

ANALYZING INVESTIGATION WRITING – USE OF EVIDENCE

Purpose

In this lesson, you will continue your quest to improve your students' writing by getting down and dirty with the elements of Analysis and Evidence from the BHP Writing Rubric. As they did in the writing activity in lesson 1.3 and in the opening activity of this lesson, students will get more familiar with the criteria on the BHP writing rubric by analyzing a piece of writing in relationship to the rubric. This activity should help them better understand how evidence should be used in their writing. And this time, they'll analyze an awesome piece of student writing. Yep, you read that right, an honest to goodness real Investigation essay from a real BHP student. (You know, as opposed to all the fake BHP students running around out there.)

Practices

Reading, claim testing

Remind students to use the Three Close Reads process when analyzing the student essay from this activity. Additionally, any time students encounter assertions and claims in the course, they should claim test whether those assertions were appropriately supported. Use the language of claim testing in classroom conversation whenever possible. You might even make a game of this by keeping track of how often students can call one another out (and you, too) for making claims without backing them up!

Process

Tell students that this activity is going to be a lot like one they did in Unit 1, when they used the BHP writing rubric to analyze the article "Cosmology and Faith." This time, they'll be paying attention a different section of the BHP Writing Rubric. And instead of an article, they're going to read a piece of student writing and look at how the writer both analyzed and used evidence in their essay.

Ask students to look at the Analysis and Evidence row of the BHP Writing Rubric, which is at the end of this document. Show students that there are three main things they should be doing to effectively use evidence to support the claim in the paper:

1. Sources: They must use the most appropriate texts/evidence from the Investigation library to support their essays, and they should use as many of them as they can as long as the texts actually support the point they are trying to make.
2. Analysis: They must analyze the texts. In other words, they can't just mention the sources, they should show that they understand the sources and the connections between sources if they use more than one (including similarities and differences).
3. Connection to claim/thesis: They must show how their texts/evidence connect to the claims in their writing.

Have students look at the essay (on page 3 of their document) and let them know that the passage included here was written by another BHP student and scored using Turnitin. The essay provided is in response to the Unit 1 Investigation question: Why do we look at things from far away and close up? Note that the Investigation 1 library contains five sources (plus two optional sources). Ask them to read the essay, keeping in mind how the writer used texts as evidence in their writing. After everyone has had a chance to review the essay once, have a class discussion about using texts as evidence, reviewing each of the three criteria mentioned above.

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Sources

Remind students that good historical writing uses texts to support the claims being made by the writer. Point out that it is not enough to just mention a source. A good historian will provide quotes and properly cite the source. For example, it's not sufficient to just write, "Text 4 says...." All quotes should begin with a short phrase that introduces the author and her credentials. For example: "Professor David Christian, the founder of the Big History Course, states that...." By appropriately introducing the source, you are providing authoritative evidence to support your argument. Once you've talked about this as a class, ask students to reread the passage, circling anywhere they find that texts have been used. This should be pretty easy; all they really need to do is identify the citations and quotes and circle them.

Analysis

Once students have found the source material, tell them to go through and underline any text that might be considered an analysis of the sources used. Analysis is a bit trickier to spot in an essay than source material, but students can find it by looking for cues, such as an explanation of a quote used or statements that compare the similarities and differences between texts.

Connection to claim/thesis

Now that students have looked at sources and analysis, they should be able to see where sources are connected to the thesis/major claim in the provided text. Before having them find those places, ask students what the thesis/major claim is in the essay. It should be fairly easy to see that it's the first sentence in the essay, the one that states, "Using different scales and perspectives gives a large advantage for understanding information on a deeper level." Once everyone is clear on the thesis statement, ask them to read through the essay again, highlighting any instances where a source was used, and the writer also connected that source to the thesis of their essay. You might also tip students off to the fact that some sentences in the essay might end up being both underlined and highlighted.

Once everyone is done, review the answers with your students, clarifying where necessary. Remind them that Investigation 2 is up next, and they'll have the opportunity to show what evidence-using rock stars they can be in their own writing.



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Directions: First, read the text below. As you read, think about the second row of the BHP Writing Rubric—Analysis and Evidence. After you’ve read the essay, mark up the passage as follows:

1. **Circle** any source material that is cited in the text.
2. **Underline** anywhere the writer analyzes the source material that was used.
3. **Highlight** (or underline in a new color) any text in which the writer connects the sources used to the thesis/major claim in the writing. Remember that certain sections might be underlined and highlighted or underlined and circled.

Note: This essay was in response to the Unit 1 Investigation question, “Why do we look at things from far away and close up?” There were five sources provided in the Investigation library, plus two additional optional sources.

