



AREA V REGIONAL SUPERINTENDENTS OF SCHOOLS

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# Writing to Sources

## Argumentative Tasks

### Middle-High School

# Literacy Design Collaborative Template Tasks

## Purpose:

Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) tasks translate the common core literacy standards into what we ask students to do and how we know they can do it. They take the standards from the page into action in the classroom. Template tasks are fill-in-the-blank shells built off of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). They primarily are used to create high-quality student assignments that develop reading and writing skills in the context of learning science, history, literature or some other element of the middle or high school curriculum. Practitioners adapt template tasks for use in specific classes by filling in the kinds of texts to be read, writing to be produced and content to be addressed. Template tasks can also be used to create shorter classroom assessments that complement larger assignments.

LDC has created a prototype set of template tasks that connect the experiences of reading, writing, and thinking as established by the CCSS. The initial collection focuses on argumentation, informational/explanatory and narrative writing in response to reading single or multiple texts. Template tasks require students to:

1. *Read texts* as specified by the CCSS;
2. *Write products* as specified by the CCSS; and
3. *Apply common core literacy standards to content* with a focus on ELA, social studies, and/or science.

## Tasks Differentiated:

### How can the rigor levels of tasks be varied?

By changing choices (as described below), practitioners can adjust the rigor level in four major ways:

1. **By selecting the level of difficulty within a template task.** LCD template tasks include levels that allow practitioners to vary the type of demands of students to manage and complete the task. Individual tasks can be made simple or complex by varying the task demand, with up to three tiers of possibilities:
  - Level 1 (L1) refers to the most fundamental level of difficulty and narrows the task to those skills in reading, writing and critical thinking that are essential for the task. Often more than one version of L1 is given to allow for choice.
  - Level 2 (L2) refers to a next-step-up skill or cognitive demand such as managing more than one point of view or multiple processes.
  - Level 3 (L3) adds additional demand to the task in which student writers are asked to make connections and use background knowledge to reflect implications beyond the specific topic.

Some tasks have only one level. Others have two or three levels. For leveled tasks, teachers can choose to teach level 1 (L1) alone or add demands to the prompt by including Level 2 (L2) and/or Level 3 (L3).

2. **By choice of reading materials.** The rigor level of a task also can be adjusted by varying text type and complexity, as well as by the number and length of text students are asked to read. Reading demands are tethered to difficulty levels that are being established by the CCSS through its text complexity specifications. Currently, common core exemplars and systems such as Lexile scores set the demand levels.
3. **By type of writing demand.** Demand levels for academic writing will be established as common core exemplars are produced and assessment systems are developed. The type of writing demand can be varied as part of a larger instructional strategy that includes scaffolding and student engagement.

# Literacy Design Collaborative Task Development Basics

This one-page organizer summarizes how LDC teaching tasks are created.

## 1. Choose Your Template Task

Your template task can:

- Be argumentation, informational or explanatory, or narrative.
- Use an essential question or an “after researching” task.
- Call for students to develop a definition, a description, a procedural-sequential piece, a synthesis, an analysis, a comparison, an evaluation, a problem-solving piece, or a discussion of cause and effect.

## 2. Choose Your Topic

Your choice should:

- Address a major issue in your discipline (big enough to be a good investment of 2 to 4 weeks of class time).
- Fit the state and local standards for which you are responsible.
- Make sense as a subject to teach during the weeks you are planning to schedule this task.

## 5. Create Your Teaching Task

Your prompt should:

- Use the exact wording of the template.
- Use your topic, reading texts, and writing text choices to fill in the blanks and brackets.
- Be both challenging and feasible for students, with a balance of reading demands and writing demands that works well for the intended grade and content.
- Require sustained writing and effective use of ideas and evidence from the reading texts.
- Be built out for students by adding introductory background statement and ending with extension if applicable.

## 3. Choose Texts Students

**Will Read**

Your choices should:

- Address your topic.
- Be short enough to allow close reading and careful analysis.
- Use and develop academic understanding and vocabulary.
- Where possible, include models of the kind of text students will be writing.

Or, you can specify a topic and assign students to research the issue to select texts that address the issue.

## 4. Choose Texts Students

**Will Write**

Your choice should:

- Be a good fit for your topic, template task, and students.
- Where possible, resemble writing students may need to do in adult life (for example, make an argument in a letter to the editor, or explain a process in a memo to a colleague.)

