

Drafting Board: Interest Groups

Time Needed: 3 to 5 class periods

Materials Needed:

- Computers or tablets with internet access (*external keyboard helpful with tablets*)
- iCivics student usernames/passwords
- Student worksheets
- Challenge Mode Guide (*for yourself*)
- Claim Creator Help Guide (*for yourself*)

Copy Instructions:

- Brainstorm *or* Mind Map pre-write activity (*half-sheet; class set*)
- Glossary (*2 pages; class set*)
- Evidence Guide (*4 pages; class set*)
- Progress Tracker (*3 pages; class set*)
- Peer Edit Guide (*half-sheet; class set*)

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis and reflection
- Organize reasons and evidence logically
- Develop a counterclaim
- Use words and phrases to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence
- Produce clear and coherent writing with appropriate development, organization, and style
- Describe the role of interest groups in American politics
- Evaluate the influence of interest groups on public policy

STEP BY STEP

TEACHER PREP

A few easy steps will make the *Drafting Board* experience go smoothly:

- Make sure your students know their iCivics.org usernames and passwords.
- Preview the Challenge Mode Guide. Decide which level is best for most of your class, and plan which students you will assign a more or less challenging level.
- Preview and choose a pre-writing activity for the class to complete.
- Copy all needed materials.

TELL

students that in this version of *Drafting Board*, they will be writing about whether groups interested in specific issues have too much influence on American politics.

DISTRIBUTE

the pre-writing activity to the class and give five minutes for the students to brainstorm. When the time is up, you may ask students to share with the class.

PRETEACH

the vocabulary if you wish, using the printable glossary. (Glossary words are highlighted and accessible within *Drafting Board* itself.)

DISTRIBUTE

one Progress Tracker and one Evidence Guide to each student.

SHOW

students where to write their usernames and passwords on the Progress Tracker.

PREVIEW

the objectives for each tool and explain that this is a multi-day tool that will take a number of class periods. The Progress Tracker will help them keep track of each visit to *Drafting Board*. (Don't worry, *Drafting Board* will remember where they left off.)

WRITE

on the board or tell students which scaffolding level you want most of the class to use. Tell them you will circulate to let individual students know if they should choose a different level. (Be prepared with your Challenge Mode Guide!)

Drafting Board: Interest Groups

- ASK** students to log in and launch *Drafting Board*. The first screen will ask them to select the challenge mode.
- CIRCULATE** to assign individual challenge modes if you wish (do this immediately) and to monitor students' progress and help students as needed. **** This is important! **** *Drafting Board* is not a game. Students will not benefit as much if they speed through the tool unsupervised.
- CLOSE** each day by giving the students a 3 minute warning and asking them to note on the Progress Tracker where they left off. Collect packets for the next *Drafting Board* session.
- REVIEW** student progress each day. Intervene either with the whole class or with individual students if necessary.
- PRINT** or export student essays once they have finished *Drafting Board* to prepare for the student editing activity.
- DISTRIBUTE** a peer editing half sheet to each student. (*optional*)
- PAIR** students and have them exchange essays for peer editing. Tell students to follow the directions on the half sheet, or have students peer edit according to methods you have previously taught.

A FEW IMPORTANT REMINDERS...

Drafting Board is not a game. You can put your kids in front of *Drafting Board* and walk away, but you probably won't like the results. Teachers who get the most out of *Drafting Board* make use of the supplemental printed materials and circulate the room while students are working. This way, you can be available to prompt students who have questions and you can make sure students are doing their best work in the free-response portions of the essay. Using the support materials to facilitate discussions on the topic and the writing process reinforces the experiences students have with *Drafting Board*.

Student finish times will vary. Each module inside *Drafting Board* will take between 10 and 20 minutes, but students may progress at a faster or slower pace.

- **For students who finish early:** Assign the game *Represent Me!* on iCivics.org, which gives students a closer look at the factors that influence legislators in our political system.
- **For students lagging behind:** Students need internet access in order to finish *Drafting Board*. Students with internet access outside school can log in and work remotely from home or from a library. Otherwise, you may need to help students find additional computer access at school.

