

**HOW CAN YOU...**

***Write to  
Communicate  
Clearly***  
**...ABOUT PUBLIC ISSUES?**

High School Lesson Plan on WRITING FOR ECONOMICS

Time Estimate: Three 45-minute class periods



FEDERAL RESERVE BANK of NEW YORK

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**Supporting Question 1:** What are the components of good research?

**Supporting Question 2:** How does asking and answering questions guide the research process?

**Supporting Question 3:** What are the different ways you can present an argument?

## **Extension Activity**

### **Materials**

- [Worksheet 1: Types of Writing](#)
- [Worksheet 2: Compelling and Supporting Questions](#)
- [Worksheet 3: Analyzing a Research Blog](#)
- [Worksheet 4: The Research Process](#)
- [Worksheet 5: Brainstorming a Public Issues Project](#)
- [Worksheet 6: Analyzing a Student Podcast Script](#)
  
- Liberty Street Economics blog (<https://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/>)
- Journal of Future Economists (all volumes located here: <https://www.newyorkfed.org/outreach-and-education/high-school/high-school-fed-challenge>)
- College, Career, and Civic Life (<https://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/c3/C3-Framework-for-Social-Studies.pdf>)

**Answer Key** NOTE: Answers will vary on Worksheets 1, 2, 5, and 6

## **State and National Curriculum Standards**



**Supporting Question 1:** What are the components of good research?

### Procedures

1. (As instructor, prior to the lesson, visit [libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org](http://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org). There you will find the Liberty Street Economics blog, where New York Fed economists write and present their research in an accessible format. Find an article or articles on a topic that you think may interest your students. Any topic you think will engage students will work for the lesson.)
2. Begin by asking students about writing they have done in the past, and in what other contexts. Put all student answers in the front of the room such as on the board or on a piece of chart paper. *(Expected student responses: Answers will vary, but students may talk about writing they have done in other classes, such as essays or term papers in English. They may also talk about informal writing such as diary entries or blogging.)*
3. Once the list is complete, ask students to write down the “class list” at the top of [Worksheet 1](#).
4. Explain to students that an important part of all writing is understanding three key components: Audience, Tone, and Purpose. Show students the Triangles<sup>1</sup> at the bottom of [Worksheet 1](#), each of which includes these important writing elements.
5. Ask students to pick any three of the types of writing from the class list, and for each one complete the box next to Audience, Tone, and Purpose. *(For instance, if the student chooses a “diary entry” for Audience they may write “myself,” for Tone they may write “casual” or “messy” or “emotional”, etc. For Purpose they may write such things as “to vent feelings” or “to share with future self”, etc.)*
6. Ask several students to share their responses, making note of how different Audience, Tone, and Purpose are for each. Regardless of which types of writing students

discuss, the key takeaway for students to understand is that writers use a spectrum of styles.

7. Expanding on Step 5, ask students if Audience, Tone, and Purpose are interchangeable. For example, using a diary entry, ask students to speculate what would happen if the audience changed or if the writer knew their diary was going to be read by someone else. *(Expected student response: It is likely that as Audience changes, Tone or Purpose may change as well.)*
8. Explain to students that determining the Audience, Tone, and Purpose are an important part of writing of all types. Introduce the compelling question for this lesson by telling students that they will focus on writing about policy issues, and that to do so successfully they must consider the following: **“How can you write to communicate clearly about public issues?”**
9. Pass out [Worksheet 2](#). Ask students to fill in the top of [Worksheet 2](#) with what they think the proper Audience, Tone, and Purpose are for writing about public issues. *(Student answers will vary.)*
10. Explain that students will tackle the first supporting question, **“What are the components of good research?”** Pass out a copy/copies of the article that you selected in Step 1, along with copies of [Worksheet 3: Analyzing a Research Blog](#). *(You may wish to provide students with some context about what they are reading. You can explain that the Liberty Street blog is written by economics researchers but is on a public website designed to present insight and analysis to a general audience.)*

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<sup>1</sup> The Audience, Tone, and Purpose Writing Triangles are adapted from the University of Minnesota Open Lib website “Writing for Success,” April 22, 2023. <https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/6-1-purpose-audience-tone-and-content/>



11. Working in groups, ask students to read the blog article and complete Worksheet 3, analyzing the article for the following:
  - a. Tone
  - b. Audience
  - c. Purpose
  - d. Content
    - i. Thesis/Question the authors attempt to answer
    - ii. Data the authors use
    - iii. Conclusions
  