# Potential Text Types (or Genre) That Can be Inserted into Template Task Prompts

## Suggestions For:

Literature	Informational Text	Written Products	Stylistic Devices
fiction	nonfiction	essay	metaphor
adventure stories	text books	review	simile
historical fiction	academic texts	article	personification
mysteries	articles	editorial	imagery
fantasy	journal	speech	apostrophe
science fiction	newspaper	proposal	symbol
realistic fiction	magazine articles	report	allegory
allegories	Scientific/historical sources	article	motif
parodies	primary source documents	lab report	paradox
satire	guides/manuals	manual	tone
graphic novels	scientific articles/documents	narrative	
dramas	technical/business articles	account	
one-act & multiple-act plays	technical/business documents	biography	
poetry	political articles/documents	play/script	
narrative poems	speeches		
lyrical poems	narratives	<b>Content</b>	<b>Techniques</b>
free verse poems	reference books	topic	suspense
sonnets	encyclopedias	issue	time frames
odes	dictionaries	theme	dialogue
ballads	thesauruses	concept	description
epics	atlases		first-person
folk literature	almanacs		narration
myths	guides		persuasion
fables	how-to books		subjective
fairy tales	video		
legends	digital text		
folktales	graphical information		
tall tales			

# Argumentative Template Tasks

**Task 1 Template:** After researching \_\_\_\_\_ (informational texts) on \_\_\_\_\_ (content), write a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (essay or substitute) that argues your position on \_\_\_\_\_ (content). Support your position with evidence from your research. **L2** Be sure to acknowledge competing views. **L3** Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

**Task 1 Social Studies Example:** After researching academic articles on censorship, write an editorial that argues your position on the use of filters by schools. Support your position with evidence from your research. **L2** Be sure to acknowledge competing views. **L3** Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

**Task 1 Science Example:** After researching technical and academic articles on the use of pesticides in agriculture, write a speech that argues your position on the use of pesticides in managing crop production. Support your position with evidence from your research. **L2** Be sure to acknowledge competing views.

**Task 2 Template:** [Insert question] After reading \_\_\_\_\_ (literature or informational texts), write a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (essay or substitute) that addresses the question and support your position with evidence from the text(s). **L2** Be sure to acknowledge competing views. **L3** Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

**Task 2 ELA Example:** Would you recommend *A Wrinkle in Time* to a middle school reader? After reading this science fiction novel, write a review that addresses the question and support your position with evidence from the text.

**Task 2 Social Studies Example:** How did the political views of the signers of the Constitution impact the American political system? After reading *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* write a report that addresses the question and support your position with evidence from the text.

**Task 2 Science Example:** Does genetic testing have the potential to significantly impact how we treat disease? After reading scientific sources, write a report that addresses the question and support your position with evidence from the texts. **L2** Be sure to acknowledge competing views. **L3** Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

**Task 3 Template:** After researching \_\_\_\_\_ (informational texts) on \_\_\_\_\_ (content), write a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (essay or substitute) that compares \_\_\_\_\_ (content) and argues \_\_\_\_\_ (content). Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts.

**Task 3 Social Studies Example:** After researching historical sources on Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton, write an essay that compares their political philosophies and argues who had the more lasting impact on the American political system. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts.

**Task 3 Science Example:** After researching technical and scientific sources on soil types, write an article for a local paper that compares different soil types and argues which different types are best for growing potatoes, marigolds, and orange trees. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts.

**Task 4 Template:** [Insert question] After reading \_\_\_\_\_ (literature or informational texts), write a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (essay or substitute) that compares \_\_\_\_\_ (content) and argues \_\_\_\_\_ (content). Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts.

**Task 4 ELA Example:** What makes something funny? After reading selections from Mark Twain and Dave Barry, write a review that compares their humor and argues which type of humor works for a contemporary audience and why. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts.

**Task 4 Social Studies Example:** Do Presidential policies really make a difference in the lives of Americans? After reading primary and secondary sources, write an essay that compares John F. Kennedy's New Frontier social policies with Lyndon Johnson's Great Society social policies and argues which had a more significant impact on Americans. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts.

**Task 4 Science:** Which is the better energy source? After reading scientific sources, write an essay that compares the physics involved in nuclear energy and fossil fuels and argues which is the better energy source for urban communities. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts.

**Task 5 Template:** After researching \_\_\_\_\_ (informational texts) on \_\_\_\_\_ (content), write a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (essay or substitute) that discusses \_\_\_\_\_ (content) and evaluates \_\_\_\_\_ (content). Be sure to support your position with evidence from your research.

**Task 5 Social Studies Example:** After researching articles and data on youth-related crime in your city, write an article that discusses the data and evaluates a program that claims to deter crime. Be sure to support your position with evidence from your research.

**Task 5 Science Example:** After researching technical articles on ways to control drinking water quality, write an essay that discusses the impact of chemical and biological contamination and evaluates measures to protect water quality in your community. Be sure to support your position with evidence from your research.

**Task 6 Template:** [Insert question] After reading \_\_\_\_\_ (literature or informational texts), write a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (essay or substitute) that discusses \_\_\_\_\_ (content) and evaluates \_\_\_\_\_ (content). Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts.