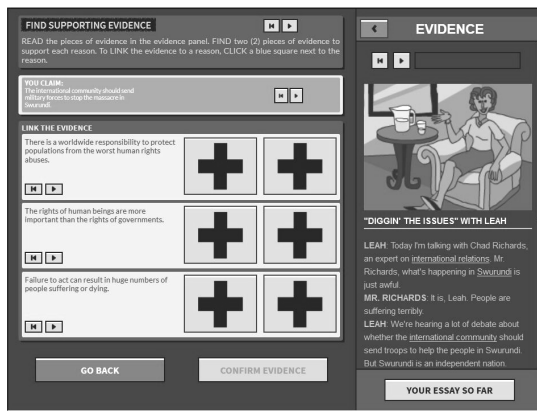
Reports are available through your MyiCivics account from the Drafting Board page. By clicking "View Report," you can follow your students' progress while they are still working on *Drafting Board*. Once they are finished, you can print or download their essays and you can view or download a spreadsheet that shows you how well they did at matching the evidence.

CHALLENGE MODE GUIDE

The first screen of *Drafting Board* asks students to select a challenge mode. The challenge mode determines how much scaffolding *Drafting Board* provides in the Paragraph Constructor module, which is the part of *Drafting Board* where students write the essay's three body paragraphs. There are three (3) possible scaffolding types:

- **Auto-complete.** This is the highest level of scaffolding. The paragraph is pre-written and contains blank spaces. As students click highlighted sentences in the evidence, *Drafting Board* auto-completes the space. Students must determine if the auto-complete response makes sense.
- **Paraphrase.** This is the mid-level scaffolding. The paragraph is pre-written and contains blank areas. Based on the evidence, students must complete the blank areas in their own words.
- **Write-it-yourself.** This level offers no scaffolding. Except for the topic sentence, students write the paragraph completely on their own based on information in the evidence.

Challenge	Use this mode when...	Paragraph	Paragraph	Paragraph
DEFAULT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student needs to learn the structure of an evidence-based argumentative paragraph • Student will be ready to write a paragraph without help after two examples 	Auto-complete	Paraphrase	Write-it-yourself
LEVEL 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student needs to learn the structure of an evidence-based argumentative paragraph • Student needs a structured example before attempting to locate information in a text and synthesize ideas independently 	Auto-complete	Paraphrase	Paraphrase
LEVEL 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student needs to learn the structure of an evidence-based argumentative paragraph • Student can locate information in a text and synthesize ideas independently 	Paraphrase	Paraphrase	Paraphrase
LEVEL 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student needs to learn the structure of an evidence-based argumentative paragraph • Student will be ready to write a paragraph without help after completing two examples with help 	Paraphrase	Paraphrase	Write-it-yourself
LEVEL 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is familiar with the structure of an evidence-based argumentative paragraph • Student could use a reminder of that structure before writing paragraphs without help 	Paraphrase	Write-it-yourself	Write-it-yourself
LEVEL 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student understands the structure of an argumentative paragraph • Student is familiar with <i>Drafting Board</i> • Student needs no help writing evidence-based paragraphs 	Write-it-yourself	Write-it-yourself	Write-it-yourself



Claim Creator: Help for Struggling Students

In the main part of the Claim Creator, students must find two pieces of evidence to support each of their reasons.

- AUDIO BUTTONS in Drafting Board let students listen to a read-aloud version of the evidence and their reasons.
- HOVER DEFINITIONS in the evidence explain difficult words.
- GUIDING QUESTIONS (below) help you direct students to the correct evidence. First give them the key words and phrases to look for, then use the last two questions to help them narrow down the options.

CLAIM: The influence of interest groups harms our political system.	
Reason	Key Words & Guiding Questions
Interest groups representing for-profit businesses often fight against the public good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Key words and phrases</u>: disaster; new technology; guidelines; fight • Can you find evidence of an interest group opposing something that would increase safety? (<i>Railroads Fight Safety</i>) • Are there any pieces of evidence that talk about businesses fighting a law designed to help children be healthier? (<i>Interest Groups Against Nutrition</i>)
Interest groups can make it difficult for politicians to make independent decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Key words and phrases</u>: cash constituents; re-election campaign • Is there any piece of evidence that describes politicians being torn between voters and groups that make large cash donations? (<i>Dear Mr. Politics</i>) • Are there any examples of an interest group trying to get back at a politician for not supporting what the group wants? (<i>Article: Politicians Beware</i>)
Interest groups "buy" public policy by making large contributions to politicians.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Key words and phrases</u>: Congressional committees • Does any of the evidence discuss the special access interest groups hope to receive in exchange for donating to politicians? (<i>Evening News: Special Influence</i>) • Are there any pieces of evidence that tell us about the relationship between interest groups and Congressional committees? ("<i>Issues Week</i>" on <i>People's Television</i>)
Interest groups are making American political campaigns more negative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Key words and phrases</u>: ads; advertising; negative advertising; campaign ads • Can you find evidence that talks about how many ads interest groups sponsor, and how many of those are negative ads? (<i>Campaign Ad Statistics</i>) • Is there evidence talking about the effectiveness of negative ads? (<i>Study: "Attack Ads"</i>)

