About This Lesson:
Elements of an Argument

Common Core State Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RI 5  Analyze how a particular sentence,</td>
<td>RI 5  Analyze the structure an author uses</td>
<td>RI 5  Analyze in detail the structure of a</td>
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<tr>
<td>paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the</td>
<td>to organize a text, including how the major</td>
<td>specific paragraph in a text, including the</td>
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<td>overall structure of a text and contributes</td>
<td>sections contribute to the whole and to the</td>
<td>role of particular sentences in developing</td>
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<td>to the development of the ideas.</td>
<td>development of the ideas.</td>
<td>and refining a key concept.</td>
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<td>RI 8  Trace the argument and specific claims</td>
<td>RI 8  Trace the argument and specific claims</td>
<td>RI 8  Delineate the argument and specific</td>
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<td>in a text.</td>
<td>in a text.</td>
<td>claims in a text.</td>
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Lesson Objectives
Tell students that, in this lesson, they will learn to
- identify the claim of an argument
- recognize how a writer supports his or her claim with reasons and evidence
- identify opposing claims and counterclaims

Strategies for Teaching
How you use this interactive lesson will reflect your personal teaching style, your instructional goals, and your available technological tools. For example, Elements of an Argument can work well as both a whole-class lesson or as a targeted small-group skill review.

Here are teaching tips for each screen in the lesson.

SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW

Screen 2: Why Argue?
Prompt students to think about the venues arguments and debates might occur, such as politics, the judicial system, newspapers, critical reviews, debates among friends, PTA meetings, protest rallies, and school board meetings. Sample reasons might include to change viewpoints and to bring about change. They accomplish their goals by using reasons and evidence to support their viewpoint.

Screen 3: The Power of Argument
Help students understand that rational arguments have an important place in society. For example, lawyers craft arguments in an attempt to convict or free people. Politicians craft arguments to gain votes or to implement policy changes or new laws. Writers, business people, and citizens develop arguments to introduce new ideas in an attempt to convince people to make change or improvements.

Screen 4: Reading an Argument
Invite students to list different forms of argumentative writing, such as essays, speeches, editorials, letters, advertisements, fliers, and blogs. Ask: Regardless of form, what do all
written arguments have in common? *(They try to change people’s beliefs, actions, or purchasing decisions using reasons, evidence, or persuasive techniques.)*

**LEARN THE SKILL**

**Screen 5: Elements of an Argument**

Review the definitions and examples. For each piece of evidence, ask: What reason does this evidence support?

- **Facts and Statistics** Teens should be allowed to use the fields for after-school sports because their families help pay for the upkeep.
- **Example** Teams can’t afford the fees.
- **Expert Opinion** There won’t be as many opportunities for teens to play after-school sports, which can negatively affect their health.
- **Anecdote** Some teens will be forced to give up activities they love.

**Screen 6: Argument Machine**

Invite volunteers to offer a claim, reason (with or without evidence), and counterclaim for each topic. Make sure that students also acknowledge an opposing claim as part of the counterclaim. Then compare students’ responses with the sample answers. Have students discuss how the reason/evidence and counterclaim support each claim. For example, the reason for Recycling includes a statistic. The counterclaim for Cafeteria Food offers solutions to address the concern about cost.

**Screen 7: Learn the Steps**

Tell students that each button represents one of the four steps. For each step, press the button and allow volunteers to identify the pertinent elements. If students have done any highlighting or underlining, erase the marks before pressing the next button. Refer to the end of this document for a printable version of this passage that you may want to distribute to students.

**Sample Analysis:**

**Claim:** Adoption is the way to go.

**Reason 1:** When you adopt a dog, you are saving a life. **Evidence:** There are millions of dogs out there who need a home. According to the ASPCA, as many as 4 million dogs suffer in shelters every year because there are no homes for them.

**Reason 2:** Adopting a dog is less expensive and just as safe as buying a purebred. **Evidence:** Volunteer trainers work with the dogs to prepare them for adoption and to determine what type of family situation would be best for the dog. Shelters also have veterinarians who examine and treat the dogs when they arrive. Shelters encourage families to spend time with a prospective dog before making the decision to adopt.

