

Learning Progression: Making Claims

	1 There is no claim.	2 A claim is attempted, but it is off-target.	3 The claim is valid but generic.	4 The claim is valid and specific.	5 The claim is valid, specific, and insightful.
Looks Like	States a topic, fact, or summary. Takes no position at all.	Takes a position, but it's actually an unprovable opinion, a restated fact, or too vague/broad to argue.	A real, arguable claim – contestable and provable – but broad or obvious enough that it could apply almost anywhere, with little genuinely at stake.	Narrowed to a specific context, so the claim is precise enough to actually be argued within the space available.	Precise and scoped, and also reveals a non-obvious tension or is qualified in a way that shows awareness of its own limits – durable under scrutiny instead of easy to dismiss.
Sounds Like	"This paper is about school lunch policies." "Lunch is 20 minutes long."	"Lunch is the best part of the day." "School lunch should be better."	"Schools should give students more time for lunch."	"Our middle school should extend lunch from 20 to 35 minutes."	"Extending lunch to 35 minutes would help most students, but only if paired with staggered scheduling – otherwise the cafeteria can't hold everyone at once."

Building Evidence-Based Arguments

Teaching Guide

In Social Studies	"The 18th Amendment banned the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcohol in the United States from 1920 to 1933."	"Prohibition was a huge mistake for America."	"Prohibition failed because it was impossible to enforce."	"Prohibition's failure in cities like Chicago stemmed less from enforcement difficulty and more from the demand it created for organized crime networks."	"Prohibition is often remembered as a failure, but it succeeded in reducing overall alcohol consumption long-term – a success overshadowed by the visible chaos of bootlegging and organized crime it also unleashed."
About Literature	"Lord of the Flies is a novel by William Golding about a group of British boys stranded on an island after a plane crash."	"Lord of the Flies shows that people are bad."	"Golding uses the boys' descent into savagery to argue that civilization is only a thin veneer over humanity's inherent capacity for violence."	"Golding uses Piggy's glasses – repeatedly stolen, broken, and finally destroyed – to trace the boys' progressive abandonment of rational thought in favor of power and fear."	"Though the boys' violence is often read as evidence of innate human savagery, Golding complicates this by showing their cruelty escalates only after they begin mimicking adult structures of power and ritual – suggesting the novel indicts not human nature itself, but the hierarchies children inherit from adults."