(Claim Creator: Help for Struggling Students, cont.)

CLAIM: The influence of interest groups does not harm our political system.	
Reason	Key Words & Guiding Questions
<p>Interest groups can help citizens participate in the political process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Key words and phrases</u>: spread information; work for change • Does any of the evidence claim that interest groups help educate voters about important issues? (<i>Polly Thompson, Volunteer</i>) • Does any evidence make the claim that interest groups help people participate in the political process? (<i>Letter to the Editor</i>)
<p>Interest groups help politicians make good decisions about important issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Key words and phrases</u>: attention; research; issues • Are there any examples of politicians who feel they are helped by special interest groups? (<i>Rachel Wells, State Representative</i>) • Does any of the evidence claim interest groups help keep lawmakers from ignoring important issues? (<i>Diggin' the Issues with Leah</i>)
<p>Political speech by interest groups is protected by the First Amendment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Key words and phrases</u>: freedom of speech; corporations • Has the Supreme Court said anything about whether corporations have freedom of speech? (<i>Op-Ed: Freedom of Speech</i>) • Has the Supreme Court said anything about preferring some speakers over others, or putting restrictions on disfavored speakers? (<i>Excerpt from Citizens United</i>)
<p>Many interest groups work for changes that benefit the public.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Key words and phrases</u>: quality of life; help the public • Does any of the evidence discuss powerful interest groups helping Americans have a better life? (<i>Tough Talk with Tracy</i>) • (Consumer Reports)

Additional, built-in Claim Creator “help” features:

- “DOES THIS MAKE SENSE?” POPUP lets students check their reason against a summary of the evidence they are about to match before they assign the evidence.
- “REMOVE” BUTTONS let students change their mind after they have matched evidence to a reason.
- END-OF-TOOL FEEDBACK tells students which pieces of evidence have been mismatched, but only after they have chosen evidence for each reason.
- HINTS guide students toward the correct evidence as part of the end-of-tool feedback.



GLOSSARY: INTEREST GROUPS

agriculture: Raising livestock, producing crops, and other farming-related activity

American Legion: A real-life group that works to make changes that benefit America's military veterans

AARP: A real-life group that works to make changes that benefit Americans aged 50 and older. Formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons.

backlash: A strong negative reaction; in politics, it is usually by people against a politician or group

ban: To prohibit

bill: A draft of a law

bottom line: An expression that refers to the money a company earns

campaign: All the activities a person does in order to be elected to political office, including all the activities of staff and volunteers

candidate: A person running for an elected office or position

chair: A chairperson; the person who leads a committee

champion: A defender or supporter of something

committee: A group of people assigned to deal with matters relating to a certain subject

Congress: The U.S. Congress is the lawmaking body of the United States, made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate; the legislative branch of United States government

Constitution: The U.S. Constitution is the founding document that established the government of the United States and that is still followed as the supreme law of our nation

consumer: A person who buys goods and services; a person who "consumes" goods and services.

Consumer Reports: A real-life group that publishes a well-known magazine called Consumer Reports that offers ratings of many kinds of products

corporation: A type of company; a business becomes a corporation by organizing itself in a specific legal way.

derail: To come off the tracks; a train that derails is no longer on the train tracks

determine: "to determine" means to decide; to figure out

diverse: Many; varied

expire: To be allowed to come to an end

First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: The part of the Constitution that guarantees freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, and other key rights

independent: Not influenced by anything else

infuriated: "to infuriate" means to enrage someone or make them angry

inherent: Existing as a natural part of something that cannot be separated

interests: Benefits or advantages; "in someone's interest" or "in someone's interests" means what is best for that person

interest group: A group that works for the benefit of a particular issue or industry, often by trying to influence lawmaking.

