

**C 11 DEVELOPING CORE  
ARGUMENT WRITING SKILLS  
(GRADES 5-12)**

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**What We Will Do Today...**

- ▶ Discuss George Hillocks' *Teaching Argument Writing*
- ▶ Introduce Models for Teaching Writing and Argumentation
- ▶ Discuss how to embed into curriculum

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**Why Does Argument  
Matter in Writing?**

**Directions: Turn to some of your nearby colleagues and discuss why and how you teach argumentation and writing.**

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**Effective Teaching**

According to Hillocks:  
“...the kind of teaching in which students learn to do, with support, what they cannot do or do not already do themselves, the kind of teaching in which students learn happily, willingly, even enthusiastically.”

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**Teaching Argument Writing**

- What do the Common Core State Standards state?
  - Students, beginning in middle school should be able to “Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and *relevant evidence*.”

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**Strategies from Hillocks**

**The Basics**

- Solving Mysteries (Simple Arguments)
- What Makes a Good-Mascot---or a Good Leader? (Arguments of Judgment)
- Solving Problems Kids Care About (Writing Simple Arguments of Policy)

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**Strategies from Hillocks**

**More Complex Arguments**

- Answering Difficult Questions (Learning to Make Judgments Based on Criteria)
- What is Courage? (Developing and Supporting Criteria for Arguments of Judgment)
- Argument and Interpretation (Making Literary Judgments)

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**The Basics of Argument**

- In Chapter Two, Hillocks uses murder mysteries to teach students the basics of argumentation.
- Let's look at the introductory problem (see p. 17)



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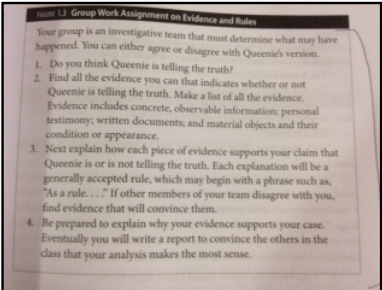
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- Introduce the problem: Did Arthur fall or was he pushed?
- Introduce the "Evidence and Rules" (see p.23)



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- Students develop a graphic organizer outlining the Rules and Evidence.
- This provides the focus to create a written report.

Evidence	Rule
1. His feet are on the stairs.	<i>If one falls down the stairs, their feet shouldn't be on the stairs.</i>
2. Everything is on the wall.	<i>As a rule, if one falls, they will try to hold on to something to break his fall.</i>
3. There's food on the stove.	<i>As a rule, why should the stove be on?</i>
4. The carpet is neat.	<i>As a rule, if one falls and lands on the carpet, the carpet will be pushed and unneat.</i>

In general, she seems to have the idea. The evidence...

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### Our Turn

- In groups of 4-5 create a mystery writing activity that can teach the students the basics of argumentation.
  - Make sure that it has a problem that students can argue/debate.
- If you finish early, brainstorm a list of specific strategies that support group work in your classroom.

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### Beyond the Basics of Argument



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Simple Problems of Judgment: Mascot Activity (pages 42-49)



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Constructing an Effective Argument of Judgment

- Review and discuss pages 42-28 in small groups.
- What other topics sources could you use to engage the students to develop and argument of judgment?

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Simple Arguments of Policy

- Writing Simple Arguments of Policy (CH 3)  
In referring to the traditional research paper assignment, Hillocks argues, "Such an approach to teaching research, and certainly to teaching critical thinking and logical argument is pedagogically unsound."  
p.68

WHY?

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**Building Our Own**

- Using Hillocks' outline (pages 70-92) create an inquiry based problem for students to solve.
- Consider:
  - How will the students investigate?
  - How will they conduct the needed research?
  - How can you model the model the important research and writing skills that you want the students to develop?
  - How will the students present what they know?

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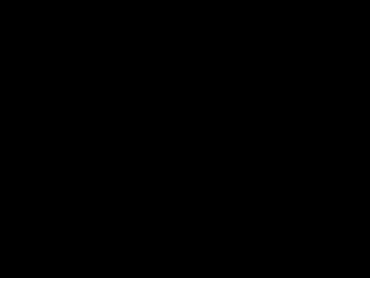
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**An Argument: Five Ways College Pays**



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**Take Out Your Cell Phones Please...**



Move into groups of 5

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**Step One**

- Step 1
- On Yellow Post-its
- As a group of 5, write 5 descriptions of a cell phone (functionality, size, etc..)
- Make 2 copies of each of the five descriptors on the Yellow Post-Its

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**Step Two**

- Count off 1-5
- Evens-Use the 5 descriptors as evidence in an argument supporting the claim that students should be allowed to use cell phones in schools.
- Odds- Use the 5 descriptors as evidence in an argument supporting the claim that students should not be allowed to use cell phones in schools.
- Number 5 will be the judge/tiebreaker
- Each team has 5-7 minutes to use evidence to construct an argument. No evidence can be used without a reason attached.

