

REVISING INVESTIGATION WRITING—CLAIM AND FOCUS

Purpose

In this Investigation writing lesson, students circle back around to the first row of the BHP Writing Rubric, Claim and Focus, to move beyond simply identifying elements of a well-crafted argument, to analyzing and writing one. In this activity, each student will revise another student's writing as a way to understand not just what a good claim is, but how to actually generate one. This gradual release of scaffolding and additional skill building will help students steadily improve their writing throughout the course.

Practices

Reading

Students should engage in close reading to identify the major claim in the essay they're reading.

Process

Let students know that in this activity, they're going to look again at a piece of student writing and evaluate its quality. This time, they'll return to the Claim and Focus row of the BHP Writing Rubric and again zero in on the major claim or thesis being presented in the essay. However, let students know that this time they aren't getting an exemplar essay; instead, they're getting one that needs some improvement, and it's going to be their job to make it better.

Ask students to review what makes an exceptional major claim or thesis. Make sure to cover the following points. A strong major claim or thesis:

- Makes a clear, well-articulated, and compelling thesis/major claim.
- Stakes out a position and directly addresses the essay question.
- Is introduced early in the essay to help structure the argument.

Now, have students read the essay included with this worksheet and let them know that although this writer received reasonable marks for Analysis and Evidence, Organization, Language and Style, and Applying BHP Concepts, the writer did not fare as well with Claim and Focus. In particular, the major claim or thesis is not clear in the writing.

As they read through the essay, ask students to underline statements or phrases that might qualify as candidates for a major claim or thesis, or that might support a major claim or thesis. Once they've identified those statements or phrases, tell them their job is to write a better thesis statement or major claim for the essay.

Once students have completed this task, have them share their new thesis statements with the class. Students will likely come up with a variety of different statements, so be sure to point out that the highest quality statements are those that manage to capture the main ideas being put forth in the essay.

Now that they're done with this Investigation writing activity, it's time for Investigation 4. Let your students know that now that they've practiced twice, they should all aim to meet the Advanced criteria for Claim and Focus!

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Directions: First, read the text below, thinking about the first row of BHP Writing Rubric, Claim and Focus. After you've read it over, mark up the passage as follows:

1. Underline any sentences that you think capture the main ideas being argued in the essay.
2. Write a new thesis statement for this essay, making sure it captures the main ideas.

Thesis Statement: *New developments in scientific understanding over time, as part of collective learning, have made it possible for new ideas and viewpoints to emerge.*

Note: This essay was in response to the Unit 3 Investigation question, "How can looking at the same information from different perspectives pave the way for progress?" There were seven sources included in the Investigation Library.

How can looking at the same information in different perspective pave the way for progress? In what roles do new complexities, collective learning, and outlooks impact the world today? It all began with supernovas from celestial bodies otherwise known as "stars".

With the correct ingredients and conditions, such as unimaginable temperatures and amount of pressure along with aging and dying stars composed of hydrogen and helium, a new complexity was made. Supernovae from these stars created elements, all 92 having their own distinct properties. With new elements, such as iron, magnesium, oxygen and silicon the Earth was formed. By the time homo sapiens (humans) evolved, multitudes of complexities were created, leading up to humans being able to pass information from generation to generation. Until 384-322 BCE, Aristotle, a Greek philosopher studied the natural world and tried to understand the world around him. Due to the historical context, there were no possible ways for Aristotle to know no more elements than the one's he thought were the most basic in the world. "According to Aristotle the basis of the material world was in 'four elements' fire, air, water and earth" (Holmyard 1957). During this time, the Greek philosopher's standpoint was accepted for two millennium.

Because of humans being able to collectively learn, Aristotle's idea was challenged by a man named Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794). He "made man contributions to collective learning with experiments he conducted" (Text 02 Scerri 2006) Lavoisier broke substances down further, calling them elements, creating Chemistry. As an example, Aristotle first deemed that water was one basic element, but Lavoisier broke it down into hydrogen and oxygen. Because Lavoisier was critical of the Greek scheme, the definition of an element was completely altered because of a different viewpoint that allowed progression. "Though he did not invent the periodic table, he identified 33 simple elements" (Text 03 Elements of Chemistry 1795) Lavoisier's list of elements, though not completely used, inspired other scientists to further change and sort the elements, showing collective learning. Until 1860, due to collective learning, humans were able to find thirty more elements. (Text 04 Timeline of Discovery of Elements) Different viewpoints were enabled at different times due to discoveries of tools that helped aid the discovery of more elements, the tools we have today allow more complicated investigation, rather than the lack of tools needed in Aristotle's time. Chemists discovered and organized more elements since it was born, but element organization was always subject to change.

