

EVALUATING AN ARGUMENT

RI.6.8 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

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STUDENT HANDOUT FOR LESSONS 1–2	A reproducible handout students will use to complete activities during the lessons.
SUPPLEMENT	An additional resource to use during the lesson set. This unit’s supplement is a chart of the parts of an argument.
STUDENT FEEDBACK GUIDE	A feedback tool for students to complete following the lesson set.

EVALUATING AN ARGUMENT

TEACHER NOTES

RI.6.8, Lessons 1–2

UNIT OVERVIEW

In this unit, students trace and evaluate the argument in a text. First, they identify the thesis and claims that establish the text’s argument. Then they evaluate the claims by determining whether each claim is supported by reasons and evidence.

Lesson 1: In this lesson, students learn about the argumentative text type and two parts of an argument’s structure: the thesis and claims. They brainstorm their own thesis and claims for an example topic and then identify these components in an argumentative text.

Lesson 2: In this lesson, students learn about the other two parts of an argument’s structure: reasons and evidence. They brainstorm a thesis and claims for a new topic and then come up with reasons and pieces of evidence to support the claims. Finally, students evaluate the text’s argument by analyzing whether the claims in the text are supported by reasons and evidence.

Research Findings	Lesson Strategies, Approaches, or Activities
In order to understand lengthy written arguments, students must mentally represent the different components of the argument as they are introduced throughout multiple paragraphs. Once students understand the argument, they can evaluate the argument’s strength and validity. (Chambliss, 1995)	In this unit, students use a graphic organizer to visually represent the elements of the argument in a text.
Readers need instruction in identifying claims, reasons, and evidence in text. (Chambliss, 1995)	This unit provides explicit definitions of a thesis, claims, reasons, and evidence along with examples of each. Students expand their understanding by formulating their own arguments and by identifying these components in an argumentative text.
Instruction in the structure of an argument increases student knowledge of the principles of argumentation. (Reznitskaya, Anderson, & Kuo, 2007)	In this unit, students examine the basic structure of an argument by identifying the thesis and claims in a text and identifying whether the claims are supported by reasons and evidence.

Instruction in critical reading significantly increases student understanding of argumentative text. Critical reading involves using evidence and reasoning to make conclusions, differentiating between fact and opinion, and identifying the author's point of view.

(Darch & Kameenui, 1987)

This unit guides students through determining whether claims are supported by reasons or evidence. This is a key first step in critical reading.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Darch, C., & Kameenui, E. J. (1987). Teaching LD students critical reading skills: A systematic replication. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 10(2), 82–91. doi:10.2307/1510215

Reznitskaya, A., Anderson, R. C., & Kuo, L. (2007). Teaching and learning argumentation. *The Elementary School Journal*, 107(5), 449–472. doi:10.1086/518623

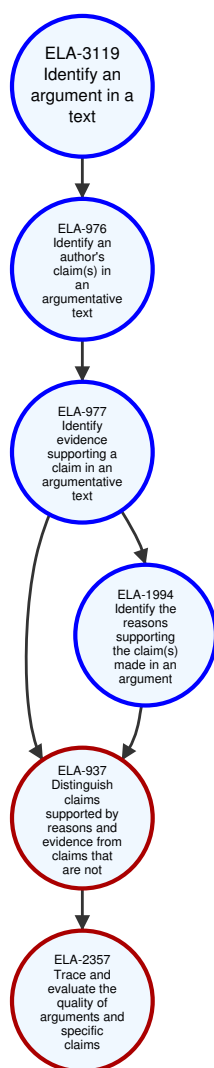
EVALUATING AN ARGUMENT

LEARNING MAP TOOL

RI.6.8

STANDARD

RI.6.8 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.



