

## **Level 2: Critiques**

**Goal:** Students are provided with a sequence of opportunities to critique arguments

**Teaching Strategy:** Mini-Lesson series focused on critique of an argument based on relevancy and support

**Works Best With:** Whole class with small group, pair, or individual extension and practice

### **Details:**

- Show students a short, written argument that contains relevant supporting evidence, irrelevant evidence and relevant but contradictory evidence, such as one of the arguments provided for this lesson.
- Remind students that the purpose of an argument is to be as convincing as possible, and that one way to make an argument convincing is to provide only relevant and supporting evidence for a claim.
- Introduce the concept of relevant, contradictory evidence if students have not encountered this idea previously. Explain that, although this evidence is relevant to the claim, it does not support the claim because it actually contradicts it.
- Read through the argument, identifying each element. As you do, mark each kind of evidence with RS, I or RCE. Think aloud as you mark each piece of evidence to model your thinking, and ask students to share their thinking as you mark each piece of evidence as well.
- Cross out any sentences marked I- or RCE. Then, reread this revised argument and discuss how it is made more convincing with these elements removed.
- Next, provide students with copies of a similar argument, and have them work in partners to mark up the text following the same procedure that you just modeled. You may want to use the second argument provided in this lesson.
- When students have finished reading and marking up the text, discuss results with the class.
- Summarize by explaining that one way students can be critical of arguments they read in class is to read them carefully and look for irrelevant or relevant contradictory evidence. Remind students that arguments are less convincing when they contain evidence that is either irrelevant to the claim, that contradicts the claim, or both. Thus, an argument that includes these types of evidence is weaker than one that only includes relevant and supporting evidence.
- Provide several opportunities for students to critique short arguments using the steps described above.
- Over time, you can also introduce students to two arguments at the same time, and ask them to compare and critique them. When you do this, make sure that one argument has only supporting evidence, while the other contains irrelevant or relevant-contradictory evidence. First guide students to identify the kinds of potential evidence in each argument (relevant supporting, irrelevant, relevant contradictory), marking them as the do.

Afterwards, ask students to discuss each argument and decide which is stronger, based on the kinds of evidence that are included.

**Resources:**

- **Example Argument: Erosion**
- **Practice Argument: Dinosaur Extinction**

**Why This Matters**

It is likely that many of your students will have at least some difficulty critiquing evidence based on relevance and support, and this is likely to persist for some time. Each new argument students encounter is about different ideas; if the content of an argument is especially difficult, then students may be less proficient at analyzing the evidence for relevancy and support. This is because just comprehending the content of the argument is a heavy cognitive load. The best way for students to get better at critiquing arguments is to practice analyzing arguments often and for them to work together with peers as they do so, so that they can hear the reasoning and ideas offered about why one piece of evidence is supportive of a given claim, and another is not.