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Over time, humans become more intellectual, allowing challenges to false claims and more information to back claims up to be absorbed. Since Lavoisier’s time, view points changed dramatically, as a majority of elements were not legitimate elements, allowing progression up to an important date in the lifetime of Chemistry. In 1871, a Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev “was the only one to leave gaps for the discovery of new elements” (Text 05 The Periodic Table) Mendeleev knew elements were subject to change after a timespan, but the importance of his periodic table layout is important to Chemists after two thousand years. “He (Mendeleev) would guess at the hypothetical element’s atomic mass, number and other properties” (Text 06 Importance of the Periodic Table). Only time allowed his predicted elements to be discovered and deemed accurate. His notes allowed his layout to be accepted. As elements were discovered, they impacted humans and the world around them, allowing humans to understand what other organisms in their environment including themselves were made up of.

Ever since a predominant change of standpoint from 1789, it allowed more viewpoints to be made. With the discovery of elements, humans were able to study the composition of astronomical figures, the earth, and many more matter. The discovery of elements changed lives, positively and negatively. With humans being more advanced than any other species due to the evolution of their brains, language and interconnection, they were able to learn about themselves and their environment allowing collective learning over many generations. Different time periods allowed more improvement. Just by discovering Gadolinium through generations of chemists, it allowed magnetic resonance imaging. (Kean, 2011). Since the use of gadolinium was discovered, it allowed many lives to be changed because of how well gadolinium works for MRI’s, allowing more collective learning to be done and more change to be upheld.

Comments from Turnitin: This essay received a score of “Developing” for Claim and Focus; a score of “Proficient” for Analysis and Evidence; a score of “Proficient” for Organization; a score of “Proficient” for Language and Style; and a score of “Proficient” for Applying BHP Concepts.

Keep varying your sentence structure and word choice. Try to include complex and compound sentences alongside simple, shorter sentence structures and work in vivid verbs. The organization of this section doesn’t feel as well-executed as others. Consider restructuring this section to show a logical progression of ideas and more effectively support your argument. Be sure to balance each quote from the text with a thorough analysis of how it supports your claim. Make sure you develop a strong focus on your claim and that this claim is supported with analysis and evidence throughout the essay. Be sure to include a counterclaim and to appropriately disprove each point in the counterclaim.



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Practices

Reading

You should engage in close reading to identify the major claim in the essay you're reading.

Process

In this activity, you're going to look again at a piece of student writing and evaluate its quality. This time, you'll return to the Claim and Focus row of the BHP Writing Rubric and again zero in on the major claim or thesis being presented in the essay. However, it's trickier this time—you aren't getting a high-quality essay; instead, you're getting one that needs some improvement. It's your job to make the essay better.

Look at the Revising Investigation Writing—Claim and Focus Worksheet. Review what makes an exceptional major claim or thesis with your class. Now, read the essay that's included with the worksheet. The writer of that essay received reasonable marks for Analysis and Evidence, Organization, Language and Style, and Applying BHP Concepts; however, the writer did not fare as well with Claim and Focus. In particular, the major claim or thesis is not clear in the writing.

As you read through the essay, underline statements or phrases that seem like they might qualify as candidates for a major claim or thesis, or might support a major claim or thesis. Once you've done that and perhaps have an idea of what the writer is trying to convey, help make that essay better by writing a better thesis statement or major claim for the essay.

Once you're done, share your revised thesis statement with the class. Your classmates will likely come up with a variety of thesis statements. Just remember that the highest quality statements are those that manage to capture the main ideas being put forth in the essay.

Now that you're done improving the essay, it's time for Investigation 4. You've had a chance to practice twice, so there's no reason you shouldn't aim to meet the Advanced criteria for Claim and Focus!

REVISING INVESTIGATION WRITING—CLAIM AND FOCUS

Name:

Date:

Directions: First, read the text below, thinking about the first row from the BHP Writing Rubric, Claim and Focus. After you've read it over, mark up the passage as follows:

1. Underline any sentences that you think capture the main ideas being argued in the essay.
2. Write a new thesis statement for this essay, making sure it captures the main ideas.

