The Structure of an Argument

Learning Targets
• Identify the elements of an argument in a text.
• Analyze The Declaration of Independence for its purpose and rhetorical features.
• Evaluate the effectiveness of the elements of argument in a text.

Before Reading
1. One of the most important documents in history, The Declaration of Independence, provides the ideals and beliefs of a fledgling people that became a nation. With a partner, generate a list of what you already know about the Declaration of Independence.
2. You have been introduced to and have applied the structure of an argument to your reading and writing in the past. As a review, go to the graphic organizer following the text of The Declaration of Independence and review the five key elements usually found in a good argument.

During Reading
3. Apply the elements of an effective argument as you analyze the text of The Declaration of Independence.

Historical Document

The Declaration of Independence

Chunk 1

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS
What five truths are held to be “self-evident”? Paraphrase the five noun clauses, beginning with the marker “that.” What have these truths to do with the American Dream?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS
Consider the Declaration as an argument. Analyze its structure. What is the claim? What concession is begin made? What evidence is being presented to support the claim?
history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

Chunk 2

1. He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

2. He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

3. He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

4. He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

5. He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

6. He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

7. He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

8. He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

9. He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

10. He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.

11. He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

12. He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

13. He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

Chunk 3

14. For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

15. For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

16. For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

17. For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:
ACTIVITY 113 continued

18 For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

19 For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences

20 For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

21 For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

22 For suspending our own Legislatures and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

Chunk 4

23 He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

24 He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

25 He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

26 He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

27 He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

28 In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Chunk 5

29 Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. /T_h ey too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

30 We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, /T_h at these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and
to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

**After Reading**

4. Do you think that the unfamiliar words and phrasing make this text less meaningful? Should the United States consider revising the document with modern language?

5. The Declaration of Independence is an historic example of argumentation. Re-read the text with a partner and note the elements of argumentation with textual evidence from the text.

### Key Elements of an Argument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Hook: (Gets the reader’s attention)</th>
<th>Details from The Declaration of Independence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The hook grabs the readers’ attention and catches their interest.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• It establishes a connection between the writer and the audience, anticipating audience knowledge and providing needed background information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• It can be, but is not limited to, an anecdote, an image, a definition, or a quotation.</td>
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<th>The Claim: (The topic being argued)</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Usually comes in the opening section of your paper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• States your belief and what it is that you wish to argue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Anticipates the audience’s knowledge, concerns, values, and possible biases and addresses them with evidence.</td>
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<th>Concessions and Refutations: (Acknowledges counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, uses evidence to point out strengths and limitations and to refute claims)</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The writer recognizes counterclaims made by the other side.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• This builds credibility by discussing strengths and limitations with fairness and objectivity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The writer grants that the other side has some validity, then …</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The writer argues at length against the opposing viewpoint by proving that his or her claim has MORE validity.</td>
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Support: (Presents facts to convince audience)
- Set out the reasoning behind your argument.
- Provide supporting evidence of your claim (data, quotes, anecdotes, etc.).
- Blend together logical and emotional appeals.

Call to Action: (The final word)
- Draw your argument to a close and restate your claim.
- Make a final new appeal to values.
- Voice a final plea.
- Try not to repeat information, but sum up your argument with a few final facts and appeals.

Check Your Understanding

Writing Prompt: Now that you have examined closely one of the foundational documents of American life and government, what part do the ideas presented in this document, as well as other seminal documents such as the Preamble to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, play in the creation of the idea of the American Dream and the freedoms we enjoy? Be sure to:
- Include a thesis that answers the question.
- Provide textual evidence from any of the texts mentioned to support your position.
- Use varied sentence beginnings and maintain a formal style with an objective tone.