

EXPLAINING REASONS AND EVIDENCE



GRADE 4-6

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Classroom Procedure:

1. Introduce the lesson by asking students, "What are facts?" Write the responses on an anchor chart to refer to later. Explain to students that they will learn how to read informational text and examine how accurate the information is.
2. Distribute the *Explaining Reasons and Evidence* Content Pages to students. Read and review with students. Point out the content's key ideas: facts, opinions, evidence, and reason.
3. Distribute the Activity Page. The Activity Page reinforces the difference between opinion and fact. This should be a quick review of those concepts.
4. Distribute the Practice Page. The Practice Page should generate discussion between students. Depending on how the students interpret the statement, there can be more than one right response to some of the statements.
5. Distribute the Homework Page. Students will be challenged to determine if the article is informational or opinion. Again, the purpose is to generate discussions!
6. In closing, ask students: What is the difference between facts and reasons? How is the information used to support the reasons? What is a good rule of thumb to remember about reading opinions or informational texts in general?

Lesson Title: Explaining Reasons and Evidence

Subject: Language Arts

Approximate Grade Level: 4 – 6

Objectives: Students will differentiate between reasons supported with evidence and an author's opinion in an informational text. Then they will draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. Finally, students will explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points.

State Educational Standards:

LB.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.8 & 5.8

LB.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.9, 5.9, & 6.9

LB.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.1

Class Sessions (45 minutes):

2 to 3 class sessions

Teaching Materials/Worksheets:

Content Pages (4), Activity Page (1), Practice Pages (2), Homework Pages (2)

Student Supplies:

Pencils, pens, highlighters, internet access

Prepare Ahead of Time:

Copies of worksheets

Options for Lesson:

To grasp and comprehend the lesson, students must understand the basic concepts of opinion or fact. Introduce the lesson by playing a game. Find 10 fact questions and 10 opinions. Read each statement aloud and ask students to raise their left hand every time they hear an opinion and their right hand for a fact. Have students write their own list of facts and opinions to use in the game.

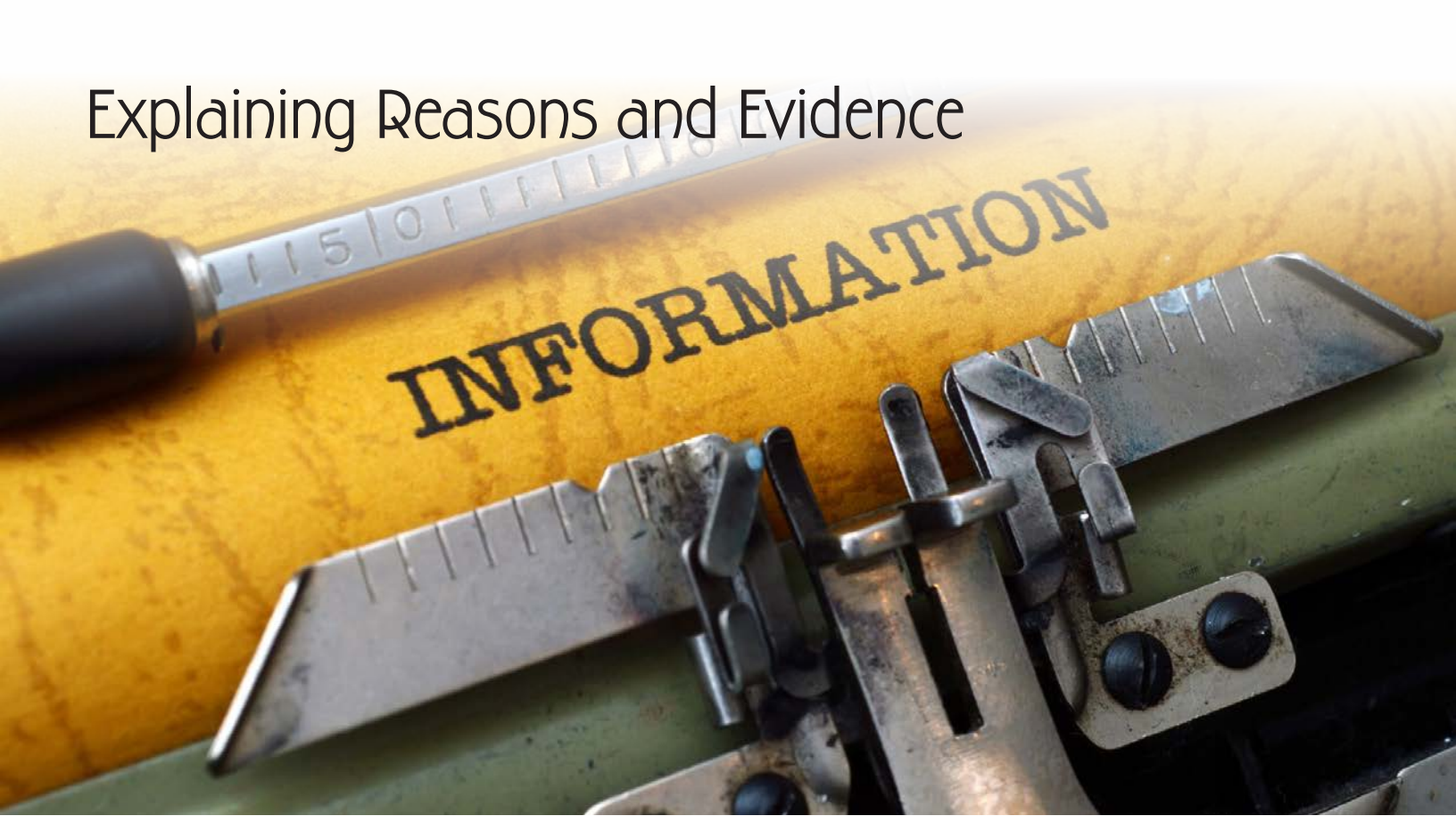
*Lessons are aligned to meet the education objectives and goals of most states. For more information on your state objectives, contact your local Board of Education or Department of Education in your state.