**Learning map model for RI.6.8.*

Node ID	Node Name	Node Description
ELA-937	DISTINGUISH CLAIMS SUPPORTED BY REASONS AND EVIDENCE FROM CLAIMS THAT ARE NOT	Distinguish claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not supported in an argumentative text.
ELA-976	IDENTIFY AN AUTHOR'S CLAIM(S) IN AN ARGUMENTATIVE TEXT	Identify the specific claim(s) made by the author in an argumentative text.
ELA-977	IDENTIFY EVIDENCE SUPPORTING A CLAIM IN AN ARGUMENTATIVE TEXT	Identify the specific evidence used to support a claim in an argumentative text.
ELA-1994	IDENTIFY THE REASONS SUPPORTING THE CLAIM(S) MADE IN AN ARGUMENT	Identify the reasons the author uses to support the claim(s) in an argument.
ELA-2357	TRACE AND EVALUATE THE QUALITY OF ARGUMENTS AND SPECIFIC CLAIMS	Trace the presentation of an argument and the specific claims in an argumentative text and evaluate them on the soundness of the reasoning and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
ELA-3119	IDENTIFY AN ARGUMENT IN A TEXT	Identify an argument in a text that asks readers to accept one or more claims on a topic through the use of supporting reasons and evidence.

IDENTIFYING CLAIMS

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

RI.6.8, Lesson 1

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students identify the thesis and claims in an argumentative text.

STANDARD

RI.6.8 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

PREPARATION

Before the lesson, select an argumentative text from a curriculum resource that has been purchased for individual student use, such as a class set of textbooks. The text should have multiple claims. Follow all copyright restrictions and guidelines as they pertain to material you select for classroom use.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ chart paper or whiteboard
 - ▶ argumentative text for individual student use
 - ▶ [SUPPLEMENT: PARTS OF AN ARGUMENT](#)
 - ▶ blank paper
 - ▶ [STUDENT HANDOUT: PARTS OF AN ARGUMENT](#)
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IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: “I can identify the thesis and claims in an argumentative text.”

Tell students they will be learning about argumentative texts. In an argumentative text, the author tries to convince the reader that something is true by using evidence and facts.

Provide the selected text. **Direct** students to read the text and to look for the argument or position that the author is trying to convince them is true.

Ask for volunteers to share what they think is the author's argument in the text.

Tell students that arguments include several parts. Today they will learn about the thesis and the claims.

Display the top half of [SUPPLEMENT: PARTS OF AN ARGUMENT](#). Talk through the definitions of *thesis* and *claim* and the examples of each.

Direct students to get with a partner to brainstorm a thesis and at least three claims that support the thesis. You may want to give students topics, such as whether schools should require uniforms, whether middle school students should have cell phones, and whether students should be involved in after school activities. Instruct students to write their thesis and claims on a blank sheet of paper.

Ask for volunteers to share and write responses on the board.

Explain that now students will identify the thesis and claims in the text.

Pass out [STUDENT HANDOUT: PARTS OF AN ARGUMENT](#) and have students work with partners. Show students where to write the thesis and claims.

Remind students that some arguments have one claim and some have multiple claims. Tell them that this text has multiple claims. Direct students to leave the second page of the handout blank; they will complete those parts in the next lesson.

Circulate and check understanding while students work.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING	
<p>Determine if the student can IDENTIFY AN ARGUMENT IN A TEXT (ELA-3119):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What position is the author trying to convince you is true? How do you know this?▶ Does the author want something to happen or change? What?	<p>Determine if the student can IDENTIFY AN AUTHOR'S CLAIM(S) IN AN ARGUMENTATIVE TEXT (ELA-976):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What statements does the author use to support the thesis? How do you know this?▶ Why does the author think [thesis as stated by student]? (For example, Why does the author think people should stop eating junk food?)

