



English II

Week 2

English II, Week 2

Analyzing Counterarguments

In Activity 1.3, you will view an additional portion of the informational text from last week. You will determine the counterclaims being made by the text as well as the evidence being used to support those counterclaims. Complete the tasks in the following sequence.

Task 1: Page 15-18 (45 minutes) - Pre-writing and Article Annotation

- Read the “Learning Targets” on page 15.
- Read the “Opening Writing Prompt.” Answer the “Opening Writing Prompt” to warm up your writing for this section.
- Read and annotate Part 2 of the “Reality is Broken” article on pages 15-18. Complete the “Making Observations” questions on page 18.
- Finish the sentence practice in “Focus on the Sentence,” focusing on appropriate grammar and usage.

Task 2: Page 19 (30 minutes) - “Returning to the Text”

- Answer questions 1-5 in “Returning to the Text.” Questions 3 through 5 are text-dependent, so remember to refer back to the text when answering in order to practice the inclusion of textual evidence.
- Make any notes or questions to discuss with other students or your teachers.

Task 3: Page 20 (30-40 minutes) - Counterargument Strategies

- Read through “Working from the Text,” paying attention to the academic terms counterargument, rebuttal, and concession. Discuss with a teacher if needed.
- Answer questions 6 and 7, analyzing McGonigal’s use of counterargument tools and using textual evidence to back up your answers. Do not complete question 8 or the independent reading questions.
- Complete “Writing Prompt: Informational.” Work to focus your answer so that you do not exceed three paragraphs.

It's All a Part of the Game: Countering Opposing Claims

Learning Targets

- Analyze the author's treatment of counterarguments, concessions, and rebuttals.
- Write an analysis of how an author strengthens an argument.

Preview

In this activity, you will finish reading the excerpt from *Reality Is Broken* and examine how the author uses counterarguments. Then, you will write an analysis of her argument.

Learning Strategies

- Drafting
- Marking the Text
- Predicting
- Previewing

My Notes

Opening Writing Prompt

Read the following excerpt from *Reality Is Broken*:

In the opening book of *The Histories*, Herodotus writes:

When Atys was king of Lydia in Asia Minor some three thousand years ago, a great scarcity threatened his realm. For a while people accepted their lot without complaining, in the hope that times of plenty would return. But when things failed to get better, the Lydians devised a strange remedy for their problem. The plan adopted against the famine was to engage in games one day so entirely as not to feel any craving for food ... and the next day to eat and abstain from games. In this way they passed eighteen years, and along the way they invented the dice, knuckle-bones, the ball, and all the games which are common.

Why might Jane McGonigal have included this excerpt in her argument? In your Reader/Writer Notebook, make a prediction and explain why you think McGonigal would include this in her argument.

As You Read

- Place stars next to the author's historical supporting evidence. Then sum up the claim in a few words.
- Circle unknown words and phrases. Try to determine the meaning of the words by using context clues, word parts, or a dictionary.

Argument

From **Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World (Part Two)**

by Jane McGonigal, PhD

15 The ever-skyrocketing amounts of time and money spent on games are being observed with alarm by some—concerned parents, teachers, and politicians—and eagerness by others—the many technology industries that

My Notes

expect to profit greatly from the game boom. Meanwhile, they are met with bewilderment and disdain by more than a few nongamers, who still make up nearly half of the U.S. population, although their numbers are rapidly decreasing. Many of them deem gaming a clear waste of time.

16 As we make these value judgments, hold moral debates over the addictive quality of games, and simultaneously rush to achieve massive industry expansion, a vital point is being missed. The fact that so many people of all ages, all over the world, are choosing to spend so much time in game worlds is a sign of something important, a truth that we urgently need to recognize.

17 The truth is this: in today’s society, computer and video games are fulfilling *genuine human needs* that the real world is currently unable to satisfy. Games are providing rewards that reality is not. They are teaching and inspiring and engaging us in ways that reality is not. They are bringing us together in ways that reality is not.

18 And unless something dramatic happens to reverse the resulting exodus, we’re fast on our way to becoming a society in which a substantial portion of our population devotes its greatest efforts to playing games, creates its best memories in game environments, and experiences its biggest successes in game worlds.

19 Maybe this sounds hard to believe. To a nongamer, this forecast might seem surreal, or like science fiction. Are huge swaths of civilization really disappearing into game worlds? Are we really rushing headlong into a future where the majority of us use games to satisfy many of our most important needs?

20 If so, it will not be the first time that such a mass exodus from reality to games has occurred. Indeed, the very first written history of human gameplay, Herodotus’ *Histories*, the ancient Greek account of the Persian Wars—dating back more than three thousand years—describes a nearly identical scenario. While the oldest known game is the ancient counting game Mancala—evidence shows it was played during Egypt’s age of empires, or the fifteenth to the eleventh centuries BC—it was not until Herodotus that anyone thought to record the origins or cultural functions of these games. And from his ancient text, we can learn a great deal about what’s happening today—and what’s almost certainly coming next.

21 It’s a bit counterintuitive to think about the future in terms of the past. But as a research director at the Institute for the Future—a nonprofit think tank in Palo Alto, California, and the world’s oldest future-forecasting organization—I’ve learned an important trick: to develop foresight, you need to practice hindsight. Technologies, cultures, and climates change, but our basic human needs and desires—to survive, to care for our families, and to lead happy, purposeful lives—remain the same. So at IFTF we like to say, “To understand the future, you have to look back at least twice as far as you’re looking ahead.” Fortunately, when it comes to games, we can look even farther back than that. Games have been a fundamental part of human civilization for thousands of years.

