



Seventh Grade

ELA

Which Claims to Believe

Learning Strategies

Previewing
SOAPStone
Think Aloud
Graphic Organizer

Learning Targets

- Recognize the characteristics and structures of argumentative text and analyze a claim.
- Identify the thesis, or controlling idea, of a text.
- Identify the intended audience of an argumentative text.

Preview

In this activity, you will read and analyze a humorous argumentative text about pollution and waste. Then you will begin crafting your own argumentative text on the issue your class has chosen.

About the Author

Andrew Rooney (1911–2011) was a popular commentator on the TV news program *60 Minutes* for more than 30 years. In that time, he wrote more than 800 essays, which he presented either on television or in the newspaper. He earned many awards for his writing, which was often humorous and sometimes controversial.



Setting a Purpose for Reading

- Interact with the text as you read, taking notes and underlining examples of loaded language.
- Circle unknown words and phrases. Try to determine the meaning of the words by using context clues, word parts, or a dictionary.

Essay

America the Not-So-Beautiful

by Andrew A. Rooney

1 Next to saving stuff I don't need, the thing I like to do best is throw it away. My idea of a good time is to load up the back of the car with junk on a Saturday morning and take it to the dump. There's something satisfying about discarding almost anything.

2 Throwing things out is the American way. We don't know how to fix anything, and anyone who does knowhow is too busy to come, so we throw it away and buy a new one. Our economy depends on us doing that. The trouble with throwing things away is, there is no "away" left.

3 Sometime around the year 500 B.C., the Greeks in Athens passed a law prohibiting people from throwing their garbage in the street. This Greek law was the first recognition by civilized people that throwing things away was a problem. Now, as the population explodes and people take up more room on Earth, there's less room for everything else.

4 The more civilized a country is, the worse the trash problem is. Poor countries don't have the same problem because they don't have much to discard. Prosperity in the United States is based on using things up as fast as we can, throwing away what's left, and buying new ones.

5 We've been doing that for so many years that (1) we've run out of places to throw things because houses have been built where the dump was and (2) some of the things we're throwing away are poisoning the Earth and will eventually poison all of us and all living things.

6 Ten years ago most people thought nothing of dumping an old bottle of weed or insect killer in a pile of dirt in the back yard or down the drain in the street, just to get rid of it. The big companies in America had the same feeling, on a bigger scale. For years the chemical companies dumped their poisonous wastes in the rivers behind the mills, or they put it in fifty-gallon drums in the vacant lots, with all the old, rusting machinery in it, up behind the plants. The drums rusted out in ten years and dumped their poison into the ground. It rained, the poisons seeped into the underground streams and poisoned everything for miles around. Some of the manufacturers who did this weren't even evil. They were dumb and irresponsible. Others were evil because they knew how dangerous it was but didn't want to spend the money to do it right.

7 The problem is **staggering**. I often think of it when I go in the hardware store or a Sears Roebuck and see shelves full of poison. You know that, one way or another, it's all going to end up in the Earth or in our rivers and lakes.

8 I have two pint bottles of insecticide with 3 percent DDT in them in my own garage that I don't know what to do with. I bought them years ago when I didn't realize how bad they were. Now I'm stuck with them.

9 The people of the city of New York throw away nine times their weight in garbage and junk every year. Assuming other cities come close to that, how long will it be before we trash the whole Earth?

10 Of all household waste, 30 percent of the weight and 50 percent of the volume is the packaging that stuff comes in.

11 Not only that, but Americans spend more for the packaging of food than all our farmers together make in income growing it. That's some statistic.

12 Trash collectors are a lot more independent than they used to be because we've got more trash than they've got places to put it. They have their own schedules and their own holidays. Some cities try to get in good with their trash collectors or garbage men by calling them "sanitation engineers." Anything just so long as they pick it up and take it away.

13 We often call the dump "the landfill" now, too. I never understood why land has to be filled, but that's what it's called. If you're a little valley just outside town, you have to be careful or first thing you know you'll be getting "filled."

14 If 5 billion people had been living on Earth for the past thousand years as they have been in the past year, the planet would be nothing but one giant landfill, and we'd have turned America the beautiful into one huge landfill.

15 The best solution may be for all of us to pack up, board a spaceship, and move out. If Mars is **habitable**, everyone on Earth can abandon this planet we've trashed, move to Mars, and start trashing that. It'll buy us some time.

staggering: stunning, shocking

habitable: a place where people could survive

Roots and Affixes

Prosperity comes from the Latin word meaning "to cause to succeed" or "fortunate." The root *sper-*, meaning "hope," is also found in *desperate*. The suffix *-ity* forms a noun.

Making Observations

- What captures your attention the most in this essay?
 - What emotions did you feel while reading this essay?
- Return to the text as you respond to the following questions. Use text evidence to support your responses.
 - Write any additional questions you have about the essay.
 1. How does the author use loaded language to convey his point of view about throwing things away? Cite examples from the text.
 2. How does the author connect the idea of prosperity to the amount of trash people throw away?
 3. In paragraph 4, the author says, “The more civilized a country is, the worse the trash problem.” What does he mean by “civilized” in this sentence?
 4. What are two central ideas of the text? What details support these ideas throughout the essay?
 5. How does Rooney’s use of humor in the last paragraph affect the tone of the essay? What is the effect?

Working from the Text

Introducing the Strategy: SOAPSTone

The letters in **SOAPSTone** stand for *subject, occasion, audience, purpose, speaker, and tone*. This acronym gives you a helpful tool for analyzing text by breaking it down into separate parts.

SOAPSTone	Analysis	Textual Support
Subject: What is the topic?		
Occasion: What are the circumstances surrounding this text?		
Audience: Who is the target audience?		
Purpose: Why did the author write this text?		
Speaker: What does the reader know about the writer?		
Tone: What is the writer’s attitude toward the subject?		

7. While a thesis in an informational text most often explains the writer’s main idea, a thesis or **claim** in an argumentative text is the writer’s position or point of view on an issue. Read the example of a claim that follows. Mark the claim by underlining its subject (usually nouns), circling its opinion (words with strong connotations), and highlighting the reasons to be developed.

Claim: There are numerous downsides to year-round schooling; it has no positive effects on education, it adds to the cost, and it disturbs the long-awaited summer vacation.

8. Write a clear and concise claim for Andrew Rooney’s essay. Use information from your SOAPStone analysis. Reread the text as needed to write the claim.

9. Use a SOAPStone graphic organizer to generate your initial ideas about the class position/claim.

10. Draft your claim.

Check Your Understanding

Review the draft of your claim. Does it clearly state the issue and your position? If not, revise your draft to achieve a clear and concise claim.

ACADEMIC

A **claim** in this usage is a statement that can be argued, such as whether a fact is true or not, a situation is good or bad, or one action is better than another. In an argumentative text, the claim is supported by reasons and evidence.

VOCABULARY

WORD CONNECTIONS

Cognates

The English word **consensus** means “general agreement.” It has the same meaning as the Spanish word *consenso*. Both words come from the Latin word *consenti* + *re*, which means *agree*.



INDEPENDENT READING LINK

Reading Plan

In class, you just read an argumentative text about trash and pollution. What is another issue that interests you or affects your daily life? For outside reading, read an article or book about another controversial issue. You may want to refer back to the list in Activity 2.11 for ideas. Compare and contrast that text to the one in this activity. Use your Reader/Writer Notebook to record your ideas.