12. Debrief with students, gathering answers from each group about their analysis of each of the writing components. Some possible expected student responses are provided below for some sections, while others will be dependent on the blog chosen:
  - a. Tone: *(Challenging, but understandable; conversational; formal, but maybe not “too formal”)*
  - b. Audience: *(Written for public; audience may need to be somewhat familiar with basic economics)*
  - c. Purpose: *(To prove a point; to analyze a problem; to present research)*
  
13. Ask students to answer the question at the bottom of Worksheet 3. Then, have several students share. *(Expected student response: If the blog was instead written for a casual audience, they may expect the article to feature fewer charts or ones easier to read, more background explanation and/or simplified analysis, use less challenging language or jargon, etc.)* Ask students to reflect on how Audience, Tone, and Purpose all came together for the economists write about these topics in the way they do.
  
14. Returning to Worksheet 2, ask students to answer Supporting Question 1, “What are the components of good research?” using their findings from Worksheet 3 as a guide.

**Supporting Question 2:** How does asking and answering questions guide the research process?

### Procedures

1. (Prior to the activities for Supporting Question 2, the instructor should collect sample pages from the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) framework. A copy of the document can be found online at <https://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/c3/C3-Framework-for-Social-Studies.pdf>)
2. Remind students of the compelling question, “**How can you write to communicate clearly about public issues?**” Explain that now that they have looked up an example of public issues writing and gotten a sense of its characteristics, now they will examine the structure and process of asking a research question and answering it.
3. Pass out Worksheet 4: A Research Framework. Explain that this framework is one (but certainly not the only) way of looking at the research process and is a visual representation of an approach students can take when writing about public issues.
4. (All readings and page numbers referenced for this step are based on the URL in Step 1 of Supporting Question 2. You can also tell students to ignore any standards that happen to be on their assigned pages.) Divide the class into three groups for a jigsaw activity. Explain that each group will be responsible for defining their section of the framework to piece together the entire puzzle.
  - a. Group 1 will read pages 23-24 (Questions and Inquiry)
  - b. Group 2 will read pages 29-30 (Social Studies Subjects)
  - c. Group 3 will read pages 53-54 (Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence)
5. Provide time for students to read, answering the questions for their assigned section on Worksheet 4. Once there is group consensus, students should team up with students from two other groups to complete Worksheet 4 and piece together the framework.

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6. Check for understanding by asking students to summarize the three steps in the framework at the bottom of [Worksheet 4](#). *(Expected student response: While the level of detail may vary, students should in some way state that “Authors begin by posing a question they want to answer. The question should be compelling and interesting. Then the author uses tools in social studies like history or economics to answer the question, like reading historical documents or interpreting economic data. The author needs to gather sources from print and online, and needs to make sure that the sources are factual by analyzing them for main idea, point of view, bias, etc.)*
7. Pass out [Worksheet 5: Brainstorming a Public Issues Project](#). Have students practice framing their research by brainstorming in their group three possible topics that they would want to write about. The groups complete sections 1-3 of [Worksheet 5](#), listing the following:
  - a. Three possible questions that they would like to research in the social studies
  - b. Examples of the disciplinary skills they would use to answer those questions
  - c. Possible data sources they would need to find to answer their questions
8. Once groups are finished, explain that peer review<sup>2</sup> and feedback is important in the writing process, and that now students will engage in a lightning round of “peer review speed dating.”
9. Divide students into new groups, so that every new group has someone who developed different questions in Step 7. Explain that each student will share their question, disciplinary skills, and possible data sources. The other students will provide feedback using the suggested questions at the bottom of [Worksheet 5](#). *(Student feedback will vary, but students could suggest such things as improvement to the wording of the question or additional sources of data to use.)*
10. As a conclusion, return to [Worksheet 2](#) and ask students to answer Supporting Question 2, “**How does asking and answering questions guide the research process?**”

