

Drafting Board: Interest Groups

Time Needed: Three to five class periods

Materials Needed:

Computers with internet access
 Drafting Board log-in information
 Student Packet (*Evidence Guide* and *Progress Sheet*)

Copy Instructions:

Reasons & Evidence Guide (for yourself)
Progress Packet (class set)
Evidence Guide (class set)

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Analyze and synthesize primary and secondary source materials
- Develop an understanding of perspective and bias by comparing and contrasting texts
- Find, evaluate, and categorize information from multiple sources
- Develop claims and counterclaims based on evidence from source material
- Describe the role of interest groups in American politics
- Evaluate the influence of interest groups on public policy

STEP BY STEP

- TEACHER PREP** Make sure your students know their iCivics.org usernames and passwords. These will be used to access *Drafting Board*. There is a space on the *Progress Packet* for the students to keep this information for each visit to *Drafting Board*.
- Look over the pre-writing activities (Mind Map and Brainstorm) and decide which you would like to have your students complete.
- 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.
- TELL** students that they will be reading about interest groups in *Drafting Board*.
- DISTRIBUTE** an *Interest Groups* packet to each student. (Includes *Progress Packet* and *Evidence Guide*)
- SHOW** students where to write their usernames and passwords on the packet.
- PREVIEW** the objectives for each tool and explain that this is a long-term project that will take a number of class periods. The *Progress Packet* will help them keep track of each visit to *Drafting Board*.
- ASK** students to log in and begin using the first tool in *Drafting Board*, The Issue Analyzer.
- CIRCULATE** around the class, helping students as needed.
- CLOSE** each day by giving the students a three minute warning, then asking them to note on the *Progress Packet* where they left off. Collect packets for the next visit to *Drafting Board*.

Continued on the next page...

Drafting Board: Interest Groups

Continued from the last page...

- 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.
- 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.

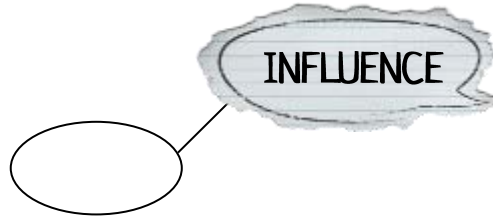
A FEW IMPORTANT REMINDERS...

- Unlike other iCivics online activities, *Drafting Board* is not a game. This tool requires the teacher to monitor and oversee student progress as the students work through the tool.
- Each tool 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.
- Boxes for student reflection appear after some parts of the tools. Students must enter text in the reflection areas before they can move on to the next page of the tool. Text entered into the reflection boxes will not appear in the student's essay; however, you will be able to view student reflections in the progress report on your teacher page.
- You can follow your students' progress by using the iCivics classroom feature. An individual student report is generated for each tool within *Drafting Board*. Each report shows you how the student performed on the activities in the tool, how much time the student spent on task, and what the student wrote. You can also print or export the essay the student generated.

Interest Groups

Name: _____

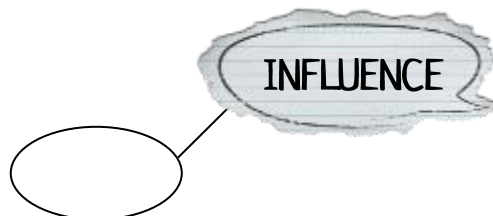
Mind Map! What does it mean to influence someone? Brainstorm all the ideas you can think of that are related to the concept of influencing people. Circle each idea you add and draw a line to connect it to the main phrase (or to another idea you added). Keep brainstorming until you run out of room or time.



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. Circle 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.



Interest Groups

Name: _____

Brainstorm! Read the question 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. If you run out of room, write on the back.

What national or state issue do you care about most?
List all the ways you could get someone else to care, too.

Interest Groups

Name: _____

Brainstorm! Read the question 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. If you run out of room, write on the back.

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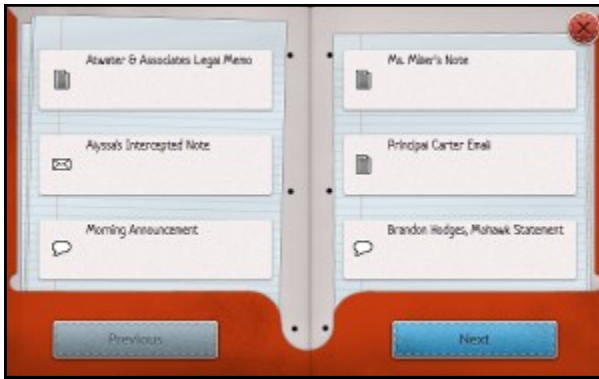


Claim Creator: Helping Students Choose the Right Evidence

The Claim Creator asks students to select three reasons to support their claim, then find the two pieces of evidence that support each reason. Use this guide to help students find 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.