Using different scales and perspectives gives a large advantage for understanding information on a deeper level. In Big History, viewing our past from different points of view is key for understanding time and space in a more complex way. We are able to look more in depth to obtain a more detailed view, or farther to see more of the big picture and general idea. “They may choose to write about a single decade, or a few hundred years, or even...of the entire period during which humans have been on Earth. The choices they make determine the sort of history they write” and this is the moment where scale comes into play. (David Christian, BHP 2005) We look close up and far away to adapt to our certain situation so that we are able to comprehend to the best of our ability.

To begin, when studying certain dates and individual people, you must use a close up perspective to fully understand. You benefit from a closer point of view since it is more detailed oriented and focuses more on certain points. “Although the precise choice of scale might differ among individuals, no one would display a map of the United States in order to find a restaurant. The necessary details will not be resolvable on a computer screen displaying such an overly large scale.” (Lisa Randall, BHP 2012) Even though people may use a different

scale due to preference in the same task, the scale they pick is chosen because it is rational and helpful for what they are trying to accomplish. If we observed everything in the same way, we would never learn at our maximum potential and understand the world in a more elaborate way.

Another approach at perspectives is to view them from far away. Although using the smaller scale provides us with plentiful details, it sometimes prohibits us from capturing the big picture. “A map that was on the same scale as the real world wouldn’t be much use because, to find out what was a mile away from you on the map, you’d have to walk as far as you would in the real world.” (David Christian, BHP 2005). This is why we use the larger scale. Looking at things from far away helps us better understand their impact on us, and the long history many topics have that would be much too complex to go into every detail over millions of years. “This is a history in which all change is slow, a history of constant repetition and ever recurring cycles.” (Fernand Braudel, BHP 1946) If we went into more detail in an instance such as this one, we would never learn anything else because it is too complex. Learning from far away would be advantageous due to too many parts.

To conclude, perspective is valuable in Big History just as much as it is in general learning. Viewing different topics from either farther away or closer up can greatly increase or decrease the overall understanding. Different perspectives help you interpret and apprehend better. Big History’s effective use of close and far scale.

Comments from Turnitin: This essay received a score of “Advanced” for Analysis and Evidence.

“An effective argument demonstrates insightful reasoning and a clear understanding of the sources. Be sure to balance each example with a thorough analysis of how it supports your claim.”

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Practices

Reading, claim testing

Think about the Three Close Reads process when you analyze the student essay in this activity. Additionally, any time you encounter assertions and claims in the course, be sure to claim test whether those assertions have been appropriately supported. Use the language of claim testing in classroom conversation whenever possible and call out your teacher and fellow classmates when they make claims without supporting them!

Process

This activity is going to be a lot like one you did in Unit 1. This time, you'll focus on a different row of the BHP Writing Rubric. You're going to read a piece of student writing and look at how they used evidence.

Turn to the BHP Writing Rubric (it's at the end of this document) and look at the Analysis and Evidence row. The three main ways you need to use evidence in Investigation writing are:

1. Sources: You must use the texts from the Investigation library to support your essays, and you should use as many as you can as long as the texts actually support the point you're trying to make.
2. Analysis: You must analyze the texts. In other words, show that you understand the sources and, if you use multiple sources, show the connections between them, including similarities and differences.
3. Connection to claim/thesis: Show how your sources connect to the thesis/major claim in your essay.

Now, look at the essay on page 3 of this document, keeping in mind how the writer used texts as evidence in their essay. The essay provided is in response to the Unit 1 Investigation question: Why do we look at things from far away and close up? Note that the Investigation 1 library contains five sources (plus two optional sources). Discuss what you found with your class. Now, work through each section of the worksheet, keeping the following information in mind.

ANALYZING INVESTIGATION WRITING – USE OF EVIDENCE

Sources

Remember, good historical writing uses texts to support the claims being made by the writer. It's not enough to just mention a source. A good historian will provide quotes and properly cite the source. For example, it's not enough to just write, "Text 4 says...." All quotes should begin with a short phrase that introduces the author and her credentials: "Professor David Christian, the founder of the Big History Course, states that...." By appropriately introducing the source, you are providing authoritative evidence to support your argument. Once you've talked about this as a class, reread the essay, circling anywhere you find that source texts have been used.

Analysis

Once you've found the source material, go through the essay and underline any text that might be considered an analysis of the sources used. Analysis is a bit trickier to spot in an essay than source material, but you can find it by looking for cues, such as an explanation of a quote used or statements that compare the similarities and differences between texts.

Connection to claim/thesis

Now that you have looked at sources and analysis, look for text where sources are connected to the thesis/major claim. Before you do this, pick out the thesis of the essay. Once you have that, start highlighting the connections.

Note: Some sentences in the essay might end up being underlined and highlighted or underlined and circled.

Once you've finished highlighting the connections, discuss what you found with your class.

You'll have the opportunity to show off your evidence-using skills in Investigation 2, which is up next.



ANALYZING INVESTIGATION WRITING – USE OF EVIDENCE

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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