Supporting social studies inquiry and argument writing with a Read.Inquire.Write. investigation
A big THANK YOU to the...

● Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources program
● James S. McDonnell Foundation

...for their support!
A Process that Structures Social Studies Inquiry and Argument Writing Through a Set of Disciplinary Literacy Tools

REFLECT
Use the "Reflection" tool to assess your writing & set goals for improvement.

COMPOSE
Use the "Useful Language" tool to support your writing.

STUDENT TALK & DISCUSSION

MAKE CHOICES & PLAN
Use the "Planning Graphic Organizer" to plan and organize.

ANALYZE SAMPLE WRITING
Use the "Mentor Text" tool to analyze how other people write arguments.

ORIENT TO CONTENT
Use the content tool to identify local context and student resources, select additional background, and develop a culturally sustaining frame.

READ & ANALYZE SOURCES
Use the "Bookmark" tool to think historically and critically and comprehend complex sources.

WEIGH & CORROBORATE EVIDENCE
Use the "Weigh the Evidence" tool to sort sources and construct evidence-based arguments.
WEBINAR OVERVIEW: WHAT TO EXPECT

- Introduction to Read.Inquire.Write. (Go to - readinquirewrite.umich.edu)
- Consider student learning outcomes
- Design principles guiding Read.Inquire.Write.
- How Read.Inquire.Write. disciplinary literacy tools create a structured process for inquiry and argument writing
- Q&A
What’s included within each investigation?

- 6th Grade Investigations: Interpretation Argument Writing
- 7th Grade Investigations: Critique Argument Writing
- 8th Grade Investigations: Counterargument Writing

Curated source set, Teacher Guide, Student Packet, Guiding PowerPoint, Student Thinking Videos, Rubrics and Writing Samples, English Learner Supports

- 6th Grade Investigations: Maps, Middle East, South Africa, Child Labor, Mexico City
- 7th Grade Investigations: Hist Artifacts, Hammurabi’s Code, Silk Road, Ancient Inca, Ancient Greece
- 8th Grade Investigations: New World Women, Executive Powers, Cherokee Removal, Abolition, Reconstruction
What do students work on and learn?
Learning Goals

● Comprehend, interpret, and evaluate sources
● Reason about sources to construct and/or evaluate arguments
● Use evidence and reasoning to support claims
● Communicate conclusions via discussion and argument writing
Investigation Central Question:

Why is access to water unequal in and around Mexico City?


Water Inequality in Mexico City Investigation Sources

Mexico City’s Water Crisis by Jonathan Watts (Source 3)

Mexico City is one of the world’s most unequal cities. Over 90% of the population lives in the crowded city center, but only 30% of the city has adequate supplies of water. The problem is so severe that in some areas of the city, people have to walk several miles to find water. The city’s water system is also woefully inadequate, with only 30% of the population having access to running water. As a result, many people are forced to drink water from contaminated sources, which can lead to a number of health problems. The situation is made worse by the fact that Mexico City is sinking due to over-pumping of groundwater, which is causing the city to shrink and crack. This has led to contamination of the water supply, as water from far away is pumped into the city. The city’s water crisis is a perfect example of the problems that arise when a city’s water system is not properly managed and maintained. The city’s decision to privatize its water system in the 1980s has only made matters worse, as private companies have focused on making profits rather than providing clean and safe water for the public. The city’s lack of proper planning and management has resulted in a water crisis that is only getting worse, and the city needs to act fast to address the problem.
Your Assignment

You will write an email to the producers of PBS NewsHour about their 2014 report on Mexico City’s water crisis.

Their report focuses on the problem of water scarcity in Mexico City, but not inequality. In addition, the report leaves out important causes for the current water crisis.

Your job in this investigation is to consider the evidence and answer the question: Why is access to water unequal in and around Mexico City?

You will write an argument in an email that makes an interpretation about the reasons for water inequality in Mexico City. You will support your interpretation using reasons and evidence from the sources we will investigate.
Alessia’s essay

June 1st, 2014
Deer PBS News Hour,

I saw your video report from 2014 and though it was very informative, however, you can improve the report by including sources about the historical reasons for Mexico City’s water crisis.

