

Show Me the Evidence

GED[®] Reasoning through Language Arts

Tools for the Classroom



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TOOLS FOR THE CLASSROOM

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2014 GED® Test RLA – Sample Stimulus Material
“Taxation and Revenue” – Test Bank Item 18101, Stimulus and Prompt

Press Release from the Office of U.S Representative Melody Walls
United States House of Representatives, Washington, DC

Representative Walls Announces Economic Boost for 12th District
July 17, 2013

Washington, DC – Representative Melody Walls announced that Congress passed the highway and transit bill today.

“This bill funds the expansion of Highway 17 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane thoroughfare. It will positively affect the town of Oak Falls,” Walls said. As part of the expansion, Highway 17 will move two miles east of the town of Oak Falls. The bill will ease traffic congestion and create job opportunities during and after construction.

Last year, Representative Walls held town hall meetings to gather opinions from her constituents about revitalizing the economy in the 12th District. Two years ago, Turnaround Motors and Bell Camera closed their factory doors. The result has been high unemployment with no immediate prospects for new businesses. Representative Walls heard residents’ concerns for jobs in the district.

Improving the highway means jobs for local construction workers. Once completed, the highway will bring more long-distance travelers into the area. Some officials anticipate a 30% increase in highway traffic due to the ease of traveling on the improved Highway 17. An increase in travelers will attract national motel and restaurant chains along the highway route. These national businesses will mean permanent jobs for residents.

In the future, historical features in Oak Falls and Gaston, such as brick streets built by early settlers and the old wheat mill, will likely become popular tourist attractions. More visitors will increase business for local shops and restaurants.

The improved highway will eliminate eighteen-wheeler traffic through towns, a major source of traffic congestion and noise. A 2001 study in Texas showed that bypasses reduce traffic through towns by as much as 75%. Eliminating eighteen-wheeler traffic will also reduce road maintenance costs.

The improvement of Highway 17, funded by federal tax allocations, is an important investment in the area.

Oak Falls Gazette
Letter to the Editor

I am a small-business owner living in Representative Walls's congressional district. A bill has been passed to expand Highway 17 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane thoroughfare. This change includes plans to move Highway 17 two miles to the east, which means it will now bypass our town completely. I find this unacceptable.

The *Gazette* reports that because Highway 17 runs through six states, construction will be paid for with federal road funds. That means some of our federal taxes will pay for a road that I believe will harm our town. I also believe that few residents of Oak Falls will use the road. Our town and district will lose money as a result of this highway bypass paid for by our tax dollars.

The road construction jobs are only a temporary bandage on the wound made by our two manufacturers closing their doors. Once the road construction is finished, only minimum wage jobs will remain.

In fact, the highway will bypass four cities in our district alone. Each of these towns will lose business because fewer travelers will pass through them and eat, stay overnight, or purchase gas. There is no guarantee that tourists will drive an extra two miles into our town if national chain motels and restaurants are built at the highway exits. The 2001 study Representative Walls references does show that bypasses reduce traffic and noise in towns, but the study also shows they have a negative impact on local businesses.

If this project were paid for with state tax money alone, angry voters would have struck it down. Representative Walls held town hall meetings to hear residents' opinions about the local economy, but obviously she did not listen to the concerns they voiced. Please consider local concerns about this federal project.

Prompt:

Analyze the arguments presented in the press release and the letter to the editor.

In your response, develop an argument in which you explain how one position is better supported than the other. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your argument.

Remember, the better-argued position is not necessarily the position with which you agree. This task should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Response 1:

Both the press release and the letter to the editor offer positions that are supported by both fact and opinion. The press release seeks to exhort the new bill for expansion of Highway 17, while the letter argues that the passing of the bill could prove detrimental to the district. While both sides make an acceptable case, the latter provides a stronger argument.

