

See how easy it is to hit the ground running with this free unit from **Short, Short, BIG!**

This is Grab-and-Go Teaching! (*We know you're busy.*)



In this unit, your students will learn how to:

- Distinguish the key difference between a claim and a statement
- Comprehend the important distinction between facts and opinions
- Use an SQ3R strategy to do a close reading of a short, non-fiction text
- Learn from model text how to transfer their reading comprehension skills to strong evidence-based writing
- Take the first step towards gaining the academic confidence they need that will have them believing they can become competent, strong readers and writers (for the rest of their life!)

What you get: This unit includes 4 ready-to-teach classroom lessons. The step-by-step lesson plans we provide you each have their own academic objective.

Educator's Note: Being able to compose a strong, well-written, grammatically correct claim is the foundation for all evidence-based writing. We want to make sure your students get this right.

Lesson 1

Academic Objective: To assess how well students are able to make one single, rock-solid claim without yet requiring evidence to support their assertion.

Lesson 2

Academic Objective: To make sure students understand:
1. What a claim actually is
2. That the nature of a claim is that it is debatable.
3. How claims differ from statements

Lesson 3

Academic Objective: To make sure students understand the significant difference between claims and statements so that once they start composing complete **short writes**, they will know how to start their compositions off on the proper foot.

Lesson 4

Academic Objective: To reinforce the difference between a claim and a statement. Students will examine a slightly longer text and identify those points that are undisputed facts, and those points that are the author's claims or opinions.

With **Short, Short, BIG!** you can shift the focus from loss to growth and discover how easy it is to effectively teach evidence-based reading and writing.

How Well Do Students Make Claims?



ESTIMATED TIME:
10-15 MINUTES



OBJECTIVE:

To assess how well students are able to make one single, rock-solid claim without yet requiring evidence to support their assertion.

- 1 — **Engage:** Let students know we're about to have a classroom discussion about a few topics relevant to their lives that don't really have any "right" answers. What's coming up are simple opinion questions... and everyone's opinion will count.
- 2 — **Model:** Inform students that some of these questions will be fun but we all want to channel our energy onto the page (and not through our mouths). Thus, the process will go like this:
 - *The questions will be posed. For example: What's the worst thing about being a teacher?*
 - *Now this answer makes me want to speak it aloud... but I am going to write it down.*
 - *After everyone has written their answers we'll go around the room and see who thinks what. For example: The worst thing about being a teacher is sometimes I speak with parents who have really bad breath. (or fill in your own blank).*
- 3 — **Read and write:** Have students work in silence for 5-7 minutes penning one sentence replies to the questions given on page 16.



REMEMBER:

Do not coach, guide or instruct prior to this assignment. Simply allow students to "do as they may" for the purpose of seeing where students' skill sets are when it comes to making claims. We'll start working to improve their claim-making abilities in the lesson plans that follow.

- 4 — **Review and share:** Have students share their responses in the group format of your choice. During the sharing period, remember that your guiding question throughout the classroom conversation

**TIPS FROM THE CLASSROOM:**

Validate your students. Be mindful that kids with bigger personalities and louder voices can sometimes dominate lively classroom discussions. Your aim is to create an emotionally safe space whereby all your students can share their ideas without fear of ridicule from their peers or making mistakes.

5 What to look for: Students will often paraphrase what they wrote and ad-lib their answers to the questions when you move to the whole class discussion. Make sure you consistently ask students to “read exactly what they have written”. This will put students in the space of wanting to have better framed their answers on the written page and will also allow you to more expeditiously move through hearing multiple student replies. In no uncertain terms you are setting the standard up that it’s what they write which will ultimately count.

Next steps: Move directly to **What is a Claim?**

Something to DO

**CLAIM IT!**

Please answer each of the following 5 questions.

Question 1: How old should a kid be before they get their first cell phone?

Question 2: What is the most disgusting, worst-tasting vegetable to eat?

Question 3: What is the smartest animal in nature?

Question 4: What is the most appropriate bedtime for someone your age on school nights?

Question 5: What popular athlete or movie star would probably make a good President of the United States?

Introducing Claims



ESTIMATED TIME:
10-15 MINUTES



OBJECTIVE:

To make sure students understand:

1. What a claim actually is
2. That the nature of a claim is that it is debatable.
3. How claims differ from statements

1 Engage: Explain to students how we live in a world of claims. From teachers (“Vegetable is an important word to know how to spell.”) to students (“Vegetables are not nearly as tasty as cookies.”) to parents (“Eating vegetables is good for you.”) Few if any of us make it through a full day without being exposed to claim after claim after claim. We make them in our own personal lives all the time.

