Parts of Argument II: Article Critique

Unit Targets: Students will produce an argumentative research paper that responds to either a practical or a conceptual problem.

Materials/Resources Needed:
- You need written arguments for students to analyze. Look for familiar texts that students don’t usually think of as arguments, such as the Declaration of Independence, or texts discussing current issues, such as columns or op-ed pieces—in addition to standards such as the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, check out publications like Rolling Stone, the Economist, and the Manchester. If possible, add line numbers in the margin.*
- Argument Critique worksheets (below)
- Student’s Guide, Chapter Six: “Planning Your Argument”

*Optional Alternative: For a workshop day, use student drafts instead of published articles.

Activities:
1. Assign students to fill out the Argument Boxes as homework, using Topic sheet 4 as a reference guide. If the text has line numbers, they can put those in the boxes.

2. Put students in groups of three to critique the argument by answering the questions on the argument critique worksheet. Or you can assign the critique worksheet as homework and have students share their responses in groups before they report to the class as a whole.

3. Reconvene the class to share their critiques. Have them discuss how the writer might have improved the argument.

4. Repeat this process later in the term using student drafts rather than articles.

**Objective/Purpose:** In this activity, students identify the parts of argument in written texts. You can return to this activity throughout the term as a means of discussing course readings and/or workshopping peer drafts.

**Illinois Common Core ELA:**
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 (a-e) Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.5 Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

**NCTE Standards 4, 5, and 11:**
- Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. (4)
- Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. (5)
- Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities. (11)
Worksheet

1. Does the writer present **evidence** for each reason?

   Do you accept the evidence as evidence?

   If you accept the evidence, is it sufficient evidence for you?

   Can you imagine other evidence that you would accept? What would that be?

2. Do the **reasons** support the claim well enough for you to accept it?

   Does each reason support the claim to some degree?

   Can you imagine other reasons that might lead you to accept the claim? What would they be?

3. Does the writer acknowledge **objections or alternatives**?

   If so, how respectfully does the writer treat those holding those other views? Do you accept the responses?

   If there are no acknowledgements, can you think of any major objections? Are those objections strong enough to undermine the argument?

4. Do you accept the **claim**?

   If so, did you already believe it or did the writer change your mind?

   If you do not accept the claim, do you accept the argument as at least reasonable?

5. List the most important factors from questions 1-3 that led to your answers in 4.

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