

# Argumentative Writing

## Learning Targets

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

## Writing an Argumentative Essay

Writers and speakers use argumentative techniques to influence the attitudes and actions of an intended audience regarding a wide variety of issues. Effective argumentation involves conveying claims and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

You will work with your teacher and with your classmates to construct two arguments that respond to a specific perspective. You will then use these as models for your own writing.

### ACTIVITY 1

## Discovering the Elements of an Argumentative Response Essay

### Before Reading

1. Honing skills in civil debate and diplomatic argumentation is important in many careers and fields. When trying to convince others of your point of view, it is especially important to understand the logic of the opposition. Think of the last time you engaged in a debate or disagreement with a teacher or classmate about a topic worthy of debate. Were you able to understand the other point of view well enough to respond with a **rebuttal** based on logic and reason? How did you address the opposing point of view effectively?

### LEARNING STRATEGIES

RAFT, Discussion Groups, Close Reading, Brainstorming, Think-Pair-Share, Drafting, Peer Editing, Sharing and Responding

### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

**Rebuttal:** n. Evidence that attacks the criticisms against a thesis or claim, a refutation

### ACTIVITY 1

## Discovering the Elements of an Argumentative Response Essay

### PLAN

This sequence of activities is designed to provide direct writing instruction in argumentative writing, specifically writing to respond. Students will create three separate texts throughout this process: one that is co-constructed as a class with direct guidance from the teacher, one that is peer-constructed, and one that is written individually.

**Materials:** Pens and highlighters for marking the text

**Pacing:** 1 class period

### TEACH

**1** Preview the Learning Targets and focus of this writing workshop.

**2** **Before Reading** is intended to **activate prior knowledge** about engaging in debate and response. This workshop requires students to respond to or rebut a particular point of view.

### TEACHER TO TEACHER

This sample text was chosen to model the elements of argumentative writing to respond. You may opt to select a different text for classroom use.

**3 During Reading:** Engage students in a **shared reading** of the sample responsive text. Ask students to **mark the text** as you read, paying attention to the promoted persona and tone. You may choose to have students first read the essay silently, following the directions about marking the text. Explain any vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to your students, or engage them in a vocabulary activity using context clues and dictionaries when necessary.

## Writing Workshop 2 (continued)

### During Reading

2. The following letter of veto (a form of rebuttal) is an example of formal argumentation that responds to a specific piece of legislation passed by the State Senate of Illinois. The author, Adlai Ewing Stevenson, served as the governor of Illinois from 1949 to 1953 and later as Ambassador to the United Nations.

Governor Stevenson maintains a professional persona while expressing his opinion that Bill No. 93 is ridiculous. As you read, highlight specific phrases and clauses that are intended to be gently humorous as well as convincing.

My Notes

### To the Honorable, the Members of the Senate of the Sixty-sixth General Assembly:

I herewith return, without my approval, Senate Bill No. 93 entitled “An Act to Provide Protection to Insectivorous Birds by Restricting Cats.” This is the so-called “Cat Bill.” I veto and withhold my approval from this bill for the following reasons:

It would impose fines on owners or keepers who permitted their cats to run at large off their premises. It would permit any person to capture, or call upon the police to pick up and imprison, cats at large. It would permit the use of traps. The bill would have statewide application—on farms, in villages, and in metropolitan centers.

This legislation has been introduced in the past several sessions of the Legislature, and it has, over the years, been the source of much comment—not all of which has been in serious vein. It may be that the general assembly has now seen fit to refer it to one who can view it with a fresh outlook. Whatever the reasons for passage at this session, I cannot believe there is a widespread public demand for this law or that it could, as a practical matter, be enforced.

Furthermore, I cannot agree that it should be the declared public policy of Illinois that a cat visiting a neighbor’s yard or crossing the highway is a public nuisance. It is in the nature of cats to do a certain amount of unescorted roaming. Many live with their owners in apartments or other restricted premises, and I doubt if we want to make their every brief foray an opportunity for a small game hunt by zealous citizens—with traps or otherwise. I am afraid this bill could only create discord, recrimination and enmity. Also consider the owner’s dilemma: To escort a cat abroad on a leash is against the nature of the cat, and to permit it to venture forth for exercise unattended into a night of new dangers is against the nature of the owner. Moreover, cats perform useful service, particularly in rural areas, in combating rodents—work they necessarily perform alone and without regard for property lines.