Teacher Notes

In this lesson, students will learn to analyze informational text critically and discern facts from opinions. The lesson explains how authors use facts and evidence to support reasons. Students will be challenged to apply the Activity, Practice, and Homework sections to their consumption of informational text. This lesson is convenient and applicable to help students better comprehend informational texts.

Explaining Reasons and Evidence



By now, you have learned about two types of text, **literary** and **informational**. Literary text is mostly fun stuff you read, like fiction books or poems. Informational text is nonfiction text. The purpose of informational text is to inform you of something. Examples are textbooks, research papers, or instructions.

Studies show that by the time you become an adult, nearly 80% of the reading you do during the day will be information. You probably think of a lot of the information you read daily as something other than reading! For example, prescription instructions, lunch menus, or sports stats. All of these are forms of information we consume with little thought. However, the information you read—such as textbooks, test instructions, opinions, or other materials—requires a different thinking process.



What is an **opinion**? When we state an opinion, we make a judgment about something, but it is not always based on fact. An opinion is a statement based on feelings, beliefs, or attitudes. Some opinions may have facts to support them, but the author *only presents the facts that best support their idea*.



For example, an author writing a soccer team story may say that one soccer team is the greatest ever based on their winning record. The author then presents the team's win-loss percentage record as evidence. The author doesn't tell you that the team has never won a championship in all the years the group has existed! Also, the difference between the best-winning record and the second is less than 1%. Did the author prove the team is the best ever? Not really; it is the author's opinion.

Stating an opinion is not a bad thing. Debating views can lead to a better understanding of issues. They educate people with differing ideas. However, you must be aware that people can "twist" facts to fit a specific conclusion. Always check what someone says as an opinion using good sources of information and facts. Be skeptical, or question, when you hear something reasonable but that may misrepresent the facts.

KEY IDEA: Remember, when someone expresses an opinion, they often try to convince you of their way of thinking.



You learned that informational texts contain **facts**. So, what are facts? A fact is something that is known to be true. Facts are verified by **evidence**. Evidence is the accumulation of facts that indicate something is true or accurate. One way to think about facts is that they don't vary from one person to another. For example, one plus one will always equal two. There is no argument about that! And facts are not emotion based. They are what they are. Two will always be the correct answer to one plus one. When writing informational texts, authors explain why (the **reason**) they believe something is accurate. A reason is the cause, explanation, theory, or justification for an event or idea. Authors use reasons backed by facts and evidence to present information.

