An **argument** states an author’s position about a topic and tries to get readers to agree with it. As a reader, it’s your job to **evaluate**, or judge, whether the author’s argument is sound—that is, whether it presents clear thinking and sensible ideas.

Begin evaluating an argument by tracing, or figuring out, how the author has “built” it. First, identify the author’s position on the topic. Then study any claims. **Claims** are statements the author presents as true in order to support his or her position. Also note any reasons and evidence the author gives to support each claim.

**Look carefully at the cartoon below. Try to figure out the girl’s argument.**

![Cartoon image](image_url)

This chart shows details about the girl’s argument. Add the evidence she gave in the cartoon to support Claim 1. Then add a sensible reason or evidence to support Claim 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argument: The girl should have a dog.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Claim 1:</strong> Having a dog will make her more responsible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reason or Evidence:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Claim 2:</strong> A dog will be a good friend and companion to her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reason or Evidence:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After you trace how an author develops an argument, evaluate it further to decide if it is sound. Ask: Does each claim support the author’s argument and make sense? Does the author give reasons and evidence that support each claim? If you can ask and answer such questions, you’ll be able to distinguish strong, sound arguments from weak ones.
Lesson 18
Part 2: Modeled Instruction

Read the following persuasive essay about whether hip-hop should be taught in English classes.

Genre: Persuasive Essay

Today’s Lesson: Hip-Hop

by Anita Perry

Year after year, most literature classes cover the same authors and genres. It’s time that educators made a change. For teachers to keep current and engage students, we must allow students to read diverse texts from their own generation. As a first step, hip-hop should be included in the literature curriculum.

This suggestion is not as odd as it may seem. After all, hip-hop is simply another form of poetry, as are all song lyrics. The verses of hip-hop have rhyme schemes, rhythms, and meters. In addition, hip-hop lyrics deal with the same timeless themes as other forms of poetry, including heartache and the challenges of growing up. In many ways, today’s hip-hop artists are contemporary versions of William Shakespeare and Emily Dickinson, only with a modern, fresh perspective.

Explore how to answer this question: “What is the author’s argument, and how does she support it with claims, reasons, and evidence?”

First, identify what the author wants to convince you about. Then, find the claims she uses to show why her position is sound. Finally, identify reasons or evidence she gives to support each claim.

Analyze the author’s argument by completing the chart below. State what her argument is. Then add one reason and one claim she gives to support her position on hip-hop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argument:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Claim 1:</strong> Hip-hop is a form of poetry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reason:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim 2:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reason:</strong> Hip-hop lyrics deal with topics such as heartache and the challenge of growing up.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With a partner, take turns evaluating the author’s argument. Does it seem sensible? Has the author provided support for her claims? Use reasons and evidence to support your evaluation.
Lesson 18
Part 3: Guided Instruction

Close Reading
On page 180, the author makes two claims to support her argument about hip-hop. **Underline** another claim she gives in the first paragraph on this page.

Hint
How does the author think hip-hop will help teachers understand their students?

Continue reading the essay. Use the Close Reading and Hint to help you answer the question.

(continued from page 180)

Examining hip-hop songs in class can help teachers identify more closely with their students' interests, cultures, and life experiences. The subject matter or lyrics of some hip-hop songs may be objectionable, but teachers can find plenty of acceptable options to explore.

Additionally, teachers can help students think critically about the lyrics and messages of their favorite songs. Exploring hip-hop will strengthen students' analytical skills and their ability to connect old and new forms of literature. Our students will therefore become more engaged, challenged, and informed.

Circle the correct answer.
What claim does the author make in the first paragraph on this page to support her argument that hip-hop should be taught in literature classes?
- A Hip-hop is more interesting than classic poetry.
- B Lyrics for hip-hop songs can teach students life lessons.
- C Teachers can better relate to their students' experiences.
- D Students can learn to write hip-hop lyrics.

Show Your Thinking
Evaluate the essay you just read. Judge whether or not the author provides enough strong reasons and evidence to support her claims and argument. Use text details in your response.

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

With a partner, discuss other reasons the author could have included to support her claims.
Read the following editorial about the censorship of school yearbooks. Use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.

**Say No to Censorship**

*by Marcos Suarez*

1. A yearbook is a special collection of memories that will be treasured by students for decades. However, some school authorities insist on dictating what students can and cannot include in yearbooks. Teachers often remove articles and images they feel are inappropriate. Authorities should not ruin this treasure by censoring yearbooks and removing what they believe to be unsuitable.

2. Educators need to respect students’ right to free speech. Everyone needs to be reminded that the First Amendment of the Constitution protects “freedom of expression.” This fundamental right should be upheld and appreciated.

3. School authorities also need to acknowledge how much students learn when they can express themselves freely. Students need more opportunities to develop their creativity. Creative expression will allow students to create interesting yearbooks that capture all of their school experiences.

4. Those who feel that yearbooks should be censored need to explain their goals. They may claim that they want to protect students, but aren’t they really trying to promote their own values? Authorities need to be open and honest about what they want to accomplish by censoring yearbooks.

5. Teachers should work together with students to define and discuss the word *objectionable*. Respecting students’ opinions on censorship will empower students and allow school yearbooks to be the treasure they deserve to be.
Lesson 18

Part 4: Guided Practice

Hints

Which answer choice restates the author’s position and claims that you marked on the previous page?