My Notes

22 In the opening book of *The Histories*, Herodotus writes:

23 When Atys was king of Lydia in Asia Minor some three thousand years ago, a great scarcity threatened his realm. For a while people accepted their lot without complaining, in the hope that times of plenty would return. But when things failed to get better, the Lydians devised a strange remedy for their problem. The plan adopted against the famine was to engage in games one day so entirely as not to feel any craving for food . . . and the next day to eat and abstain from games. In this way they passed eighteen years, and along the way they invented the dice, knuckle-bones, the ball, and all the games which are common.



This set of dice from Ancient Rome was made from animal bones.

24 What do ancient dice made from sheep's knuckles have to do with the future of computer and video games? More than you might expect.

25 Herodotus invented history as we know it, and he has described the goal of history as uncovering moral problems and moral truths in the concrete data of experience. Whether Herodotus' story of an eighteen-year famine survived through gameplay is true or, as some modern historians believe, **apocryphal**, its moral truths reveal something important about the essence of games.

26 We often think of immersive gameplay as "escapist," a kind of passive retreat from reality. But through the lens of Herodotus' history, we can see how games could be a *purposeful* escape, a thoughtful and active escape, and most importantly an extremely helpful escape. For the Lydians, playing together as a nearly full-time activity would have been a behavior highly adaptive to difficult conditions. Games made life bearable. Games gave a starving population a feeling of power in a powerless situation, a sense of structure in a chaotic environment. Games gave them a better way to live when their circumstances were otherwise completely unsupportive and **uninhabitable**.

apocryphal: fictitious, untrue
uninhabitable: not fit to live in

My Notes

27 Make no mistake: we are no different from the ancient Lydians. Today, many of us are suffering from a vast and primal hunger. But it is not a hunger for food—it is a hunger for more and better engagement from the world around us.

28 Like the ancient Lydians, many gamers have already figured out how to use the immersive power of play to distract themselves from their hunger: a hunger for more satisfying work, for a stronger sense of community, and for a more engaging and meaningful life.

29 Collectively, the planet is now spending more than 3 billion hours a week gaming.

30 We are starving, and our games are feeding us.



This pot dates back to 540–530 BCE, and depicts the Greek heroes Achilles and Ajax playing dice.

Making Observations

- What facts surprised you in this argument?
- Are you persuaded by McGonigal’s argument?

Focus on the Sentence

Use the conjunctions *because*, *but*, and *so* to complete this sentence. Be sure to use correct capitalization and punctuation.

The Lydians experienced hunger because _____

The Lydians experienced hunger, so _____

The Lydians experienced hunger, but _____

Returning to the Text

- Reread paragraphs 15–30 from *Reality Is Broken* to answer these text-dependent questions.
 - Write any additional questions you have about the text in your Reader/Writer Notebook.
1. McGonigal chooses to use the phrase *engage in games* instead of *play games*. How does each phrase communicate a different tone? Why might McGonigal have chosen the phrase *engage in games*?

2. McGonigal chooses to use the words *scarcity*, *famine*, and *abstain*. What do these words have in common, and why might McGonigal have selected them? Use context clues or a dictionary for help, if needed.

3. Whom is McGonigal trying to convince? What evidence supports your answer?

4. As part of McGonigal's counterargument, which groups does she identify as the opponents of her claim?

5. To strengthen her counterargument, which negative emotions does McGonigal associate with these groups?

ACADEMIC

A **counterargument** is a set of reasons or evidence put forward to oppose an idea or theory developed in another argument. A counterargument often contains a **concession**, where the author allows that some of what the opposing argument is claiming is true. Then, in the **rebuttal**, the author refutes the rest of the opposing argument.

**INDEPENDENT
READING LINK****Read and Respond**

What claim(s) do you see asserted in the text that you are reading independently? How does the author present evidence in support of each claim? What specific counterarguments, rebuttals, or concessions have you noted? Record your responses in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

Working from the Text

A strong argument does not shy away from opposition. In fact, it tackles the opposition directly by presenting a **counterargument**. A counterargument is a counterclaim that might be made by the opposing party. The argument offers a **rebuttal** to the counterargument. The rebuttal provides evidence and reasoning that disproves or highlights the shortcomings of the counterclaim.

Because it is often difficult to persuade an opponent to change a stance by dismissing a counterargument entirely, an effective rhetorician knows the power of **concession**—the practice of acknowledging the validity of part of a counterclaim. Conceding some things while still rebutting the overall counterclaim can make the argument stronger by making the writer or speaker seem balanced and reasonable.

- According to McGonigal, how do these opposing parties view gaming? How does the acknowledgment of these opposing parties strengthen McGonigal's argument?
- Choose one of the opposing perspectives that McGonigal identifies in paragraphs 15–21 and write a paragraph or two voicing your concerns about gaming from that point of view. Your paragraph(s) should present a brief argument, asserting a claim and supplying evidence and reasoning to support that claim. Your word choice should reflect the emotional tone that McGonigal ascribes to your perspective (e.g., if you are expressing bewilderment, you might use a word like *mystified*).
- Collaborative Conversation:** Return to the essential question: How should we interact with the world around us? How do you think McGonigal would answer this question? How might Twohy answer the question? What is your answer?

**Writing Prompt: Informational**

In the excerpt from *Reality Is Broken*, Jane McGonigal makes the claim that gamers are rejecting reality in favor of playing games that offer superior experiences and rewards. Select two of the ways McGonigal strengthens her argument, and write to explain how and why they serve to strengthen the argument and support the claim. Be sure to:

- Use textual evidence in your response.
- Employ reasoning.
- Provide a historical example.
- Include a counterargument.
- Use rhetorical features such as powerful language and repetition.