	Guiding Questions for Struggling Students
<p>Reason 1</p> <p>Interest groups work on behalf of for-profit industries and fight for laws that protect their members' profits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Key words and phrases:</u> business interests • Is there evidence showing what kind of groups donate the most money to politicians? (<i>Business Groups vs Issue Groups</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>)
<p>Reason 2</p> <p>Interest groups make it difficult for politicians to stay loyal to the voters who elect them.</p>	<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>Support Us or Be Defeated</i>)
<p>Reason 3</p> <p>Interest groups "buy" public policy by making large contributions to politicians.</p>	<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 Interest Donations</i>) • Are there any pieces of evidence that tell us about the relationship between interest groups and Congressional committees? (<i>"Issues Week" on People's Television</i>)
<p>Reason 4</p> <p>Interest groups have too much power to influence elections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Key words and phrases:</u> unlimited spending; negative ads • Has the Supreme Court made any decisions about how much interests groups can spend on behalf of candidates? (<i>Blog: Overturn Citizens United</i>) • Where in the evidence does it talk about negative campaign advertising? (<i>Study: Who Will Voters Punish?</i>)



Claim Creator: Helping Students Choose the Right Evidence

(continued)



Claim: The influence of interest groups does not harm our political system.

	Guiding Questions for Struggling Students
<p>Reason 1</p> <p>Interest groups 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>Students for Clean Air 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>Reason 2</p> <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>Reason 3</p> <p>The First Amendment right to freedom of speech gives interest groups the right to speak out about political issues.</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: Who Gets 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>Reason 4</p> <p>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>) • Is there any example of a business supporting a law that would benefit the public? (<i>Papers R Us CEO David Kamaka</i>)

Interest Groups

Name: _____



Business Groups vs. Issue Groups

DOC #06 A

11/23/11

Who is donating the most money to politicians? Statistics show that groups representing business interests gave 92.7% of all the money donated to politicians in 2011-12. By contrast, only 7.3% was donated by groups supporting issues such as the environment or religious rights.

Page 1 of 1



Interest Groups Against Nutrition

DOC #06 A

11/23/11

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. The government could not even enforce them. Even so, some of the nation's biggest foodmakers have started an interest group to fight the guidelines. The "Sensible Food Policy Coalition" includes companies like 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*

Page 1 of 1



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,
Cash constituents have cash, but they probably won't give you any unless you're a politician. 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. 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 if they need to make a decision about an issue where what's best for the voters back home is different from what the cash constituents want.

Hope that helps,
Mr. Politics

Page 1 of 1



Support Us or Be Defeated

DOC #06 A

11/23/11

The National Rifle Association (NRA) has been a strong supporter of the Republican Party and has donated millions of dollars to Republican candidates. But Republican leaders in Nashville, Tennessee infuriated the NRA this year by refusing to go along with a bill to prevent businesses from banning guns on their property.

Now the NRA is using its deep pockets to try to unseat one of the lawmakers. The NRA spent \$75,000 in an effort to defeat state representative Debra Maggart's campaign for re-election. That amount is more than half of Rep. Maggart's entire campaign budget. The NRA hopes voters will replace her with a different Republican--one who will help the NRA accomplish its goals.

Page 1 of 1

Interest Groups

Name: _____

News: Special Interest Money

Anchor #1: Tonight our spotlight is on special interest groups.

Anchor #2: You may already know that interest groups have a lot of influence over the laws that get passed in Congress. You may also know that interest groups donate money to politicians.

Anchor #1: But 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. Interest groups donate money to politicians' political campaigns, hoping they'll have easy access to the politician to discuss the group's special interests.

Anchor #1: You probably won't be shocked to learn that the largest amounts of money go to politicians with the most power.

Anchor #2: Those include committee chairs, political party leaders, and people who have been in office for awhile.

"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. Todd, 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 pay close attention to committees that work on issues the groups care about.

Host: But they don't just pay attention, do they?

Todd: They don't. Interest groups pay millions and millions of dollars every year to support members of Congress who serve on committees related to the groups' interests.

Host: Can you give us an example?

Todd: Sure. Environmental groups try to influence laws that affect the environment. So do companies that might harm the environment, such as energy companies 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.



Blog: Overturn Citizens United

In 2010, the Supreme Court decided a case called *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*. This case overturned a law that made it illegal for corporations to spend money advertising for or against a political candidate. Thanks to Citizens United, special interest groups may now spend unlimited amounts of money advertising for political candidates. Why? According to the Court, it's because limiting the amount corporations can spend violates their right to freedom of speech.

As a result, interest groups are spending more money on elections than ever. During the 2010 election, these groups spent over \$300 million, and they spent \$75 million on presidential campaign ads in the first four months of 2012. This is nothing more than buying influence--exactly the kind of corruption the original law tried to stop when it was passed in 1912. The Court's decision in *Citizens United* has set us up to see major corruption in a new century.

Page 1 of 1



Study: Who Will Voters Punish?