We are all interested in protecting certain varieties of birds. That cats destroy some birds, I well know, but I believe this legislation would further but little the worthy cause to which its proponents give such unselfish effort. The problem of cat versus bird is as old as time. If we attempt to resolve it by legislation who knows but what we may be called upon to take sides as well in the age-old problems of dog versus cat, bird versus bird, or even bird versus worm. In my opinion, the State of Illinois and its local governing bodies already have enough to do without trying to control feline delinquency.

For these reasons, and not because I love birds the less or cats the more, I veto and withhold my approval from Senate Bill No. 93.

Respectfully,  
Adlai E. Stevenson, Governor

## After Reading

3. When responding to and analyzing text, it is important to understand the relationship among the author's role, the audience, the format, and the topic. Using the **RAFT** strategy can help analyze the text for these elements. If only one element is changed or adjusted, the text can take on an entirely different complexity. Begin by identifying the following elements from the sample text:

a. Author's Role

Sample response: The writer is the Governor of Illinois whose job it is to veto a legislative bill that he considers unenforceable, unfair, and downright silly. His task is to show why he cannot support the bill without offending its proponents.

b. Audience

Sample response: The audience is the Illinois Senate, including both proponents and opponents of this legislation which saw fit to pass the bill, probably knowing that the Governor would veto the bill. A veto is a public document so the audience also includes the wider public.

c. Format

Sample response: The format is a formal letter of veto.

d. Topic

Sample response: The topic is a veto of legislation enacted to restrict the movements of cats in favor of protecting the lives of birds.

## Check Your Understanding

Examine the specific phrases and clauses you highlighted or underlined. How would you categorize the tone of this letter? Why does Stevenson choose to approach this topic with this tone? What is the intended effect of this approach?

Sample response: The tone of this veto is wryly humorous. Stevenson uses wit and humor to amuse the opponents and convince the proponents of this legislation that it would be impossible to enforce and unfair to cats and cat owners. Governor Stevenson uses hyperbole for comic effect and to underscore his reasoning, saying, "I doubt if we want to make their every brief foray an opportunity for a small game hunt by zealous citizens—with traps or otherwise." He crowns his argument with this *reductio ad absurdum*: "The problem of cat versus bird is as old as time. If we attempt to resolve it by legislation who knows but what we may be called upon to take sides as well in the age-old problems of dog versus cat, bird versus bird, or even bird versus worm." He also offers cogent reasoning to assure he is being reasonable and not insensitive to the value of bird life: "I cannot believe there is a widespread public demand for this law or that it could, as a practical matter, be enforced." "That cats destroy some birds, I well know, but I believe this legislation would further but little the worthy cause to which its proponents give such unselfish effort."

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**4 After Reading: RAFT** is a strategy that helps initiate reader response, facilitate analysis of a text, and promote understanding of the relationship between the author, the audience, the format, and the topic. Begin by creating a class definition of each component of **RAFT** (*Role, Audience, Format, and Topic*). Pair students (or place them in small groups) to discuss and respond to the **graphic organizer**. Ask students to share their responses with the class.

## 5 Check Your Understanding:

After students answer the question independently or in small groups, lead them in a discussion of the phrases and clauses they highlighted and their understanding of the intended effect of each element. Clarify the terms and concepts if necessary.

## ASSESS

Use the **Check Your Understanding** to evaluate students' grasp of diction and tone. Based on your observations of students' understanding of the argumentative elements of a structured response, assess which students may need additional support and resources.

## ADAPT

A number of examples of writing to respond are included in well-known literature and rhetoric courses. If you would like to expose students to a longer and more complex example of this type of writing, you may wish to refer to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" as an extension example for potential use in class.



client. According to Mian, Lloyd had to undergo reconstructive surgery and currently suffers from headaches.

- 7 The International Little League tells NBC10 that all local chapters carry accident insurance that covers players, coaches and concessions but not spectators.
- 8 Bob also tells Asbury Park the entire ordeal has made the family step back from the league. He's taken a break from coaching while his wife Sue has stepped down as manager of the league's snack stand. Matthew continues to play however.
- 9 "He accidentally threw a ball," said Bob. "He didn't do anything wrong and I don't want him to carry that around thinking he did something wrong. It's just not right."
- 10 No court date has been set for the lawsuit.

### Prewriting

1. Using the left column of the following graphic organizer, list the **explicit** or **implied** points that Lloyd uses to support her position that the Migliaccio family is liable in this case. Then, in the right column, brainstorm possible responses and evidence that could be used to argue against her position. Prepare to share your ideas.