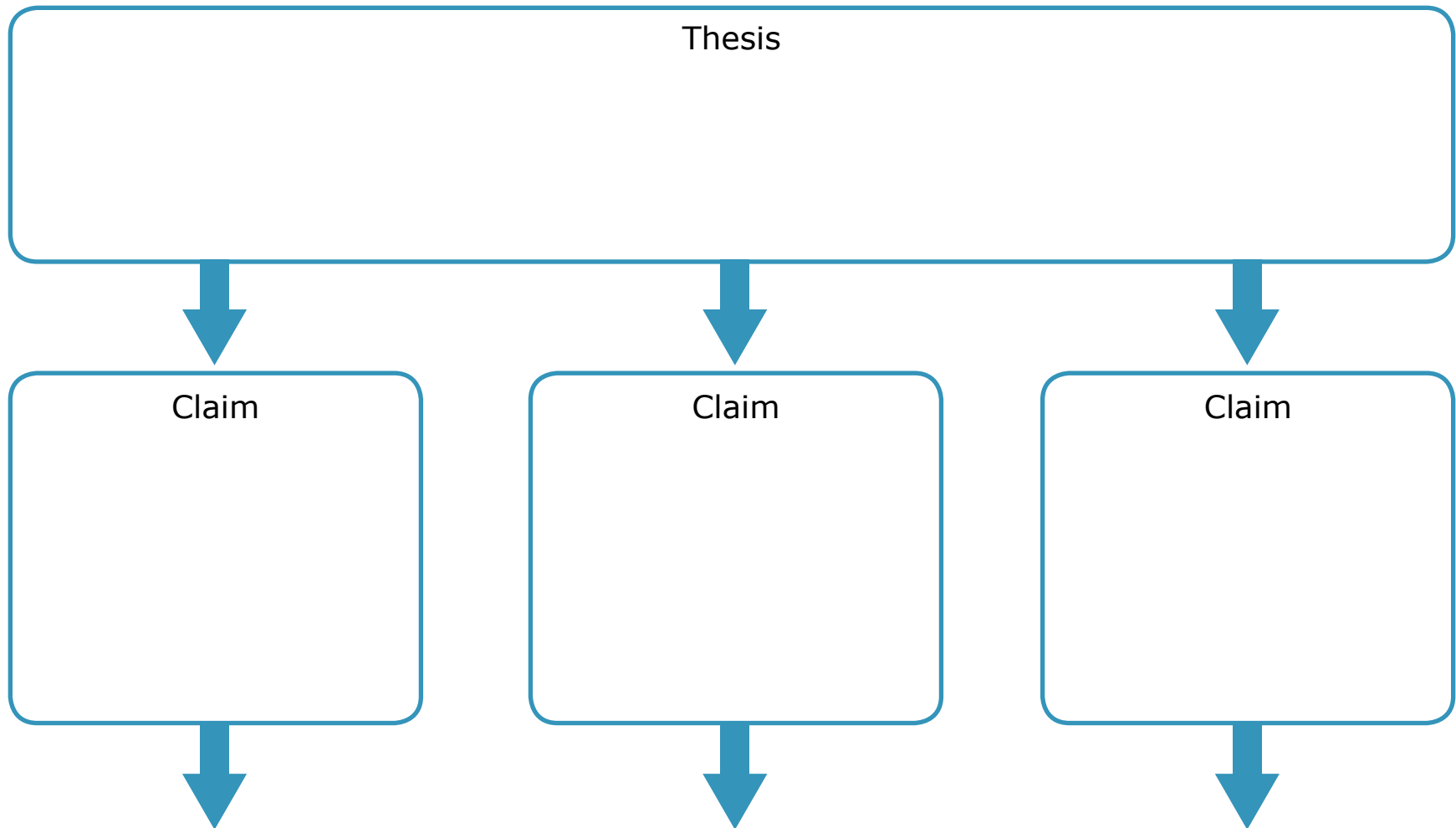
Invite volunteers to share their responses and ideas with the class, and write final answers on the board.
Collect handouts and papers with brainstormed theses and claims.