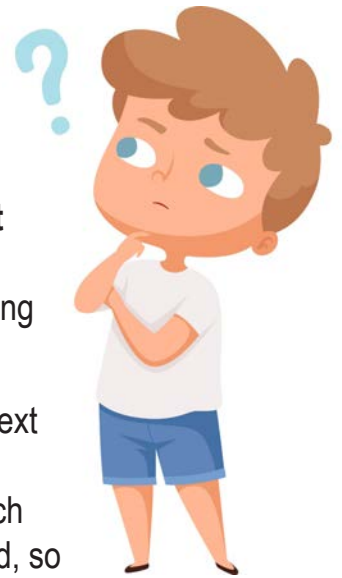


Difference between Fact and Opinion

"How do I know if it is the author's opinion or a fact?"

This is an important question. How do you know if something is opinion or fact? One way is to recall the author's purpose in writing the informational text. Another method is to ask what person the text is written in. Opinions are most likely written in the **first person** or use the "I" or "we" pronouns. The author is speaking from their personal perspective. When you read an opinion, you sometimes feel that the author is speaking directly to you and trying to convince you of something.

When you read most informational texts, the writing has a formal feel. Informational text is generally written in the **third person**. The third person is not personal like the first person. The author will quote experts and have facts supported with evidence for each reason they provide. The facts and evidence will be **cited**, or a reference will be listed, so that you can go read the source of the information. Finally, the writer will address all sides of an issue or subject. Remember, in opinions, the author is trying to bolster the case that their side is the right way to look at a problem. In informational texts, the author reports the facts. The reader decides if the author has made their case based on the facts and evidence in informational texts.



PURPOSE OF INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

1. To share new information with readers
2. To describe a process or method
3. To make a concept or idea clear
4. To explain how, why, or what
5. To provide directions or explain parts of the whole
6. To add to previous knowledge

Here are some common types of informational writing that you might come across:



Description



Cause &
Effect



Instruction



Compare &
Contrast



Problem &
Solution



Autobiography &
Biography

Purpose of Providing Reasons

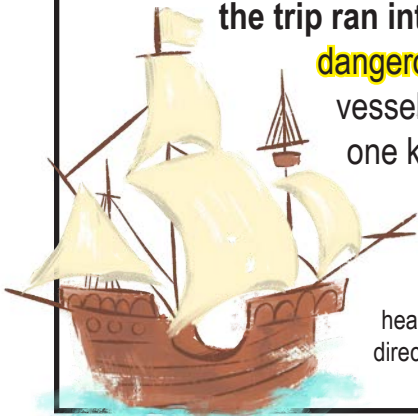
If you have facts and evidence, what's the purpose of reasons? You learned earlier that a **reason** is the cause, explanation, theory, or justification for an event or idea. Informational texts are not designed to persuade someone. Those texts are considered persuasive, and opinions fall into this category. Authors write informational texts to educate and inform readers. Reasons explain some parts of the text to make it clearer to the reader. Think about it. Would a list of facts without any connection catch your interest? Probably not. Facts and evidence connect to the reasons, making them plausible or accurate statements about what happened.

Here is an example of a piece of informational text written by a student like you! The reasons are **highlighted**, facts are written in *italics*, and evidence is in **bold** print.

What Happened to Captain John Cabot

John Cabot's third voyage began in February 1498. The ship's crew list included 300 sailors on five ships that set sail together (Diary of Captain Giovanni Caboto, 1499). Only one ship returned to the harbor one year later, where the expedition began. **According to the crew on this lone ship, the trip ran into bad weather and rough seas.¹ The ship's captain decided it was too dangerous to sail farther and turned back towards the English coast.** The remaining vessels, including Cabot's, continued south. Cabot was never heard from again. No one knows for sure what happened to Cabot. **Most likely, his ship could not handle the hurricane-sized storm, sunk, and everyone, including Cabot, drowned.**

¹From transcripts of the Naval Inquiry of Captain John Cabot's third voyage. Several sailors testified at the hearing about the storm and Captain Cabot refusing to turn back. They reported Cabot headed south but couldn't say if he continued traveling south because the wind was blowing from different directions.



Obviously, when reading informational text, it probably will not have facts, evidence, and reasons in different styles! As the reader, you will have to pick them out for yourself. Here are some examples you could find the text to help you:

FACTS

- Dates and numbers
- People in history
- Geography and places

EVIDENCE

- Primary sources, such as people who witnessed event

REASONS

- Statements that seem reasonable, given the facts and evidence presented



Activity

Name _____ Date _____



Instructions: Write "O" for opinion or "F" for fact next to each statement.

