

Lesson 19 Part 1: Introduction

Evaluating an Argument

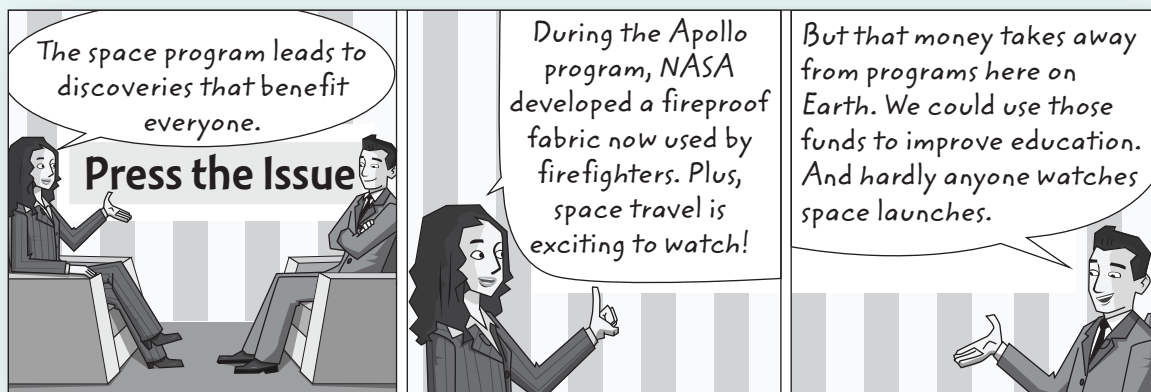
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RI.8.8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

Theme: *Innovation and the Future*

When people debate an issue—for instance, whether social networking is good or bad—they present an **argument** and then try to support their ideas with evidence. A written argument is like a debate: authors state their position and then provide facts to support their beliefs. Authors first make a **claim**, or a statement that they believe to be true. Then they back up this claim with reasons to accept the claim. Reasoning should be logically sound. Finally, authors list **evidence**, or factual information that supports their reasoning. This evidence should be **relevant**, or directly concerned with what is being discussed. It should also be **sufficient**; in other words, there should be enough to firmly support the claim.

Look at the cartoon showing an argument about funding the U.S. space program.



Each person presents a claim about the space program based on what he or she believes to be true. Does each person provide relevant details to support the claim? Complete the chart below to analyze each person's claim about the space program.

Claim	Reasoning	Relevant Evidence	Irrelevant Evidence
We should fund the space program.	The space program leads to important discoveries.	NASA developed fireproof fabric now used by firefighters.	Space travel is exciting to watch.
We should not fund the space program.	We should fund programs on Earth instead.	Money from the space program could be used to improve education.	

When you read an argument, look first to see what claims it makes. Then look for the reasoning and evidence that's provided to support each claim. Do the reasons make sense? Is the evidence factual? Does it relate directly to the claim? Beware of irrelevant evidence that might be interesting but does not directly relate to the author's claim.



Read the editorial below about funding the space program.

Genre: Editorial

Our Space Program Inspires All *by Dylan Moore*

It is crucial that we fund and support our nation's space program. Well before the first astronaut walked on the moon, humans have had an insatiable curiosity about space. What if Galileo had never pondered the heavens? It is no accident that Europe's navigation satellite system bears his name. It is this powerful curiosity about space exploration that inspires our young people, too.

One of the most important reasons to fund our space program is to make vital advances in science and technology. Think of all the technology we have now because of space exploration. Every day we use and enjoy innovations such as GPS devices in our cars and cell phones. The "memory foam" material, which was first used in space shuttles, now helps relieve back pain. And by studying and exploring other planets such as Mars and Venus, we have learned more about our own planet, Earth.

Finally, what do we tell a child whose dream is to become an astronaut? Sorry, we can't afford it? As astronaut Michael Massimino said, "We have lots of bills to pay, we've got wars going on, we have all these other problems, . . . but you always still put something away for the future."

Explore how to answer this question: *"What claim does the author make in this editorial?"*

To identify the claim, look for the main statement that the author believes to be true. In this case, the claim is made in the first sentence. Underline the reasoning that supports this claim. Then complete the graphic organizer.

Claim	Reasoning	Relevant Evidence	Irrelevant Evidence
It is crucial that we fund our nation's space program.	People have an insatiable curiosity about space.		
	The space program makes vital advances in science and technology.		

With a partner, discuss whether the reasoning in each paragraph is sound.



Close Reading

Underline the author's reasoning, and **circle** key details that support her claim. **Mark** an "X" next to any irrelevant evidence in the article.

Hint

Eliminate answer choices that list ideas that are not relevant to the author's reasoning.

Read the editorial below about funding the space program. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

Genre: Editorial

Money for Food, Not Mars *by Lisa Packard*

Did you know that the Mars rover *Curiosity* cost \$2.6 billion? Previous rovers *Spirit* and *Opportunity* together cost \$800 million. These enormous numbers seem absurd when we consider that our country is in debt and countless people are hungry and homeless.