**Supporting Question 3:** What are the different ways you can present an argument?

### Procedures

1. Prior to this lesson, the instructor should find several articles from any volume of the *Journal of Future Economists*, available online<sup>3</sup>. These journals feature podcast scripts written by teams of students from high schools that participate in High School Fed Challenge<sup>4</sup>. The instructor should choose podcast scripts from different volumes that they feel are accessible for their students. It is helpful as well to mix styles and tones, so the instructor is encouraged to pick scripts that differ in content and structure.
2. Remind students of the compelling question they are trying to answer: “**How can you write to communicate clearly about public issues?**” Review that in previous lessons students answered the supporting questions “**What are the components of good research?**” and “**How does asking and answering questions guide the research process?**” Have students review their answers to those two questions on [Worksheet 2](#).
3. Explain that today students will look at the academic writing of their high school peers to see how students like them have tackled real-world economics problems and written for an audience. Provide students some context that the podcast scripts they will read are from *The Journal of Future Economists*, and that all the writing and research for these published works was done by high school authors.
4. Pass out [Worksheet 6: Evaluating a Student Podcast Script](#). Divide students into groups. Each group will read a different script that the instructor selected in Step 1 of the sequence of steps for Supporting Question 3.

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<sup>2</sup> Peer review is “the process of someone reading, checking, and giving his or her opinion about something that has been written by another scientist or expert working in the same subject area.” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/peer-review>)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.newyorkfed.org/outreach-and-education/high-school/high-school-fed-challenge>

<sup>4</sup> To learn more about High School Fed Challenge and how to participate, visit: <https://www.newyorkfed.org/outreach-and-education/high-school/high-school-fed-challenge>



5. Students work together to read their script, and complete Worksheet 6. Students are evaluating the script for the following:
  - a. Tone
  - b. Audience
  - c. Purpose
  - d. Question
  - e. Social studies subjects
  - f. Data
  - g. Conclusions
6. Once students have completed their first script, the instructor should provide a second article of a contrasting style. Again, in their groups, students complete Worksheet 6 for the second article.
7. Debrief, asking students to share their thoughts on the writing they evaluated. *(While answers will vary, students will likely note that, for example, podcast scripts have a different tone than academic articles. Academic articles use data in a different way, with charts and graphs, where the scripts use data that can be read aloud because they have a different purpose. Students should note that some of the podcast scripts have a conversational tone and sound somewhat casual, yet the content is still rigorous and there is still extensive use of data.)*
8. Ask students to return to Worksheet 2 and answer the third supporting question, **“What are the different ways you can present an argument?”** *(Expected student response: An author can make an argument using a more formal academic paper or using a podcast script, among others. The tone of the podcast may be more casual than a paper, but that is because the purposes of the two are different. Regardless of the approach, it is important to ask questions and use data and disciplinary skills to answer them.)*
9. To conclude, ask students to reflect with a personal answer to the compelling question, **“How can you write to clearly communicate about public issues?”**



## Extension Activity/Next Steps: Journal of Future Economists

1. Students have now spent time analyzing some characteristics of academic writing, both informally and formally, as well as learned a basic framework for the inquiry and research process.
2. The High School Fed Challenge extends this student learning and gives your class the opportunity to analyze a real-world policy issue and write about it using the disciplinary literacy of economics and other social studies content areas.
3. Teams of student authors submit academic work on a topic related to the year's theme, developing their research skills and teamwork in the process. Select submissions are published annually in the Journal of Future Economists. All schools that submit are credited in the journal.
4. For more information about the program including rules, eligibility, rubrics, timelines, resources, and the year's topic, please visit <https://www.newyorkfed.org/outreach-and-education/high-school/high-school-fed-challenge>
5. If your school has not yet decided or is preparing to participate in High School Fed Challenge, consider having your own competition between teams at your school to select an entry or publish your own Journal of Future Economists with podcast scripts produced by teams in your class, using the competition rubric or other criteria. If you publish your own Journal or have an in-school competition, we would love to hear from you at [nyeconed@ny.frb.org](mailto:nyeconed@ny.frb.org).



# Handouts

## Materials

- [Worksheet 1: Types of Writing](#)
- [Worksheet 2: Compelling and Supporting Questions](#)
- [Worksheet 3: Analyzing a Research Blog](#)
- [Worksheet 4: A Research Framework](#)
- [Worksheet 5: Brainstorming a Public Issues Project](#)
- [Worksheet 6: Evaluating a Student Podcast Script](#)



In the box below list as many types of writing as you can.