One example of the letter's stronger argument is the explanation that federal tax dollars pay for the road, as it will incorporate six different states, therefore eliminating this particular state's ability to strike the bill down. This proves, with factual information, that the district did not have a fair say in the bill. The notion that few residents will use the road that their tax dollars are providing is an opinion. However, a resident and small-business owner in the town is more credible in the awareness of the town's concern, as compared to a representative who attended a few meetings in the town hall.

Another example of the better supported argument in the letter is the reference to the construction jobs as temporary. The press release praises the new jobs created by the highway construction, as this is a valid point. However, the author of the letter is correct in the fact that the jobs will not create a boom in the district's economy, or fill in the gap caused by the closures in the manufacturing plants, as the press release leads listeners to believe. The road construction does not solve the long-term issue of unemployment in the town. In addition, the author of the letter counters the argument that new motels, restaurants, and gas stations along the highway will create permanent jobs for the residents of the town. She explains that, "...only minimum wage jobs will remain." This is a valid argument also, as unemployed residents that need enough income to support a household would not be much better off. Providing restaurant or motel jobs is very unlikely to feed or support an entire family. It will not pick up the laid-off employees of the manufacturing plants, who may have worked for many years towards promotions and a pension.

Another example of the letter's stronger argument is the author's explanation of the 2001 study. She concedes that the representative is correct in citing that bypasses are proven to reduce noise and traffic in town, but she argues that the study shows a negative effect on local businesses. This piece of the study was not mentioned by Representative Walls or the press release, and it is a proven fact. This draws more credibility to the argument in the letter. Also, although it is a speculation, it is more reasonable that travelers will stick to the main highway and not venture miles off their path into small town when chain gas stations, restaurants, and motels are conveniently located directly at the highway exits. It is less likely that old roads in the towns will become historical locations, attracting tourists and boosting small business sales.

Despite the argument and evidence given by the press release, it appears that the letter to the editor offers a stronger case. The author's ideas are backed up by logical explanations and facts with a few speculations. Though the press release offers some fact, it is mainly specked with anticipations and

hopes, driven to overshadow any doubts and quell any concerns. The letter is penned by a resident of the town and owner of a business, subject to first-hand opinions of the citizens of the district. The press release is pushed by an elected representative who, upon visiting the town a number of times and consulting a small percentage of the constituents, is convinced she understands the majority. Although both parties may very well have the best interests of the district in mind, and either position could be correct, it is clear that the letter provides a better-supported argument.

Response 2:

Representative Walls claims that the expansion of Highway 17 “will positively affect the town of Oak Falls.” This is a subjective claim according to the author of the letter. The ways in which the town will benefit, provided by the representative, are decreased traffic through town, the creation of job opportunities, new business springing up along the highway, and increased tourism. The press release goes on to state that the representative understands the concern of her citizens, because she had a town hall meeting with them the prior year. This is misleading because it almost implies support for the expansion by these citizens, when this is not the case. From the information provided, they simply expressed economic concerns about jobs, and this solution was neither offered nor discussed.

In the case of the letter to the editor, one citizen’s opinion is very clearly given. She states, that because of passage of this expansion, she will economically suffer. She is a small-business owner that relies on the congestion of traffic to come through town as customers in her shop. She proposes that, by diverting traffic around the cities, local businesses will lose customers. She even goes on to cite the very same 2001 Texas study used by the representative in favor of the road expansion. The representative chooses only to include the statistics supporting her case, a 75% reduction in traffic through towns. Mrs. Jenkins includes the part in the study about bypasses having a negative impact on local business. A statistic vital to the arguing of this case.

The representative’s claim about the bypass creating jobs is questionable, according to the letter. Sure, construction jobs will be created, but they are not permanent thus do not offer a long term solution to the problem. The representative also states that the proposed increase in highway traffic will encourage national chains to build more businesses along the highway, adding more jobs in the process. This might be true, but at what expense? With reduced traffic thru town, already established local businesses will suffer. This will lead to the potential laying off of current employees. Therefore, the representative’s claim that jobs will be created is, in a sense, incorrect. Jobs will simply be redistributed from the town centers to the highways. Mrs. Jenkins also states that the quality of jobs are not satisfactory, because they will mostly be minimum wage positions.