lobbyist: A person who tries to influence public officials for or against an issue

nutritious: Healthful, usually used in relation to food



GLOSSARY: INTEREST GROUPS p. 2

Republican Party: One of the two major political parties in the United States

obtain: "to obtain" means to get (ex: "to obtain a driver's license" means "to get a driver's license")

oil drilling: The process of drilling in the ground to search for sources of oil

persuasive: Convincing

political party: An organized group of people who share similar political views and work to influence the government in support of those views

politician: A person who holds an elected office

politics: The activities of government

portrayed: "to portray" means to describe or represent in words or as a picture

predatory lending: The practice of making loans in exchange for a very high fee; the lender is seen as a "predator" going after people who are their "prey" in order to make money off of the fees. "Payday loan" companies are often accused of predatory lending.

profit-driven: Motivated by the desire to gain or profit

proposition: An idea or subject that has been suggested and is under consideration

Real People for Real Education: A fictional interest group for purposes of this Drafting Board topic

re-election: "to re-elect" means to elect someone to public office again for another term

senator: A United States Senator is a member of the United States Senate, which is one of two parts of the United States Congress, which makes laws in the United States

skyrocket: "to skyrocket" means to rise very high very quickly (just like a rocket shoots into the sky)

skeptical: Having doubt

special interest group: (see *interest group*)

sponsored: "to sponsor" means to pay the cost of doing something, usually on behalf of someone else

state legislature: A state's lawmaking body; the group of people elected to make a state's laws

Supreme Court: The United States Supreme Court is the highest court in the United States

voluntary: Optional; not required

Interest Groups

Name: _____

Brainstorm. Read the prompt below and brainstorm as many answers as you can think of until your teacher tells you to stop. Make notes quickly, and don't worry about spelling. Use the back for more space.

What issue do you care about most? List all the ways you could get someone else to care about it, too:

Interest Groups

Name: _____

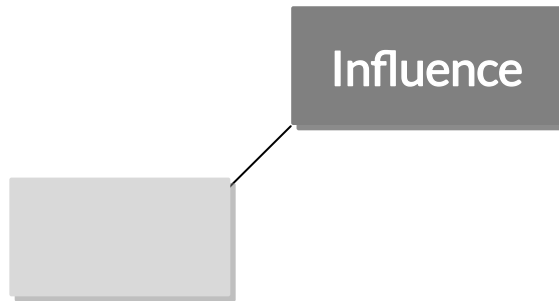
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What issue do you care about most? List all the ways you could get someone else to care about it, too:

Interest Groups

Name: _____

Mind Map! What does it mean to influence someone? BRAINSTORM all the ideas you can think of that are related to the concept of influencing people. BOX each idea you add and DRAW A LINE to connect it to the main phrase (or to another idea you added). KEEP BRAINSTORMING until you run out of room or time.

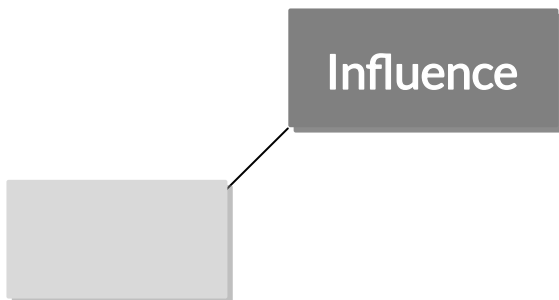


Drafting Board | Pre-Write Activity (Mind Map)

Interest Groups

Name: _____

Mind Map! What does it mean to influence someone? BRAINSTORM all the ideas you can think of that are related to the concept of influencing people. BOX each idea you add and DRAW A LINE to connect it to the main phrase (or to another idea you added). KEEP BRAINSTORMING until you run out of room or time.



Drafting Board | Pre-Write Activity (Mind Map)

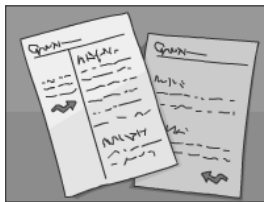
EVIDENCE: INTEREST GROUPS



RAILROADS FIGHT SAFETY

In 2008, 25 people died and 135 were injured in a major railroad disaster in California, where two trains collided head-on. Not long afterward, Congress passed the Rail Safety Improvement Act, which required new safety technology to be installed on about 70,000 miles of track. The new technology is called Positive Train Control (PTC), and it automatically applies a train's brakes when trains are about to collide or derail. Government investigators have shown that PTC could have prevented many crashes that have occurred in the past.