Type of writing:

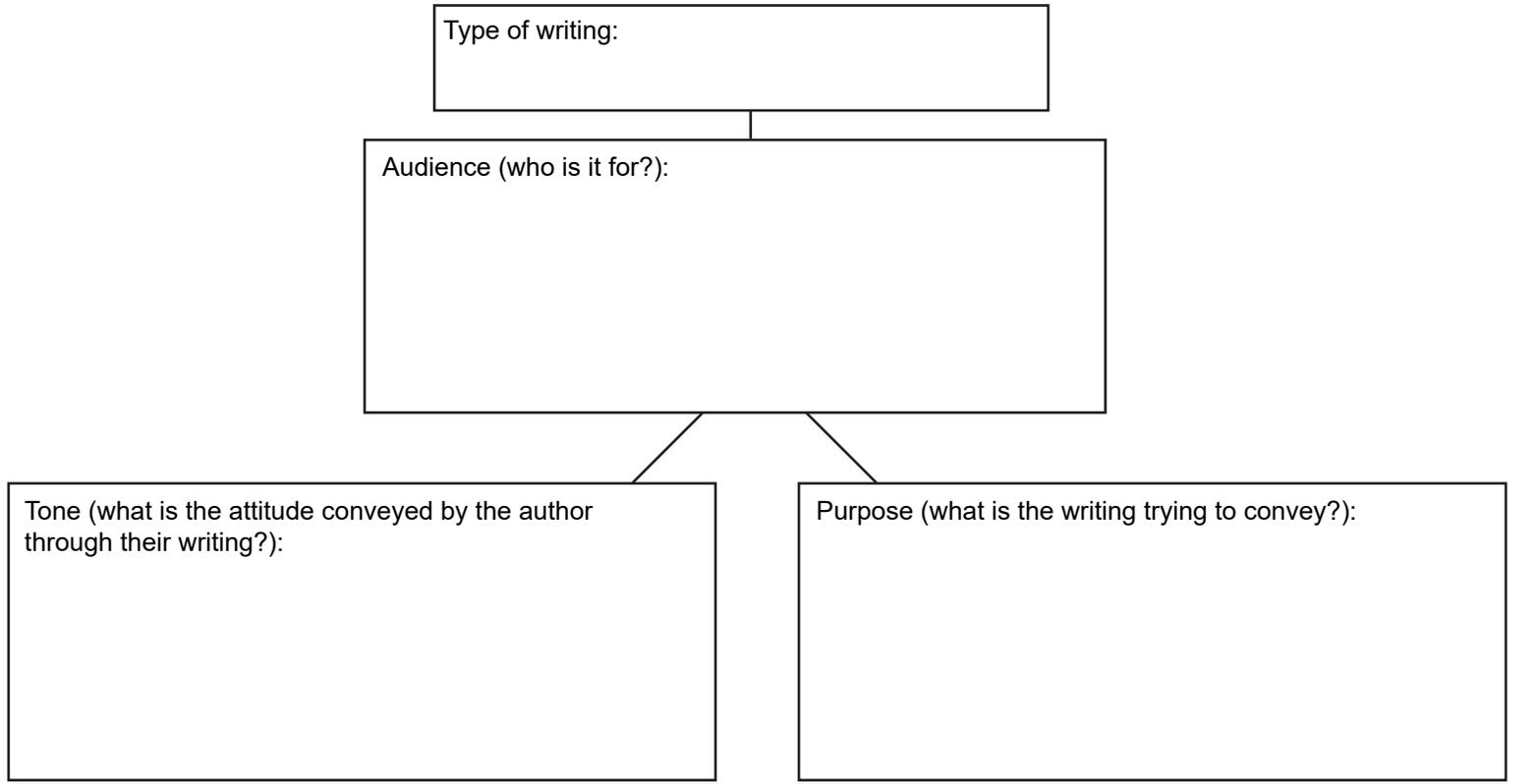
