Distinguish Claims, Reasons, and Relevant Evidence

Classroom copy · 2 November 2026

In this estimated 40-minute lesson, learners classify statements by their role in an argument: claim, reason, relevant evidence, or unrelated detail. They explain how evidence supports a reason and how that reason supports a claim. Agreement with the claim is not scored.

Follow the argument’s reasoning

A claim is a position or conclusion the writer wants readers to accept. A reason explains why the writer supports that claim. Evidence is specific information, such as an observation, example, or result, that supports a reason. Evidence can mention the same topic and still be irrelevant if it does not connect to the reason. To classify a statement, read the surrounding argument: name its claim, ask what reason supports it, then ask what evidence supports that reason. A statement’s role can change in a different argument, so use its job in this argument. A detail can be true and still be unrelated. Judge the role and relevance of the reasoning, not whether you agree with the claim.

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Model argument: A lunch reading corner

Fictional instructional example; counts are invented, not research or classroom results.

At the fictional Ridgeview School, the school should open a quiet reading corner in the library during lunch. Some students want a calmer place to read than the cafeteria. In a fictional poll of 24 students, 17 said cafeteria noise made it hard to read during lunch. The library bulletin board is green.

Modeled practice

Read “A lunch reading corner.” Follow the possible classification and explanation. What is the claim? Which sentence gives a reason? Which detail is evidence for that reason? Why is the final sentence unrelated? The categories describe each statement’s job here, not whether you agree with the claim.

> Possible classification: Claim — “the school should open a quiet reading corner in the library during lunch,” because it is the proposal. Reason — “Some students want a calmer place to read than the cafeteria,” because it explains why the proposal may help. Relevant evidence — the fictional poll result that 17 of 24 students said cafeteria noise made lunch reading hard; it directly connects to the need for a calmer place. Unrelated detail — the bulletin board is green; its color supports neither the reason nor the proposal. This identifies how the argument works, whether or not a reader supports the proposal.

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Guided classification: Two-book checkout

Fictional instructional example; counts are invented, not research or classroom results.

A. The school library should let students borrow two books at once. B. A second choice lets a reader switch if the first book is not a good fit. C. During a fictional three-day trial, 12 of 15 students selected a second book after previewing the first. D. The library opened fourteen years ago.

Guided sorting and classification

Sort statements A–D into these groups: claim, reason, relevant evidence, or unrelated detail. You may label the cards or write the letters. Then explain how C connects to B and how B supports A. The trial is fictional and its count describes only those 15 participants; do not claim it proves every reader wants two books. Your score depends on each statement’s function and relevance, not whether you agree with two-book checkout.

Card labels and reasoning

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Independent argument: Family night bookmarks

Fictional instructional example; counts are invented, not research or classroom results.

At family night, the school should set out student-made bookmarks. This gives visitors a simple way to learn which books students recommend. In a fictional one-night trial, 19 of 25 visitors took a bookmark labeled with a student-recommended book. The gym’s east wall has three windows.

Independent classification

Independently classify each sentence in “Family night bookmarks” as a claim, reason, relevant evidence, or unrelated detail. Use the organizer to explain how the relevant evidence supports a reason and how the reason supports the claim. State one limit on what the fictional trial shows. You do not need to agree with the claim; classify each sentence by its function and relevance.

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Independent argument organizer

Use the sentences in “Family night bookmarks.” Name each sentence’s function, then explain the reasoning link and one limit of the fictional trial. Agreement with the claim is not scored.

Claim: which sentence states the proposal?

_____

Reason: which sentence explains why?

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Relevant evidence: which sentence gives specific information?

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Unrelated detail: which sentence has no stated link?

_____

How does the evidence support the reason and the reason support the claim?

_____

_____

_____

One limit of what the fictional trial shows

_____

_____

Created for Distinguish Claims, Reasons, and Relevant Evidence; the school, poll, counts, and details are fictional.

Created for Distinguish Claims, Reasons, and Relevant Evidence; the school, trial, counts, and details are fictional.

Created for Distinguish Claims, Reasons, and Relevant Evidence; visitors, trial, count, and setting are fictional.

Teacher directions

Grade 6 ELA. Adapt the reading and response demands to your students and curriculum.

Prerequisites: Learners can read or listen to short statements and share or record a brief explanation. No prior debate vocabulary is required.

Materials: Learner pages in print or editable DOCX.; Pencil or another way to mark or record classifications.; Optional colored pencils or highlighters for marking claim, reason, and evidence.

Estimated preparation: 5 minutes. Basis: Estimate to read the fictional arguments and teacher keys and prepare learner pages.

Estimated teaching: 40 minutes. Basis: Planning estimate: opening 3 minutes, strategy 5, model 8, guided classification 10, independent task 12, closure 2.