2 Model: Exemplify for students how making claims is something they are already doing every day.

- “That new song is incredible!”
- “My mom’s car needs a wash.”
- “My neighbor’s new puppy is so, so cute.”



BRING YOUR CLASSROOM TO LIFE!

Look around your room and make a {spontaneous} claim in order to show how claims are everywhere in our lives:

- *That file cabinet would look better if pretty yellow flowers were painted on it.*
- *The whiteboard at the front of the room needs to be bigger.*
- *The school should install a water fountain in every classroom.*

3 Read: Do a whole class reading of **What is a Claim?** on page 22. For various whole class reading strategies to incorporate, please see page 12.

4 Review and discuss: Interrupt and interject during the whole class reading to check for comprehension. For example, you might ask:

- *If I say, “A chair is a piece of furniture on which people sit,” is that a claim or a statement?*
- *If I say, “The chairs in this classroom are comfortable pieces of furniture,” is that a claim or a statement?*

Ask students to make a few claims about objects inside your room.

5 What to look for: Informally assess if students can (1) make a claim and (2) distinguish between a claim and a statement.

Next steps: Anchor student learning by having them do the activity on page 10.



Something to LEARN

WHAT IS A CLAIM?

CLAIM IT! → Says what you know

A claim is when someone says, “this is true”—it’s when a person puts forth an idea that something is an actual fact.

Claims vs. Statements

But hold on, because a claim is NOT a statement of fact; a claim is when someone says that something is a fact—and there is a HUGE difference between the two.

THIS IS A CLAIM	This is NOT a claim
Pepperoni pizza is delicious.	Pepperoni pizza is a type of food.
The author of the story probably spent a lot of time around young kids.	The author wrote a story about young kids.
Checkers is a fun and easy board game.	Checkers is a board game.

Claims put forth a statement that can be argued and debated!

- Saying, “Football is better than baseball,” is a claim.
- Saying, “Football is a sport,” is NOT a claim. (It’s a simple statement that can’t be debated.)

THIS IS A CLAIM	This is NOT a claim
Sneakers are more comfortable than boots.	Sneakers are worn by people on their feet.
The waitress cares about her customers.	The waitress serves her customers food.
Motorcycles were a terrible invention.	Motorcycles are a form of transportation.

Remember, not every statement is a claim.

Identifying Claims (and Differentiating them from Statements)



ESTIMATED TIME:
5-10 MINUTES



OBJECTIVE:

To make sure students understand the significant difference between claims and statements so that once they start composing complete short writes, they will know how to start their compositions off on the proper foot.

1 Engage: Have students open their worktexts to page 11 and let them know that based on the prior class discussion, you have a lot of confidence in their ability to do well.

2 Model: Do the first question as a THINK-ALoud for the whole class.

Step 1 - Read the question aloud.

Vegetarians don't eat meat.

Step 2 - Be explicit about your thought process. For example, say : *Since I am not really being given an opinion on something and the idea is not debatable because there is no such thing as a vegetarian who does eat meat, this is a statement of fact. Thus, I have my answer.*

3 Read and write: Have students answer the rest of the questions.



Watch out for sneaky questions: Some students mistake claims for statements because the expressed opinions are almost universally accepted. That doesn't mean they are facts. For example:

- Questions 5: Many people find Nikes comfortable but some people do not. Thus, it's a claim and not a statement.
- Question 8: Many people believe that spending too much time on a computer can make you tired but some people believe that spending too much time on a computer can make you extra excitable and sleepless. Thus, it's a claim and not a statement.

4 Review and share: Go over answers as a class.

5 What to look for: This is an important concept so make sure your students understand the distinction between claims and statements. We're about to scaffold upward. Before you know it, our young writers will compose rock-solid claims of their own.

Next steps: This is an opportunity to use praise to build confidence. When you instill the belief that students can be successful, they start to believe it. They need to believe it before they can achieve it.

Something to DO



IDENTIFYING CLAIMS

Determine whether each sentence below is a Claim or a Statement.

1. Vegetarians don't eat meat.
Claim _____ *Statement* _____
2. Movies are more entertaining than YouTube videos.
Claim _____ *Statement* _____
3. Beach vacations are more fun for kids than mountain vacations.
Claim _____ *Statement* _____
4. The school principal is in charge of the campus.
Claim _____ *Statement* _____
5. Nike makes comfortable running shoes.
Claim _____ *Statement* _____
6. Dogs are better pets than cats.
Claim _____ *Statement* _____
7. Dogs and cats are both pets.
Claim _____ *Statement* _____
8. Spending too much time on a computer can make you tired.
Claim _____ *Statement* _____
9. Cereal is the best breakfast to eat if you want to start your day right.
Claim _____ *Statement* _____
10. Goldfish live in water.
Claim _____ *Statement* _____



Something to DO

TIPS

Is it a statement or a claim? Here are some tips!