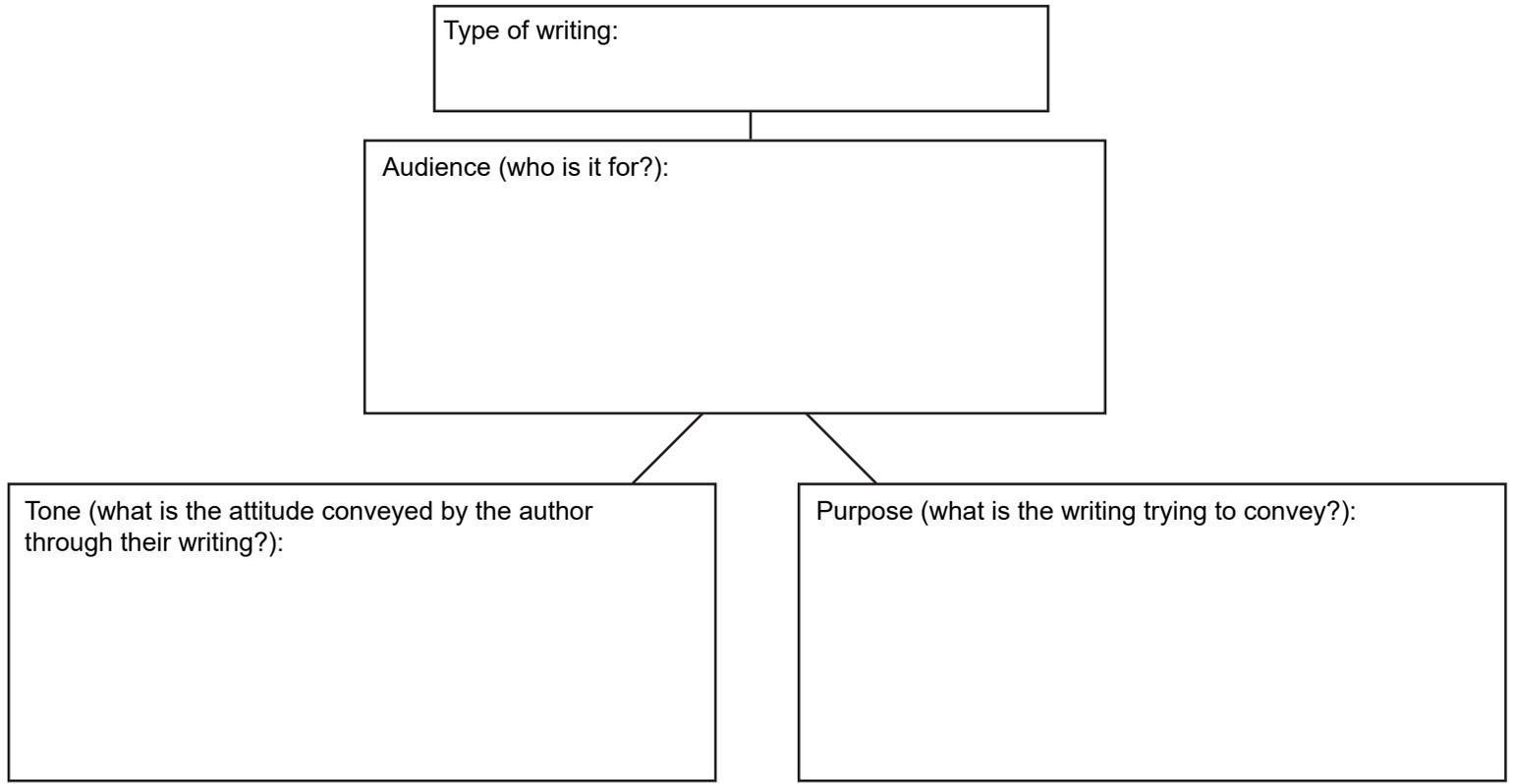
Audience (who is it for?):