Reread the second paragraph of the editorial. Which answer choice matches closely with the author’s ideas in this paragraph?

Does the author give strong reasons and evidence to support each of the claims in his argument?

Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

1 Which statement best summarizes the author’s argument?
   A School authorities need the freedom to practice censorship upon the content of yearbooks.
   B School authorities are obligated to remove objectionable material from yearbooks to protect their students.
   C School authorities should work together with students to delete objectionable material from yearbooks.
   D School authorities should not censor school yearbooks because it limits students’ rights and creativity.

The author mentions the First Amendment in the editorial. What purpose does this reference serve?
   A to explain why yearbooks should be censored by school authorities
   B to support the idea that students have a right to express themselves
   C to point out why yearbook censorship is a controversial topic
   D to emphasize the problem of objectionable school materials

In the editorial, the author explains his position on censorship of school yearbooks. How well do you think the text supports his ideas about censoring yearbook materials? Cite details from the text to support your evaluation.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Read the article. Then answer the questions that follow.

Longer school day: Expanded learning time pros and cons

by Bethany Bray, The Andover Townsman

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR

• More time to cover the curriculum.

1 “I’m always hearing from teachers that there’s not enough time,” Superintendent Claudia Bach said. “We really need more time to do the academic things, not just extracurricular.”

2 The extra time allotted with ELT [expanded learning time] would allow teachers to expand current lessons, introduce special projects, provide new enrichment and have time for more teacher workshops and development, supporters say.

3 “If you look at the curriculum, you say, ‘Oh my gosh, how can a teacher possibly get this done?’ ELT will allow us to do so much more, for all our kids,” said Brad Heim, a High Plain Elementary parent. “There’s always room for improvement, and we have the luxury of being out front and being able to decide how we want to do it.”

• Provide students global, 21st century skills.1

4 “Andover’s looking at 21st century skills like cultural awareness, communication skills. For Andover, it’s making education all it can be . . . The big vision is that the world is changing, education is changing, and how can the schools meet the needs of the children and society?” said Lisa Glickstein, grant coordinator for the district. “Kids are doing reading and math that we didn’t do at their age.”

5 But Glickstein added, “Parents are justifiably concerned. . . . We’re still figuring out if this grant program is right for Andover.”

• State money is growing.

6 Although ELT grants guarantee money for only one year, school districts can reapply year after year, and preference is given to districts that have ELT programs, Glickstein said.

7 ELT funding has increased substantially in the three years it’s been offered by the state, Heim said. What started as $500,000 has increased to $13 million this year, and Gov. Deval Patrick and Sen. Edward Kennedy are in favor of ELT, he said.

1 21st century skills: The skills students need to succeed in a highly technological workplace.
“With such tremendous support from our legislature, even in these economic times, (ELT funding) is being increased,” Heim said. “It’s being funded because it works.”

ARGUMENTS AGAINST

- **If it ain’t broke, why fix it?**

Andover is already one of the top districts in the state. In the past, ELT grants have helped underperforming districts such as Boston and Worcester with low state test scores and high dropout rates, problems Andover does not have.

- **Only one year of funding guaranteed.**

“As the political atmosphere changes, there’s no promise of long-term funding,” said Karen Lu, a High Plain Elementary parent. “Realistically, we cannot support this kind of budget long term, and it’s almost practically a certainty that funding would be dropped eventually.”

Lisa Glickstein, grant coordinator for Andover, said, “It is a legitimate concern that the grant will go away. There really is no way that the town budget would be able to support that amount of time in a long-term way.”

- **Takes time away from families.**

Bancroft Elementary mother Dawn Kalinowski, who also teaches at Pentucket Regional High School, believes ELT could eliminate the positive effect of parental involvement.

“We may be taking away the very thing that makes Andover such a great district,” she said.

She switched careers from engineering to teaching to have more time with her kids. Being able to put her kids on the bus in the morning is priceless, she said.

Also, Andover parents, including Kalinowski herself, provide very specific extracurricular activities and lessons tailored to their children. School districts can’t provide something each youth likes.

**What evidence does the article provide to support one claim in favor of adding expanded learning time?**

A Andover schools are already top performers in the state.

B Funding for longer school days is only guaranteed for one year.

C Some are convinced that ELT will encourage positive parent involvement.

D More time is needed for current academic lessons and special projects.
2. Why does the author include the fact that the amount available for expanded learning time [ELT] programs has increased to $13 million?

A. It proves that starting an ELT program is a good way for Andover to raise money.
B. It suggests that ELT programs are growing rapidly, so Andover should add one.
C. It shows that ELT is too expensive a program for Andover to fund on its own.
D. It supports the idea that state funding for Andover’s ELT program will not run out.

3. Which statement best summarizes the argument against expanded learning time?

A. Andover should not begin ELT because Andover is a high-performing district, the funding might run out, and ELT takes time away from families.
B. There is no point in starting ELT in Andover because grant money to fund it might run out after a single year, and the town could not pay for it.
C. ELT is most useful in districts where test scores are low and dropout rates are high, but Andover does not have these problems.
D. Adding extra time to the school day would allow less time for parents to help their own children, so students’ performance might actually suffer from ELT.

4. In her article, the author intends to show that future funding of an ELT program in Andover is uncertain. Explain how the text supports this idea about the uncertain future of ELT in the town. Use at least two details from the text to support your response.

---

Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 177.