One historical reason what access is unequal in Mexico City is because the wealthier people have easier/more access to water. According to Mexico’s Groundwater Crisis by Mikael Wolfe, it states “However, by the 1970’s, wealthy, private landholders could afford far more groundwater pumps than poor farmers. And landholders could use as much water as they wanted.” Another source that proves this claim is The Case of Mexico City by Dr. Priscilla Connolly. In this source, it states “But the city, flooded multiple times...”
Water supplies. Wealthy people live in these areas. Poor Mexicans tend to live in flat lands and do not have running water or sewers, and floods when it rains.

As you can see, both Wolfe and Connolly show us that the wealthy have water advantages such as being safe from flood and closer to water. They being able to afford more water. A few reasons why you can trust these sources is that Mikael Wolfe is a professor at Stanford University, a very trusted and well-respected university. Also, to write this source, Wolfe looked through several documents in order to help and assure his writing. A reason why you can trust Connolly is because Dr. Connolly is a professor in the Department of Sociology at the Metropolitan Autonomous University in Mexico City, meaning that Dr. Connolly could have witnessed some of the events that take place in their writing.

Alessia corroborates relevant evidence from two different sources to support the same point.

Alessia’s reasoning shows how the evidence ties to the claim and includes a solid understanding of why the sources presented are reliable.
Navin’s essay

Navin’s essay

Dear PBS News Hour,

My name is 25024 and I want to suggest that you include information about the historical reasons about the Mexico Water Crisis.

One reason access to water is unequal is that poor people receive less attention. According to Dr. Priscilla Connolly, “The higher areas of the city are safe from flooding and have more access to water. Wealthy people live in these areas.”

In conclusion, this shows that poor people have less access to water and the government isn’t doing anything about it. Adding on, this source is reliable because it uses true facts.

Sincerely, 25024

Navin states a claim that is vague, warranting a 2.

Navin selects a specific quote as evidence, but it is unclear how this evidence supports the claim, meriting a score of 2.
Assumptions and Principles for Supporting Students’ Thinking and Argument Writing with Sources in Social Studies
ASSUMPTIONS GUIDING THIS WORK

- Learning is situated.
- Learning is social; meaning is co-constructed.
- Teachers are partners with valuable expertise.
- Students are sense-makers who bring and further construct understandings of the world.
- Teachers will adapt the curriculum as appropriate to their context and students.
Research-Based Principles of Practice

1. Orient students to history as inquiry (e.g., pursue debatable compelling questions with multiple sources that have diverse, contrasting perspectives). **Content Tool**

2. Make connections with students’ incoming knowledge, interests, and experiences + Extend students’ background knowledge of the topic, language, or concept. **Content Tool**

3. Support comprehension and analysis of sources through modification of complex texts, explicit strategy instruction, interaction, and attention to language. **Bookmark, W-T-E**

4. Facilitate and foster discussion of sources & compelling question to construct arguments. **Bookmark, W-T-E**

5. Support students’ language learning through explicit instruction, consistent opportunities to talk, and use of their incoming language resources. **All Tools**

6. Provide models of good social studies argument writing and make expectations for such writing explicit. **Mentor Text, Useful Language Tool**

7. Support a writing process that focuses on meaning (not form) and includes planning, composing, feedback, reflection, revision. **Planning Graphic Organizer, Reflection Tool**

8. Design writing assignments with sources that require argumentation, offer an authentic purpose and audience, and connect past and present. **Writing Tasks**
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Use the content tool to identify local context and student resources, select additional background, and develop a culturally sustaining frame.

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STUDENT TALK & DISCUSSION

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ANALYZE SAMPLE WRITING
Use the “Mentor Text” tool to analyze how other people write arguments.
5-Day Example of an Investigation Sequence

Day 1: Orient to Content
Students make connections between their life, prior experience, and local context with the larger historical and social issues, concepts, or topic and content.

Day 2: Analyze & Evaluate Sources
Students read, talk about, and analyze sources as they reflect on the central question.

Day 3: Analyze & Evaluate Sources
Students continue to read, talk about, and analyze sources as they reflect on the central question. Students sort sources and weigh the evidence as they begin to construct evidence-based arguments.

