



# Cite Text Evidence: Grades 6–8

## OVERVIEW:

As students enter middle school, they need to learn to cite text evidence in social studies to support their analysis of primary and secondary sources. This allows them to make logical claims about people, ideas, and eras in history. Learning how to make logical claims leads to rational and informed decision-making, which is essential in our democracy and in students' civic lives. The more practice they have identifying and evaluating evidence, the better students become at recognizing arguments that are not supported by evidence. Throughout middle school, texts become more complex and nuanced, requiring students to do more evaluation and inferencing. In addition, social studies texts often use media and primary sources to present information, which requires students to locate and cite evidence differently than with written texts.

## Mini-Lesson I

### Citing Text Evidence to Support Claims (30 minutes)

**Background:** As students move to middle school and begin reading more sophisticated texts, they are asked to make claims about a text or topic and support their thinking with evidence. This requires them to identify a purpose for reading, read carefully to form a claim, reread to find evidence that supports their conclusion, and explain this evidence. The following teaching suggestions are based on the *Expedition: Learn!* lesson "The Great Migration, 1915–1940."

- Teach or review the related academic vocabulary word claim.
  - *claim*: a statement of fact
- Explain that as we become more sophisticated readers, we notice that authors include a lot of information in their writing. We need to sift through that information to draw conclusions and make a claim about a topic.
- Share that in this lesson, students will read two texts and form a claim about each, supporting their thinking with evidence and reasoning.
- Explain that for the first passage, students will make a claim in response to the following prompt:
  - Why did Black Southerners leave the South?
- Conduct a shared reading of the first article in the lesson, "Leaving the South."
- Invite students to turn and talk, discussing their initial response to the question. For example:
  - *Black Americans left the South to escape violence and unfair laws and went North, where there was more economic opportunity.*
- Display the [Using Evidence organizer](#) and write the sample response in the "Claim" section.

- Share with students that they will read the text a second time, looking for text evidence that supports their response.
- Begin a second read-aloud, stopping to think aloud and demonstrating how to select text evidence and explain how it supports the responses. Jot the evidence and explanation in the organizer:
  - Life in the South
    - Text Evidence: *"In the late 1800s, many Southern states enacted laws—known as "Jim Crow" laws—that severely limited the rights of Black Americans."*
    - Explanation: *The Jim Crow laws in the South made life difficult for Black Americans. There was racial segregation in public places, the right to vote was denied, and political and economic power for Black Americans was very limited.*
  - Life as a Sharecropper
    - Text Evidence: *"...many had few choices but to continue working for their former enslavers as sharecroppers."*
    - Explanation: *Black Americans were given no economic support after slavery ended. Because of this, many ended up stuck in the sharecropping system, which was designed to keep them working for almost no profit and stuck in a cycle of poverty.*
  - The Appeal of the North
    - Text Evidence: *"Reports of job opportunities, higher wages, and better living conditions in the North spread among Black Americans living in the rural South. At that time, farm workers in the South made about 75 cents a day. Factory workers in the North made as much as four dollars a day!"*
    - Explanation: *Laws limiting immigration, and World War I, meant fewer people were immigrating to the U.S. and there were more factory jobs available. Black Americans could make four times the amount of money they were making as sharecroppers in the South.*
  - Pushed to Migrate
    - Text Evidence: *"When Black Southerners asserted their rights and fought against unjust laws and policies, many white Southerners responded with violence and even terrorism. Black Southerners feared for their safety, and even their lives."*
    - Explanation: *Trying to work for a better life in the South was actually dangerous for Black Americans. White Southerners tried to keep them down using violence and even murder. Leaving for the North was a way for Black Americans to keep themselves and their families alive and safe.*
- Release students to use the organizer to practice making a claim and finding and explaining evidence to support it using the second article in the lesson.
- When students have completed the organizer, ask them to share their claims and evidence about life in the North.
- Emphasize that using and explaining text evidence to support their claim ensures that their argument is clear and logical.

## Mini-Lesson II

### Using Primary Sources as Text Evidence (30 minutes)

**Background:** Historians are often tasked with reviewing original documents to make claims or to support theories or arguments. Similarly, in social studies lessons, students are asked to consider primary sources, such as legal documents, photographs, maps, or speeches, in order to understand a topic. While these can be valuable sources of information, there are a number of factors that students need to consider when evaluating this evidence, including what the source is saying, the context in which it was created, and the perspective or possible bias of the creator. The following teaching suggestions are based on primary sources included in the *Expedition: Learn!* lesson “Child Labor and Labor Reform.” Note that this mini-lesson works best after students have gained some background knowledge about the topic, so it is recommended that students read the texts beforehand.