The essay's thesis statement is:

Note: This essay was in response to the Unit 3 Investigation question, "How can looking at the same information from different perspectives pave the way for progress?" There were seven sources included in the Investigation Library.

How can looking at the same information in different perspective pave the way for progress? In what roles do new complexities, collective learning, and outlooks impact the world today? It all began with supernovas from celestial bodies otherwise known as "stars".

With the correct ingredients and conditions, such as unimaginable temperatures and amount of pressure along with aging and dying stars composed of hydrogen and helium, a new complexity was made. Supernovae from these stars created elements, all 92 having their own distinct properties. With new elements, such as iron, magnesium, oxygen and silicon the Earth was formed. By the time homo sapiens (humans) evolved, multitudes of complexities were created, leading up to humans being able to pass information from generation to generation. Until 384-322 BCE, Aristotle, a Greek philosopher studied the natural world and tried to understand the world around him. Due to the historical context, there were no possible ways for Aristotle to know no more elements than the one's he thought were the most basic in the world. "According to Aristotle the basis of the material world was in 'four elements' fire, air, water and earth" (Holmyard 1957). During this time, the Greek philosopher's standpoint was accepted for two millennium.



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Over time, humans become more intellectual, allowing challenges to false claims and more information to back claims up to be absorbed. Since Lavoisier’s time, view points changed dramatically, as a majority of elements were not legitimate elements, allowing progression up to an important date in the lifetime of Chemistry. In 1871, a Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev “was the only one to leave gaps for the discovery of new elements” (Text 05 The Periodic Table) Mendeleev knew elements were subject to change after a timespan, but the importance of his periodic table layout is important to Chemists after two thousand years. “He (Mendeleev) would guess at the hypothetical element’s atomic mass, number and other properties” (Text 06 Importance of the Periodic Table). Only time allowed his predicted elements to be discovered and deemed accurate. His notes allowed his layout to be accepted. As elements were discovered, they impacted humans and the world around them, allowing humans to understand what other organisms in their environment including themselves were made up of.

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WRITING RUBRIC

| | Advanced | Proficient | Developing | Emerging |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| Claim and Focus* Make a clear claim about the topic early in the essay and focus on proving it. | The essay makes a precise and significant claim based on the topic and/or source(s). The essay maintains a strong focus on defending a directly stated position, using the whole essay to support and develop the claim and counterclaims while thoroughly addressing the demands of the prompt. | The essay makes a clear claim based on the topic and/or source(s). The essay maintains focus on defending an identifiable position, using most of the essay to support and develop the claim and counterclaims while addressing the demands of the prompt. | The essay makes a claim based on the topic and/or source(s), but it may not fully address the demands of the prompt. Counterclaims may not be acknowledged, and the essay may not stay focused on the purpose and task. | The essay makes an overly simplistic or vague claim, or a position on the topic and/or source(s) may not be stated. Counterclaims are not acknowledged, and the essay does not address the purpose, task, or demands of the prompt. |
| Analysis and Evidence Choose the right evidence and explain how it supports the claim and analysis. | The essay cites the most appropriate and valid evidence to support its claim, drawing information substantively from multiple sources to defend its position and effectively refute counterclaims. The essay demonstrates insightful reasoning and careful understanding of the sources, acknowledging inconsistencies or weaknesses in evidence, and fully explains the relationship between claims and support. | The essay cites sufficient and appropriate evidence to support its claim, drawing information from multiple sources to defend its position and refute counterclaims. The essay demonstrates reasoning and understanding of the sources, potentially acknowledging inconsistencies or weaknesses in evidence, and adequately explains the relationship between claims and support. | The essay cites evidence to support its claim, but it may be insufficient or draw unevenly from available sources. Support may be inadequate in defense of the position and refutation of the counterclaim or rely too heavily on summary. The essay demonstrates some reasoning and/or understanding of the sources, though explanations of the relationship between claims and support are not always clear. | The essay cites minimal or irrelevant evidence to support its claim. Support may rely primarily on opinion, reasoning, or summary of the source(s) without clear cited evidence. The essay demonstrates little to no reasoning and/or understanding of the sources. An explanation of the relationship between claims and support is not present. |
| Organization Present ideas in a structure that enhances the analysis. Use transitions throughout the essay to make connections clear. | The essay incorporates precise transitions within a sophisticated organizational structure that enhances the relationships between and among ideas and promotes cohesion and clarity. A well-executed, logical progression of ideas is clearly constructed, including an effective introduction and a conclusion which follows from and supports the claim and analysis. | The essay employs an organizational structure that shows the relationships between and among ideas, yielding a cohesive analysis. Clear transitions support a logical progression of ideas, including an effective introduction and a conclusion which follows from and supports the claim and analysis. | The essay uses a simplistic organizational structure, though relationships between ideas may not be consistently clear. Use of transitions is sparse, repetitive, and/or does not show the connections among sections of the text. A progression of ideas is evident, however, the introduction and/or conclusion may not be fully developed or follow from and support the claim and/or analysis. | An organizational structure is not evident, and relationships between ideas are not consistently clear. The essay may read as a series of unrelated ideas, as the absence of transitions makes it difficult to see connections among sections of the text. An introduction and/or conclusion is missing from the essay. |