Day 4: Develop Arguments
Students analyze examples of argument writing and then begin to plan and organize their arguments in response to the central question.

Day 5: Communicate Arguments
Students compose their written arguments and share their writing. They reflect, revise, and set goals for next steps.
Orienting to the discipline and making connections to content
Orient students to history/social science as evidence-based interpretation

- **Central question:** Why is access to water unequal in and around Mexico City?
- **Sources:**
  - Mexico’s 1917 Constitution with amendments
  - Book excerpt by an anthropologist
  - News article excerpt by an environmental journalist
  - Journal article by environmental experts
  - Online magazine article by an urban planner
ORIENTING 7TH GRADERS TO SOCIAL STUDIES AS EVIDENCE-BASED INTERPRETATION
MAKE CONNECTIONS WITH STUDENTS’ INCOMING KNOWLEDGE & EXTEND IT

Write and reflect:
What does the word *unequal* (or *inequality*) mean to you?

Where have you seen or experienced inequality in your life?
Access to water in and around Mexico City is unequal.

- Some people use 600 liters per person each day and have expensive home water systems.
- Others are not allowed to use more than 20 liters per day. They have water delivered to them each week.

Design principles 3 & 5

3) Support comprehension and analysis of sources through modification of complex texts, explicit strategy instruction, regular talk/discussion, and attention to language.

(5) Support students’ language learning through explicit instruction, consistent opportunities to talk, and use of their incoming language resources.
**THE BOOKMARK TOOL**

**Part 1: the Headnote and Attribution**

**As you read:**
- A. Who said, drew, or wrote this?
- B. When and where was it said, drawn, or written?
- C. What type of source is this?
- D. Why was it said, drawn, or written? Or, for whom was it created?

**After you read:**
- Discuss with your partner.
- Make a note.

**Part 2: the Source**

**As you read:**
- Use one question; underline in pencil.
  - A. What people and institutions are actors in the source? What is the relationship between those people and institutions?
  - B. What parts of the source tell you what the author or people in the text think, want, or experience?
  - C. Find sentences that begin with transition words or introductory phrases. What key ideas come after transition words or introductory phrases?
  - D. What parts of the source seem most important for understanding it? Why?

**After you read:**
- Discuss with your partner.
- Make a note.

**Part 3: Reasoning about the Source**

**Discuss with your partner(s):**
- What questions do you have about this source?
- How reliable is this source for our Central Question? (See Reasoning Questions below)
- How does this source help us think about our Central Question?

**Write down your thoughts:**
- Box important evidence for responding to the Central Question

**Reasoning Questions**

1. How trustworthy is the author/artist for our Central Question?
   - a. Was the creator in a good position to know about the issues?
   - b. Was the creator an **insider** or an **outsider**? (Ex: language, expertise)
   - c. What was the creator's **point of view**?
   - d. What does the creator want their audience to think or feel?
   - e. Is the source **believable**?

2. Does the context of the source make it more/less useful for our Central Question?
   - a. Was the source created in the **place** of the events?
   - b. Was the source created at the **time** of the events?
   - c. What was going on then, that might have **influenced** the creator?
   - d. How was that time/place **similar** or **different** from ours?
   - e. Whose voices or perspectives are **not represented** in the source?

3. How do we weigh this source in comparison with others?
   - a. Does this source provide the same information as other sources?
   - b. How does this source **agree** or **disagree** with others?
   - c. How are the creator's ideas **similar/different** from other ideas at the time/place?
   - d. What can this source **tell us**? What can't we learn from this source?
One student’s annotations

Headnote: Jonathan Watts travels around the world researching environmental problems for his articles in the British newspaper The Guardian. In this one, he includes the perspectives of country and city-dwellers, government officials, engineers, sewage workers, pipe drivers, university professors, and water activists.

