

Analyzing a Speaker's Argument

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 10



Quick Review

To DELINEATE a speaker's argument, a careful listener (1) identifies the speaker's CLAIM, (2) lists the REASONS the speaker gives for the claim, (3) judges whether each reason is supported by EVIDENCE (data, named studies, expert testimony) or just by OPINION, and (4) notices reasons that are MISSING SUPPORT.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Transcript: Lin's speech to the school board

Our school should add a 20-minute silent reading block right after lunch every day. I have three reasons. First, daily reading practice improves student reading levels. According to a 2022 report from the National Center for Education Statistics, sixth graders who read silently in school for at least 15 minutes a day gained an average of half a grade level more in reading than students who did not - a result confirmed across more than 1,200 students.

Second, a quiet block right after lunch helps students settle for the afternoon. Our school nurse, Mrs. Cohen, told me that more than 60% of the visits to her office in the last month happened in the hour right after lunch - the loudest, most active part of the day. A calm reading block could help.

Third, students enjoy choosing what they read, and choice builds motivation. I think kids will love it because reading is just super fun and awesome for absolutely everybody. So the school board should adopt the 20-minute reading block for next year.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Read the speech transcript and answer the items. The speaker is a sixth grader asking the school to add a 20-minute silent-reading block.

1. What is Lin's MAIN CLAIM?
 - A. Reading is fun and awesome for everybody.
 - B. Mrs. Cohen sees a lot of students after lunch.
 - C. Our school should add a 20-minute silent reading block right after lunch every day.
 - D. The school board should buy more books for the library.



2. Which of Lin's reasons is supported by the STRONGEST evidence?
 - A. The first reason - improved reading levels - supported by a 2022 NCES report on 1,200+ students.
 - B. The second reason - calmer afternoons - supported only by Lin's feelings.
 - C. The third reason - choice builds motivation - supported by a named, recent study.
 - D. All three reasons are supported equally well.
3. WHICH of Lin's reasons does the school nurse's 60%-of-visits data DIRECTLY support?
 - A. The first reason: reading improves reading levels.
 - B. The third reason: choice builds motivation.
 - C. The second reason: a calm block right after lunch helps students settle.
 - D. It does not support any of Lin's reasons.
4. WHICH of Lin's reasons has the WEAKEST support, and WHY?
 - A. Reason 1, because 1,200 students is too small a sample.
 - B. Reason 2, because school nurses cannot be trusted to know what happens at their own school.
 - C. Reason 1, because reading research is generally unreliable.
 - D. Reason 3, because Lin offers ONLY an opinion (*reading is just super fun and awesome*) and no real evidence.
5. Which sentence in Lin's speech is OPINION PRESENTED AS EVIDENCE?
 - A. Sixth graders who read silently for at least 15 minutes a day gained half a grade level more in reading.
 - B. Reading is just super fun and awesome for absolutely everybody.
 - C. More than 60% of nurse visits in the last month happened in the hour after lunch.
 - D. A 2022 report from the National Center for Education Statistics tracked more than 1,200 students.
6. What would BEST STRENGTHEN Lin's third reason (choice builds motivation)?
 - A. Citing a study or a teacher survey showing that students who choose their own books read more pages or more days per week.
 - B. Repeating the same claim more loudly.
 - C. Saying it again in three different ways.
 - D. Adding her own personal story about her favorite book.
7. Lin says, *According to a 2022 report from the National Center for Education Statistics...* Why is this MORE CREDIBLE than just saying *experts say*?
 - A. It uses bigger words.
 - B. It is longer.
 - C. It NAMES the year, the source, and what was measured - so a listener could actually look it up and check.
 - D. It mentions sixth graders.