Before teaching — about 5 minutes (estimate): read the fictional arguments and keys. The poll, trial, and count are invented instructional examples, not reported data. Prepare the learner PDF or editable DOCX.

Opening — 3 minutes (estimate): display the claim “The school should offer a lunch reading corner.” Ask learners what kind of statement it is. Say they will classify how a writer supports a position; they are not being asked to take that position.

Strategy — 5 minutes (estimate): teach the three roles: claim = position/conclusion, reason = why support it, evidence = specific information supporting a reason. Explain that a detail can be true and still not be relevant. Read the surrounding argument before deciding a statement’s role.

Model — 8 minutes (estimate): read the Ridgeview argument and think aloud through the claim-to-reason-to-evidence chain. Point out that 17 of 24 is a specific fictional result relevant to cafeteria noise, while the green bulletin board has no stated link. Explain what the poll does and does not establish.

Guided classification — 10 minutes (estimate): learners sort A–D alone or with a partner. Ask them to explain why C is relevant to B and why B supports A. Clarify that the fictional trial describes only its 15 participants and does not prove a universal preference. Accept a concise written or oral reasoning link.

Independent task — 12 minutes (estimate): learners classify each sentence in the Family Night argument and complete the organizer independently. They explain the evidence-to-reason-to-claim link and identify a limit of the fictional trial. Score function and relevance; do not score agreement with the proposal.

Closure — 2 minutes (estimate): ask learners how a detail can be accurate but irrelevant. Have them name one link in the independent argument without stating whether they favor the claim.

Shortened 30-minute option (estimate): opening 2 minutes; strategy 4; model 6; guided classification 7; independent task 9; closure 2. Keep the independent task and reasoning explanation; shorten discussion and model share-out.

Support: read the argument aloud or chunk one sentence at a time. Use three distinct marks for claim, reason, and evidence, plus a separate mark for unrelated detail. Offer oral rehearsal, a frame (“The evidence is relevant because…”) or dictation/typing. Do not label answers for the learner.

Extension: replace the unrelated detail with a specific detail that would support the stated reason. Explain why it is relevant, and name what additional information would strengthen the argument without claiming the example proves more than it shows.

Common confusions: a reason is the writer’s explanation, while evidence is a specific example or result offered for that reason. A fact is not relevant merely because it names the same place or topic. Evidence

may be limited without being irrelevant. A statement can serve a different function in another argument. A learner can classify a claim accurately while disagreeing with it; do not score personal agreement.

Model — intended evidence: Learner identifies the lunch reading-corner proposal as the claim, the need for a calmer reading place as the reason, the fictional poll result as relevant evidence for that reason, and the green bulletin board as unrelated. Learner explains the links without treating agreement as correctness.

Guided practice — intended evidence: Learner classifies A as the claim, B as the reason, C as specific relevant evidence for B, and D as unrelated detail. Learner explains that choosing a second book after previewing the first illustrates the use of a second choice; the reason supports the checkout proposal. Learner does not generalize the small fictional trial or base correctness on agreement.

Independent response — intended evidence: Learner identifies the bookmark proposal as claim, visitor information as reason, the fictional visitor count as relevant evidence, and the gym-window fact as unrelated. Learner explains the reasoning chain, notes that the trial is limited to 25 fictional visitors and does not show all families’ preferences or later effects, and does not treat agreement as correctness.

Answer keys

— key for Model

Claim: open a lunch reading corner. Reason: some students want a calmer place to read. Relevant evidence: 17 of 24 fictional poll respondents reported cafeteria noise made lunch reading hard. Unrelated detail: the bulletin board is green.

The poll addresses the specific noise problem named in the reason, so it is relevant to a quieter place for reading. The green bulletin-board detail has no stated connection. The count supports a possible need among respondents; it does not show what every student wants or establish a measured learning benefit. Whether the reader favors the proposal does not change these classifications.

The first sentence is the claim because it proposes an action. The second is a reason because it explains a need. The poll is evidence because it gives a specific count about that need. The color detail is unrelated.

Accept concise wording that correctly describes each statement’s job and explains the link; do not require agreement with the claim.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3, Criterion 4

— key for Guided practice

A — claim; B — reason; C — relevant evidence; D — unrelated detail. C is relevant because the trial records participants choosing a second book after previewing one, which illustrates the second-choice reason. B gives a rationale for A.

The fictional trial is specific to 15 participants and supports only a limited point about their choices. It does not prove all readers want two books or that checkout changes improve reading. The library’s age has no stated connection. Classify the statements by function and relevance, regardless of personal position.

A is a proposal, B says why a second choice might help, C reports a count of participants selecting one, and D does not support the argument.

