

BUILDING EVIDENCE THROUGH WRITING

Guide & Resources for High School English (ELA) Teachers

Good writing is forged, not gifted.



The Myth: Writing is an innate talent you are born with.

“Good writing is not a gift. It is forged by desire, practice, and assistance from others. You can play a central role... by teaching writing effectively.”



The Truth: Good writing is forged by desire, practice, and instruction.

Building evidence-based thinking through writing means using the writing process to test, question, and support your ideas with concrete proof instead of just stating opinions



Vague Claim (Opinion-Based)

This character is
brave.

How do we
know?

Evidence-Based Claim

The character's bravery
is shown when they
volunteered to explore
the dark cave first,
proving they put the
group's safety above
their own fear.

Textual
Example

Explanation/
Reasoning

Strong claims need more than confidence;
they need specific details behind them.

The Core Evidence Writing Process

1. Make a Claim First

State your thesis clearly before introducing outside proof. Every piece of evidence must directly support this point.

2. Gather Reliable Sources

Look for trustworthy data, expert quotes, or academic records. Use credible peer-reviewed journals or official texts.

3. Choose the Best Method

Integrate your evidence strategically through:

- Direct Quoting : Use exact words when the original phrasing is powerful or unique.
- Paraphrasing : Rewrite a specific idea in your own words to keep your personal writing voice smooth.
- Summarizing : Condense a large section or a main argument into a short, simple overview.
- Synthesizing : Combine ideas from multiple different sources to show how they connect.

4. Mastering the 'Quote Sandwich'

Top Bun: Context | Introduce the source and build the scene before presenting the evidence.

The Filling: Evidence | Present the exact quote, fact, or data with a proper textual citation.

Bottom Bun: Analysis | Explain WHY it matters. Connect the evidence back to your main claim.

Scaffolding the Skill for High Schoolers

Phase 01: Find It

Train students to locate quotes or data that are broadly relevant to a topic.

Phase 02: Choose It

Have them compare multiple options and filter out the single strongest piece of proof.

Phase 03: Explain It

Deep dive into articulation. Explicitly teach them how to link evidence to their thesis.

Interactive Classroom Activities

Evidence Match-Up

Provide mixed cut-outs of Claims, Evidence, and Analysis. Challenge student groups to correctly sort and stack them into complete structural paragraphs.

Quote Battle Royale

Give the class a controversial prompt. Teams compete to extract the most undeniable piece of textual evidence and pitch why theirs reigns supreme.

The 'So What?' Drill

Instill the habit of thorough analysis. Force students to answer two follow-up questions after every single quote: 'What does this show?' and 'Why does it matter?'

BUILDING EVIDENCE THROUGH WRITING: WORKSHEET

Reading Passage: Red Valley Colony (2150)

In the year 2150, humans built large colonies on Mars. In Red Valley, a sixteen-year-old girl named Arya stood out. Unlike most teenagers, she loved robotics and ancient Earth history more than video

games.

One afternoon, while repairing a mining robot with her father, Arya discovered a strange metal object buried under the red sand. When she touched it, it suddenly glowed with a bright blue light, projecting a hologram map that pointed to a secret subterranean facility deep under the Martian surface.

Excited, Arya and her best friend Leo secretly followed the map into dark, dangerous underground tunnels. Suddenly, giant security repair robots appeared and identified them as hostile intruders.

Leo became terrified and wanted to turn back immediately. However, Arya convinced him to press on. After hours of navigating threats, they unlocked a massive hidden laboratory built by early Earth scientists to preserve human knowledge. Arya successfully secured the ancient data, saving a priceless legacy for future generations.

Scaffolding: Find It & Choose It

STEP 1: FIND IT

Claim:

"Arya is an exceptionally brave and determined teenager."

Task:

Scan the text and locate two separate sentences or clues that directly support this claim of courage.

STEP 2: CHOOSE IT

Task:

Which of these options is the absolute strongest proof of active bravery? Select one and justify why:

Option A: Sneaking into the forbidden underground tunnels at night without telling anyone.

Option B: Standing her ground and convincing Leo to continue despite being cornered by giant security robots.

Step 3: Explain It (The Quote Sandwich)

TOP BUN: Introduce the Context

Set the scene. Who is involved? What is happening right before the evidence appears?

Example: When faced with unexpected mechanical threats in the pitch-black tunnels...

THE FILLING: Insert the Textual Evidence

Integrate the exact words from the story using quotation marks seamlessly into your sentence.

Example: ...the narrative notes that even though "several giant repair robots appeared," Arya refused to retreat.

BOTTOM BUN: Your Critical Reasoning (Analysis)

Explain the 'so what?' aspect. Connect the specific quote back to your primary claim.

YOUR TASK: Complete the paragraph using a strong reasoning frame:

"This demonstrates that [___your analysis here___] because..."

Advanced Skills: Paraphrasing & Summarizing

PARAPHRASING PRACTICE

Original Sentence:

"He was different from most teenagers because He loved robotics and ancient Earth history more than sports or online games."

Your Task:

Rewrite this text entirely in your own voice. Keep the core meaning, but alter the sentence structure and vocabulary completely.

SUMMARIZING PRACTICE

Original Paragraph Focus:

Paragraph 4 describes their dark, freezing journey through the tunnels, encountering hostile giant repair machinery, Leo's intense terror, and Arya's refusal to turn back.

Your Task:

Condense this entire event sequence into a single, highly compressed, punchy sentence.

THANK YOU