



BIG GREEN LESSONS

WINTER WRITING, OPINION: GRADES 6-8

KEY

In this lesson, students will...

UNDERSTANDINGS

- write argumentative pieces based on the Learning Garden.

STANDARDS

Common Core - English Language Arts

ALIGNMENT

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1.** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.1.** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

MATERIALS &

PREPARATION

- Chart paper/whiteboard and markers
- Writing materials for students (pencils/paper, computers, tablets, etc.)
- Graphic organizer, optional
- Argumentative writing rubric

TEACHER

BACKGROUND

The winter may seem like a slow season for your school Learning Garden without active planting, observing, and harvesting activities happening during a prime growing season. This can be the optimum time, however, for students to engage further with the Learning Garden by identifying a topic connected to the Learning Garden that they can “take a side on” and defend.

If the weather allows, consider touring the Learning Garden to introduce this writing – give students time to explore the differences between a fall and winter Learning Garden. You may also consider introducing the activity in the Learning Garden space, doing the student discussion and brainstorming, even writing the first drafts in the Learning Garden.

Opinion writing for middle school focuses on not only creating a claim, but also supporting that claim with relevant evidence that clearly connects to the claim. Students should also be working on organizing their piece so that the evidence and reasoning build as strong an argument as possible. Lastly, students at this level should begin acknowledging counter-arguments and use them to strengthen their own perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Spend time discussing the following introductory questions:

- Is spending class time in the Learning Garden good for our students? Why?



- Would you tell our principal/another teacher/your parents that we should spend more or less time in the Learning Garden? Why?
- If your class responses seem one-sided, you may need to pose the opposite perspective, for example: “Why might [principal/custodian/coach] say we should spend [more/less] time in the Learning Garden?”

LESSON

1. Review as necessary the components of argumentative writing.
2. Have students “Think, Pair, Share” their perspectives from the introduction questions.
3. Allow pairs to share their points of discussion and record all ideas on a chart paper or whiteboard.
4. Share your own opinion topic from the Learning Garden in order to model the writing process. (Consider using a topic different than the ones posed in the introduction to allow students to present their own opinion and not be tempted to follow yours.) If using a graphic organizer, model how to use the graphic organizer with your own idea. *Use this opportunity to highlight a classroom focus for writing.
5. Model drafting your own argumentative piece for students.
6. Give students time to solidify their own perspective with reasons and examples and begin drafting their piece or identifying where they might need additional sources of information.
7. Circulate as needed, reinforcing desired writing techniques with students.
8. As time allows (possibly over the remainder of the week), move through the writing process with the Learning Garden opinion pieces. After drafting, revise and edit your model and then have students revise and edit their own; repeat as necessary.
9. Create a final draft of your model and publish, and have students create a final draft and publish. Lastly, if possible, allow students to share or present their opinion pieces.
10. Use your school’s argumentative writing rubric to score student writing and provide feedback.

CONCLUSION

Have students share key parts of the lesson and review the Key Understandings.

ADDITIONAL WRITING PROMPTS TO CONSIDER

- If you were to change any aspect of our Learning Garden, what would you change? Why?
- Do you think growing your own food is easy or difficult? Why?
- Should an amount of land in our city be dedicated to gardens?
- What other ways might we use the Learning Garden in our school?

Even more writing prompts are available in our BG Writing Prompts document!



NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Learning Garden Argumentative Piece

Opinion/Claim:		
Evidence:	Evidence:	Evidence:
Reasoning:	Reasoning:	Reasoning:
Counter-argument:		
Conclusion:		