**Task 6 ELA Example:** Would you recommend *Esperanza Rising* to a friend? After reading the novel, write a critical review that discusses the novel's strengths and weaknesses and evaluates whether it's a good book for middle school readers. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the text.

**Task 6 Social Studies Example:** Is "utilitarianism" a viable social philosophy for the 21st century? After reading John Stuart Mill's "Essays on Utilitarianism," write an essay that discusses his "Greatest Happiness Principle" and evaluates its relevancy to today's society. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the text.

**Task 6 Science Example:** Is wind power a solution to energy shortages and costs? After reading the U.S. Department of Energy's Report on Alternative Energy Resources, write an article that discusses wind power benefits and costs and evaluates whether wind power is an answer to America's energy future. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the text.

**Task 7 Template:** After researching \_\_\_\_\_ (informational texts) on \_\_\_\_\_ (content), write a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (essay or substitute) that identifies a problem \_\_\_\_\_ (content) and argues for a solution. Support your position with evidence from your research. L2 Be sure to examine competing views. L3 Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

**Task 7 Social Studies Example:** After researching government documents on term limits, write an essay that identifies a problem created by term limits and argues for a solution. Support your position with evidence from your research. L2 Be sure to examine competing views.

**Task 7 Science Example:** After researching scientific and technical sources on methods for preventing water shortages, write a proposal that identifies a problem faced by communities in arid regions and argues for a solution. Support your position with evidence from your research. L2 Be sure to examine competing views. L3 Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

**Task 8 Template:** [Insert question] After reading \_\_\_\_\_ (literature or informational texts) on \_\_\_\_\_ (content), write a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (essay or substitute) that identifies a problem \_\_\_\_\_ (content) and argues for a solution \_\_\_\_\_ (content). Support your position with evidence from the text(s). L2 Be sure to examine competing view. L3 Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

**Task 8 Social Studies Example:** What problems did the South encounter in the post-Civil War era? After reading primary and secondary sources on the post-Civil War era, write an essay that identifies a problem related to economic issues faced by the South and argues for a solution that could have been (or was) used to aid its economic recovery. Support your position with evidence from the texts. L2 Be sure to examine competing views. L3 Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

**Task 8 Science Example:** What would you recommend to help your community improve its air quality? After reading scientific articles on the potential for plant growth to improve air quality, write a proposal that identifies a problem related to air quality in your community and argues for a solution that would involve planting some varieties of flora. Support your position with evidence from the texts.

# Argumentative Template Tasks

**Task 9 Template:** After researching \_\_\_\_\_ (informational texts) on \_\_\_\_\_ (content), write a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (essay or substitute) that argues the causes of \_\_\_\_\_ (content) and explains the effects \_\_\_\_\_ (content). What \_\_\_\_\_ (conclusions or implications) can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

**Task 9 Social Studies Example:** After researching historical documents on the period of exploration in the New World, write an essay that argues the causes of the migration from Europe and explains the effects of settlements on the formation of regional identities. What implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

**Task 9 Science Example:** After researching maps, data, and technical documents on land use in South America, write an essay that argues the causes of deforestation in the Amazon and explains the effects on populations and vegetation in the region. What implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

**Task 10 Template:** [Insert question] After reading \_\_\_\_\_ (literature or informational texts) on \_\_\_\_\_ (content), write a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (essay or substitute) that argues the causes of \_\_\_\_\_ (content) and explains the effects \_\_\_\_\_ (content). What \_\_\_\_\_ (conclusions or implications) can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

**Task 10 Social Studies Example:** What ramifications does debt have for individuals and the larger public? After reading articles and data on the current credit crisis, write an editorial that argues the causes of personal debt and explains the effects on individuals and the larger public. What implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

**Task 10 Science Example:** What is the function of variation in living things? After reading scientific sources on variation in organisms, write an article for younger readers that argues the causes of variation among species and explains the effects of differences among species, such as color and other physical attributes. What implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the texts.

## How are LDC teaching tasks scored?

### LDC Rubrics:

The LDC rubrics are aligned to the common core standards and address argumentation, informational/explanatory and narrative products. The LDC rubrics are holistic, written to describe demands (do this) and qualities (how well). The score a student receives is an informed professional representation of the skills and qualities described in the rubric based on the grade and curriculum continuum. As data, the LDC score provides feedback on these skills students still need to develop, pointing to the teaching that should follow and they type of learning the student should engage in. A score of *meets expectations* or better tells students that they have demonstrated the qualities of thinking and use of skills to warrant that score for the teaching task. If not, the student receives a not yet and works with the teacher to improve the work until it meets expectations.