STATEMENTS

A STATEMENT is sentence that states a FACT.

A STATEMENT can be proven true.

You can't argue about a STATEMENT. (Well, you can but why would you want to?)

CLAIMS

A CLAIM is a sentence that states an OPINION.

A CLAIM describes what the writers thinks or feels.

People disagree with CLAIMS all the time.

Tip: If the sentence includes these phrases, it's probably a CLAIM:

I believe...

I think...

In my opinion...

Someone should...

The best thing...

The worst thing...

I prefer...

...is better than...

Fact or Opinion, Statement or Claim?

READING COMPREHENSION LESSON
by Dr. Katie



ESTIMATED TIME:
15-20 MINUTES



Discerning the difference between a statement and a claim requires students to closely examine subtleties and inferences. Using a two-column graphic organizer helps students visually sort facts from opinions as they make their way through a text.



OBJECTIVE:

To reinforce the difference between a claim and a statement. Students will examine a slightly longer text and identify those points that are undisputed facts, and those points that are the author's claims or opinions.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

"Evidence based writing is at the heart of critical thinking. When students have an understanding of the components of an argument and are able to closely examine texts and identify evidence, they are engaging in that deep critical thinking."

Hillocks, G. (2010). "EJ" in Focus: Teaching Argument for Critical Thinking and Writing: An Introduction. *The English Journal*, 99(6), 24-32.

Hillocks, G. (2011). *Teaching argument writing, grades 6-12*. Portsmouth, NH: Heineman.

1 Engage: Have students open their worktexts to page XX. Let them know that, based on the **Identifying Claims** activities, you believe they are ready to apply their skill to an actual text.

2 Model: Display the following text and a blank **Statements or Claims Graphic Organizer**. Read the text aloud. Then demonstrate how you "extract" sentences from the text and sort them into the correct categories.



If you want to live, never drive a motorcycle. In the event of a crash, a motorcycle offers far less protection than a car. Over 89% of high-speed motorcycle accidents end in death when only 54% of high-speed automobile accidents end in death. Also, car drivers hate motorcycles. Sometimes I think they don't even care if they crash.

Statements & Facts:

- In the event of a crash, a motorcycle offers far less protection than a car.
- Over 89% of high speed motorcycle accidents end in death when only 54% of high speed automobile accidents end in death.

Claims & Opinions

- If you want to live, never drive a motorcycle.
- Also, car drivers hate motorcycles.
- Sometimes I think they don't even care if they crash.

3 Read and Respond: Proceed to the activity on page 11 of the worktext. Instruct students to read the text, then complete the **Statements or Claims Graphic Organizer**.



Consider providing sentence strips of GRIZZLIES: THE COOLEST BEARS. (What is a sentence strip? It's when each sentence of a text is provided on a separate strip of paper for easy manipulation. To create strips, write or type out each sentence from the text on a separate line. Give a photocopy of this sheet to each student. They can cut the strips themselves.) Using sentence strips encourages students to re-think their decisions. Sometimes students are reluctant to change an answer because they already invested time in writing it down.

Next steps: It's time for students to start making their own claims. When this graphic organizer activity is complete, move on to the **Make 5 Claims** activity.

Something to READ

**GRIZZLIES: THE COOLEST BEARS**

In my opinion, grizzly bears are the coolest animal. They are large. An adult male can weigh 1,000 pounds. Their front claws can be over 4-inches long. Their color ranges from light brown to dark brown. Many have white tips on their fur. This “grizzled” look gives them their name.

The grizzly bear leads a solitary life. Except for mothers and their cubs, they usually live by themselves. This is probably very lonely for the bear.

We should all work to make sure grizzly bears can live safely with humans. They used to live all over the western United States. Then hunters killed a lot of them. Now they are protected under the Endangered Species Act.





Something to DO

STATEMENTS OR CLAIMS GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Read the article **GRIZZLIES: THE COOLEST BEARS**.

- Look at each sentence. Is it a statement or a claim?
- Copy 2 statement sentences into the Statements column.
- Copy 2 claim sentences into the Claims column

STATEMENTS

A **Statement** is a **Fact** that can be proven true.

Tip: You cannot change a fact. You cannot argue about a fact.

Identify 2 Statement sentences from the Grizzlies article

1.

2.

CLAIMS

A **Claim** or **Opinion** describes how someone thinks or feels.

Tip: Look for sentences about feelings or beliefs. Cue phrases include:

I believe... or, I think...

In my opinion...

Someone should....

The best thing... or, The worst thing...

I prefer....

.... is better than

Identify 2 Claim sentences from the Grizzlies article

1.

2.



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