

CLAIM TESTING – INTRODUCTION

Preparation

- Print and cut out the Supporting Statement Cards

Purpose

Claim testing is an important analytical process for assessing the quality and veracity (truthfulness) of claims. It helps you “see” and evaluate people’s assertions and gives shape to one of the most important and useful critical thinking practices in history. Since history is all about making assertions, it’s important that you learn the skill of testing claims early and use it frequently as part of evaluating historical accounts and making historical interpretations.

Practices

Reading, writing

Being well-versed in claim testing will help you be a critical consumer of what you read. If you use claim testers to construct essays, your speaking and writing skills will improve.

Process

In this course, and in everyday life, we encounter assertions or claims. At times, we believe we can take these at face value, but more and more, it is important to question and test the claims that we come across. In other words, we need to decide if the claims are true, so we can determine what to believe. In this course, we use what we call claim testers to help us check the soundness and strength of our beliefs. The four claim testers are intuition, authority, logic, and evidence. Before we use the claim testers, we need to understand what they are! Look at the claim testing poster on the wall, and get ready to review each claim tester as a class.

Now, you’ll practice with a claim. You are going to get a bunch of statements that support the claim: “There is one true history.” Your job will be to determine which supporting statements match which claim tester. Before starting, think about the following example with your class:

The school board and the government require that we all take the same social studies classes.

What claim tester do you think is being used here? Discuss your answer with the class.

Now that you’ve practiced as a class, get into groups and sort the cards into the four claim testing categories and tape them to the grid in the areas designated by your teacher. You will be asked to defend your categorizations at the end of the activity, especially for those supporting statements that were hard to place in just one claim tester category.



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Finally, see if you can come up with any statements or counterclaims that might help debunk the claim, “There is one true history.” Do you believe this claim?

Remember that this course encourages us to consider multiple accounts in history. We all have different perspectives, and that is often reflected in how history stories are told. So, while there might be different stories about the same thing, it’s not necessarily because one story is true and another is false—it’s about our perspective. And often, the story that seems more true is just better supported via claim testers—and that is why you’ll be practicing claim testing all the time in this class.