STATEMENT	OPINION OR FACT
Lebron James is the greatest NBA basketball player ever.	
There are nine zeros in a billion.	
The sun rises in the east and sets in the west.	
The best time to fish is in the late afternoon.	
Soccer is the best sport to play.	
Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809.	
Vanilla ice cream is the best flavor of ice cream.	
The earth revolves around the sun.	
The best cold drink on a hot day is water with ice cubes.	
iPhones are better made than other cell phones.	
Dogs make better pets than cats or turtles.	
People move from the north to the south only because of the weather.	
Red cars are always faster than blue or silver cars.	
Everyone in the world thinks chocolate candy is the best candy.	
To be healthy, you have to get daily exercise and eat right.	
The best time to take a nap is 12 o'clock noon.	
Time moves more slowly when you are in school than when out of school.	
Bright yellow shirts are bolder than red shirts.	



Practice

Name _____ Date _____



Instructions: Write whether each statement is fact, evidence, or reason. More than one answer can apply depending on how you read or use the information. (Remember, evidence is the accumulation of facts!)

STATEMENT	Fact, Evidence, or Reason
Giant Pandas eat 28 pounds of bamboo daily.	
According to the last Census Bureau Report (2020), more than 306 million people live in the United States. Other federal agencies have confirmed this.	
While no witnesses except the two drivers in the cars were present, the first car ran the stop sign. It was stuck in the side of the second car, indicating the accident was the first driver's fault.	
More than 10 million insect species live on Earth (National Geographic Magazine).	
If $a + b = c$, then $c - b = a$, and $c - a = b$ if all the numbers are positive integers.	
Tomatoes are fruits, not vegetables.	
Someone must have mixed vinegar with baking soda. It smelled like vinegar, and the counter top had a foamy mess.	
The dog must have done it. There was shredded paper all over the house. Only my sister and the dog were home at the time.	

Explain in your own words why more than one answer can apply.



Instructions: Read the paragraph. Do the facts and evidence support the author's reasoning? Explain your answer.

Was There a King Arthur?

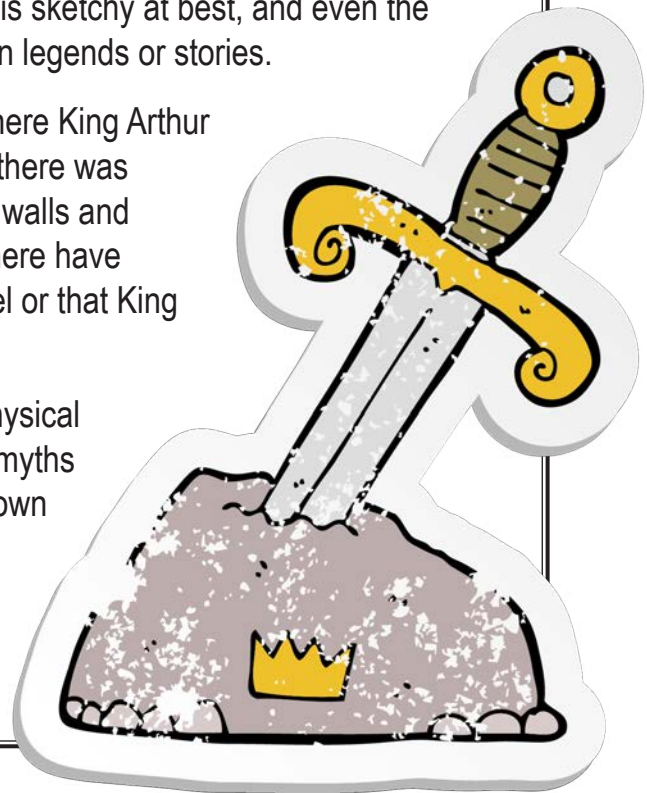
One of the great mysteries in history involves the existence or of King Arthur. Thousands of stories have been written about the king. Was King Arthur a real king, or is he a myth? Was there a round table, knights, and Merlin the Wizard? Or is it possible that part of the King Arthur story is genuine and the rest a myth? Historians have wrestled with the question for decades.

Historians point to the ninth century when a leader fought with the Saxons. The Saxons were Germanic people who invaded Great Britain. Some early accounts indicate that a leader organized the tribes in Great Britain and repelled the invasion of the Saxons. Many believe this leader to be King Arthur. However, the historical evidence is sketchy at best, and even the accounts of the Saxon invasion and defeat are shrouded in legends or stories.