Lloyd's claims (explicit or implicit)	Potential rebuttals and evidence that could be employed to respond to this claim
<p>At little league games, spectators should not be held responsible for paying attention to their environment or watching out for stray/fly balls. It is not reasonable to expect spectators to be vigilant or to protect themselves.</p>	<p>Sample response: All spectators take risks when they attend a sporting event. It is the same as walking in a park when a sporting event takes place. An element of danger is present in all activities.</p>
<p>Sample response: Those who hit baseballs should be liable for any injuries or damage incurred as a result of their hits or misses or mishits.</p>	<p>Sample response: Accidents happen; no athlete intends to hit a spectator. Responsibility implies intent to harm. In this case there was no intent to harm.</p>
<p>Sample response: The Migliaccio family has insurance and the purpose of insurance is to cover any unexpected or unplanned damages that occur, therefore Lloyd can collect damages.</p>	<p>Sample response: Just because a person has insurance does not mean he can be sued for damages for an accident in a public place in a court of law.</p>
<p>Sample Response: Damage or injury incurred can develop over time, rather than at the moment of the incident.</p>	

**3 Prewriting:** Lead students in an activity that completes the graphic organizer, modeling the process for them using a whiteboard or overhead projector. Synthesize the class ideas to represent the most compelling responses and the most effective evidence for each explicit or implicit claim.

4 If necessary, lead students in conducting light research to augment their bank of evidence, or provide students with preselected sources that might illustrate rebuttal points to the lawsuit. Be sure students understand the importance of **reliability** and **validity** of evidence.

5 Evaluate which responses are the most logical and effective based on the information collected in the graphic organizer. As a group, select an approach to argue and **draft** a thesis, or main idea and reasoning, for the class-constructed response.

6 Lead the group in creating a topic outline, paying special attention to the organization of ideas. As you do this, ask students to articulate why they choose the order they do.

7 **Drafting:** Begin drafting the response to the Lloyd's case against the Migliaccios. To emphasize the importance of outlining, remind students that they should be making conscious references to the outline in both content and organization.

8 Point out the elements of an introduction or opening paragraph and where these elements appear in the sample text. **Think aloud** from the perspective of a writer as you draft this first paragraph.

## Writing Workshop 2 (continued)

2. After all class members have shared their ideas, you will have a solid representation of a range of responses and evidence for rebuttal of counterclaims. As a class, synthesize this information, and select the most relevant and persuasive responses and evidence for inclusion in the rebuttal to the case against the Migliaccio family.
3. To augment your evidence, spend time researching online sources as well as conducting informal interviews. Search for both primary and secondary sources. Your goal here is to search out information that represents the entire range of relevant perspectives on this lawsuit—not just your own.
4. Once you have found additional sources, consider their **validity** and **reliability**. If you deem your new information valid and reliable, add the information to your brainstorm list so you can accurately represent these viewpoints in your class-constructed text.  
  
To consider your sources' validity and reliability, think about the following questions:
  - **Validity:** Does the information appear to be legitimate? Is it timely and relevant to the rebuttal? In what ways could this evidence be used to support the ideas generated for response?
  - **Reliability:** Are the author's name and qualifications clearly identified? Is the information from a respected source of publication? If it is an online resource, is the site listed as .gov, .edu, or .org rather than .com?
5. Once you have compiled a list of relevant and valid evidence, choose two to three of the most compelling and precise pieces of evidence and place them on the board.
6. After everyone has submitted their best evidence, you will have a solid representation of a range of views and information on the topic. As a class, use the synthesized information to construct an outline that will frame the response.

### Drafting

Your class should now have a clear and thoughtful line of reasoning in response to Lloyd's lawsuit, a list of specific and relevant evidence, and a proposed outline. The next step is to plan an approach that will suit the public audience (not just Lloyd) and the purpose.

7. Remember that part of your task is to present a *persona* that maintains formal style while exposing the absurdity of this case. This is crafted not only into what you write, but how you write it. The tone you strike will have a great deal of impact on the effectiveness and ethos of your response. Before you begin drafting, come to an agreement as a group about how to promote this persona in your response. This selection will influence your choices regarding diction, syntax, and rhetorical appeals/devices.
8. As a class, work together to draft the introduction, or opening paragraph of the response. Remember that while this will take the form of a letter of response, the forum is public and the appeals should be directed at a broader audience than just Lloyd as an individual.

9. Your teacher will assign your group a portion of the outline to draft. Work together as a group to draft your portion of the response and prepare to share your draft with the class for revision before including it in the class-constructed response.
10. After your class has assembled these portions to create a complete body, your teacher will lead your class as you work together to draft a conclusion, or closing.