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**Step Three**

- Each team presents their argument.
- Each team then has a chance to submit 2 counter-arguments.
- Each team submits rebuttals.

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**Who Wins?**

- Person #5 is the tiebreaker who must award the reason-counter-argument point to the team with the strongest argument for the shared value: Learning, which one helps kids learn more? That's who should win.

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**The Standard**

**Tennessee homicide law defines murder as a killing with malice aforethought.**

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**The Problem**

**A relatively young woman married a man over 70 years old. One night he was sick with a bad cold in the middle of the winter. The woman opened a window in the man's bedroom. The open window let in a freezing draft in on the man. He developed some hypothermia as a result of the open window. His health failed and he died. Would you charge her with murder?**

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"Ya Know" vs Purposeful Academic Language Development

-  **claim**
-  **evidence**
-  **reasoning**
-  **counter-claim**
-  **audience-appropriate language**

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 **claim**

- Answers a specific question given in a prompt or asserts an independent claim generated by the student.
- Claim statement often suggests/addresses an audience.
- Tells readers why the issue is significant\*. Providing key words as part of an essential question unit often helps students express this significance and their reasoning. For example, in discussions of Facebook and teens, "privacy," "freedom," and "safety" are key terms students will need.

\*CCSS

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 **evidence**

- Quotations from the text (Word for Word).
- Summary of text.
- Paraphrased information.
- Facts & statistics.
- Anyone engaged in the argument can find this and use it.

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 reasoning

- The source of the greatest language and cognitive demands.
- This is thinking spelled out.
- Answers this question: “How does that evidence help prove the claim?”
- Where rigor and learning reside.

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 counter-claim

- Bring it on! The counter-claim challenges students to consider other viewpoints by asking them to state an opponent’s argument and to develop a rebuttal from a shared value.
- A natural and serious game, debate is animated by counter-argument. Responsiveness to another argument makes the counter-claim in writing, play, discussion, or creation the most engaging aspect of *cerca*.
- Exploring opposing viewpoints is a strong thread throughout all academic standards, from the College Readiness Standards to the Common Core Standards. It is also a skill featured prominently in Advanced Placement assessments across disciplines.

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 audience-appropriate language

- Academic Language Learners (ALLs) and English Language Learners (ELLs) struggle with the power of their own ideas because they often lack the language or the confidence to express the abstract concepts and complex ideas that are the basis of reason- giving in all forms of argumentation.
- Academic terms, discipline-specific sentence frames, and arguespeak can be provided to scaffold these challenges.
- In reading, students can begin to see arguments with a kind of X-ray vision when they are given this support, providing more support and practice for challenging reading.
- Students can be taught about correct usage, punctuation, or even the aptness of a word choice, when we pay regular attention to these details within a systematic program.

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Sample (After)

**Grade 6 Reading/ELA Sample: "Priscilla and the Wimps" by Richard Peck.**

At the end of the story Priscilla's actions are justified, but she goes too far. For example, one way that shows how Priscilla's actions were justified is when one of the Kobras sneaks up behind Melvin and "grabs him by the neck and slams his head against his locker door." Considering that Melvin is Priscilla's best friend, it is not surprising that she was angry. Melvin is also her only friend. In the text it states how "Priscilla was basically a loner except for her Melvin." Given that she is even taller than Monk Clutter she knows she can protect her friend against the worst people in the school and not fear for herself. But then in the passage when Monk confronts her, and he's suddenly "wedged into the locker, a perfect fit." That's the part where Priscilla starts to dance around a fine line of protecting your friends and just humiliating somebody. And after "Priscilla bangs the door shut, twirls the lock, and strolls out of school," she crosses the line not only in humility but also because when the blizzard comes, she does nothing about it while he dies. They don't say this right out in the story but you can infer, and that's something no one would say is alright because she was standing up for her friend. While Priscilla is justified in the beginning of her efforts to help Melvin, as the story progresses she goes too far, and ultimately what she did was not necessary at all.

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