The representative adds that the town's historical features will likely attract tourists and traffic through the town. Mrs. Jenkins calls this in to question. She contends that there is no guarantee that such an increase will occur. She goes further to assert her belief that tourists will not venture two miles into town to view such attractions. A possible increase is not enough of a reason to intentionally divert the needed traffic away.

Response 3:

The Press Release from the office of U.S. Representative Melody Walls has many good intentions, they want to make Highway 17 a four-lane highway instead of the two-lane highway it is now. Ms. Walls believes it will ease traffic congestion and create new job opportunities during and after construction. She also believes the highway will bring in more traffic due to the new four-lane highway and an increase in travelers from around the state, this will attract more hotels and restaurants which will give people permanent jobs. Another point she brought up was how the highway will help eighteen-wheeler traffic in the towns, it will cut down the noise and the amount of traffic. This new highway will also save the town money in the long run because they won't have to be spending money on repairing roads and they can use the saved money on other expenses the town needs. In all of this new proposed idea I think it would be best for the town to allow the new highway to be built for the people and the economy of the towns near the highway. If they were to build this, they would bring in way more jobs than they already have. It would greatly improve the economy, it would give the people a chance to find a job close to home and give them a steady income, they would not have to worry about losing their jobs because there would be so much traffic going by that the new business would always be busy with truckers, commuters and tourists and this means more money for the business and the workers.

The letter to the editor had a lot of issues with this new four-lane highway. The person that wrote this letter stressed that the new highway would totally bypass their town and they would lose business because of this. The letter also stressed that yes the highway will bring in new jobs but the high paying jobs will be temporary and the minimum wage jobs will be permanent, which concludes that their town's economy will take a big hit over the years. Lastly, the letter stressed that the tax payers would be paying for this highway and it won't even benefit them as much as the other towns and cities around the area. In all, both of these have pros and cons, but they should do what's best for the group and that would be to pay for the highway to be built. It would bring in more jobs for the people in the surrounding areas and the towns that won't really benefit might just have to think about changing jobs so they can be employed for years to come.

Let's Take Another Look

Writing Sample	Annotations
<p>The best candidate for the jon would be to fix the highways with the four lane it would possibly affect some change in town for Oak Falls. The bill might ease traffic congestion and create job opportunities. As of last yar the unemployment has no fast results for a new business in this case the district were worried about these peoples jobs.</p> <p>And with the highway built it will attract national motel and restaurant chains. That means more permanent jobs and reduce traffic by a good 75%.</p> <p>A local business owner has disagreed with the development of highway 17 being built. Because it might harm the town. Federal taxes will be paid by the local people around the area and will lose money as a result of this highway bypass paid for by tax dollars. Alice stated , "Once the road construction is finished , only minimum wage jobs will remain." Okay, so we all know it will bypass four cities in district alone. That means the local business stores will lose customers and won't purchase anything along with these highways involved.</p> <p>If this was to happen the state tax dollars would be plummet from angered voters. They lacked the consideration of letting people know about this future project. Which remains under concerned to this day.</p> <p><i>Note: Highlighted items indicate non-original text and summarization.</i></p>	<p>Trait 1: Score Point 0 This response is primarily a summary of the source text that demonstrates little to no understanding of the given arguments. The writer includes sections of the text copied from the source. This response lacks purpose and connection to the prompt, and fails to cite evidence in support of an argument, thereby earning a score of 0 for Trait 1.</p> <p>Trait 2: Score Point 0 The response consists of four brief paragraphs that primarily reiterate points from the two passages. The writer attempts to stake out a position in the first sentence, but does so in a way that is unclear (<i>The best candidate for the jon would be to fix the highways with the four lane it would possibly affect some change in town for Oak Falls</i>), and fails to develop this position coherently. There is no discernable organizational structure, and no transitions between one idea or paragraph and the next. There is little to no elaboration of ideas. The tone of the response is occasionally inappropriate for formal writing (<i>Okay, so we all know it will passed by four cities in district alone</i>). Therefore, the response earns a score of 0 for Trait 2.</p> <p>Trait 3: Score Point 0 The response demonstrates consistently flawed sentence structure and problems with mechanics and conventions that interfere with the writer's meaning. There are multiple instances of run-on sentences (<i>As of last yar the unemployment has no fast results for a new business in this case the district were worried about these peoples jobs</i>). In addition, there are errors in subject-verb agreement and in the use of apostrophes with possessives (the preceding excerpt contains examples of both), and there are several sentence fragments (<i>Which remains under concerned to this day</i>). Therefore, the response earns a score of 0 for Trait 3.</p>