### Check Your Understanding

After you have completed this process, read over the drafted response that your class has created. Use these questions as a checklist.

- Does the introduction clearly establish your group’s position and the topic of contention?
- Are the strongest points of argument in the lawsuit adequately addressed?
- Does the writing maintain decorum while promoting the specified persona desired?
- Does the writing expose the absurdity of holding small children liable for stray pitches?
- Is the tone effective for the purpose and audience?
- Do transitions help the reader clearly make connections among the ideas of the response?
- Is the response organized in the most effective way to convince the audience?

### Revising for Language and Writer’s Craft

#### Using Hyperbole

Sometimes, in order to expose the absurdity of a situation, it is necessary to employ figurative language or *hyperbole* (deliberate exaggeration). In these cases, the figurative expression or exaggeration is not meant to be taken literally. Rather, the intention is to expose the irrational reasoning of the opposing viewpoint by gently (or sometimes not so gently) mocking ideas the other side proposes as logical or reasonable.

11. Reread the examples of figurative language and hyperbole employed in the sample text. Then, in the space provided, explain what impression Stevenson hopes to make by employing a hyperbolic diction and imagery in each instance.

Language/hyperbole from the passage	Explanation of the intended effect
It would permit any person to capture, or call upon the police to pick up and <b>imprison</b> , cats at large.	Sample response: Using the language of human capture and incarceration makes the idea of restraining cats ridiculous.
I doubt if we want to make their every brief foray an opportunity for a small game hunt by zealous citizens—with traps or otherwise.	Sample response: “small game hunt” uses the language of hunting and thus contextualizes the restraint of cats as absurd.
To <b>escort</b> a cat abroad on a leash is against the nature of the cat, . . .	Sample response: Inflated diction “escort” coupled with “on a leash” creates a ridiculous image.

(continued)

9 Instruct groups to craft a paragraph that will describe a point of rebuttal to the lawsuit, referencing the class-constructed outline. Assign one talking point to each group.

10 When all groups are finished, ask the presenter from each group to share their work. Read through each group’s contribution and ask for peer feedback from other groups. Allow students to make revisions to their paragraphs.

11 Display the selected paragraphs on an overhead or whiteboard and allow students time to copy them down individually. Make revisions as necessary, keeping persona and tone at the forefront of your revisions.

12 Lead the class in construction of the closing paragraph/conclusion. Model this process using an overhead projector or whiteboard.

13 In discussion groups, ask students to read over the drafted response and use the **Check Your Understanding** questions as a checklist. Emphasize that *logos* should dominate their responses. As groups finish, students should present their revisions to the class in the order those paragraphs will be included in the response.

14 **Revising for Language and Writers Craft** focuses on the rhetoric of hyperbole. This language activity explicitly addresses using figurative diction and hyperbole. Guide students through the activity, checking for understanding by having selected students share their responses.



**15** As a class, revise the draft to include more hyperbole where appropriate to create a tactful yet incredulous persona and a tone of wit and irony.

**16 Editing:** When producing the final draft of the essay, be sure to model editing skills to eliminate mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc.

## ASSESS

Based on your observations in the classroom, assess which students may need additional support and resources as the group moves from creating an argumentative response as a class to creating one in pairs.

## ADAPT

You may wish to supply struggling students with a completed graphic organizer of the implicit claims or premises of the lawsuit. Students who struggle to make inferences or draw unspoken conclusions from what they read will have difficulty determining the implied elements of the lawsuit.

### ACTIVITY 3

## Writing an Argumentative Response Essay with Peers

### PLAN

**Materials:** Materials generated in Activity 1 and Activity 2 to serve as models for partner work

**Pacing:** 2 class periods

## Writing Workshop 2 (continued)

Language/hyperbole from the passage	Explanation of the intended effect
... and to permit it to venture forth for exercise unattended into a night of new dangers is against the nature of the owner.	Sample response: Parallel clauses give this sentence added power and describing a cat's activities as "exercise" while confronting "new dangers" makes the situation ridiculous
Moreover, cats perform useful service... in combating rodents—work they necessarily perform alone and <b>without regard for property lines</b> .	Sample response: Applying legal language of "property lines" makes light of thinking of restraining cats from their valuable service.
... <b>we may be called upon to take sides as well in the age-old problems of dog versus cat, bird versus bird, or even bird versus worm.</b>	Sample response: "Argumentum ad absurdum" or "reduction ad absurdum"
In my opinion, the State of Illinois and its local governing bodies already have enough to do without trying to control feline delinquency.	Sample response: Inflated diction of "feline delinquency" puts the idea of restraining the activities of cats in the context of the functions of governing bodies to make it silly.
For these reasons, <b>and not because I love birds the less or cats the more</b> , I veto and withhold my approval from Senate Bill No. 93.	Sample response: Excellent use of balanced sentence for effect.