Accept different concise explanations that connect C to B and B to A, note the trial’s limit, and do not score agreement.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3, Criterion 4

— key for Independent response

Claim: set out student-made bookmarks at family night. Reason: bookmarks give visitors a way to learn book recommendations. Relevant evidence: 19 of 25 fictional visitors took a bookmark with a recommended title. Unrelated detail: the gym wall has three windows.

The visitor count is specific evidence of uptake and relates to the reason about sharing recommendations. It covers only 25 fictional visitors on one night and does not show all families' preferences or later reading behavior. The window detail has no stated connection. Classifications do not depend on whether the learner agrees with the proposal.

The first sentence makes the proposal. The next explains how the table might help visitors. The count is relevant to whether visitors use the bookmarks. The window count is unrelated.

Accept another clear explanation of the function and relevance. Learners may question the strength or limits of the small trial, but should not call it unrelated merely because it is limited. Do not score agreement with the claim.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3, Criterion 4

Scoring criteria and extensions

Criterion 1 — scoring criterion

Identifies the claim and reason by their function in the argument. Example: Names the proposal as claim and the “why” statement as reason. Alternatives: A statement may fill a different role in another argument; judge its stated role here.

Criterion 2 — scoring criterion

Distinguishes specific evidence from a reason or unrelated detail. Example: Labels a reported count as evidence, not as the writer’s reason. Alternatives: Accept clear descriptions without requiring one exact label phrase.

Criterion 3 — scoring criterion

Explains whether evidence supports the reason and how the reason supports the claim. Example: Connects the noise poll to the need for a calmer reading space. Alternatives: Relevant evidence may have limits; do not treat limited scope alone as irrelevance.

Criterion 4 — scoring criterion

Bases classification on argumentative function and relevance, not agreement with the position. Example: Accurately classifies a proposal even while stating a different personal view. Alternatives: Do not score whether learners support or oppose the claim.

Fictional teaching response — sound for the named task

Named task: Family night bookmarks — statement roles, links and limit

Fictional response — sound for the named task: “The proposal to set out student-made bookmarks is the claim. Giving visitors a way to learn students’ recommendations is the reason. The invented 19-of-25 uptake is specific relevant evidence because visitors took bookmarks labeled with recommended books; this supports the proposed way to share recommendations, which supports the claim. The east-wall windows have no stated link. One night’s uptake does not establish that visitors later read or enjoyed the books.”

Visible evidence: Accurate functions, both reasoning links, relevance distinction and an appropriate limit.

Not established: That the proposal is proven effective or that agreement is required.

Clarify: Accept equivalent role explanations and another relevant limit grounded in the scenario.

Next teaching/evidence: Use the statement-role part of the argument and reply response pack Fresh recheck after another learning opportunity. Its fair-reply target is separate.

This response is invented for teacher interpretation. Accept defensible alternatives. Record access, prior exposure and the actual response; do not assign an ability label or claim mastery from this example.

Different check after response teaching

Arguments: Check, Respond and Reconsider — matching teacher directions and answers

Fictional teaching response — partially developed

Named task: Family night bookmarks — statement roles, links and limit

Fictional response — partially developed: “The first sentence is the claim, the next is the reason, then evidence and an unrelated detail.”

Visible evidence: Correct role labels in order.

Not established: The evidence-to-reason and reason-to-claim connections or what the record cannot establish.

Clarify: Ask how taking a labeled bookmark supports a route for discovering recommendations, and what uptake alone cannot show.

Next teaching/evidence: Use the argument and reply response pack’s argument-role model and supported practice, explaining both links rather than only sorting labels. Reserve its different role-check task.

This response is invented for teacher interpretation. Accept defensible alternatives. Record access, prior exposure and the actual response; do not assign an ability label or claim mastery from this example.

Model and supported practice

Reserve: Different check after response teaching

Arguments: Check, Respond and Reconsider — matching teacher directions and answers

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Fictional teaching response — plausible error

Named task: Family night bookmarks — statement roles, links and limit

Fictional response — plausible error: “Nineteen visitors took bookmarks, proving all visitors read the recommended books. The windows are evidence because both sentences are about family night.”

Visible evidence: A remembered relevant count and a shared-topic association.

Not established: Accurate scope or relevance: taking is not reading, 19 of 25 is not all, and no window-to-reason link is supplied.

Clarify: Ask what was actually recorded and which detail explains the stated reason, rather than just sharing its setting.

Next teaching/evidence: Use the argument and reply response pack’s evidence/reason/claim model with its limited one-session observations. Keep the irrelevant-detail contrast explicit, then use its separate role recheck.

This response is invented for teacher interpretation. Accept defensible alternatives. Record access, prior exposure and the actual response; do not assign an ability label or claim mastery from this example.

Model and supported practice

Reserve: Different check after response teaching

Arguments: Check, Respond and Reconsider — matching teacher directions and answers