

Critical Concepts 6.8A Text Structure

Non Fiction Lesson Plans

Skill Focus: CC.6.8A – Tracing and evaluating the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing, claims that are supported by reasoning and evidence from claims that are not

Vocabulary: Argument, claim, evaluate, determine, distinguish, trace, reason,

April Lesson Objectives:

- SWBAT trace and evaluate an author's argument and claims in a nonfiction text.
- SWBAT distinguish between claims supported by reasons and evidence and those that are not.
- SWBAT identify the type of evidence used and evaluate its strength.

Non-Fiction Texts Suggestions for April (text selections are suggestion only, teachers can change the text to fit their classroom needs, if choosing another text it should come from the Educational Epiphany Curriculum)

- San Francisco's 10 cent Checkout Bag Ordinance- It's Stupid & Let's Repeal It by Akit.org
- A Sticky Situation
- Pros and Cons of Cell Phones in School by Cheryl Cirelli
- Spongebob Study: Do Fast Paced Cartoons Impair Kids' Thinking? By Stephanie Pappas

Graphic Organizer: Refer to your Educational Epiphany Critical Concepts Binder: Graphic Organizers Tab: CC 6.8A1-4 pages 100 - 116

I Do Teacher Models

Texts: Pros and Cons of Cell Phones in School by Cheryl Cirelli

Step 1: What Is an Argument?

Teacher explains:

"An author's *argument* is their main opinion or belief that they want to convince you of. *Claims* are the different points that support that argument. Each claim should have *reasons* and *evidence*. Our job is to figure out which claims are strong and which ones are weak or unsupported."

Use real-life example:

"If I claim we should start school later, I might support that with evidence like a study from the CDC saying teens need more sleep. But if I only say 'Because I don't like waking up early,' that's not very strong."

Step 2: Read the text aloud

Step 3: Using Graphic Organizer 6.8A-1**Teacher Think-Aloud Example:**

"Let's look at the first paragraph. The author says, 'Cell phones improve communication and safety.' That's the argument. Now what claims does she use to back it up? I see one claim is 'Cell phones allow parents and students to stay in touch during emergencies.' I'll write that in the claim section."

Then model adding to the next boxes on the organizer adding:

- **Type of evidence:** "She includes a quote from a principal—so that's expert opinion."
- **Source:** "According to Principal Angela Smith..."

Graphic Organizer Sample Fill-In:

Author's Argument: Cell phones improve communication and safety

Author's Claims: 1. Students can stay in touch during emergencies

2. Cell phones help students manage their schedules

3. Cell phones support learning with apps

Continue modeling *claims* 2 & 3 until the organizer is filled in completely.

Wrap Up: Teacher quickly shows students the four graphic organizers for CC6.8A and explains their structure. Give a quick review of each format if needed.

"You'll get to use a different one later. They all ask you to find the same kinds of things: arguments, claims, and if they're backed by evidence or not. But they organize it in different ways. Some focus more on evaluating strength, others on separating supported and unsupported claims."

WE DO (Guided Practice)

Texts: A Sticky Situation

Steps:

1. **Read:** A Sticky Situation as a class
2. **Discuss:**
 - **Graphic Organizer:** 6.8A3

Teacher Think-Aloud Example:

- "This article argues that schools should ban gum. One of the claims is 'Gum causes distractions during class.' Let's find if this is supported... Here, the author says teachers report constant chewing noise, but gives no source. That feels like it's missing strong evidence. Let's put that in the 'unsupported claims' box."

3. Fill Graphic Organizer Together:

Sample Fill-In:

Argument	Supported Claims	Proof/Citation	Unsupported Claims
Schools should ban gum	1. Gum ruins school property	"Custodians spend extra hours removing it from desks"	1. Gum causes distractions during class
	2. Leads to cheating during tests	"Students hide notes in gum wrappers"	2. Students never pay attention if allowed gum

You Do (With a Partner)

Text: "San Francisco's 10-Cent Bag Ordinance"

Think-Aloud:

"Okay, so before you dive into this with your partner, I want to remind you what you're looking for: You need to find at least **three claims** the author makes and then look closely at the **evidence or reasoning** provided for each. You're asking yourself, *Is this claim supported by real data, research, or expert opinion? Or is it just a suggestion or assumption?*

For example, if I see a claim like, 'Plastic bags harm the environment,' I need to scan the paragraph for **specific studies, quotes, or facts** that back that up. Oh, here's a reference to the San Francisco Department of the Environment—that feels credible because it's a government agency. But then another claim says 'People should bring reusable bags'—and I don't see any studies or expert opinions after that. That might be a weaker claim.

Talk through this with your partner—maybe you'll agree, maybe you'll catch different things. Either way, work claim by claim, checking if the evidence is strong or weak."

Graphic Organizer Example:

Students identify three claims, their supporting reasons/evidence, and evaluate which claim (if any) lacks proper support.

Claim	Reason/Evidence 1	Reason/Evidence 2	Unsupported Claim
1. Plastic bags harm the environment	Study from SF Dept. of Environment	Wildlife ingestion data	
2. The ordinance reduces waste	Data from recycling centers	Quotes from residents	

3. People should bring reusable bags	No data or expert input	—	✓ Claim 3
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You Do (Independent Practice)

Text: "SpongeBob Study: TV and Kids' Attention"

Graphic Organizer: A2 – Evaluating Strength of Claims

Step 1:

Teacher Think Aloud:

"Now it's your turn to apply this skill independently. Read this article about a study on SpongeBob and its effect on kids' attention spans. The author is making a claim that fast-paced cartoons like SpongeBob might negatively impact focus. Your job is to figure out if that claim is well-supported.

First, look for evidence. Does the article cite a specific study? Yes—it mentions one done by researchers at a university. That's a good start. But then ask, Is this a strong study? How many kids were involved? Was it a big group or just a few kids? And was the study peer-reviewed or published somewhere official?

You also need to know if there are multiple sources, or if the article is just relying on this one study. If it's only based on one, the claim might still be weak, especially if there's no expert commentary or comparison to other research.

If you don't see a balance of credible research and expert opinion, then you can say the argument is only partially supported. That's what you'll include in your organizer."

Step 2: Allow time or assign as HW, CC6.8 Graphic Organizer A2