Water pressure matches income levels: both go down the further you get from Cutzamala. In the wealthy western neighborhoods of Miguel Hidalgo and Cuajimalpa, where most of the city’s golf courses are, water pressure is high enough for lawn sprinklers. Closer to the center, in the commercial districts of Polanco and Benito Juarez, the upper- and middle-classes have to get by with less than half that pressure and they face occasional shortages. This is nothing, though, compared to the situation in eastern Iztapalapa, where pipe pressure is extremely low, and taps are dry more often than not. Located in the east of Mexico City, Iztapalapa is the poorest, most crowded, and least water-sufficient neighborhood in the city. Consumption by wealthy districts in the west — and leaks in between — leave only a trickle more than 150 km from the source.

SACMEX, the city’s water office, invests more in Iztapalapa than in any other neighborhood, but the challenge is huge. City officials explain that Iztapalapa’s development was largely unplanned. About 1.8 million (mostly poor) people have moved to the area in the past four decades, and the infrastructure is slowly being built around them. It does not help that the well water in the area contains toxic chemicals that have to be filtered in purification plants.

Attribution: Excerpted and adapted from the article Mexico City’s Water Crisis – From Source to Sewer, written by Jonathan Watts in 2015 and published in The Guardian.

AFTER YOU READ...

(1) What does Jonathan Watts’s article help you understand about why access to water is unequal in Mexico City? The poorest people in Mexico City have least worst water.
THE BOOKMARK TOOL PART 1

Part 1: the Headnote and Attribution

As you read:

A. Who said, drew, or wrote this?
B. When and where was it said, drawn, or written?
C. What type of source is this?
D. Why was it said, drawn, or written? Or, for whom was it created?

After you read:

Discuss with your partner.
Make a note.

Analysis Support - Consider where the source is from and perspectives it may represent.
Annotating with Part 1 of the Bookmark

Part 1: the Headnote and Attribution

A. Who said, drew, or wrote this?
B. When and where was it said, drawn, or written?
C. What type of source is this?
D. Why was it said, drawn, or written? Or, for whom was it created?

As you read:
- Discuss with your partner.
- Make a note.

After you read:
- Which of these details matter and why?
THE BOOKMARK TOOL PART 2

Part 2: the Source

A. What people and institutions are actors in the source? What is the relationship between those people and institutions?

B. What parts of the source tell you what the author or people in the text think, want, or experience?

C. Find sentences that begin with transition words or introductory phrases. What key ideas come after transition words or introductory phrases?

D. What parts of the source seem most important for understanding it? Why?

After you read:

Discuss with your partner.

Make a note.

Comprehension Support – Use one prompt per source to unlock meaning.
Mexico City’s Water Crisis
by Jonathan Watts (Source 3)

Headnote: Jonathan Watts travels around the world researching environmental problems for his articles in British newspaper The Guardian. In this one, he includes the perspectives of country and city-dwellers, government officials, engineers, sewage workers, pipe drivers, university professors, and water activists.

Pipe pressure matches income levels: both go down the further you get from Cutzamala. In the wealthy western neighborhoods of Miguel Hidalgo and Cuajimalpa, where most of the city’s golf courses are, water pressure is high enough for lawn sprinklers. Closer to the center, in the commercial districts of Polanco and Benito Juárez, the upper- and middle-classes have to get by with less than half that pressure, and they face occasional shortages. This is nothing, though, compared to the situation in eastern Iztapalapa, where pipe pressure is extremely low, and taps are dry more often than not. Located in the east of Mexico City, Iztapalapa is the poorest, most crowded and least water-sufficient neighborhood in the city. Consumption by wealthy districts in the west—and leaks in between—leave only a trickle more than 150 km from the source.

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Part 3: Reasoning about the Source

Discuss with your partner(s):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Reasoning Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What questions do you have about this source?</td>
<td>Evaluate the source for its relevance &amp; usefulness given the CQ + whether the author is in a position to be a good reporter on this issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How reliable is this source for our Central Question?</td>
<td>Evaluate the source for its relevance &amp; usefulness given the CQ + whether the author is in a position to be a good reporter on this issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you think this source helps us think about our Central Question?</td>
<td>Evaluate the source for its relevance &amp; usefulness given the CQ + whether the author is in a position to be a good reporter on this issue.</td>
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Write down your thoughts:

Box important evidence for responding to the Central Question

*Reasoning Questions

1. How trustworthy is the author/artist for our Central Question?
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   b. Was the creator an insider or an outsider? (Ex: language, expertise)
   c. What was the creator’s point of view?
   d. What does the creator want their audience to think or feel?
   e. Is the source believable?