The railroad industry, led by the Association of American Railroads, said the PTC system was too expensive and began to fight the law. The industry hired dozens of lobbyists to convince politicians that the PTC system put too big a burden on the railroad companies. In 2009 and 2010, the industry spent \$73.4 million on lobbying politicians. Congress let the law expire at the end of 2013.



INTEREST GROUPS AGAINST NUTRITION

Do children know what's nutritious and what isn't? Not always -- and they might not care, especially when unhealthy food is advertised by favorite characters like SpongeBob or Dora the Explorer. To deal with this problem, the U.S. government has proposed guidelines to encourage foodmakers to reduce the amount of salt, sugar, and fat they add to food that will be advertised to children. These standards would be voluntary for foodmakers, and the government could not even enforce them.

Even so, the food industry is fighting back. The "Sensible Food Policy Coalition" is an interest group that includes some of the nation's biggest foodmakers, such as General Mills, Kellogg, PepsiCo, and media giant Time Warner. In the first three months of 2011 alone, they spent \$6.6 million fighting the nutrition guidelines.

-- adapted from *The Washington Post*

DEAR MR. POLITICS:

Dear Mr. Politics,

I heard some guy on TV talking about how our senator has cash constituents. I don't even know what a constituent is. What was he talking about? If these people have cash, I want to know how to get in on the action!

Signed,
Money Hungry

Dear Money Hungry,

A constituent (con-STIH-chew-ent) is someone represented by an elected official. Normally, a politician's constituents are the voters who elected him or her to office. These are the people whose interests a politician considers when making decisions about laws, and they are the people a politician represents in government. But when politicians receive large cash donations from interest groups or others, those groups are said to become "cash constituents"--groups the politician represents because they donated money. Many people think this is a problem. Politicians can have a conflict of loyalty when the cash constituent wants something different from what's best for the voters back home. Instead of making an independent decision based on the voters' interests, the politician will feel pressured to consider the cash constituent's interests.

Hope that helps,
Mr. Politics

ARTICLE: POLITICIANS BEWARE

The National Rifle Association (NRA) has been a strong supporter of the Republican Party and Republican candidates across the United States. But in 2012, the NRA became infuriated when Republican leaders in Nashville, Tennessee did not support a bill that would prevent business owners from banning guns on their property. State representative Debra Maggart was one of those politicians. After Rep. Maggart refused to support the law, the NRA made great efforts to help defeat Rep. Maggart's campaign for re-election. It wanted voters to replace her with a different Republican--one who will help the NRA accomplish its goals. Voters did indeed support Rep. Maggart's challenger, and she was voted out of office. Later, Rep. Maggart suggested that the NRA used her as an example to send a message to other politicians about the consequences of not supporting what the NRA wants.

EVENING NEWS: SPECIAL INFLUENCE

Anchor #1: Did you know that special interest groups donated over \$1.4 billion to political candidates from 2011 to 2012?

Anchor #2: It may sound shocking, but this kind of involvement from special interest groups is part of how our political system works.

Anchor #1: Interest groups donate money to politicians' political campaigns, hoping they'll have easy access to the politician to discuss the group's concerns. And you probably won't be shocked to learn that the largest amounts of money go to politicians with the most power.

Anchor #2: That's right. Those politicians include committee chairs, political party leaders, and people who have been in office for a while. Those are the people with the most influence to push laws through Congress.



CAMPAIGN AD STATISTICS

In its 2010 decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, the Supreme Court ruled that interest groups may spend unlimited amounts of money on advertising for political candidates. Since then, the percentage of political ads sponsored by interest groups has skyrocketed. Not only that, most of those ads are "negative," meaning they say negative things about the candidate's opponent instead of highlighting good things about the candidate. This table shows the difference between the 2008 and 2012 presidential campaign seasons from January through April:

	2008	2012
Percent of all campaign ads that were sponsored by interest groups	3%	59%
Percent of interest group ads that were negative	25%	86%

"ISSUES WEEK" ON PEOPLE'S TELEVISION

Host: Tonight on Issues Week we're talking about special interest groups and Congressional committees. My guest, Todd Hamilton, is a former senator. What can you tell us about this relationship?