### The Scoring Process:

Where possible, student work should be scored by practitioners in pairs or in small groups. Practitioners can refer to the CCSS grade-by-grade standards if they need further description for what is highlighted in the rubric. The process includes:

- Collecting and identifying student work using some notation system that identifies student grade levels and class, but not individual students.
- Scoring in pairs or small groups in which differences in scores are discussed.
- Agreeing on and providing one score. Practitioners might note on the rubric where there are weaknesses and strengths or where students need to work more diligently, the notation would be used to confer with students.
- Collecting scores in a matrix to identify how many scores are at each level. Teams should discuss what the classroom, student groups and individual student data indicate about learning progress and what students need next. Questions to consider:
  - \*Do students need to repeat the task, with other texts and content?
  - \*Are they ready to move to a higher Level 2 or 3?
  - \*Are they ready to move to another type of module? Do they need some interim teaching on specific skills before they engage in another module?
- Select a small number of paper that pose interesting questions for instruction.
- Collect sample papers to serve as exemplars for future scoring.

Practitioners can also add specific content criteria. Ultimately, though, the student receives one score. This sends the message that content and skills work together to demonstrate understanding and adherence to the teaching task.

### Making Scoring Matter:

Common scoring with rubrics is one of the most powerful activities for building consensus about the meaning of achievement for both teachers and students. A score is not an exact measurement, nor is a rubric an exact description of performance, although a good rubric describes as well as words can the most salient skills and qualities relevant to a task. Because scoring is inexact even with a high quality rubric, it requires experience and collaboration to arrive at decisions. As practitioners gain more confidence in their scoring, the score gains more and more meaning and accuracy. As a result, scoring provides critical classroom-based data to inform the next steps teachers and students must take to improve literacy skills.



# Scoring Rubric for Argumentation Template Tasks

Scoring Elements	Not Yet	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Advanced			
	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4
<b>Focus</b>	Attempts to address prompt, but lacks focus or is off-task.	Addresses prompt appropriately and establishes a position, but focus is uneven.	Addresses prompt appropriately and maintains a clear, steady focus. Provides a generally convincing position.	Addresses prompt appropriately and maintains a clear, steady focus. Provides a generally convincing position.	Addresses all aspects of prompt appropriately with a consistently strong focus and convincing position.		
<b>Controlling Idea</b>	Attempts to establish a claim but lacks a clear purpose. (L2) Makes no mention of counter claims.	Establishes a claim. (L2) Makes note of counter claims.	Establishes a credible claim. (L2) Develops claim and counter claims fairly.	Establishes a credible claim. (L2) Develops claim and counter claims fairly and thoroughly.			
<b>Reading/ Research</b>	Attempts to develop response, but lacks connections or relevance to the purpose of the prompt.	Presents information from reading materials relevant to the purpose of the prompt with minor lapses in accuracy or completeness.	Accurately presents details from reading materials relevant to the purpose of the prompt to develop argument or claim.	Accurately and effectively presents important details from reading materials to develop argument or claim.			
<b>Development</b>	Attempts to provide details in response to the prompt, but lacks sufficient development or relevance to the purpose of the prompt. (L3) Makes no connections or a connection that is irrelevant to argument or claim.	Presents appropriate details to support and develop the focus, controlling idea, or claim, with minor lapses in the reasoning, examples, or explanations. (L3) Makes a connection with a weak or unclear relationship to argument or claim.	Presents appropriate and sufficient details to support and develop the focus, controlling idea, or claim. (L3) Makes a relevant connection to clarify argument or claim.	Presents thorough and detailed information to effectively support and develop the focus, controlling idea, or claim. (L3) Makes a clarifying connection(s) that illuminates argument and adds depth to reasoning.			
<b>Organization</b>	Attempts to organize ideas, but lacks control of structure.	Uses an appropriate organizational structure for development of reasoning and logic, with minor lapses in structure and/or coherence.	Maintains an appropriate organizational structure to address specific requirements of the prompt. Structure reveals the reasoning and logic of the argument.	Maintains an organizational structure that intentionally and effectively enhances the presentation of information as required by the specific prompt. Structure enhances development of the reasoning and logic of the argument.			
<b>Conventions</b>	Attempts to demonstrate standard English conventions, but lacks cohesion and control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Sources are used without citation.	Demonstrates an uneven command of standard English conventions and cohesion. Uses language and tone with some inaccurate, inappropriate, or uneven features. Inconsistently cites sources.	Demonstrates a command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Cites sources using appropriate format with only minor errors.	Demonstrates a well-developed command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone consistently appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Consistently cites sources using appropriate format.			
<b>Content Understanding</b>	Attempts to include disciplinary content in argument, but understanding of content is weak; content is irrelevant, inappropriate, or inaccurate.	Briefly notes disciplinary content relevant to the prompt; shows basic or uneven understanding of content; minor errors in explanation.	Accurately presents disciplinary content relevant to the prompt with sufficient explanations that demonstrate understanding.	Integrates relevant and accurate disciplinary content with thorough explanations that demonstrate in-depth understanding.			