2. Does the context of the source make it more/less useful for our Central Question?
   a. Was the source created in the place of the events?
   b. Was the source created at the time of the events?
   c. What was going on then, that might have influenced the creator?
   d. How was that time/place similar or different from ours?
   e. Whose voices or perspectives are not represented in the source?

3. How do we weigh this source in comparison with others?
   a. Does this source provide the same information as other sources?
   b. How does this source agree or disagree with others?
   c. How are the creator’s ideas similar/different from other ideas at the time/place?
   d. What can this source tell us? What can’t we learn from this source?
How students analyze and evaluate a source using Parts 1 & 3 of the Bookmark tool
Facilitate and foster discussion of sources and compelling question to construct arguments
Weigh the Evidence

Step 1 - Sort and discuss evidence.
- Sort sources by date and place they were created.
- Which sources were written for similar purposes?
- Which sources agree? Which sources disagree?
- Which sources are most useful (relevant) for answering this central question?
- Which sources are most trustworthy given this central question?

Step 2 - Construct and discuss arguments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Develop CER</th>
<th>Prompt discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Given the evidence, what is one claim that you could make in response to the Central Question?</td>
<td>Do people agree that the evidence supports this claim? How do we know? Is this a reasonable response to the Central Question? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are two pieces of evidence you could use to support the claim? (Include source author and quote)</td>
<td>Do people agree that this evidence supports the claim? If so, how? If not, why not? Do people think it is useful or trustworthy evidence? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8th grade) What could someone who disagrees with your argument say? What evidence or reasoning could they use? (Include source author and quote)</td>
<td>What is a problem with their counterpoint? How would you argue that your argument is stronger?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 3 - Record arguments in an anchor chart for the class.

1. CLAIM: Compare the sources. Then, list possible claims you can make.
2. EVIDENCE:
   - 1. What does the evidence come from (e.g., author, title, date, etc.)?
   - 2. What is the evidence support the claim? What is reliable or unreliable about the evidence?
   - 3. REASONING: How does this evidence support the claim? What is reliable or unreliable about the evidence?

Students in pairs or small groups

T facil. discussion among whole class

Teacher or Student(s)
DISCUSS & SORT:

Which sources agree?

Mexico City’s Water Crisis by Jonathan Watts (Source 3)

Water Management for a Megacity by Cecilia Tortajada and Enrique Castelán (Source 4)

Which sources disagree?

Mexico’s Constitution (Source 1)

The Case of the Indigenous Mazahua Women by Anahí Gómez (Source 2)
DISCUSS & SORT

Which sources are most useful (relevant) for thinking about this central question?

Least useful?
Brainstorm with your group then discuss as a class - 6th and 8th

Given the evidence, what is one claim that you could make in response to the Central Question?

Do people agree that the evidence supports this claim? How do we know?

Is this a reasonable response to the Central Question? Why or why not?
Brainstorm with your group then discuss as a class - 6th and 8th

What are two pieces of evidence you could use to support the claim? (Include source author and quote)

Do people agree that this evidence supports the claim? If so, how? If not, why not?

Do people think it is useful or trustworthy evidence? Why or why not?
# Weigh the Evidence Anchor Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. CLAIM: Compare the sources. Then, list possible claims you can make.</th>
<th>EVIDENCE:</th>
<th>4. REASONING: How does this evidence support the claim? What is reliable or unreliable about the evidence?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claim #1</td>
<td>2. Where does the evidence come from (e.g., author, title, date, etc. of source)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim #2</td>
<td>3. What quotations or information from the headnote or attribution support your claim?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim #3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39
Support for students’ argumentation with the Weigh the Evidence tool
Teach with models of social studies argument writing and make expectations explicit
Dear Producers of “Challenges of Tomorrow,”

Your program about the meat industry does not mention an important problem: how it damages the environment. The meat industry is harmful to the environment because raising cattle takes up a lot of forest land, and because it produces greenhouse gases.