Todd: In Congress, committees focus on laws that relate to certain topics, such as agriculture or education. Interest groups are very interested in committees that work on issues the groups care about, and they pay close attention to what these committees do.

Host: But attention isn't the only thing they pay, is it?

Todd: Absolutely not. Interest groups pay millions and millions of dollars every year to support the campaigns of politicians who serve on committees related to the group's cause. They do this hoping to influence laws in a way that will help their cause.

Host: Can you give us an example?

Todd: Sure. Environmental groups try to influence laws that affect the environment. So do groups that might harm the environment, such as oil or coal companies. Both types of groups give money to senators who served on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Host: Sounds like a cozy relationship.

Todd: It is -- too cozy, according to some people.

STUDY: "ATTACK ADS"

Study: "Attack Ads"

"Attack ads" are advertisements that say negative things about one candidate in order to convince voters to support the other candidate. Studies have shown that these negative ads are more effective when they are sponsored by an interest group than when they are sponsored by an actual candidate. There are several possible reasons for this:

- Many people don't like negative ads, and if a candidate sponsors the ad, those people may form a negative opinion about the candidate. Having an interest group sponsor the ad shields the candidate from this backlash.
- Studies have shown that when an interest group sponsors a negative ad, viewers are more likely to believe what the ad says and find it persuasive.

“TOUGH TALK” WITH TRACY

Tracy: My guest today is interest group expert Professor Don Houston. Prof. Houston, we’ve all heard interest groups being portrayed in the media as monsters. I have to tell you, I think it’s true.

Prof. Houston: Well, Tracy, I have to tell you, you’re wrong.

Tracy: Ha! Tell me why.

Prof. Houston: Not all interest groups are profit-driven corporations out to defend their bottom line at the expense of innocent citizens.

Tracy: I’m skeptical, professor.

Prof. Houston: Some of the most influential interest groups in America are nonprofit organizations dedicated to issues that lots of Americans care about.

Tracy: Can you give some examples?

Prof. Houston: Sure! Two of the most powerful groups are the American Legion, which works on behalf of veterans, and the AARP, which fights to make sure older Americans have a good quality of life.

Tracy: I see. I have to admit, you’ve got a point there.

RACHEL WELLS, STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Without interest groups, I really don’t know how I could do my job. In the state legislature, we consider hundreds of bills every year. Some would make good laws, but many wouldn’t. I don’t have the time or staff to research all the important issues I’m asked to make decisions about. But most interest groups only focus on a few issues, and they are experts in those areas. I can look to the interest groups to give me information and educate me about these issues. Interest groups are a real help to politicians like me who want to pass laws that will benefit people.

POLLY THOMPSON, VOLUNTEER

Before I volunteered with Students for Clean Air, I never thought much about politics. But this year, I’ve been able to help educate voters about this really important issue. I’ve contributed to our blog, handed out flyers to people at the county fair, and posted all kinds of things to our Facebook page. I never knew how many opportunities there are for even small groups like ours to spread information. Forming an interest group lets us focus all our resources on telling people why clean air is important. I always thought “special interest groups” was a dirty word, but what’s really dirty is my city’s air!

“DIGGIN’ THE ISSUES” WITH LEAH

Leah: Today I’m talking with Jo Swann, head of Real People for Real Education, a special interest group that focuses on school reform. Jo, you say interest groups deserve a big “thank you.” Why?

Ms. Swann: Lawmakers are very busy people. Every day, their offices receive a flood of paperwork and information, and important issues can easily get lost or be ignored. Interest groups call attention to these issues.

Leah: How?

Ms. Swann: Contacting lawmakers and speaking to them directly is the best way to get a politician to pay attention to an issue.

Leah: So people should thank interest groups for making sure the issues they care about get action?

Ms. Swann: Exactly. Without interest groups, many issues wouldn’t ever be discussed, let alone get attention from lawmakers.

EXCERPT FROM CITIZENS UNITED

[T]he Government may commit a constitutional wrong when by law it identifies certain preferred speakers. By taking the right to speak from some and giving it to others, the Government deprives the disadvantaged person or class of the right to use speech. . . . The Government may not ... deprive the public of the right and privilege to determine for itself what speech and speakers are worthy of consideration. The First Amendment protects speech and speaker, and the ideas that flow from each.