Space program funds should be cut dramatically so that the money can be used to solve our country's economic and social problems. Sending robots to other planets may be inspiring for children, but don't we have a duty to feed and clothe these children? People need to speak out on this urgent issue so that we can make cuts that matter and put money where it's needed most.

Circle the correct answer.

What evidence does the author provide to support her reasoning that money used for the space program should be used to address poverty?

- A** She acknowledges that exploring other worlds is inspiring for children.
- B** She presents facts to demonstrate that space program spending is excessive.
- C** She explains the importance of space research and exploration.
- D** She shows why reducing the nation's debt should be a priority.



Show Your Thinking

Explain how the answer choice you selected supports the author's reasoning.



On a separate piece of paper, write a paragraph explaining whether the author's evidence is relevant and sufficient to support her claim.



Read the excerpt below from the introduction to the book *Print Is Dead: Books in Our Digital Age*. Use the Study Buddy and Close Reading to guide your reading.

Genre: Essay



From the title, it looks like the author believes print is dead. I wonder why he begins this article by saying it isn't dead. What argument is he really trying to make?

Close Reading

The author makes a claim in paragraph 4. **Underline** the author's reasoning. Then **number** the relevant evidence that supports it.

In this article, the author presents two sets of information that seem to contradict each other. Consider how these facts work together to support the author's position.

from *Print Is Dead* by Jeff Gomez

- 1 Print can't possibly be dead; it's everywhere.
- 2 After all, books and newspapers exist in abundance and people read them avidly each day. Mounds of printed material sit in stacks upon stacks in stores, offices, and homes across the country and the world. You rarely see someone taking a form of mass transportation—bus, commuter train, etc.—who isn't clutching some sort of reading material. . . . The same goes for the hundreds of thousands who travel each day by plane, flying for either business or pleasure. Most airports have a bookstore or newsstand, if not both. And then there are the millions of newspapers that are delivered every morning to doorsteps all over the world, folded into thirds like a wallet of information just waiting to be opened. . . .
- 3 Whole rooms of houses and apartments are lined with books, and some homes even have their own libraries stacked floor-to-ceiling with row after row of hardbacks and paperbacks. Furniture and office supply stores feature a dizzying array of bookshelves, while corner kiosks in large cities are like ice cream trucks for printed material, selling glossy magazines and black-and-white newspapers. So with all of this ink-on-paper floating around . . . print *can't* be dead, can it?
- 4 While print is not yet dead, it is undoubtedly sickening. Newspaper readership has been in decline for years, magazines are also in trouble, and trade publishing (the selling of novels and non-fiction books to adults primarily for entertainment) has not seen any substantial growth for years. More and more people are turning away from traditional methods of reading, turning instead to their computers and the Internet for information and entertainment. Whether this comes in the form of getting news online, reading a blog, or contributing to a wiki, the general population is shifting away from print consumption, heading instead to increasingly digital lives.



Hints

Authors do not always present the claim at the beginning of an argument. What is the main point the author hopes to make?

Which choice reflects the ideas you numbered in paragraph 4?

Think about why the author provides information about both the popularity and the decline of print. Does this weaken his position, or strengthen it?

Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

- 1 Which of the following statements best explains the author's claim?
 - A Print is effectively dead as a form of communication.
 - B Despite predictions of its disappearance, print is widespread.
 - C Print has not come to an end, but it is dwindling quickly.
 - D Newspaper sales are shrinking, but books remain popular.
- 2 Which of the following statements is evidence supporting the author's reasoning that "people are turning away from traditional methods of reading"?
 - A "Furniture and office supply stores feature a dizzying array of bookshelves . . ."
 - B "Newspaper readership has been in decline for years . . ."
 - C "... corner kiosks in large cities are like ice cream trucks for printed material. . ."
 - D "... some homes even have their own libraries . . ."
- 3 Evaluate the author's argument about the state of print publishing. Explain whether the author backs up his claim with sound reasoning and relevant evidence. Use at least two details from the text in your response.



Read the following article about foods that may have cancer-fighting properties. Then answer the questions that follow.

Get on the Anti-Cancer Diet

by Anita Gomez

1 We all know many of the benefits of eating different types of foods. Calcium is good for our bones, and vitamin C is good for our immune system. But did you know that certain foods actually fight cancer? According to some medical and health professionals, they can.

2 If you want to lower your cancer risk, begin a diet rich in vegetables, whole grains, and beans. According to the American Institute for Cancer Research, there are several minerals and vitamins in these foods that have cancer-fighting properties. Laboratory studies show that naturally occurring compounds can work together to protect against cancer.