**Reason 3:** If you really want a purebred, you can adopt one. **Evidence:** An estimated 25 percent of the dogs at shelters are purebreds. There are also rescue organizations for almost every type of purebred. Examples include the Dalmatian Rescue organization and the Greyhound Project.

**Counterclaims:**

- *(Opposing claim)* Some people claim that it’s worth the money to buy a purebred because shelter dogs are unpredictable and unhealthy. *(Counterclaim)* Reputable
animal shelters do everything they can to make sure their dogs are healthy and adoptable.

- **(Opposing claim)** Many people think animal shelters only have mutts.
  **(Counterclaim)** An estimated 25 percent of the dogs at shelters are purebreds.

**Screen 8: Use the Steps**
You may wish to distribute the printable version of this passage, which is located at the end of this document. Have students read the argument independently or in small groups and identify the elements of the argument. Then as a class, complete the multiple-choice activities on the whiteboard by having students vote on the correct answers. For the evidence screen, challenge students to identify each type of evidence the writer uses.

**Screens 9 and 19: Trace the Argument**
Have students work in small groups to complete the graphic organizer. Then have each group fill in one part of the organizer on the whiteboard. Finally, compare groups’ responses with those on the Answer screen.

**Screen 10: Tips for Reading an Argument**
You might do this activity as a whole class or divide students into small groups and assign each group a different argument, such as an editorial or speech. Have each group work together to complete the sentence frames and then take turns filling out the frames on the whiteboard. Discuss responses as a class, making changes or adding notes as a result of the discussion.

**PRACTICE & APPLY**

**Screen 11: Identify the Claim**
Explain that a writer’s claim often appears in the first or last sentence of an introduction. However, in some texts, the claim appears elsewhere in the argument. Remind students that the claim clearly states the writer’s viewpoint on an issue. Read the passage and have students identify the issue (the absence of a girls’ football team in the town). Then read each item and have students vote on the correct answer, giving reasons for their choice.

**Screen 12: Identify the Support**
Reread the passage; then read each choice and have students vote on the correct answers. Before revealing the feedback, have students identify the type of evidence used in each correct choice. To extend the activity, have students work in groups to research girls’ football teams and generate additional reasons and evidence to support this writer’s claim.

**Screen 13: Consider the Counterclaim**
Remind students that a good argument acknowledges opposing claims and uses counterclaims to refute those other viewpoints. Invite students to vote on the strongest counterclaim. Have volunteers explain their choices before dragging the correct ending into place. To extend the activity, have students work with a partner to generate another counterclaim.

**Screens 14 and 20: Read an Editorial**
Review the steps for reading an argument. Then divide students into small groups to read the argument and follow the steps. (Distribute the printable version of this argument, which is located at the end of this document.) Then bring the class together, and have a
volunteer from each group identify one element of the argument. Finally, check students’ answers against the sample response.

**Screens 15 and 21: Trace the Argument**
Have students return to their small groups. Group members should refer to their printouts and notes to complete the organizer. (You will also find a printable version of the graphic organizer at the end of this document.) Then have each group complete a section of the organizer on the whiteboard. Have the class identify each type of evidence the writer uses and discuss how it supports the claim.

**Screen 16: Match Up**
Have students work in small groups to match the statement with the correct element. Then have a volunteer from each team take turns dragging a statement to the correct element. Discuss other reasons and evidence that might support this claim. Encourage students to brainstorm additional opposing claims and consider possible counterclaims.

**Screen 17: Spin Off**
This activity can be quick and informal, with students generating ideas on the spot, or you could extend the activity by having students research their topics. If you have them do research, you might ask them to locate evidence to support each of their reasons and draft a paragraph with their findings as well. Whichever option you assign, have students share their ideas or paragraphs.

**Screen 18: Square Pair**
As students flip square (even those that don’t match), ask them to identify whether each includes a claim or support. When students find a match, challenge them to supply a related opposing claim and counterclaim. To extend the activity, you might have students research the topics and provide additional evidence.

____________________________________________________________________

**Note:** Printable versions of all public-domain selections and the graphic organizer in this lesson are available on the following pages of this document.
“Adopt a Puppy”

So, your family wants a puppy. Do you buy a purebred or adopt from a shelter? Adoption is the way to go.