Tone (what is the attitude conveyed by the author through their writing?):

Purpose (what is the writing trying to convey?):



 **Worksheet 1: Types of Writing (cont'd)**



Compelling Question: How can you write to communicate clearly about public issues?

Prediction: What is the appropriate Audience, Tone, and Purpose when writing about public issues?

Type of writing:

Audience (who is it for?):

Tone (what is the attitude conveyed by the author through their writing?):

Purpose (what is the writing trying to convey?):

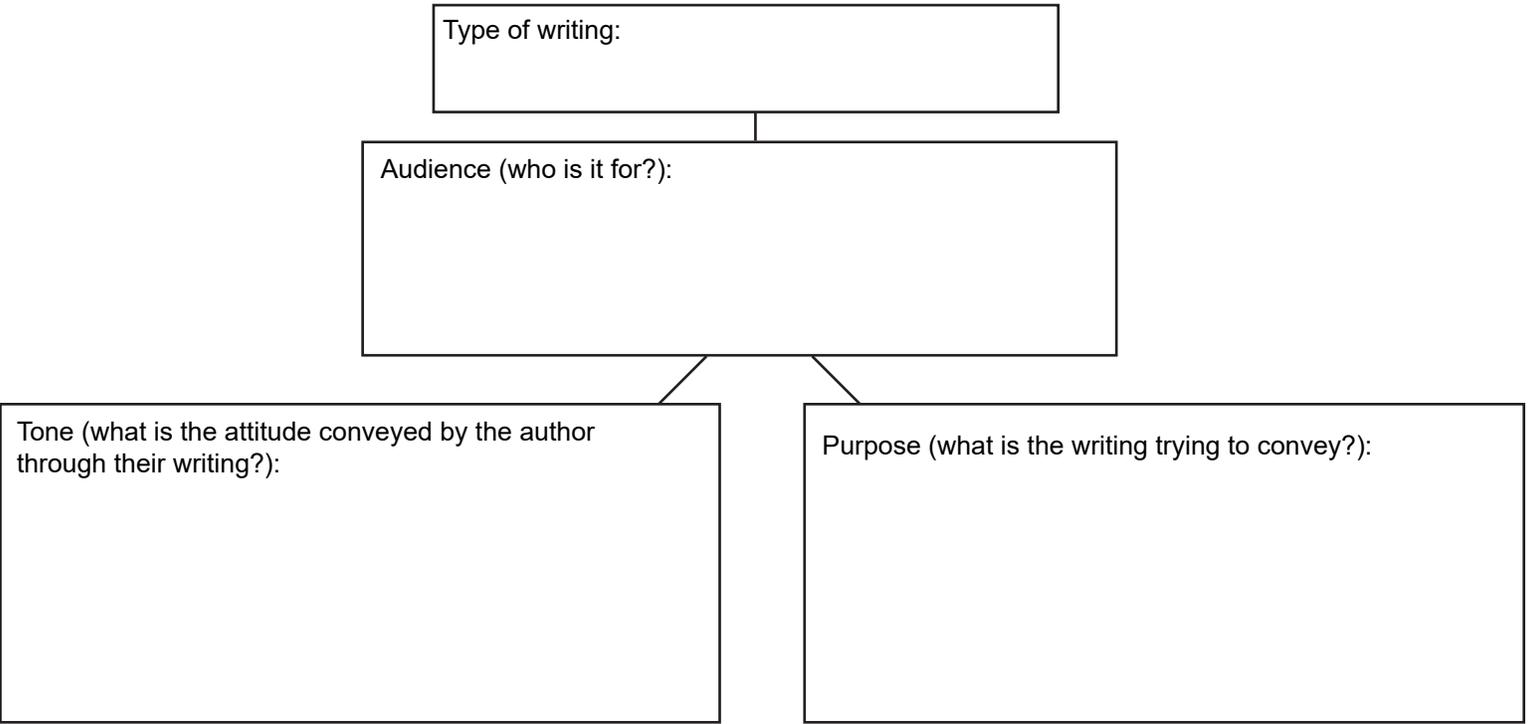
Supporting Question 1: What are the components of good research?

Supporting Question 2: How does asking and answering questions guide the research process?

Supporting Question 3: What are the different ways you can present an argument?



 **Worksheet 3: Analyzing a Research Blog**



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Thesis/question the authors are trying to answer:
Data the authors use:
Authors' conclusions:

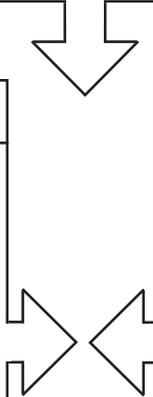
Question: How might the elements of the writing change if this were written for the general public? (For example, an article in the school newspaper or for a general interest internet site?)



Questions and Inquiry
1. Why is a question important?
2. What are the elements of a good question?
3. What is the difference between a compelling and supporting question?

Social Studies Subjects
What are the four major social studies subjects or disciplines?
Why is using multiple subjects important in research?
How have you as a student used different subjects in the past?

Evaluating Sources
Why is the use of data important?
What are the three things a scholar should analyze when determining the usefulness of a source?
What types of data sources have you used in the past?



**Summarize the research process:**

How does a writer combine the social studies subjects and sources to answer a question?

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 **Worksheet 5: Brainstorming a Public Issues Project**

**Research Topic 1**

What is my research question?

What subjects will I use?

What are some examples of types and sources of data that I will need?

**Research Topic 2**

What is my research question?

What subjects will I use?

What are some examples of types and sources of data that I will need?

