

# Content Spotlight: Interdisciplinary Literacy



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According to the NAEP, 33 percent of eighth graders scored below “basic” in reading—the lowest set of scores recorded in the exam’s 33-year history.

Historically, ELA instruction has prioritized literary texts. Consequently, students struggle to read informational texts. Students are expected to analyze informational texts and demonstrate their understanding through both informational and argumentative writing — not just in ELA classrooms, but also in science and social studies lessons. To achieve this successfully, students need access to high-quality texts that provide opportunities to engage in deliberate practice.



*Expedition: Learn!* secures students’ path to academic success and prepares them to navigate real-world tasks such as making informed voting and consumer choices, and navigating information overload.

**Source:** The NAEP Reading Achievement Levels by Grade [https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/reading/2024/g4\\_8/national-trends/?grade=8#student-skills](https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/reading/2024/g4_8/national-trends/?grade=8#student-skills) and The NAEP Reading Achievement Levels by Grade [https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/achieve.aspx#2009\\_grade8](https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/achieve.aspx#2009_grade8)

Check out how Britannica experts use ELA, science, and social studies in the featured inquiry!

## Expedition: Learn!

is an instructional platform with standards-aligned, interdisciplinary lessons that build content knowledge, reading comprehension, and critical-thinking skills. Explore how our experts utilize content area reading to develop key ELA reading and writing skills!

## In Practice

Argumentative writing shows up in many content areas. Students are often asked to show what they know and explain “why.” Here are a few examples of argumentative writing standards across content areas.

|                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Name: _____ Date: _____       |                               |
| <b>Argumentative Writing</b>  |                               |
| Argument                      |                               |
| Claim 1                       | Claim 2                       |
| Evidence 1                    | Evidence 2                    |
| Evidence-Based Counterclaim 1 | Evidence-Based Counterclaim 2 |

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### Common Core | ELA | Grade 8

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1:** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

### C3 | Social Studies | Grades 6–8

**D4.1.6–8:** Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging the strengths and limitations of the arguments.

### NGSS | Science | Grades 6–8

**SEP: Engaging in Argument from Evidence:** Construct an oral and written argument supported by empirical evidence and scientific reasoning to support or refute an explanation or a model for a phenomenon or a solution to a problem.

To support students as they develop their argumentative writing skills, use the Teach Britannica **Argumentative Writing instructional strategy** and **graphic organizer** to help guide students through the steps of crafting an argumentative essay.

### How to Craft an Argumentative Essay

1. Develop an argument
2. Identify claims and counterclaims
3. Use appropriate evidence from multiple sources

Keep the exploration going! Discover these resources and more in Expedition: Learn! on Teach Britannica.



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# Classroom Guide

**Directions:** Use this inquiry to practice interdisciplinary literacy.



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## Progress, Technology, and the Environment

**Inquiry**

**Grades 6–8**

**2 weeks** (based on 60 min. periods)

### Compelling Question

Does the progress of technology justify the environmental damage it creates?

### Staging the Compelling Question

To introduce students to the themes of the compelling question, use the **Talking Points instructional strategy** with the questions below. After completion, present the compelling question to students.

1. Is change always necessary?
2. Is all change good? Why or why not?
3. Does progress come with a cost?
4. Can something be useful and harmful at the same time?

### Explore the Supporting Questions

For each supporting question, students will complete the accompanying formative assessment by exploring primary and secondary sources.

#### Supporting Question 1

What are the effects of the human population on the environment?

#### Formative Assessment

List the positive and negative effects of human activity on the environment.

#### Supporting Question 2

In what ways are natural resources and synthetic materials used, and what are their effects?

#### Formative Assessment

Engage in a **Flash Debate** on whether using natural resources or synthetic materials is better for the environment.

#### Supporting Question 3

How have advancements in technology changed society?

#### Formative Assessment

Make an evidence-based claim and counterclaim that technological advancements have improved daily life.

Use the **Argumentative Writing instructional strategy** to help students develop their argument and evidence-based claims and counterclaims as they examine the sources.

#### Expedition: Learn! Sources

**Social Studies Lesson**  
Humans and the Environment

**Science Lesson**  
Human Impacts on Earth Systems

**Science Lesson**  
Monitoring and Minimizing Human Impact

#### Expedition: Learn! Sources

**Science Lesson**  
Natural Resources

**Science Lesson**  
Synthetic Materials

#### Expedition: Learn! Sources

**Social Studies Lesson**  
The Industrialization of the United States

**Social Studies Lesson**  
Transforming Transportation:  
Automobiles and Airplanes

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# Progress, Technology, and the Environment

**Inquiry**

**Grades 6–8**

**2 weeks** (based on 60 min. periods)

## Summative Performance Task

Students will demonstrate their understanding and consider their role as consumers and leaders in the context of technological advancements.

**Argument:** Construct an argument in the form of an essay in response to the compelling question using specific claims and counterclaims supported by relevant evidence.

**Extension:** Explain ways people can impact resource usage and influence government regulations and industry standards around resource usage. Think about who is accountable for the effects on the environment when technology progresses.

## Taking Informed Action

Provide students with the opportunity to make a personal connection with their work and deepen their understanding of how consumer choices can shape society and the environment.

**Understand:** Research a manufactured product, identify the resources used to produce it, and trace the logistics required to get it to the consumer. Investigate the impact this product has on the people and places involved in its production and use.

**Assess:** Evaluate the pros and cons of the manufacturing, use, and disposal of this product.

**Act:** Create a product guide to help people make informed consumer decisions. Include both the social and environmental impacts.

Learn more:  
[britannicaeducation.com/expedition-learn](https://britannicaeducation.com/expedition-learn)



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