



# English III

# Argumentative Writing

## Learning Targets

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- 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.
- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

### LEARNING STRATEGIES

RAFT, Close Reading, Brainstorming, Drafting, Peer Editing, Sharing and Responding

## Writing an Argumentative Essay

Writers and speakers use argumentative techniques to influence the attitudes and actions of an intended audience regarding a wide variety of issues. Effective argumentation involves conveying claims and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

You will work with your teacher and with your classmates to construct two arguments that respond to a specific perspective. You will then use these as models for your own writing.

### ACTIVITY 1

## Discovering the Elements of an Argumentative Response Essay

### Before Reading

1. Honing skills in civil debate and diplomatic argumentation is important in many careers and fields. When trying to convince others of your point of view, it is especially important to understand the logic of the opposition. Think of the last time you engaged in a debate or disagreement with a teacher or classmate about a topic worthy of debate. Were you able to understand the other point of view well enough to respond with a **rebuttal** based on logic and reason? How did you address the opposing point of view effectively?

### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

**Rebuttal:** n. Evidence that attacks the criticisms against a thesis or claim, a refutation

**During Reading**

- 2. The following letter of veto (a form of rebuttal) is an example of formal argumentation that responds to a specific piece of legislation passed by the State Senate of Illinois. The author, Adlai Ewing Stevenson, served as the governor of Illinois from 1949 to 1953 and later as Ambassador to the United Nations.

Governor Stevenson maintains a professional persona while expressing his opinion that Bill No. 93 is ridiculous. As you read, highlight specific phrases and clauses that are intended to be gently humorous as well as convincing.

My Notes

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**To the Honorable, the Members of the Senate of the Sixty-sixth General Assembly:**

I herewith return, without my approval, Senate Bill No. 93 entitled “An Act to Provide Protection to Insectivorous Birds by Restricting Cats.” This is the so-called “Cat Bill.” I veto and withhold my approval from this bill for the following reasons:

It would impose fines on owners or keepers who permitted their cats to run at large off their premises. It would permit any person to capture, or call upon the police to pick up and imprison, cats at large. It would permit the use of traps. The bill would have statewide application—on farms, in villages, and in metropolitan centers.

This legislation has been introduced in the past several sessions of the Legislature, and it has, over the years, been the source of much comment—not all of which has been in serious vein. It may be that the general assembly has now seen fit to refer it to one who can view it with a fresh outlook. Whatever the reasons for passage at this session, I cannot believe there is a widespread public demand for this law or that it could, as a practical matter, be enforced.

Furthermore, I cannot agree that it should be the declared public policy of Illinois that a cat visiting a neighbor’s yard or crossing the highway is a public nuisance. It is in the nature of cats to do a certain amount of unescorted roaming. Many live with their owners in apartments or other restricted premises, and I doubt if we want to make their every brief foray an opportunity for a small game hunt by zealous citizens—with traps or otherwise. I am afraid this bill could only create discord, recrimination and enmity. Also consider the owner’s dilemma: To escort a cat abroad on a leash is against the nature of the cat, and to permit it to venture forth for exercise unattended into a night of new dangers is against the nature of the owner. Moreover, cats perform useful service, particularly in rural areas, in combating rodents—work they necessarily perform alone and without regard for property lines.

We are all interested in protecting certain varieties of birds. That cats destroy some birds, I well know, but I believe this legislation would further but little the worthy cause to which its proponents give such unselfish effort. The problem of cat versus bird is as old as time. If we attempt to resolve it by legislation who knows but what we may be called upon to take sides as well in the age-old problems of dog versus cat, bird versus bird, or even bird versus worm. In my opinion, the State of Illinois and its local governing bodies already have enough to do without trying to control feline delinquency.

For these reasons, and not because I love birds the less or cats the more, I veto and withhold my approval from Senate Bill No. 93.

Respectfully,  
Adlai E. Stevenson, Governor

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## After Reading

3. When responding to and analyzing text, it is important to understand the relationship among the author’s role, the audience, the format, and the topic. Using the RAFT strategy can help analyze the text for these elements. If only one element is changed or adjusted, the text can take on an entirely different complexity. Begin by identifying the following elements from the sample text:

a. Author’s Role

b. Audience

c. Format

d. Topic

## Check Your Understanding

Examine the specific phrases and clauses you highlighted or underlined. How would you categorize the tone of this letter? Why does Stevenson choose to approach this topic with this tone? What is the intended effect of this approach?

## Language and Writer’s Craft: Using Hyperbole

Sometimes, in order to expose the absurdity of a situation, it is necessary to employ figurative language or *hyperbole* (deliberate exaggeration). In these cases, the figurative expression or exaggeration is not meant to be taken literally. Rather, the intention is to expose the irrational reasoning of the opposing viewpoint by gently (or sometimes not so gently) mocking ideas the other side proposes as logical or reasonable

- Reread the examples of figurative language and hyperbole employed in the sample text. Then, in the space provided, explain what impression Stevenson hopes to make by employing a hyperbolic diction and imagery in each instance.

Language/hyperbole from the passage	Explanation of the intended effect
It would permit any person to capture, or call upon the police to pick up and <b>imprison</b> , cats at large.	
I doubt if we want to make their every brief foray an opportunity for a small game hunt by zealous citizens— with traps or otherwise.	
To <b>escort</b> a cat abroad on a leash is against the nature of the cat, . . .	
. . . and to permit it to venture forth for exercise unattended into a night of new dangers is against the nature of the owner.	
Moreover, cats perform useful service... in combating rodents—work they necessarily perform alone and <b>without regard for property lines</b> .	
. . . <b>we may be called upon to take sides as well in the age-old problems of dog versus cat, bird versus bird, or even bird versus worm.</b>	
In my opinion, the State of Illinois and its local governing bodies already have enough to do without trying to control feline delinquency.	
For these reasons, <b>and not because I love birds the less or cats the more</b> , I veto and withhold my approval from Senate Bill No. 93.	

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