Annotations

Response 1:

Trait 1: Score Point 2

The writer generates a text-based argument with strong evidence, stating that *“the letter provides a better-supported argument.”* The writer uses specific details from the text to evaluate the credibility of both authors (*a resident...is more credible...as compared to a representative*). The writer supports the argument by demonstrating how the letter to the editor has *“factual information”* to strengthen the arguments (*...correct in the fact [and] ...backed by logical explanations and facts with a few speculations*). The writer selects unsupported portions of Walls’ argument (*...mainly specked with anticipation and hopes*) and counters weak points with Jenkins’ facts (*...the author of the letter counters the argument*). Overall, the writer creates a strong argument using specific evidence focused on the textual sources. Therefore, the response earns a score of 2 for Trait 1.

Trait 2: Score Point 2

The organizational structure of the response successfully conveys the writer’s message. Beginning with an introduction to the topic that clearly expresses the writer’s argument, the response then develops that argument logically over the following paragraphs. Each paragraph begins with a transitional device (*One example..., Another example...*), thereby sustaining a logical progression of ideas. Each paragraph contains evaluation and analysis of specific points from the two texts (*She concedes...but she argues*). The response concludes with a restatement of the writer’s argument within an analysis of the credibility of each text. The writer maintains a formal style and appropriate tone throughout. Therefore, Response 9 earns a score of 2 for Trait 2.

Trait 3: Score Point 2

This lengthy response demonstrates correct sentence structure and variety throughout, and successfully employs language to achieve clarity and fluidity. The writer applies standard English conventions competently and effectively. He or she avoids wordiness and awkward sentences for the most part, uses punctuation appropriately, and demonstrates mastery of mechanics. Overall, the response is at an appropriate level for on-demand draft writing. Therefore, Response 9 earns a score of 2 for Trait 3.

Response 2:

Trait 1: Score Point 1

The writer generates an argument against the expansion (*A possible increase [in traffic] is not enough of a reason to intentionally divert the needed traffic away*). The writer uses this and other reasons to show Walls' argument as "*misleading [and] incorrect*." Although there are only some citations from the evidence used as support, the writer references the text to highlight strengths in Jenkins' argument (*A statistic vitally important to the arguing of this case*). The writer evaluates the argumentation by asking questions to point out flaws in Walls' argument (*This might be true, but at what expense?*). The writer distinguishes between claims by showing which claims are unsupported or incorrect (*Therefore, the representative's claim that jobs will be created is, in a sense, inaccurate*). Although limited, this response includes an argument with some evidence and partial evaluation, which merits a score of 1 for Trait 1.

