ER for Arguments: Sound, Relevant, Sufficient

Teacher		**Class**	Grade 8
Subject	ELA	**Topic**	Analyzing an argument
Date		**Room**	
Lesson length	60 minutes	**Country**	United States

Students learn to take apart claims and judge evidence. They diagnose sick arguments and cure them in teams.

Curriculum links

- Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

Learning objectives

- Students will delineate specific claims, reasoning, and evidence in a text.
- Students will evaluate reasoning for logic and evidence for relevance and sufficiency.
- Students will recognize and explain irrelevant evidence in an argument.

Success criteria

- I can map each claim to the evidence meant to prove it.
- I can judge if reasoning is sound and evidence is enough.
- I can spot true details that do not prove the claim.

What students already know

Ask: What is a claim? Cold-call 2-3 answers, then ask: What makes you believe a claim? Listen for facts or proof.

Key words

claim	a statement a writer tries to show is true [6]
reasoning	the clear link that shows why proof backs a point [4]
evidence	facts, examples, or quotes used as proof [4]
relevant	directly about the point and helping to prove it [5]
irrelevant	off the topic and not helping to prove the point [3]
sufficient	plenty enough proof to make the point believable [4]

Materials

- Slides 1-12
- Video clip 3 (0:00–3:23) on slide 8
- Worksheet Task C with Passage "Phones Out of Class?"
- patient charts
- weak argument slips from Passage "Pay for Grades?" paragraphs 1-3

Before the lesson

- Test Slides 1-12 and Video clip 3 (0:00–3:23) on slide 8
- Print Worksheet Task C with Passage "Phones Out of Class?" for pairs
- Print patient charts with checkboxes for each group
- Print weak argument slips from Passage "Pay for Grades?" paragraphs 1-3 and sets of 4 evidence bandages

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- evidence bandages
- markers and tape

Lesson outline

0–5 min **Starter** 5 min · Whole class

Hook students and recall claim and evidence before analysis.

YOU DO

1. Welcome class with the ER hook and show Slide 1.
2. Show Slide 5 mystery: author claims later start raises grades, then discusses cafeteria paint colors.
3. Ask pairs to turn and talk for 30 seconds: what is wrong here?
4. Cold-call to name the claim and why paint color does not help.

STUDENTS DO

1. Listen to hook and read Slide 5 mystery.
2. Turn and talk with neighbor about what is wrong.
3. Vote thumbs-up if paint color helps prove grades claim.

Say: These arguments came into the ER sick. Your job is to save them before they fall apart. Today you will take arguments apart piece by piece before you decide if you believe them.

Worked example: Claim: later start raises grades. Detail: cafeteria paint colors. Verdict: true but off-topic, so it is irrelevant because it does not help prove that start time raises grades [3].

Ask: What is the author trying to get us to believe? (That a later start raises grades.) · Why does cafeteria paint color not help? (It is true but off-topic; it does not prove the claim about grades.)

Check understanding: Thumbs-up or thumbs-down: does paint prove grades? Re-teach relevant as stays on same topic if split.

Support: Point to Slide 2 objectives and read claim definition aloud while students repeat. **Stretch:** Ask: what kind of detail would be on-topic for start time and grades?

Use: Slides 1-2, 5

5–15 min **Teaching** 10 min · Whole class

Model how to delineate claims, reasoning, and evidence.

YOU DO

1. Display Slide 3 key words and Slide 4 steps for delineating.
2. Think aloud with Passage "Phones Out of Class?" paragraph 1: find main claim and reasoning [6].
3. Match paragraph 2 evidence to the claim and draw arrows on board [4].
4. Judge relevance and logic aloud using Slide 7 language.

STUDENTS DO

1. Follow on Slide 4 steps and copy Claim -> Reasoning -> Evidence map.
2. Choral-read the main claim sentence with teacher.
3. Point to which evidence goes with which claim when asked.

Say: First find the main point the author tries to prove. Then list each smaller point. Next match each proof to its point. Last ask: does the proof fit, is there enough, and does the link make sense?

Worked example: Main claim: Our school should keep cell phones in lockers during class time. Reasoning: without constant messages and alerts, students will focus better and learn more. Evidence: last semester two classes tried a no-phone rule for a month and teachers reported more finished classwork and calmer discussions [4]. This shows that the evidence matches the focus claim.

Ask: Which is the main claim and how do you know? (Phones in lockers during class; it is the statement needing proof.) · How does the two-class example connect to focus? (It shows less distraction and more finished work, so it backs focus and learning.)

Check understanding: Mini-whiteboards: write C for claim, R for reasoning, E for evidence for three read-aloud lines; re-model any mixed R/E.

Support: Give pre-marked copy with main claim already underlined so students only find reasoning and evidence. **Stretch:** Ask students to add in writing one sentence explaining how the evidence connects to the claim.

Use: Slides 3-4, 7

15–25 min **Guided practice** 10 min · Pairs

Practice judging relevance, sufficiency, and sound reasoning together.

YOU DO

1. Hand out Worksheet Task C with Passage "Phones Out of Class?" paragraphs 2-4.
2. Play Video clip 3 (0:00–3:23) on Slide 8 to model checking relevance and sufficiency [3].
3. Guide pairs to label paragraph 3 singer detail as irrelevant and paragraph 2 survey as relevant.
4. Lead class check: does paragraph 2 give enough to prove learning improved?

STUDENTS DO

1. Read paragraphs 2-4 with partner and underline claim and evidence.
2. Label singer sentence irrelevant and survey sentence relevant.
3. Write one This shows that... sentence about sufficiency.

Say: Work with your partner. Label the point, the link, and two proofs. Mark each proof as helpful or just noise. Then decide: is the thinking sound and is there enough proof? Start longer answers with: This shows that...