First, when you adopt a dog, you are saving a life. There are millions of dogs that need homes. When people choose to buy rather than adopt, homeless dogs spend their lives in shelters or are put down. In fact, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) estimates that as many as 4 million dogs suffer in shelters every year because there are no homes for them. With recent natural disasters, even more dogs need homes.

Second, adopting a dog is less expensive than buying a purebred. Some people claim that it’s worth the money to buy a purebred because shelter dogs are unpredictable and unhealthy, but trustworthy animal shelters do everything they can to make sure their dogs are healthy and adoptable. Volunteer trainers work with the dogs to prepare them for adoption and to determine what type of family situation would be best for the dog. For example, one dog might be best suited for a home with no other pets. Shelters also have veterinarians who examine and treat the dogs when they arrive at the shelter. Shelters also recommend that the entire family—including any other pets—visit the shelter to spend the day with a prospective dog to see if it’s the right fit. When you adopt from a reliable shelter, you can feel confident that you’re getting a great pet.

Finally, if you really want a purebred, you can adopt one. Many people think animal shelters only have mutts, but an estimated 25 percent of the dogs at shelters are purebreds. There are also rescue organizations for almost every type of purebred. For example, the Dalmatian Rescue organization finds homes for Dalmatians that have been abandoned by their owners, and the Greyhound Project helps retired racing greyhounds find homes.

When getting a dog, think about adoption first. You can save a life and find the perfect dog for your family.
“The Case for Cell Phones in Schools”

Teens should be allowed to have cell phones at school. Most importantly, cell phones help students stay safe. If a student gets hurt or has an emergency, he or she can easily call a parent or the police. People may argue that cell phones aren’t necessary, but the National Parent Network recommends that students be allowed cell phones for this purpose, if for no other. Also, many cell phones now have GPS technology, so parents—or the police—can track the location of their children if they get lost or are in danger.

Another benefit is that cell phones help teens stay in touch with their families. Many students participate in after-school sports and activities, so they need to be able to reach their parents if they are going to be late or if they need a ride home. Parents also need to be able to reach their kids to tell them when they will pick them up or if they have to work late. Our school board claims that students can use pay phones to call their parents. However, our school has 640 students and only two pay phones, so using a pay phone isn’t practical. Without cell phones, it’s difficult for parents and their children to stay connected.

Finally, cell phones help kids stay connected with their friends. Nearly half of U.S. teens say their social life would greatly suffer without their cell phones. This may sound dramatic, but psychologists agree that forming and keeping a social circle is an important part of growing up. Some people say that kids will call their friends all the time and run up phone bills; however, parents can limit the minutes their teens can use. Also, most cell-phone companies offer unlimited calling and texting plans, so phone bills are no longer a problem.

Despite what people say, the evidence shows that cell phones help keep kids safe and connected.
“The Importance of the German Program”

This newspaper does not endorse the school district’s decision to discontinue the German program.

For starters, learning the German language has proven benefits in many areas of life. After all, next to English, German is the most frequently used language in business, diplomacy, and tourism.

In addition, maintaining the German program will help our current and future students successfully compete in the global economy. American CEOs name German as the language they would most like job applicants to know. Further, German companies represent the largest source of foreign employment in the United States. Are we not putting our students at a disadvantage by cutting off the opportunity to learn such a practical language?

Even many colleges recognize the importance of German language study, as evidenced by their emerging programs. For example, the University of Connecticut’s Eurotech program, a dual-degree program in German studies and engineering, addresses the high concentration of German companies in the Northeast. The University of Maryland has a residential campus in Germany because “to compete in today’s global marketplace, one needs a cross-cultural perspective, language skills, and first-hand experience in the international arena.” Shouldn’t the district take its cue from these respected institutions of higher learning?

We understand the German program costs money, but the expense is negligible—the salaries of only two teachers. The district should recognize the importance of learning German and fund the program.
Trace an Argument

Use this graphic organizer to help you understand and analyze any argument you read.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason 1:</th>
<th>Reason 2:</th>
<th>Reason 3:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence:</td>
<td>Evidence:</td>
<td>Evidence:</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opposing Claim(s):</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Counterclaim(s):</th>
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