Other historians believe they have discovered the sites where King Arthur made his home, Tintagel. Excavations at the site indicate there was a large structure there. Artifacts found indicate there were walls and possibly a military force living at Tintagel. Unfortunately, there have been no artifacts found that indicate a king lived at Tintagel or that King Arthur made his home there.

Historians continue to probe and investigate looking for physical evidence proving if King Arthur was real or a collection of myths and stories. Personally, I think that most stories handed down from generation to generation have truthful elements in them. Oral stories and oral tradition are acceptable to most historians as evidence of someone's existence.

Why not for King Arthur?



Do the facts and evidence support the author's reasoning? Explain your answer.



Practice

Name Answer Key Date _____



Instructions: Write whether each statement is fact, evidence, or reason. More than one answer can apply depending on how you read or use the information. (Remember, evidence is the accumulation of facts!)

STATEMENT	Fact, Evidence, or Reason
Giant Pandas eat 28 pounds of bamboo daily.	Fact (simple provable statement)
According to the last Census Bureau Report (2020), more than 306 million people live in the United States. Other federal agencies have confirmed this.	Fact (citation) and evidence (because it has other information confirming the statement)
While no witnesses except the two drivers in the cars were present, the first car ran the stop sign. It was stuck in the side of the second car, indicating the accident was the first driver's fault.	Reason (based on positioning of the cars and there were no independent witnesses)
More than 10 million insect species live on Earth (National Geographic Magazine).	Fact (citation)
If $a + b = c$, then $c - b = a$, and $c - a = b$ if all the numbers are positive integers.	Fact (Plug in numbers and see if it is true!)
Tomatoes are fruits, not vegetables.	Fact (simple provable statement)
Someone must have mixed vinegar with baking soda. It smelled like vinegar, and the counter top had a foamy mess.	Reason (Based on experience: vinegar + baking soda = messy)
The dog must have done it. There was shredded paper all over the house. Only my sister and the dog were home at the time.	Reason (Shredded paper is more likely the dog's work than the sister's based on experience.)

Explain in your own words why more than one answer can apply.

Answers will vary.



Instructions: Read the paragraph. Do the facts and evidence support the author's reasoning? Explain your answer.

Was There a King Arthur?

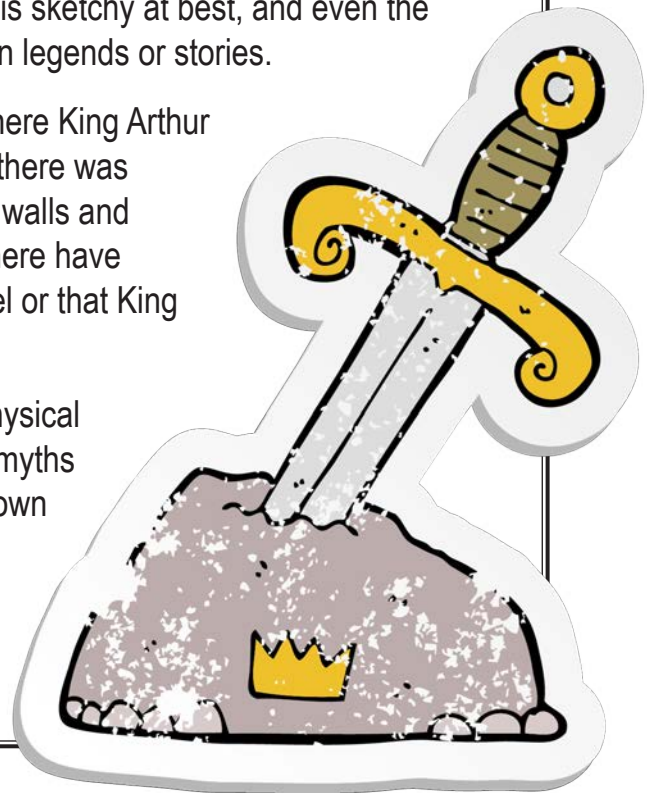
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Why not for King Arthur?



Do the facts and evidence support the author's reasoning? Explain your answer.

Answers will vary. The key sentence to look for begins with, "Personally, I think." This sentence

indicates that the text is an opinion piece and not strictly informational, but it does include facts as

well. See Opinion and Fact section in content pages.