Trait 2: Score Point 2

The writer has employed a point-counterpoint format throughout the response, in each paragraph pitting the claims of Rep. Walls against the arguments of Alice Jenkins. For the most part, this organizational structure is effective at conveying the writer's views, which seem to support the arguments of Alice Jenkins. The response is lacking a clear statement of the writer's position, however, which occasionally compels the reader to infer the writer's meaning. The main transitional device employed by the writer is to offer responses to Rep. Walls' claims (*Sure, construction jobs will be created, but...*). On the whole, however, the writer's ideas are logical and specific points are elaborated upon. Therefore, Response 6 earns a score of 2 for Trait 2.

Trait 3: Score Point 1

Although the writer varies sentence structure within the response, there are multiple examples of awkward or unclear sentences, sentence fragments (*A statistic vitally important to the arguing of this case*), errors in subject-verb agreement (*the quality of jobs are not satisfactory*), and errors in the use of apostrophes (*assert her belief that tourist's will not venture*) that occasionally interfere with comprehension. Overall, the response demonstrates standard English usage that is at a minimally acceptable level of appropriateness for on-demand task writing. Therefore, Response 6 earns a score of 1 for Trait 3.

Response 3:

Trait 1: Score Point 0

This response includes summaries of the source texts with commentary on the topic that serves as a minimal level of analysis. The writer attempts to build an argument in favor of building the highway: *“they should do whats best for the group...to pay for the highway to be built.”* The writer includes information from the text, but this is summary and not evidence to support the argument.

Although the writer takes a stand on the issue at hand, it is not based on the strength of the arguments for the two positions. The last sentences of the response contain minimal amounts of analysis of the letter to the editor.

Overall, the response earns a score of 0 in Trait 1.

Trait 2: Score Point 1

The writer has attempted to organize his/her ideas by dividing the response into two paragraphs, each of which begins with a summary of one of the two positions followed by a brief and simplistic response to that summary. The first paragraph lays out the position taken by Rep. Walls, followed by the writer’s opinion: *“I think it would be best for the town to allow the new highway to be built for the people and the economy of the towns near the highway.”* The second paragraph describes the letter-writer’s position, followed by a reiteration of the writer’s opinion of the issue (*In all, both of these have pros and cons, but they should do whats best for the group and that would be to pay for the highway to be built*). The response lacks details and contains few transitional devices that would support a logical progression of ideas.

Therefore, the response earns a score of 1 for Trait 2.

Trait 3: Score Point 0

The response contains multiple examples of run-on and awkward sentences, homonym confusion (there/their), errors in subject-verb agreement, and incorrect use of apostrophes, detracting from the clarity of the writer’s message and interfering with comprehension. For example: *“The Press Release from the office of U.S. Representative Melody Walls has many could intentions, they want to make Highway 17 a four-lane highway.”* Overall, standard usage is at an unacceptable level for on-demand draft writing.

Therefore, the response earns a score of 0 for Trait 3.

Resources for the Classroom

Fact and Opinion Activities

Fact and Opinion Newspaper Activity

Pair your students and provide each pair a page from the newspaper and two highlighters or markers. Explain to students that newspapers report many facts. They also include opinions in interviews, advertisements, and editorial pieces. Ask students to highlight or underline facts and opinions on their newspaper pages, using a different color for each. When students have finished, have them trade their newspaper page with another student pair to check their work.

Facts and Opinions in Advertisements

Many companies include both facts and opinions in their advertisements. Since advertisements are easy for students to access at home, they are an excellent source for students to use in their search for facts and opinions. Photocopy and distribute the Facts and Opinions in Advertisements Reproducible. Ask students to take the reproducible home and complete it using reading materials they have in their homes.

Fact and Opinion Activity

Label a sentence strip or index card “Fact”, and label another “Opinion.” Write several facts and opinions on sentence strips and place in the center. Direct students to lay the sentence strips under the correct headings. You may choose to make this activity self-checking by writing the answer on the back of each sentence strip. Provide extra blank sentence strips for students to create their own sentences and answers. Ask students to leave their facts and opinions at the center for others to categorize.