One way in which the meat industry harms the environment is by taking up forest land to raise cattle. For example, Barona says that “the Amazon is being deforested, for the most part, because pastures for cattle ranching are growing”. This means that the meat industry is destroying one of the world’s most important forests. Barona is an expert in tropical agriculture at McGill University, so she is a reliable source.

The meat industry also damages the environment because livestock produces greenhouse gases that cause global warming. In 2013, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization reported that “14.5 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions caused by humans” come from the livestock industry. This shows us that the meat industry is a big problem for the environment. The report was made by many experts who agreed on this information, so we can trust it.

I hope you will explain the environmental problems of the meat industry next time you talk about it in your show.

Sincerely,
Peter Parker
Explicit instruction & discussion with the Mentor Text Tool

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Discuss:
- **What makes this a claim? Or, what about this tells me it’s a claim?**
- **Based on the claim, what would you expect the evidence will show us?**
- **How is the claim introduced? What language features does it have?**
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Discuss:
- Is this evidence related or relevant to the claim?
- What about this evidence connects back to the claim?
- Is this good evidence? Why or why not?
- How is the evidence introduced? What language features does it have?
Explicit instruction & discussion with the Mentor Text Tool

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Peter Parker

Discuss:
● How do we know there’s reasoning?
● What do we see the writer sharing in the reasoning?
Student thinking with the Mentor Text tool
Useful Language Tool

Making a claim:
People in and around Mexico City do not have equal access to water because...
Your program should talk about equal access to water in Mexico because...
______ causes water inequality in and around Mexico City because ...

Providing evidence:
One reason access to water is unequal is....
For example, (name of document/author) states that "...."
The headnote for (name of document/author) tells us that “....”

There is also water inequality because....
(name of document/author) reports that “.....”
(name of document/author) source is evidence for this. It says “.....”

Reasoning:
This means that .....  
This source will help the viewers understand that.....
This shows that ...
This evidence is reliable because....

Goals

- Support students’ use of academic and disciplinary language as they put ideas into words
- Support composing
- Provide students with language choices to compose different parts of their argument (C-E-R)
Support a writing process that focuses on meaning and includes planning, feedback, reflection, and revision
## Planning Graphic Organizer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Claim</strong></th>
<th>Reason(s) why access to water is unequal in and around Mexico City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
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<th><strong>Evidence #1</strong></th>
<th>What details, quotations, or information from the sources support your claim?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Reasoning #1</strong></th>
<th>Explain how the evidence supports your claim AND why your evidence is reliable.</th>
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<th><strong>Evidence #2</strong></th>
<th>What details, quotations, or information from the sources support your claim?</th>
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**Claim**

The **claim** states why access to water is unequal.

The **claim** identifies ideas that are the focus of the essay.

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**Evidence**

The essay includes information from the headnotes, attributions, or sources as **evidence** to support the claim.

The essay includes quotations as **evidence** to support the claim.

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**Reasoning**

The **reasoning** explains how or why the evidence supports the claim.

The **reasoning** explains the reliability of the source(s) as evidence to support the claim.

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**Criteria for a Strong Argument**

Place a check for each statement below if it is done well (👍) or needs improvement (👎).

- The claim takes a position.
- The claim states why access to water is unequal in and around Mexico City.
- The sources in the investigation support the claim.
- The essay focuses on the claim.
- The evidence relates to the claim.
- The evidence is specific.
- The evidence is accurate.
- The evidence comes from more than one source.
- Quotations have quotation marks around them.
- The reasoning explains how each piece of evidence supports the claim.
- The reasoning explains why each piece of evidence is reliable for supporting the claim.
- The reasoning makes sense and shows the author understands the issue and question.

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**Comments or Notes to Self**

Circle or write notes to help with revision and star 1-2 of these as goals for revision.

---

**Reflection Tool:**

Why is access to water unequal in and around Mexico City?
Design principle 8

Design assignments with sources that require argument, offer an authentic purpose or audience, and connect past to present.
Features of Social Studies Argument Writing Tasks

- **Authentic form**
  In my current project, 6th graders are writing e-mails, 7th graders are writing letters that critique interpretations, and 8th graders are writing Op-Ed pieces. We also experimented with museum wall text. Students examine mentor texts to understand each form.