[I]t is inherent in the nature of the political process that voters must be free to obtain information from diverse sources in order to determine how to cast their votes.

We find no basis for the proposition that, in the context of political speech, the Government may impose restrictions on certain disfavored speakers. Both history and logic lead us to this conclusion.

-- from the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission*

OP-ED: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

The First Amendment of our Constitution guarantees freedom of speech. But whom, exactly, does that apply to? Should only human beings be allowed to speak? Of course not. The Supreme Court has said that freedom of speech applies to corporations and other groups even though they are not "natural persons." In fact, the 2010 Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission* says that prohibiting corporations from supporting or opposing political candidates violates freedom of speech. This time, the Supreme Court was right on. It's time to take the duct tape off the mouths of corporations and other interest groups.

CONSUMER REPORTS

From consumerreports.org:

Unleashing the world-changing power of consumers. That's what Consumer Reports has been doing for more than 75 years. Our experts test thousands of products each year, from cars to cosmetics, TVs to toasters, and tell you which are the best and which are the worst. And we fight in the halls of Congress and state legislatures as the consumer champion for safe products and fair practices in the marketplace.

Consumers Union, the policy and advocacy arm of Consumer Reports, has played a critical role in cutting hospital-acquired infections, reducing predatory lending practices, combating dangerous toxins in foods, and winning other consumer protections. Our team of lobbyists and grassroots organizers works with more than 1 million online activists to push for improvements in the consumer marketplace.

-- James A. Guest, President and CEO of Consumer Reports

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I'm really getting fed up with everyone complaining about how bad "special interest groups" are. It's as if we're at war with special interest groups! The fact is, interest groups are responsible for a lot of people participating in the political process. I never used to care about politics, but then the gas prices skyrocketed and I started worrying about the U.S. running out of oil. I really care about this issue, so I looked for a group I could join that is trying to increase oil drilling. I joined Citizens for Oil, a group that showed me dozens of ways I can actively work for change. Interest groups aren't bad. They help people like me make a difference.

Sincerely,
Joe Tucker



TOPIC: INTEREST GROUPS

Use this worksheet to keep track of your progress in *Drafting Board*.

Name	
Class	
iCivics Username	
iCivics Password	

Issue Analyzer

In the Issue Analyzer, you will investigate both sides of the issue. By filling in the missing pieces of a news article, you'll get to preview some of the evidence you'll use to write your essay. You'll also get to know the issue!

- READ the article's introduction
- COMPLETE the story chunks
- CORRECT any mistakes
- CHOOSE a side of the issue

Date Completed: _____

Claim Creator

In the Claim Creator, you will choose three reasons to support the claim you made at the end of the Issue Analyzer. These reasons will become the topics of your three main paragraphs. You'll also search your evidence to find support for each reason.

- CHOOSE your reasons
- FAVORITE your strongest reason
- FIND two pieces of evidence that support each reason

Date Completed: _____

Use this space to write down the basics of your essay.

Choose a Side: Does the influence of interest groups harm our political system?
 Yes No

My Claim: _____

Paragraph Constructor — Paragraph #1

The Paragraph Constructor helps you write the main “body” paragraphs of your essay. Each paragraph starts with one of your reasons.

- USE YOUR EVIDENCE to complete the paragraph
- MAKE SURE your paragraph supports why the reason is true
- ADD TRANSITIONS to connect your ideas
- RE-READ the paragraph to be sure it makes sense
- EDIT the paragraph to add your ideas or correct mistakes
- EVALUATE how well you wrote the paragraph

Paragraph type:

- Auto-fill
- Fill-in-the-blank
- Write from scratch

Date Completed: _____

Paragraph Constructor — Paragraph #2

The Paragraph Constructor helps you write the main “body” paragraphs of your essay. Each paragraph starts with one of your reasons.

- USE YOUR EVIDENCE to complete the paragraph
- MAKE SURE your paragraph supports why the reason is true
- ADD TRANSITIONS to connect your ideas
- RE-READ the paragraph to be sure it makes sense
- EDIT the paragraph to add your ideas or correct mistakes
- EVALUATE how well you wrote the paragraph

Paragraph type:

- Auto-fill
- Fill-in-the-blank
- Write from scratch

Date Completed: _____

Paragraph Constructor — Paragraph #3

The Paragraph Constructor helps you write the main “body” paragraphs of your essay. Each paragraph starts with one of your reasons.