Facts and Opinions in Advertisements

Fact	Opinion

Fact or Opinion? You Decide

Read each statement and determine whether it is a fact or opinion. Explain your answer. Identify the signal words that led you to identifying each as a fact or opinion.

	Fact	Opinion
Heart disease is a leading cause of death in America.		
The price of gas has grown to become too expensive.		
Almost half of all Americans drink coffee every day, making it the most widely consumed drug in the United States.		
On average, college graduates earn more money in their lifetimes than high school graduates.		
Security alarms are the most effective way to protect homes from burglaries.		
Eating a vegetarian diet is the best way to stay healthy.		
93% of all greeting cards are purchased by women.		
The U.S. government is the largest government in the world.		
There are more calories in latte from Starbucks than a Snickers bar.		
The more money someone has the more successful they are.		

Both Sides Now

When reading argumentative non-fiction text, materials often present one side or viewpoint on a particular issue. Sometimes, the text may provide evidence to support both sides. Then, it is up to the reader to determine which is best supported. Analyzing and evaluating the evidence for both sides is one way to identify a claim and the reasons for making a specific decision/claim.

Both Sides Now		
Evidence that Supports		Evidence that Opposes
	Question or statement Which position is better supported?	
Decision (Claim)		
Reasons (Analysis/Evaluation)		

Citing the Evidence

Question	State	Cite	Explain
This is the question you are directly responding to. If you are writing an essay, you must also use part of the stimulus in your answer so your audience knows what you are talking about	State the claim - the idea you had about the text.	Cite what in the text led you to that idea.	Explain how each piece of evidence supports your idea.

Question	State	Cite	Explain

Sample Frames for Incorporating Evidence

In the article, “ _____,” _____ maintains that _____

_____’s point is that _____

_____’s claim rests upon the questionable assumption that _____

One reason that _____ maintains the position of _____ is that _____

According to the text/article/passage/report, _____

An example of _____, is _____. This proves/supports that _____

The author states that _____

In addition, the author/article/research supports that _____. This proves that _____.

Examples/data supporting _____, include _____

For instance, _____

This highlights the difference between _____ and _____

Constructed Response Organizer

Prompt/Question:		
<p>Restatement of question in own words (unpack it)</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <p>Claim</p> <p>Evidence Detailed body of evidence or reasons that support answer – include enough details to answer the question. Make sure all details support the claim and are not off-topic.</p> <p>Counterargument(s)</p> <p>Restated question Concluding thoughts</p>		
	Text 1	Text 2
	Claim	Rebuttal

Connecting Ideas – Using Transitional Words and Phrases (Odell Education)

Transitional words and phrases create link between your ideas when you are speaking and writing. They help your audience understand the logic of your thoughts. When using transitional words, make sure that it is the right match for what you want to express. Remember, transition words work best when they are connecting two or more strong ideas that are clearly stated. The following is a list of transitional words and phrases that you can use for different purposes.

Add Related Information	Give an Example or Illustrate an Idea	Make Sure Your Thinking is Clearly Understood	Compare Ideas or Show How Ideas Are Similar	Contrast Ideas or Show How They Are Different
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · furthermore · moreover · too · also · again · in addition · next · further · finally · and, or, nor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · to illustrate · to demonstrate · specifically · for instance · as an illustration · for example 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · that is to say · in other words · to explain · i.e., (that is) · to clarify · to rephrase it · to put it another way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · in the same way · by the same token · similarly · in like manner · likewise · in similar fashion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · nevertheless · but · however · otherwise · on the contrary · in contrast · on the other hand
Explain How One Thing Causes Another	Explain the Effect or Result of Something	Explain Your Purpose	List Related Information	Qualify Something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · because · since · on account of · for that reason 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · therefore · consequently · accordingly · thus · hence · as a result 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · in order that · so that · to that end, to this end · for this purpose · for this reason 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · First, second, third... · First, then, also, finally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · almost · nearly · probably · never · always · frequently · perhaps · maybe · although