



English IV

Argumentative Response

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.
- Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
- 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

Close Reading,
Brainstorming,
Drafting

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 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. The Internet is a fantastic place to find and respond to the views of people from all walks of life. Have you ever read an article online and then contributed to the comment section that follows? How familiar are you with public message boards, discussion threads, or online debates? What topics or comments inspire you to respond? Use the space below to describe your prior experience using the Internet to engage in online debate or respond to the comments of others.

During Reading

2. The following text is a famous speech delivered by Sojourner Truth in

1854. She was born into slavery, but later lived as a free woman when New York abolished slavery. She was renowned for speaking out for the causes of emancipation and women’s rights. The following text, delivered in 1851 at the Ohio Woman’s Rights convention in Akron, Ohio, is perhaps Truth’s most famous speech, and it is apparent from her words that she is speaking in response to the words of others. As you read, highlight the lines that are clearly crafted as responses to opposing sentiments. Circle each repetition of her famous rhetorical question, “Ain’t I a woman?”

Ain’t I a Woman?

Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that ‘twixt the negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what’s all this here talking about?

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain’t I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain’t I a woman?

Then they talk about this thing in the head; what’s this they call it? [member of audience whispers, “intellect”] That’s it, honey. What’s that got to do with women’s rights or negroes’ rights? If my cup won’t hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn’t you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?

Then that little man in black there, he says women can’t have as much rights as men, ‘cause Christ wasn’t a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them. Obligated to you for hearing me, and now old Sojourner ain’t got nothing more to say.

My Notes

Handwriting lines for taking notes.

After Reading

3. Reread the lines you highlighted. Then create a “reverse outline” of the three objections made to giving women the right to vote. Then, outline briefly Truth’s use of logic in response to the objections.

Objection 1:

Response:

Objection 2:

Response:

Objection 3:

Response:

4. How does Truth make effective use of language in the context of this speech?

Check Your Understanding

- When Truth repeats her famous rhetorical question, what is the effect? What is implied by that question?

- In this speech, Truth makes some strong points using very informal language, called *colloquial language*. How does this affect her persona and further the points she’s trying to make?

ACTIVITY 2

Locate a published, publicly expressed op-ed or letter to the editor

- The selected opinion piece should contain a structured argument that inspires you to respond with a rebuttal. See the example below.
- NOTE: Select your op-ed piece before viewing the Task 2 Video.

From David McCullough’s Speech to Graduating Seniors, Spring 2012

You are not special. You are not exceptional.

Contrary to what your soccer trophy suggests, your glowing seventh grade report card, despite every assurance of a certain corpulent purple dinosaur, that nice Mister Rogers and your batty Aunt Sylvia, no matter how often your maternal caped crusader has swooped in to save you ... you’re nothing special.

Yes, you’ve been pampered, cosseted, doted upon, helmeted, bubble-wrapped. Yes, capable adults with other things to do have held you, kissed you, fed you, wiped your mouth, wiped your bottom, trained you, taught you, tutored you, coached you, listened to you, counseled you, encouraged you, consoled you and encouraged you again. You’ve been nudged, cajoled, wheedled and implored. You’ve been feted and fawned over and called “sweetie pie.” Yes, you have. And, certainly, we’ve been to your games, your plays, your recitals, your science fairs. Absolutely, smiles ignite when you walk into a room, and hundreds gasp with delight at your every tweet. And now you’ve conquered high school ... and, indisputably, here we all have gathered for you, the pride and joy of this fine community, the first to emerge from that magnificent new building...

But do not get the idea you’re anything special. Because you’re not.

“But, Dave,” you cry, “Walt Whitman tells me I’m my own version of perfection! Epictetus tells me I have the spark of Zeus!” And I don’t disagree. So that makes 6.8 billion examples of perfection, 6.8 billion sparks of Zeus. You see, if everyone is special, then no one is. If everyone gets a trophy, trophies become meaningless. In our unspoken but not so subtle Darwinian competition with one another—which springs, I think, from our fear of our own insignificance, a subset of our dread of mortality—we have of late, we Americans, to our detriment, come to love accolades more than genuine achievement. We have come to see them as the point—and we’re happy to compromise standards, or ignore reality, if we suspect that’s the quickest way, or only way, to have something to put

on the mantelpiece, something to pose with, crow about, something with which to leverage ourselves into a better spot on the social totem pole. No longer is it how you play the game, no longer is it even whether you win or lose, or learn or grow, or enjoy yourself doing it. ... Now it’s “So what does this get me?” As a consequence, we cheapen worthy endeavors, and building a Guatemalan medical clinic becomes more about the application to Bowdoin than the well-being of Guatemalans. It’s an epidemic—and in its way, not even dear old Wellesley High is immune ... one of the best of the 37,000 nationwide, Wellesley High School ... where good is no longer good enough, where a B is the new C, and the midlevel curriculum is called advanced college placement. And I hope you caught me when I said “one of the best.” I said “one of the best” so we can feel better about ourselves, so we can bask in a little easy distinction, however vague and unverifiable, and count ourselves among the elite, whoever they might be, and enjoy a perceived leg up on the perceived competition. But the phrase defies logic. By definition there can be only one best. You’re it or you’re not.

My Notes

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SCORING GUIDE

| Scoring Criteria | Exemplary | Proficient | Emerging | Incomplete |
|------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Ideas | <p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asserts an insightful thesis and position statements that anticipate alternate positions • supports reasons with precise and convincing evidence and commentary • demonstrates thoughtful consideration of validity and reliability of evidence • consistently presents an accurate, honest and diplomatic representation of other views | <p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presents a clear thesis and position statements that anticipate alternate positions • supports reasons with relevant evidence and commentary • demonstrates consideration of validity and reliability of evidence • usually presents an accurate, honest and diplomatic representation of divergent views | <p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presents a limited or unfocused thesis • contains reasons with insufficient evidence and vague commentary • demonstrates little or no consideration of validity and reliability of evidence • struggles to represent divergent views accurately | <p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not present a thesis • contains insufficient and/or irrelevant evidence with little or no commentary • demonstrates little or no research • does not attempt to present alternative viewpoints |
| Organization | <p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • skillfully uses an appropriate organizing structure • presents a sustained focus that displays a progression of ideas with depth and complexity • effectively sequences ideas and uses graceful transitions to enhance the overall coherence | <p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes an appropriate organizing structure • includes a sustained focus that displays ideas with clarity and coherence • sequences ideas logically and uses transitions appropriately | <p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may lack an organizing structure or contain one that is inappropriate • presents unfocused or underdeveloped ideas • presents disconnected ideas and limited use of transitions | <p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lacks a clear organizing structure • presents unfocused and underdeveloped ideas • presents ideas that are unconnected with little or no transitional elements |
| Use of Language | <p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses varied syntax to contribute to the clarity of ideas and persuasive effect • uses diction that is deliberately crafted for the topic, audience, and purpose • employs rhetorical questions in a way that enhances the argument • uses conventions skillfully | <p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses varied syntax for persuasive effect • uses diction appropriately for the topic, audience, and purpose • uses rhetorical questions • uses conventions correctly; minor errors do not affect meaning | <p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows some variety in sentence structure • sometimes uses inappropriate diction for the topic, audience, and purpose • does not use rhetorical questions • uses conventions incorrectly; errors may interfere with meaning | <p>The essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows no deliberate use of syntax for effect • uses inappropriate diction for the topic, audience, and purpose • does not use rhetorical questions • multiple serious errors interfere with meaning |