3 Some phytochemicals, or chemical compounds that occur naturally in plants, may help fight cancer. For example, apples contain flavonoids and polyphenols, which protect the body's cells from damage that can cause cancer. Carotenoids, found in vegetables such as carrots, have similar effects. And do you know what puts the blue in blueberries? They have powerful phytochemicals called anthocyanins. These special nutrients may help slow or even stop tumor growth! Scientists say these chemicals can also help reduce the risk of diabetes.

4 Researchers have found that foods rich in the B vitamin folate can help reduce the risk of some cancers. Dry beans and peas, for example, provide a good source of folate. Folate is also found in broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts. Folate can help repair damaged cells to help lower the risk of pancreatic cancer. Even the ancient Romans knew about the health benefits of beans and peas. Some Romans were even named after them. For example, the name Cicero comes from the word *chickpea*!

5 Whole grains may also help reduce the risk of developing some types of cancer. Whole grains have natural plant compounds that can protect cells from being harmed by some cancers. Found in brown rice and wheat bread, whole grains are also rich in fiber. Whole grains are found in foods you may eat every day, such as cereal, popcorn, and tortilla chips.

6 Studies show that extra body fat can increase the risk of certain cancers. This is why doctors and health professionals urge people to eat plenty of vegetables and fruits, which are low in calories. Eating whole grains and beans and limiting fatty foods can also help people stay at a healthy weight. While research continues on the health benefits of some foods, it is recommended that people choose whole-grain products.

7 According to biochemist Richard Béliveau, some foods not only help fight cancer, but can help prevent it. In their book *Foods That Fight Cancer*, Béliveau and co-author Denis Gingras list specific foods that seem to have cancer-fighting properties. They believe these foods have properties with similar benefits as some man-made medications. They call these foods “nutraceuticals.” In addition to blueberries and cabbage, these foods include raspberries, oranges, tomatoes, garlic, and onions. Their research shows that there are also cancer-fighting elements in dark chocolate, soy, green tea, and some spices. For example, adding a teaspoon of



turmeric to foods each day may help prevent the appearance of colon cancer. Turmeric is a spice used in many Indian dishes.

8 “In many respects, these foods possess therapeutic properties on par with those of synthetic drugs,” writes Béliveau. “We have the possibility of deploying a veritable arsenal of anticancer compounds occurring naturally in many foods as a complement to the therapies now in use.” Béliveau believes that a diet rich in “nutraceuticals” may help prevent different types of cancer.

9 Leafy green vegetables seem to be the most beneficial, experts say. Colorful vegetables, such as broccoli, kale, beets, and winter squash, have beneficial nutrients key to a healthy diet. How we prepare and even how we eat our food can make a difference in its health benefits. For example, Béliveau claims that thoroughly chewing broccoli and cabbage helps release cancer-fighting molecules.

10 In fact, the American Cancer Society seems to support some of Béliveau’s research. It recommends eating a daily dose of at least two and a half cups of fruits and vegetables. It also says choosing fish and chicken instead of red meat and processed foods can improve overall health. And exercise also plays a role in staying healthy.

1

The author’s main claim is that a diet rich in vegetables, whole grains, and beans can help prevent cancer. Which sentence from the passage **best** supports this claim?

- A “We all know many of the benefits of eating different types of foods.”
- B “Some phytochemicals, or chemical compounds that occur naturally in plants, may help fight cancer.”
- C “Even the ancient Romans knew about the health benefits of beans and peas.”
- D “Studies show that extra body fat can increase the risk of certain cancers.”

Answer Form

1 (A) (B) (C) (D)

2 (A) (B) (C) (D)

3 (A) (B) (C) (D)

**Number
Correct**

3

2

Which evidence supports the author’s reasoning that foods rich in folate can help prevent cancer?

- A “Dry beans and peas, for example, provide a good source of folate.”
- B “Folate can help repair damaged cells to help lower the risk of pancreatic cancer.”
- C “Folate is also found in broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts.”
- D “Even the ancient Romans knew about the health benefits of beans and peas.”



- 3** Which evidence from the article is irrelevant to the author's reasoning that foods containing phytochemicals fight cancer?
- A** "For example, apples contain flavonoids and polyphenols, which protect the body's cells from damage that can cause cancer."
 - B** "Carotenoids, found in vegetables such as carrots, have similar effects."
 - C** "These special nutrients may help slow or even stop tumor growth!"
 - D** "Scientists say these chemicals can also help reduce the risk of diabetes."

- 4** Answer Parts A and B below.

Part A

Below, put an "X" by the claim that is **best** supported by "Get on the Anti-Cancer Diet."

CLAIMS

	A plant-based diet helps prevent cancer by providing low-calorie foods that help with weight control.
	Scientific studies support the theory that certain foods from plants may help prevent cancer.
	"Nutraceutical" foods may someday be more important than human-made drugs in the fight against cancer.

Part B

Write a short paragraph with **two** details from the article to support the claim you checked in Part A.

**Self Check**

Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 187.