- 12.** Look back at the response you drafted as a class. Have you already employed examples of language that intends to exaggerate the claims or ideas behind the lawsuit? In what places could ideas be revised, or words or phrases be added or replaced to exploit this subtle but powerful technique? Consider specific diction as well as **hyperbole** of ideas. Prepare to share your thoughts with the class to be considered for inclusion in the class constructed response.

### Editing

After presenting your revisions to the class and hearing the revisions of others, it's time to polish the final draft of the argumentative essay by editing for mistakes. Consider all of the elements listed in the Language category of the Scoring Guide.

### ACTIVITY 3

## Writing an Argumentative Response Essay with Peers

**WRITING PROMPT:** With a partner (or partners), locate a published, publicly filed lawsuit or proposed bill that inspires you to respond with rebuttal. Then, work together to respond to the stated or implied ideas expressed in the piece in a well-crafted letter or essay. Refer to the Scoring Guide for this writing task—it will help you understand where to focus your attention and efforts. Your peer-constructed response should include the elements listed in Activity 2 under the writing prompt.



## Prewriting/Drafting

1. In pairs or small groups, review the writing steps from the class-constructed response and apply them to your peer-constructed response.
  - a. Create an outline of the points made in the text that inspired your response.
  - b. Brainstorm possible responses and evidence that could be used to argue against this position.
  - c. Conduct research to augment your bank of evidence. Be mindful of selecting valid and reliable sources.
  - d. Generate an outline for your response.
  - e. Determine a tone and persona to promote in the response.
  - f. Draft an introduction or opening, body paragraphs, and conclusion or closing.

## Peer Review

2. Upon completing your letter or essay, reread the required elements for this activity. You will evaluate and provide feedback for another group's response based on the criteria listed as well as a specific focus on hyperbole as an element of rhetoric.
3. Exchange response drafts AND unmarked copies of the original article that inspired the response. When you receive materials from your peers, begin by reading the response FIRST. Judge its effectiveness and clarity, and note any points for which clarity is necessary. It should not be necessary to read the original article to understand the peer-generated response.
4. After you have read your peers' work the first time, read the article that inspired this response. Then, read the work of your peers again, making connections between the two texts. Are there any significant points in the original opinion that are not addressed in the response? Note these observations.
5. As you read your peers' work a second time, record your feedback—specifically whether the tone and persona are effective, as well as whether the argument is convincing and whether the evidence is compelling. Pay particular attention to the balance between humor and diplomacy. In addition, make marks regarding editing mistakes that need to be corrected (spelling, punctuation, etc.) and suggestions for revisions in effective diction and clarity in grammar and sentence structure.

## Revising/Editing

6. Return your peers' work. After you have the peer review notes for your essay or letter, revise it based on feedback from your peers. Edit for language conventions and make it ready for publication.

### ACTIVITY 4

## Independent Writing

**WRITING PROMPT:** Locate a published, publicly filed lawsuit or proposed bill that inspires you to respond with a rebuttal. Then, respond to the ideas expressed in the piece in a well-crafted letter or essay. Review the writing steps from the class-constructed response and apply them to the response you write independently.

Refer to the Learning Targets and Scoring Guide for this writing task—they will help you understand where to focus your attention and efforts.

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## TEACH

1 Divide the class into pairs or groups of three.

2 As students analyze the prompt, monitor groups to be sure they research and find an appropriate lawsuit or legislative bill for their response. Review their selections before allowing them to proceed.

3 Remind students of the elements they should incorporate in the argumentative response. Refer to the Scoring Guide to inform areas of emphasis.

4 **Prewriting/Drafting:** Students should review and emulate the process they followed in Activity 2.

5 Monitor and assist students as necessary through this process.

6 **Peer Review:** Guide students through the peer-review process. Encourage students to provide written feedback. Ask teams to trade papers and review one another's work.

7 Combine groups to create larger groups for sharing and responding. Each writing group should take careful notes.

8 After both responses have been reviewed in the writing group, writers should revise their work to produce a final draft. Collect drafts and review student work before proceeding to Activity 4.