Worked example: Paragraph 3 singer detail: a popular singer earns millions of dollars and owns many pairs of shoes. This shows that it is interesting but has nothing to do with focus or grades, so it is irrelevant and should be set aside when judging the reasoning [3].

Ask: Why is the singer detail irrelevant even if true? (True but off-topic; it does not prove phones affect focus.) · Is the two-class evidence relevant and sufficient? (Relevant and almost sufficient, but only two classes and a short survey, so more data would help.)

Check understanding: Pairs hold up Relevant or Irrelevant cards for singer detail; pull class back to Slide 7 definition if split.

Support: Provide discussion card: What is the author saying? What proof do they give? Does the proof fit?
Stretch: Rewrite the shaky use of the singer detail in one sentence to make it logical or delete it with a reason.

Use: Slides 7-8; Video clip 3 (0:00–3:23); Worksheet Task C

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25–50 min **Main activity** 25 min · Groups

Diagnose weak arguments and cure them with relevant, sufficient evidence.

YOU DO

1. Give each group a patient chart and weak argument slip from Passage "Pay for Grades?" paragraphs 1-3.
2. Direct groups to diagnose: unsound reasoning, irrelevant evidence, or relevant but not enough [3].
3. Direct groups to choose two correct evidence bandages, remove irrelevant ones, and write how each supports the claim [4].
4. Time groups and prompt discharge-note stretch, then select two groups to present cures.

STUDENTS DO

1. Read slip, number specific claims, and mark irrelevant paint and cheese lines.
2. Sort 4 bandages, stick 2 strong ones on chart, and write how each supports the claim.
3. Present cured argument: what was removed and what made it stronger.

Say: Your patient has a clear point but thin or off-topic proof. Diagnose the sickness, stick on two correct bandages, and explain in writing how each one backs the point. Be ready to show what you removed and what you added.

Worked example: Patient claim from paragraph 1: Our school should not pay students cash for good grades. Sickness: paragraph 3 adds that the school parking lot needs repainting and that cheese costs $4.50 a pound at the store — true but irrelevant [3]. Cure bandages: Bandage A: When small prizes for improved homework were offered for six weeks, homework completion rose at first but dropped right after the prizes stopped. Bandage B: Teachers said most students worked for the prize, not to understand the math, and quiz scores did not stay up. This shows that Bandages A and B are relevant and together more sufficient, while paint and cheese should be ignored [4].

Ask: Why do paint and cheese prices fail as proof? (They do not show whether cash improves learning; off-topic.) · Why are the two trial bandages stronger together? (Both match the claim about interest and learning and give more than one result.)

Check understanding: Check charts for correct diagnosis and two bandages with written link; send unclear groups back to checkbox: Does it talk about claim? Is there enough? Is it logical?

Support: Give a chart with checkboxes: Does the evidence talk about the claim? Is there enough of it? Is the reasoning logical? **Stretch:** Groups write a discharge note predicting the best opposing argument and how their cured version survives it.

Use: Slides 9-10; patient charts and weak argument slips

50–60 min **Plenary** 10 min · Whole class

Return to objectives and check delineation and evaluation.

YOU DO

1. Display Slide 10 chain: clear claim, reasoning explains why, relevant enough evidence builds trust.
2. Run Slide 12 true-or-false: delineate means outline; true can still be irrelevant; evidence must connect.
3. Run Slide 11 vote: what makes you trust an argument most?
4. Collect exit tickets and preview homework.

STUDENTS DO

1. Vote and defend corners for Slide 11 choice in 15 seconds.
2. Answer true-or-false with thumbs and correct false lines.
3. Complete 3-question exit ticket on their own.

Say: Strong thinkers map the parts first. Even a true fact is useless if it does not connect to the point. If proof is helpful but thin, we need more before we trust it.

Ask: Can evidence be true but still bad for the argument? (Yes, if it is off-topic and does not prove the claim.) · What is missing when evidence is relevant but not sufficient? (More matching proof or stronger data to fully back the claim.)

Check understanding: Exit ticket 3 answers; re-teach irrelevant vs insufficient tomorrow if more than a third miss Q2.

Support: Let students answer exit ticket with partner and sentence starters: This is relevant because... This is irrelevant because... **Stretch:** Ask: what extra evidence would move this insufficient example to strong?

Use: Slides 10-12

Common mistakes

Mistake	How to spot it	How to fix it
Thinking any true statement counts as good evidence.	Students keep singer, paint, or cheese details as support.	Ask: does it prove this claim about learning or focus? If off-topic, set aside even if true [3].
Confusing reasoning with evidence.	Students label an example as the logical link.	Frame as: evidence is the proof; reasoning is why the proof should make us believe it [4].
Thinking one relevant example is automatically enough.	Students call two-class trial fully sufficient alone.	Ask: who, how many, how long? Show relevant but small proof needs more to be sufficient [4].

Support

- Give a chart with checkboxes: Does the evidence talk about the claim? Is there enough of it? Is the reasoning logical?

Stretch

- Groups write a discharge note predicting the best opposing argument and how their cured version survives it.

For the LSE or teaching assistant

Stay with target groups in main ER task; prompt checkbox use, help match each bandage to its claim, and scribe the This shows that... link if needed.

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Check for understanding

Question	Answer
What does delineate mean when analyzing an argument?	To outline and map the main argument, specific claims, reasoning, and evidence.
Claim: cash for grades helps learning. Evidence: cheese costs $4.50 a pound. Relevant, irrelevant, or insufficient?	Irrelevant; true price does not prove anything about learning.
Why is one short trial relevant but not yet sufficient?	It matches the claim but is too small alone; more classes or longer data are needed.

Homework

Find a short opinion paragraph, underline the main claim, and list one relevant and one irrelevant detail.

Sources

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