WRITING RUBRIC

| | Advanced | Proficient | Developing | Emerging |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Language and Style</p> <p>Use specific, interesting language and clear sentence structure to communicate ideas.</p> | <p>The essay has an established, formal style and objective tone that is maintained throughout. The essay uses varied sentence structure, precise language, and domain-specific vocabulary in a way that addresses the complexity of the topic. Few errors are present, and they do not interfere with meaning.</p> | <p>The essay has an established, formal style that is maintained throughout. The essay uses mostly correct, varied sentence structure and generally uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary in a way that generally addresses the complexity of the topic. The essay may have some errors, but they do not interfere with meaning.</p> | <p>The essay attempts to establish a formal style that may not be maintained throughout. The essay attempts to vary sentence structure and uses some precise language that may be domain-specific at times but may address the complexity of the topic inconsistently. The essay contains some errors that may interfere with meaning.</p> | <p>The essay does not establish and/or maintain a formal style. The essay uses little variety in sentence structure, and the language is general and not domain-specific. The essay contains errors that interfere with meaning.</p> |
| <p>Applying BHP Concepts†</p> <p>Choose and accurately apply the relevant BHP concepts in a way that shows understanding, and further supports the argument and evidence presented in the essay.</p> | <p>The essay effectively applies at least one BHP course-level concept and/or unit-level concept or content. The concept(s) or content are connected to the argument or evidence in the essay, and misconceptions are avoided. There are no errors in applying BHP concepts or content, and the essay draws on both knowledge within the Investigation and the unit as well as knowledge beyond or outside the Investigation or unit. The essay demonstrates a clear understanding of the topic, the concepts, and the time period discussed in the essay. The essay makes use of broader historical or scientific knowledge than is located in the course.</p> | <p>The essay applies one BHP course-level concept and/or unit-level concept or content. The concept or content is connected to the argument or evidence in the essay, and misconceptions are avoided. There are no errors in applying BHP concept or content to illustrate or support concepts and claims, or to inform the essay. The essay draws on both knowledge within the Investigation and the unit as well as knowledge beyond or outside the Investigation or unit. The essay might draw on broader historical or scientific knowledge than is located in the course to make claims, but might contain some inaccuracies.</p> | <p>The essay tries to apply at least one BHP course-level or unit-level concept or content, but does not fully articulate the concept's meaning or connection to the argument. It does avoid explicit misconceptions of the concept and may make an occasional minor error in applying BHP facts or concepts (that is, ones not found in the Investigation library) to illustrate or support concepts and claims, or to inform the essay. The essay does not draw on broader historical or scientific knowledge than is contained in the course.</p> | <p>The essay incorrectly or inappropriately mentions at least one BHP course-level concept and/or unit-level concept or content, and it may include misconceptions of that concept. The essay may make many minor errors or a major error in applying new BHP facts or concepts (that is, ones not found in the Investigation library). The student fails to use historical content in any meaningful way, and instead simply lists factors or describes elements of the topic.</p> |

*Turnitin, LLC, created the first four rows of this rubric for use with their Revision Assistant and Turnitin tools.

†The “Applying BHP Concepts” row of the rubric should be used by teachers and students to assess student learning and understanding in this area. *Teachers should not assess student writing using Turnitin reports exclusively.*



WRITING RUBRIC

Name:

Date:

| | Advanced (4) | Proficient (3) | Developing (2) | Emerging (1) | Score |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|-------|
| Claim and Focus | | | | | |
| Analysis and Evidence | | | | | |
| Organization | | | | | |
| Language and Style | | | | | |
| Applying BHP Concepts | | | | | |

Toal Score