**Research Topic 3**

What is my research question?

What subjects will I use?

What are some examples of types and sources of data that I will need?



**PEER FEEDBACK**

Is the research question clear?

Can the research question be answered?

Are there any other subjects that can be used?

Are there disciplines outside the social studies that might be useful?

Can the data be gathered?

Do I have the skills and expertise to interpret the data effectively?



**Name of Student Article:** \_\_\_\_\_

Audience (who is it for?):

Tone (what is the attitude conveyed by the author through their writing?):

Purpose (what is the writing trying to convey?):

Thesis/question the students are trying to answer:

Data the students use:

Students' conclusions:

What did I like about this podcast script? \_\_\_\_\_

What would I improve about this podcast script? \_\_\_\_\_



**Name of Student Article:** \_\_\_\_\_

Audience (who is it for?):

Tone (what is the attitude conveyed by the author through their writing?):

Purpose (what is the writing trying to convey?):

Thesis/question the students are trying to answer:

Data the students use:

Students' conclusions:

What did I like about this podcast script? \_\_\_\_\_

What would I improve about this podcast script? \_\_\_\_\_



 **Worksheet 3: Analyzing a Research Blog [Answer Key]**

Type of writing: **Research blog** (teacher note: unless another type of reading material is chosen; see Step 1 of lesson plan)

Audience (who is it for?):  
Possible answers include but not limited to: written for the public; written for an audience familiar with basic economics; written for people who are curious

Tone (what is the attitude conveyed by the author through their writing?):  
Possible answers include but not limited to: challenging, but understandable; conversational; formal but not “too formal” or difficult to read

Purpose (what is the writing trying to convey?):  
Possible answers include but not limited to: to prove a point; to analyze a problem; to present original research; to encourage further study

Thesis/question the authors are trying to answer:

Answers will vary based on article chosen

Data the authors use:

Answers will vary based on article chosen

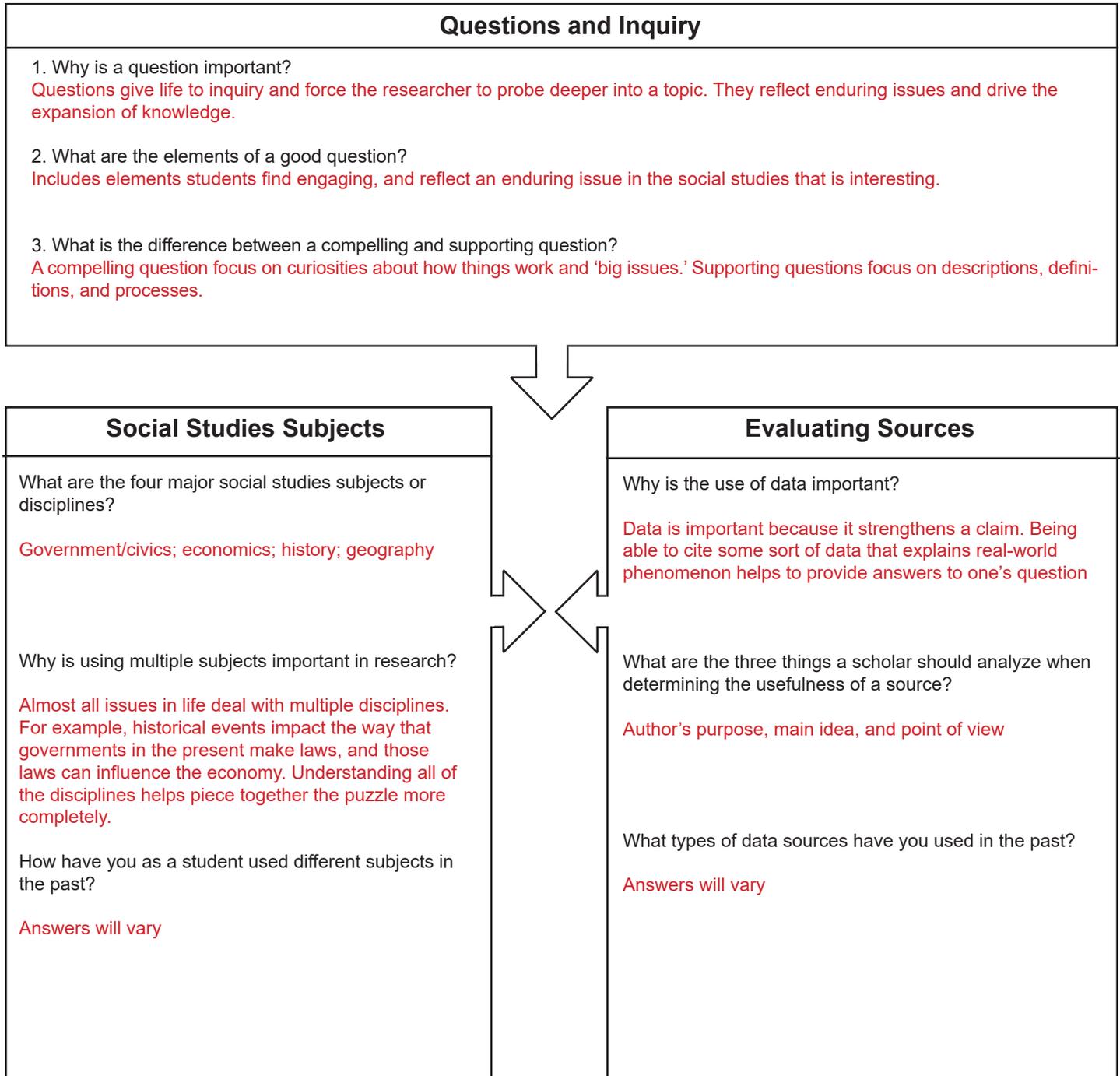
Authors' conclusions:

