

Grade 8 Playlist: Analyze Conflicting Information

Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.9:

- Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

Welcome

Sophie's science teacher has given her an assignment to write an argumentative paper on genetically modified organisms. Sophie does not know much about the subject, so she heads to the library right away. The first article that she finds paints a very bad picture of GMOs. She reads that since GMOs have only been introduced recently, possible health threats are unknown, but some scientists believe that eating genetically modified foods can cause cancer. Sophie is horrified, and she knows what her opinion on the subject will be—that is, until she finds another article. Its author tells a different story. Not only have genetically modified foods existed for centuries, but they can also be specially engineered to fight insects without the use of pesticides (which are known to cause cancer in large amounts). Now Sophie is confused. These two authors are presenting different facts about the same topic. Which account should she believe?

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- analyze a case in which two informational texts disagree on the same topic.
- identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

Review

Key Terms

- To **compare** two informational texts is to examine them side by side and determine how they are the same. When readers **contrast** the texts, they determine how the texts are different.
- When two texts include **conflicting information**, they make statements that contradict each other. If two facts conflict with each other, they cannot both be correct at the same time.
- An author's **interpretation** of facts is the way he or she understands them. Two authors may understand the same fact differently, depending on their own backgrounds and knowledge.

Exploring the Standard

Two texts on the same topic may present facts, but the information in the texts may differ because the authors interpret the facts differently. The authors may have different information about the facts themselves, or their backgrounds may influence their interpretations. The personal opinions of the authors sometime show the greatest impact of all on how a text is interpreted.



A Closer Look: Comparing and Contrasting Texts

When comparing and contrasting two texts on the same subject by different authors, first determine which claim each author is making. Are they making the same claim? If not, then it is likely that the two texts have conflicting information. After determining the authors' claims, identify the facts that the authors use to support their claims. For example, if the first author writes, "Pizza is very healthy because it contains ingredients from the food pyramid," and the second author writes, "Pizza is one of the most popular foods in the United States," these facts may support different claims but it is possible for both to be true. Therefore, they do not present conflicting information.

However, if the second author wrote, "Pizza is very unhealthy because it is high in simple carbohydrates and saturated fat," then the two texts would be presenting conflicting information. One author says that pizza is healthy and the other says the opposite. In this case, the authors interpret information differently: the first believes that it is healthy to eat any grains, meats, dairy, and vegetables, while the second believes that it is not healthy to eat foods that include simple carbohydrates or saturated fat.

Often, two accounts by different authors on the same subject are not likely to agree because they have different purposes. They wish to use facts to persuade their readers to accept the claims they make, and this may involve selectively choosing which facts to present to the reader.

Watch!

Watch these videos to better understand how to analyze information from different texts:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pRlaKq3L5I>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-QUeR6IAQw>

Examples

Below is an informational text about global warming, a phenomenon that some people say is made worse by large amounts of carbon dioxide present in the atmosphere. While reading this text, try to identify the author's claim and the facts he or she uses to support this claim.



Teaching Notes: Analyze Conflicting Information

The goal of RI.8.9 is for students to be able to identify conflicting information in two different texts. In teaching this standard, stress to students why two texts might present conflicting information. For example, the authors may view the issue from different perspectives and may be trying to convince the reader to take their perspective, or they may understand the information available to them differently.

Activities

1. Write a Venn diagram on the board. With the class, use the facts given in the two informational texts on global warming to fill in the diagram. Identify points where the authors agree and points on which they make conflicting claims.
2. Discuss other reasons (aside from those explored in the playlist) why two texts on the same subject may have conflicting information. One avenue to explore may be the authors' backgrounds. Ask the students how their English, history, and science teachers may respond differently to a paper written on a subject by a student if it was turned in to each of them (the remarks they would make, the grades they would give, etc.).

Writing Prompts

1. Over time, the way the Supreme Court and other governing bodies have interpreted the U.S. Constitution has changed in many ways. Instruct students to identify two significant U.S. Supreme Court cases that have given conflicting rulings (e.g., *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Brown v. Board of Education*) and to write a full essay describing the ways in which the justices interpreted the Constitution differently in these cases. Provide students with as much guidance as needed in understanding the cases.
2. Have students locate an informational text written at least one hundred years ago (www.gutenberg.org is a source for informational texts in the public domain). After students have analyzed the text and identified its claims and support, have them conduct research on the text's subject to determine how scholarship has changed over time. Then, instruct them to write a full essay describing how the facts given in this text have been discredited or reevaluated since it was written.

Additional Resources

Consider this additional resource when teaching RI.8.9:

“Evaluating Conflicting Evidence: *Sultana*”: This lesson plan teaches students to weigh conflicting information to come to a conclusion about the mystery of the 1865 explosion of the steamship *Sultana*.

- <http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/educators/lessonplan/evaluating-conflicting-evidence-sultana/>