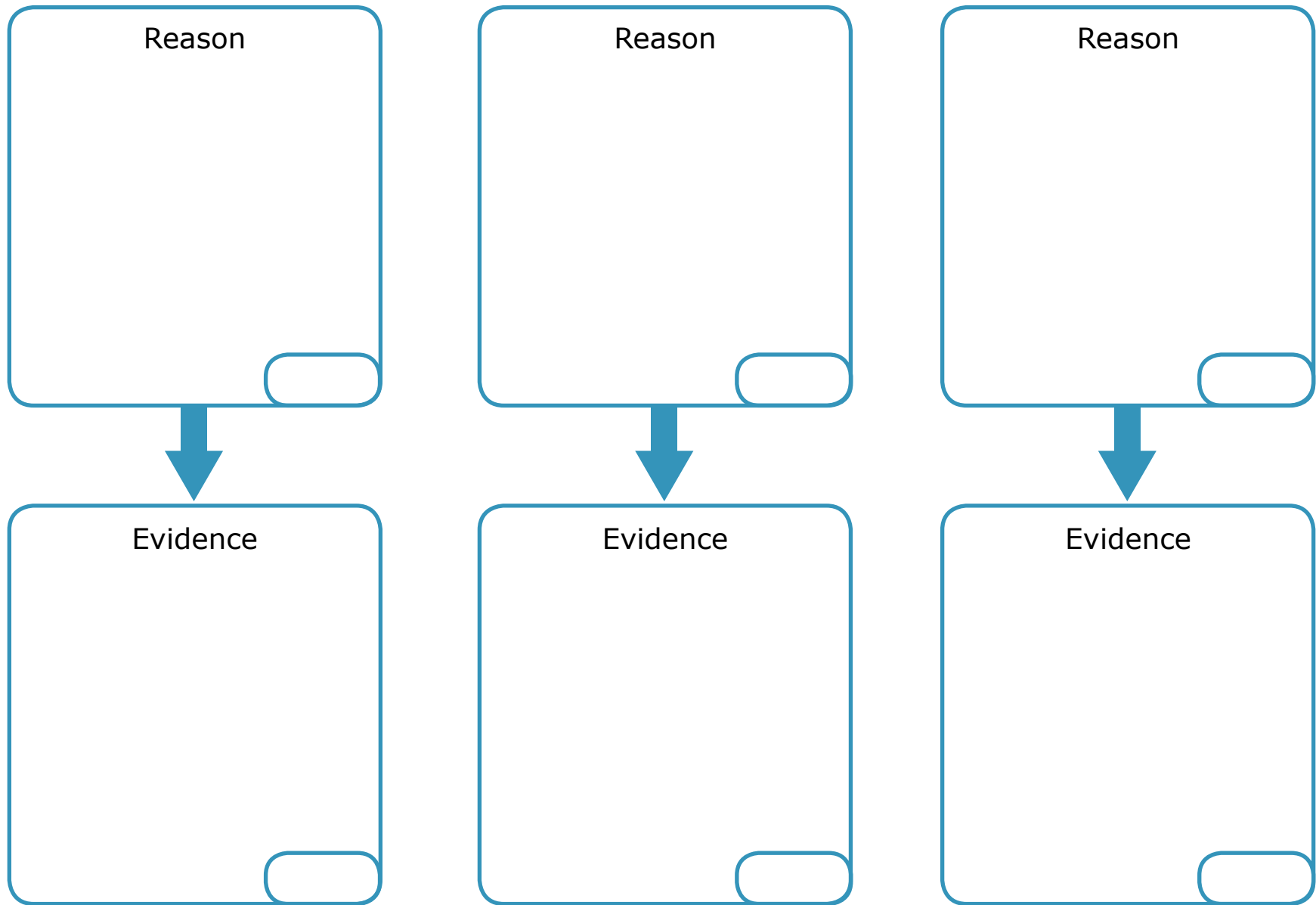
For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the [TEACHER NOTES](#) for this lesson set.

PARTS OF AN ARGUMENT

STUDENT HANDOUT

Lessons 1–2





PARTS OF AN ARGUMENT

SUPPLEMENT

Lessons 1–2

PART	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES	
Thesis (position)	The debatable point that the author is trying to convince or persuade the reader to accept.	People should stop eating junk food.	Animals should not be held in captivity.
Claim	A statement or position the author presents as true to support the thesis. An argument can have one or more claims.	Eating junk food causes weight gain, which leads to health problems. Junk food contains unnatural chemicals, which have negative effects on health.	Animals held in captivity are often treated poorly. Animals held in captivity can injure people.
Reason	A statement or explanation that supports a claim.	If people ate only nutritious food, they would maintain a healthy weight. If people ate more nutritious food, they would be less hyperactive.	Animals who live in their natural environments are happier. People are less likely to be hurt by animals in the wild than by animals in captivity.
Evidence	Data gathered to support a claim.	Empty calories from added sugars and solid fats contribute to 40 percent of daily calories for 2 to 18-year-olds. Multiple studies have linked artificial food colors to hyperactivity.	In captivity, animals often can't do natural things, such as run, fly, climb, choose a partner, or be with others of their kind. In 2010, an orca whale killed its trainer.