- **Audience**
  Students write to someone other than the teacher. We are experimenting with how “real” the audience needs to be or whether a “pretend” audience is enough to influence student thinking. For example, if writing an e-mail to an actual person who exists, how important is sending the e-mail and getting a response?

- **Purpose**
  In our tasks we use a “central question” to guide students’ analysis of sources and thinking as well as a prompt to guide their composing. Most questions are open-ended with multiple possible responses and some are narrower with yes or no responses. In some cases, students make connections between past and present in their writing.

- **Authentic materials**
  We are incorporating primary and secondary sources as well as more detailed information about origins and creation of the sources than simply noting author, date, and place (e.g., information about those details). Students also have anywhere from four to fifteen sources to select from as they write.

- **Scaffolding**
  We are building in opportunities for students to question and analyze sources before constructing claims, to make choices among the many sources, to discuss and synthesize ideas across sources, to plan their thinking, and to reflect and revise.
Sample Assignment

You will write an email to the producers of PBS NewsHour about their 2014 report on Mexico City’s water crisis.

Their report focuses on the problem of water scarcity in Mexico City, but not inequality. In addition, the report leaves out important causes for the current water crisis.

Your job in this investigation is to consider the evidence and answer the question: Why is access to water unequal in and around Mexico City?

You will write an argument in an email that makes an interpretation about the reasons for water inequality in Mexico City. You will support your interpretation using reasons and evidence from the sources we will investigate.
INCREASINGLY COMPLEX TYPES OF ARGUMENT WRITING

A Progression in Types of Argument Writing Within Investigations of History/Social Science Content.

1. Write Interpretations in World Geography investigations
2. Write Critiques in Ancient World History investigations
3. Write Counterarguments in U.S. History investigations
Read.Inquire.Write: Translating research based principles into a framework that supports social studies inquiry

**Principle 1:** Orient students to history as inquiry (e.g., pursue debatable compelling questions with multiple sources that have diverse, contrasting perspectives).

**Principle 2:** Make connections with students’ incoming knowledge, interests, and experiences + Extend students’ background knowledge of the topic, language, or concept.

**Principle 3:** Support comprehension and analysis of sources through modification of complex texts, explicit strategy instruction, interaction, and attention to language.

**Principle 4:** Facilitate and foster discussion of sources & compelling question to construct arguments.

**Principle 5:** Supporting students’ language learning through explicit instruction, consistent opportunities to talk, and use of their incoming language resources supports their disciplinary learning.

**Principle 6:** Support students’ language learning through explicit instruction, consistent opportunities to talk, and use of their incoming language resources supports their disciplinary learning.

**Principle 7:** Support a writing process that focuses on meaning (not form) and includes planning, composing, feedback, reflection, revision.

**Principle 8:** Design writing assignments with sources that require argumentation, offer an authentic purpose and audience, and connect past and present.
Principle 1: Orient students to history as inquiry (e.g., pursue debatable compelling questions with multiple sources that have diverse, contrasting perspectives).

Principle 2: Make connections with students’ incoming knowledge, interests, and experiences + Extend students’ background knowledge of the topic, language, or concept.

Principle 3: Support comprehension and analysis of sources through modification of complex texts, explicit strategy instruction, interaction, and attention to language.

Principle 4: Facilitate and foster discussion of sources & compelling question to construct arguments.

Principle 5: Supporting students’ language learning through explicit instruction, consistent opportunities to talk, and use of their incoming language resources supports their disciplinary learning.

Principle 6: Provide models of good social studies argument writing and make expectations for such writing explicit.

Principle 7: Support a writing process that focuses on meaning (not form) and includes planning, composing, feedback, reflection, revision.

Principle 8: Design writing assignments with sources that require argumentation, offer an authentic purpose and audience, and connect past and present.
THANK YOU FOR JOINING US TODAY!

Contact: cmontesa@umich.edu
Investigations, disciplinary literacy tools, videos, and relevant literature are freely accessible and available at readinquirewrite.umich.edu