

Learning Progression: Identifying & Acknowledging Counterclaims

	1 No attempt at acknowledgement.	2 Attempting to acknowledge differing views, but isn't yet a true counterclaim	3 Acknowledges a counterclaim that is real but generic	4 Acknowledges a counterclaim that is valid and specific.	5 Acknowledges a counterclaim that is valid, specific, and insightful.
Looks Like	Writes as if no one could possibly disagree; doesn't register that the claim is contestable at all.	Acknowledges disagreement exists, but the "counterclaim" is a strawman no reasonable person actually holds.	Identifies a real, reasonable counterclaim, but it's vague and untethered to specific reasoning or evidence.	Identifies a specific, real counterclaim, accurately representing the reasoning or evidence an actual opposing thinker would use.	Identifies the strongest possible version of the counterclaim, one that genuinely challenges the writer's own position.
Sounds Like	"Cell phones are distracting, so schools should ban them during the school day."	"Some people might say kids need their phones for no reason at all, but that's obviously ridiculous."	"Some people argue that students should be allowed to keep their phones."	"Parents and administrators often argue students need phones on hand for emergencies, especially during lockdown drills, when immediate communication with family can feel essential."	"The strongest argument for keeping phones isn't emergency access at all – it's that a full ban removes the low-stakes practice students need to build self-regulation before they leave a controlled environment and have to manage their own phone use with no structure at all."

Building Evidence-Based Arguments

Teaching Guide

In Social Studies	"Prohibition failed because there was no way to stop people from making and selling alcohol illegally."	"Some people might think Prohibition was a good idea because they just don't like fun, but that's not a real argument."	"Some historians argue that Prohibition actually had some positive effects."	"Some historians point to a nearly 30% drop in per-capita alcohol consumption during Prohibition's early years as evidence the law had real, measurable public health effects, regardless of enforcement struggles."	"The strongest defense of Prohibition doesn't rest on enforcement or public-health data from the era itself – it's that national alcohol consumption stayed well below pre-Prohibition levels for decades after repeal, suggesting the amendment permanently reshaped American drinking culture."
About Literature	"The boys' quick collapse into violence proves civilization is only a thin veneer over humanity's true nature."	"Someone might argue the boys aren't really violent, they're just playing games – but that's clearly not what's happening."	"Some readers might argue that the boys aren't inherently violent."	"Some critics point to the boys' early insistence on democratic structures – the conch, the signal fire, the votes for chief – as evidence that order, not savagery, is their first instinct."	"The most serious challenge to the 'thin veneer' reading isn't that the boys start out orderly – it's that Simon and Ralph never abandon empathy or reason even once the group fully collapses, suggesting some individuals simply resist that collapse while others don't."