- Share with students that historians often read and analyze primary sources in order to get a better understanding of a historical era, event, or person. Invite students to turn and talk, sharing what they know about primary sources.
- Invite students to share, recording their responses. For example:
  - *first-hand account of an event or topic; created by people that were there at the time; speeches; artwork; photos; historical maps; diaries/journals*
- Emphasize that primary sources are works that were created by people who experienced the event or era and reflect their ideas, thoughts, and feelings about the topic or event.
- Share that when we evaluate primary sources as text evidence, we must answer several questions to make sure we consider the person who created it and the context in which it was created.
- Display the [Analyzing Primary Sources organizer](#) and review each area that students will assess.
- Display the photo “Children Working in a Cotton Mill” on Page 3-Build, and invite students to take a minute to silently view.
- Model and think-aloud using the organizer to assess the photo. For example:
  - Content: What do you see? What is the main idea?
    - *I see a black-and-white picture of two barefoot kids standing on some kind of big machine. They are wearing white shirts, hats, and pants. One kid has his pants rolled up at the knees. The machine looks like it has strings coming out of it. I think the main idea is that kids were doing jobs that they were too young and small to do, so they had to climb up onto the machines.*
  - Citation: When was this created? Who created it?
    - *I don't know who created this or when it's from, but the photo says Library of Congress underneath it. The lesson is about the late 1800s and early 1900s, so I'm going to guess that the photo is from that time.*
  - Context: What was going on in the world, the country, or the region when this was created?
    - *Based on the title of the photo and the lesson, I think that at this time in history, kids were working in factories.*
  - Connections: What do you already know about this topic?
    - *I know that child labor was used in the United States a lot in the late 1800s and early 1900s, before laws were passed making it illegal.*
  - Communication: What is the perspective of the creator? Who is the intended audience?
    - *We don't know who the intended audience is. The perspective shows young boys standing on top of a machine, so I think the creator's perspective might be that these children are too young and small for this job.*
  - Conclusions: How does this contribute to our understanding of the topic?
    - *This picture helps us see what child labor looks like in action. The kids seem very young and look like they are doing something that is probably dangerous for them.*



- Explain to students that this kind of thinking work can then help them if they want to use a primary source to support a claim or idea.
- Invite students to turn and talk with a partner, discussing how they could use this photo to support the claim that child labor put children in danger.
- Ask a few student pairs to share out and record their thinking on the board. For example:
  - *Some children worked in factories where they had to climb onto machines to use them. One photo from the Library of Congress shows two boys with no shoes standing on top of a machine in a cotton mill. If they were to fall, or if their feet were to get caught in the machine, they could get seriously injured or even killed.*
- As time allows, invite students to view the photo “Children on Strike” in the first image carousel on Page 4-Build. Ask them to complete the steps on the Analyzing Primary Sources organizer. Then ask students to use the source to support the claim that child labor endangered children.

## Check for Understanding

### If you observe ...

### Then try ...

#### **students having difficulty locating text evidence**

asking a specific question and then reading the paragraph that contains the answer. Model thinking about the question and then re-reading the paragraph to find the evidence that answers the question.

#### **students struggling to explain text evidence**




inviting students to choose a high-interest topic that they know a lot about. Ask them to write a claim about the topic and provide evidence to support their claim. Invite students to share their claim and evidence with you and prompt them to respond to the following question after each piece of evidence:

- Why does it matter?

For example, a student who claims that Steph Curry is the greatest basketball player of all time might provide the evidence that he holds the NBA record for most three-point shots made. When asked why that matters, the students could state that this means he has scored a lot of points for his teams, which contributes to those teams winning games.



## Using Evidence

Claim:	
 Claim	
 Text Evidence	 Explanation



## Analyzing Primary Sources

### Content

*What do you see?  
What is the main idea?*

### Citation

*When was this created?  
Who created it?*

### Context

*What was going on in the  
world, the country, or the  
region when this was  
created?*

### Connections

*What do you already  
know about this topic?*

### Communication

*What is the perspective  
of the creator?  
Who is the intended  
audience?*

### Conclusions

*How does this contribute  
to our understanding of  
the topic?*