EVALUATING CLAIMS

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

RI.6.8, Lesson 2

LEARNING GOAL

In this lesson, students identify reasons and evidence and determine whether the claims in the argumentative text are supported by reasons and evidence.

STANDARD

RI.6.8 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

MATERIALS & HANDOUTS

- ▶ chart paper or whiteboard
 - ▶ argumentative text for individual student use
 - ▶ [SUPPLEMENT: PARTS OF AN ARGUMENT](#)
 - ▶ blank paper
 - ▶ [STUDENT HANDOUT: PARTS OF AN ARGUMENT](#)
-

IMPLEMENTATION

As a class, turn the learning goal into an I Can statement: “I can determine whether claims are supported by reasons and evidence.”

Tell students that today they will take a closer look at the claims in the argumentative text. Explain that effective arguments support claims with reasons and evidence. **Display** [SUPPLEMENT: PARTS OF AN ARGUMENT](#). Guide students through the definitions of *reasons* and *evidence* and the examples of each.

Divide students into pairs. Have students think of a thesis and supporting claims on a new topic. Then have students brainstorm reasons and evidence to support the claims. Potential topics include whether students should be allowed to have cell phones at school, whether students should be allowed to bike to school, and

whether students should be allowed to eat during class. Direct students to write their thesis, claims, reasons, and evidence on a blank sheet of paper. **Ask** for volunteers to share and write responses on the board.

Pass back [STUDENT HANDOUT: PARTS OF AN ARGUMENT](#), started in the previous lesson. **Explain** that students will determine whether the text's claims are supported by reasons and evidence.

For each claim, **instruct** students to circle the smiley face in the reason box if the text provides a reason to support the claim. They should also write the reason in the box. If there is not a reason to support the claim, students should circle the frowny face. (If students are using the fillable PDF handout, instruct them to click on the smiley or frowny face to select it.)

Direct students to follow the same procedure to identify any evidence that supports each claim.

Walk around and ask the Check for Understanding questions while students work.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING	
Determine if the student can DISTINGUISH CLAIMS SUPPORTED BY REASONS AND EVIDENCE FROM CLAIMS THAT ARE NOT (ELA-937) :	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Is the claim supported by a reason?▶ If so, what is that reason?▶ If not, what reason could the author have used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Is the claim supported by evidence?▶ If so, what is that evidence?▶ If not, what evidence could the author have used?

Invite volunteers to share their responses and ideas with the class and write final answers on the board.

Collect papers and handouts.

To extend the activity, give students time to research their brainstorm topic and then re-evaluate and revise the thesis, claims, reasons, and evidence that they came up with during the lesson. Have students use these elements to write an argumentative essay.

For a discussion of the research that supports this instructional model, see the [TEACHER NOTES](#) for this lesson set.

EVALUATING AN ARGUMENT

STUDENT FEEDBACK GUIDE

RI.6.8

Directions: For each learning goal, circle the sentence that best matches what you can do.

Learning Goal	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Identify claims in an argumentative text.	I can identify the thesis of an argumentative text.	I can identify one claim in an argumentative text.	I can identify multiple claims in an argumentative text.
Determine whether a claim is supported by reasons.	I can identify a reason in an argumentative text.	I can determine whether a single claim is supported by reasons.	I can determine whether multiple claims are supported by reasons.
Determine whether a claim is supported by evidence.	I can identify evidence in an argumentative text.	I can determine whether a single claim is supported by evidence.	I can determine whether multiple claims are supported by evidence.