## ASSESS

Based on your observations in the classroom and student writing you've collected, assess which students may need additional support and resources.

## ADAPT

Engage students in a classroom debate or small group discussions to explore methods of responding to ridiculous ideas. As students discuss responses to absurd ideas, coach them on ways to express their ideas with decorum and balance.

### ACTIVITY 4

## Independent Writing

## PLAN

**Materials:** Materials generated in Activities 1, 2, and 3; research

materials or opportunities for student research

**Pacing:** 1 class period or homework

## TEACH

**1** Students should plan and draft this essay individually.

**2** Assign the independent writing prompt. Respond to students' needs during the writing process. Remind them of the steps they've practiced in class.

## ASSESS

Individually written responses will be assessed by the teacher using the scoring rubric for the assignment.

## ADAPT

Consider including supplemental examples of arguments that respond, or assigning particular cases or lawsuits to individual students. You may also insist that students get your approval on their selections before moving forward, or limit options based on their level of challenge or topics of controversy you believe appropriate.

## SCORING GUIDE

Use the Scoring Guide throughout this workshop to remind students of the elements expected to be included in their writing.

## Writing Workshop 2 (continued)

### SCORING GUIDE

Scoring Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Incomplete
<b>Ideas</b>	<p>The essay or letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>asserts an insightful thesis and position statements: effectively anticipates alternate points of view</li> <li>supports reasons with precise, convincing evidence and authoritative commentary</li> <li>demonstrates thoughtful consideration of validity and reliability of evidence</li> <li>consistently presents alternative viewpoints accurately, honestly, and diplomatically</li> </ul>	<p>The essay or letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents a clear thesis and position statements that anticipate and distinguish alternate viewpoints</li> <li>supports reasons with specific and relevant evidence and commentary</li> <li>demonstrates consideration of validity and reliability of evidence</li> <li>usually presents an accurate, honest, and diplomatic representation of alternative viewpoints</li> </ul>	<p>The essay or letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents a limited or unfocused thesis that does not distinguish alternate viewpoints</li> <li>uses insufficient evidence and vague commentary</li> <li>demonstrates little or no consideration of validity and reliability of evidence and insufficient research</li> <li>often struggles to represent alternative viewpoints accurately or diplomatically</li> </ul>	<p>The essay or letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents neither a clear claim nor alternate viewpoints</li> <li>contains insufficient and/or irrelevant evidence with little or no commentary</li> <li>pays little attention to research and consideration of reliability and validity of evidence</li> <li>shows little attempt to present alternative viewpoints fairly</li> </ul>
<b>Structure</b>	<p>The essay or letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>skillfully uses an appropriate organizing structure</li> <li>presents a sustained focus that displays a progression of ideas with depth and complexity</li> <li>effectively sequences ideas and uses graceful transitions</li> </ul>	<p>The essay or letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>includes an appropriate organizing structure</li> <li>includes a sustained focus that presents ideas with clarity and coherence</li> <li>sequences ideas logically and uses transitions appropriately</li> </ul>	<p>The essay or letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may lack an organizing structure or contain one that is inappropriate</li> <li>presents unfocused or underdeveloped ideas</li> <li>presents disconnected ideas and limited use of transitions</li> </ul>	<p>The essay or letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lacks a clear or appropriate organizing structure</li> <li>presents unfocused and underdeveloped ideas</li> <li>presents ideas that are unconnected with little or no use of transitional elements</li> </ul>
<b>Use of Language</b>	<p>The essay or letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses syntax effectively to contribute to the clarity of ideas and persuasive effect</li> <li>uses diction that is deliberately crafted for the topic and</li> <li>employs hyperbole in a way that enhances the argument</li> <li>uses conventions skillfully to contribute to the rhetorical effectiveness</li> </ul>	<p>The essay or letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses syntax deliberately for persuasive effect</li> <li>uses diction appropriately for the topic and audience</li> <li>uses hyperbole</li> <li>uses conventions correctly; minor errors do not affect meaning</li> </ul>	<p>The essay or letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shows little or no deliberate use of sentence structure for effect</li> <li>uses inappropriate diction for the topic, and audience</li> <li>does not use hyperbole</li> <li>uses conventions incorrectly; errors may interfere with meaning</li> </ul>	<p>The essay or letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shows no deliberate use of syntax for a certain effect</li> <li>shows no evidence of careful and deliberate use of diction</li> <li>shows little or inappropriate use of hyperbole</li> <li>contains multiple errors in conventions that interfere with meaning</li> </ul>