8. Which question would BEST help a listener EVALUATE Lin's FIRST reason?
- A. What color was the cover of the 2022 report?
 - B. Did Lin write the report herself?
 - C. How much did each book in the study cost?
 - D. How much of a difference was the half-grade-level gain across the 1,200 students, and was that gain consistent or did it vary widely by school?
9. Pick ONE of Lin's three reasons and write ONE sentence describing whether its evidence is STRONG, FAIRLY STRONG, or WEAK - and explain WHY in the same sentence.

10. Suggest ONE specific PIECE OF EVIDENCE Lin could ADD to make her speech more convincing. Name the type of evidence and what it would show.



Answer Keys

- 1 A B C D
- 2 A B C D
- 3 A B C D
- 4 A B C D
- 5 A B C D

- 6 A B C D
- 7 A B C D
- 8 A B C D
- 9
- 10

Explanations

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| 1. C | The MAIN CLAIM is the action Lin wants the audience to take. Lin states it at the very start: add a 20-minute silent reading block after lunch. A is part of an unsupported reason. B is evidence for one reason. D is not in the speech at all. |
| 2. A | A names the strongest support: a recent, named, large-sample study from a credible source (NCES). B mischaracterizes reason 2 (it has real school data, not just feelings). C is wrong (reason 3 is supported by opinion only). D is wrong (the supports differ in quality). |
| 3. C | The nurse data is about WHEN students get sent to the office (the hour right after lunch). It directly supports Lin's claim that AFTER LUNCH is the time when calm is most needed. A is unrelated. B is about choice. D ignores the obvious match. |
| 4. D | Reason 3 is missing evidence entirely - it relies on Lin's enthusiasm. D names that failure. A is wrong (1,200 is a strong sample). B is wrong (school nurses are credible for their own school's data). C overgeneralizes about an entire field. |
| 5. B | B is a sweeping opinion - not a fact, not a measurement, not a named study. A, C, and D are factual statements (a study finding, a percentage, a study description). |
| 6. A | A replaces opinion with evidence (a study or survey) - exactly what reason 3 needs. B doesn't add support. C is repetition. D is anecdote, which is weaker than data for an evidence claim. |
| 7. C | C names the real reason: specific, checkable details (year + named source + measured outcome) make a claim verifiable. <i>Experts say</i> is vague and unfollowable. A, B, and D are not credibility markers. |
| 8. D | D zeroes in on the two things that make a study trustworthy: size of effect AND consistency across schools. A is an irrelevant cosmetic detail. B misunderstands the source. C is irrelevant. |
| 9. | <p>Answer: Examples: (1) Reason 1 has STRONG evidence because Lin names a recent (2022), large (1,200+ students), credible source (NCES) and reports a specific finding (half a grade level). (2) Reason 2 has FAIRLY STRONG evidence because Lin uses real, recent school data (60% of nurse visits) from a credible insider (the school nurse), though the data comes from only one school. (3) Reason 3 has WEAK evidence because Lin offers an opinion (<i>reading is just super fun and awesome</i>) instead of any data, study, or survey about choice.</p> <p>Accept any single sentence that (a) names ONE of the three reasons, (b) assigns a clear strength rating, and (c) gives a SPECIFIC reason that fits the actual evidence (study size, source type, opinion vs. data). NOT acceptable: a vague rating with no reason, a rating that contradicts the actual evidence, or an answer that addresses two reasons at once and gives no clear judgment.</p> |



10. **Answer:** Examples: (1) Lin could cite a published study showing that students who choose their own books read more pages per week than students who are assigned books - that would replace her opinion in reason 3. (2) Lin could survey her own school's sixth graders, asking how much they read for fun outside school, to show that choice already drives reading at her school. (3) Lin could ask the school nurse for last year's monthly data, so she could show the after-lunch spike is a long-term pattern, not a one-month fluke. Accept any specific addition that (a) directly supports one of Lin's reasons and (b) names a TYPE of evidence (study, survey, more data, interview, named source). NOT acceptable: *talk louder, use more pictures, add a poem, or any non-evidence improvement.*



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