Answers will vary based on article chosen

Question: How might the elements of the writing change if this were written for the general public? (For example, an article in the school newspaper or for a general interest internet site?)

Possible answers include but not limited to: the article may use different, more accessible language; article may explain basic concepts more because the audience is unfamiliar with academic terms; the article may spend more time in the introduction rather than in the data section because a general audience may not have the data skills





**Summarize the research process:**

How does a writer combine the social studies subjects and sources to answer a question

In the research process, you formulate a compelling question that addresses an enduring social studies issue. Then you develop supporting questions whose answers will help you answer the compelling one. Using the social studies disciplines, the researcher gathers the appropriate data and uses that to answer the question.



# State Curriculum Standards

## New York

### Grades 11 – 12 Social Studies Writing Standards

1. Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
  - a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claims, establish the significance of the claims, distinguish the claims from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences the claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
  - b. Develop claims and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claims and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
  - c. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claims and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claims and counterclaims.
  - d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which the work is written.
  - e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
9. Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

## New Jersey

### Social Studies Disciplinary Practices

- **Developing Questions and Planning Inquiry**  
Developing insightful questions and planning effective inquiry involves identifying the purposes of different questions to understand the human experience, which requires addressing real world issues. Inquiries incorporating questions from various social science disciplines build understanding of the past, present and future; these inquiries investigate the complexity and diversity of individuals, groups, and societies.
- **Gathering and Evaluating Sources**  
Finding, evaluating and organizing information and evidence from multiple sources and perspectives are the core of inquiry. Effective practice requires evaluating the credibility of primary and secondary sources, assessing the reliability of information, analyzing the context of information, and corroborating evidence across sources. Discerning opinion from fact and interpreting the significance of information requires thinking critically about ourselves and the world.
- **Presenting Arguments and Explanations**  
Using a variety of formats designed for a purpose and an authentic audience forms the basis for clear communication. Strong arguments contain claims with organized evidence and valid reasoning that respects the diversity of the world and the dignity of each person. Writing findings and engaging in civil discussion with an audience provides a key step in the process of thinking critically about conclusions and continued inquiry..

## Connecticut

### Social Studies Frameworks: Inquiry in the Social Studies

- **DIMENSION 1: DEVELOPING QUESTIONS AND PLANNING INQUIRY** Central to a rich social studies experience is the capability for developing questions that can frame and advance inquiry. Those questions come in two forms: compelling and supporting questions.
- **DIMENSION 3: EVALUATING SOURCES AND USING EVIDENCE** Students need to analyze information and come to conclusions in an inquiry. These skills focus on gathering and evaluating sources, and then developing claims and using evidence to support these claims.



# National Curriculum Standards

## College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

D4.1.9-12. Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

D4.3.9-12. Present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature evocative ideas and perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

D4.4.9-12. Critique the use of claims and evidence in arguments for credibility.

D4.6.9-12. Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.