- USE YOUR EVIDENCE to complete the paragraph
- MAKE SURE your paragraph supports why the reason is true
- ADD TRANSITIONS to connect your ideas
- RE-READ the paragraph to be sure it makes sense
- EDIT the paragraph to add your ideas or correct mistakes
- EVALUATE how well you wrote the paragraph

Paragraph type:

- Auto-fill
- Fill-in-the-blank
- Write from scratch

Date Completed: _____



SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST: Did you . . .

- ✓ Use several details to explain how each piece of evidence supports your reason?
- ✓ Put the ideas from the evidence into your own words?
- ✓ Read your paragraph out loud to make sure the ideas flow together and make sense?

INTEREST GROUPS

Name: _____

Critic Crusher — Practice Paragraph

The Critic Crusher shows you how to “counter” an argument for the other side of the issue. The first part walks you through each sentence in the paragraph. Pay close attention! You’ll have less help next time.

- FIND the other side’s claim
- CHOOSE a reason to “crush”
- “SMACK DOWN” their reason
- COUNTER their evidence with yours
- POINT TO A DETAIL in your evidence
- DELIVER the final “crusher” sentence

Critic Crusher — Essay Paragraph

Now you’ll crush their reason again, but you’ll use different evidence. This paragraph will appear in your essay. Remember the purpose of each sentence:

- “SMACK DOWN” their reason
- COUNTER their evidence with yours
- POINT TO A DETAIL in your evidence
- DELIVER the final “crusher” sentence

Date Completed: _____

Introduction Introducer

In the Introduction Introducer, you will learn how to grab the reader’s attention at the very start of your essay. You will learn the format for an effective introduction paragraph.

- CATEGORIZE the five hooks
- CHOOSE a hook & bridge pair
- READ your intro paragraph
- ADD transitions
- EDIT the paragraph

Date Completed: _____

“HOOK” CATEGORIES

Background Info: Offer historical information or a piece of deeper information about the issue

Statistics: Give numbers or data, especially if the numbers will shock or surprise the reader

Quote: Use a famous person’s exact words

Question: Ask something the reader may not have thought about

Scenario: Make the reader imagine something

Conclusion Crafter

In the Conclusion Crafter, you will learn the structure for an effective closing paragraph. You’ll learn how to end your essay with information your reader won’t forget.

- RESTATE your claim
- RESTATE your reasons
- CATEGORIZE the clincher sentences
- CHOOSE a clincher for your essay
- ADD transitions
- EDIT the paragraph

Date Completed: _____

“CLINCHER” CATEGORIES

Consequences: Show the reader what might happen if your side of the issue is not successful

Statistics: Give numbers or data that show once and for all that your side is right!

Quote: Use a famous person’s exact words to make a final point in favor of your side

Next Steps: Tell the reader what should be done next to further your cause

Peer Editing

Name: _____

1) **GIVE COMPLIMENTS.** Mark places in the text where the writing is effective.

Easy to Understand. Are there places where the writing is really clear? Compliment the writer on things like...

- Good use of details
- Effective organization of ideas
- Sticks to the topic – no unrelated ideas



Great Words. Has the writer chosen some words that really sparkle? Circle great word choices and mark them with a star.



Sentence Flow. Does the writing read smoothly? Mark places where the writer has...

- Used transitions effectively
- Used a variety of sentence lengths
- Done anything you think works well!

2) **MAKE SUGGESTIONS.** Offer specific ideas for how to improve the writing.

Confusion. Are there confusing parts? Figure out why you are confused. Should the writer...

- Add some details?
- Organize the ideas in a clearer sequence?
- Stick to the topic and cut ideas that don't fit?

Word Choice. Could the writer spice up the writing by choosing more interesting words? Mark boring words (such as *bad* or *nice*) so the writer can find a more descriptive alternative.

Sentence Flow. Does the writing read smoothly? If not, figure out why:

- Do any sentences seem *way* too long? Suggest a way to break them up.
- Are too many sentences really short? Suggest a way to connect some of them.

3) **MAKE CORRECTIONS.** Check the essay for problems with spelling, grammar, sentence structure, capitalization, punctuation, and other technical errors. Mark these on the text.



Drafting Board | Peer Edit Guide

Peer Editing

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