We've all seen those ads on television during the campaign season: A dark voice warns, "Senator Smith is no friend to education," or "Senator Jones: A name you CAN'T trust." These so-called "negative" or "attack" ads are known to be effective.

At the same time, voters complain about them during every election cycle. But do voters hate negative ads so much that they will punish a candidate by voting for someone else on election day? A recent study says yes, if the candidate sponsors the ads, but no, if an independent group runs the negative ads.

Page 1 of 1

Interest Groups

Name: _____

Students for Clean Air Volunteer

TRANSCRIPT | 8675509 | SEP 2 3 2011

"Before I volunteered with Students for Clean Air, I had no idea how much interest groups do to educate voters. I always thought "special interest groups" was a dirty word, but what's really dirty is my city's air! I never knew how many opportunities there are for even small groups like ours to spread information. I've contributed to our blog, handed out flyers to people at the county fair, and posted all kinds of thing to our FaceBook page. Our group has over a thousand followers on Twitter! This really helps us get important information out to voters. Being an interest group lets us focus all our resources on the one issue we care about most: clean air!"

- Polly Thompson, volunteer

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

11/23/11

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 us 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

Page 1 of 1

Rachel Wells, State Representative

TRANSCRIPT | 8675509 | SEP 2 3 2011

"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 handful of issues. That means they are experts in those issues, and I can look to them 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."

Diggin' the Issues with Leah

TRANSCRIPT | 8675509 | SEP 2 3 2011

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: Because interest groups call attention to issues politicians could easily ignore.

Leah: How?

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. Interest groups call attention to these issues.

Leah: That can't be easy.

Ms. Swann: It's not. Contacting lawmakers and speaking to them directly is the best way to get a politician to pay attention to an issue. It's worth it, because lawmakers can do a lot to move an issue forward.

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.

Interest Groups

Name: _____



Op-Ed: Who Gets 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.

Page 1 of 1



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 by these means 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*

Page 1 of 1

Tough Talk with Tracy

TRANSCRIPT | 8675309

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: That's easy. All you have to do is look at the most powerful interest groups in America. Many of them are nonprofit organizations dedicated to issues that many Americans care about.

Tracy: I'm skeptical, professor.

Prof. Houston: It's true. Not all interest groups are profit-driven corporations out to defend their bottom line at the expense of innocent citizens. 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. You've got a point there.



Papers R Us CEO David Kamaka

Dear Mom,

I'm sorry I haven't written in awhile. Things have been really busy at work. I had to make three trips to Washington, D.C. to lobby some senators about a paper safety law they're considering. It would require all paper to have rounded edges so people won't get paper cuts. It would be great for business, because we've been trying to push round-edge paper to our customers. It's cheaper to produce and we make a lot more money from it.

You know, mom, I really think this paper safety law is going to be good for everyone, not just the businesses. I mean, a lot of people suffer from paper cuts. So the law would help our profits, but it would also help the public. It's kind of like when the insurance industry pushed for those health warnings on cigarette labels. It's a win-win, you know?

Be careful, Mom. I worry about you getting tangled up in yarn at your knitting circle.

Love,
Your Davie

DRAFTING BOARD

Interest Groups



Name: _____

Class: _____

iCivics Username: _____

iCivics Password: _____

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

Glossary of Terms

Claim: where you stand on an issue

Counterclaim: where the other side stands on an issue

Reason: an explanation for something, like why your claim is right

Evidence: proof that can be given to support something; it backs up your reason

Rebuttal: statement of why you disagree with something

Transitions: words used to make a paragraph flow smoothly

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

Big Question: Does the influence of interest groups harm our political system?

Yes or No

My claim:

DRAFTING BOARD

Issue Analyzer

In the Issue Analyzer, you will investigate both sides of the issue. First you must sort through your evidence to complete the missing sections of the story. When you're done, you will understand both sides of the issue and have a chance to pick your side.

Here are your objectives:

- Read the article
- Complete the story chunks
- Choose a side

Date Completed: _____



Claim Creator

The Claim Creator helps you outline the reasons behind your claim. These reasons will help you draft the three main paragraphs of your essay, so they're really important. You will also have to back up your reasons with evidence, so read closely.

Here are your objectives:

- Pick sides
- See vote results
- Select your reasons
- Justify your best reason
- Support your side with evidence
- Select the other side's reasons

Date Completed: _____



Paragraph Constructor 1

The Paragraph Constructor helps you write the three body paragraphs of your essay. For the 1st paragraph, make sure to support your reason with evidence.

Here are your objectives:

- Arrange the sentences
- Complete the sentences with evidence
- Place transitions
- Edit your paragraph

Date Completed: _____



DRAFTING BOARD

Paragraph Constructor 2

Now it's time to create your 2nd body paragraph. For your 2nd paragraph, make sure to support your reason with evidence. This time use your own language to complete the evidence sentences.

Here are your objectives:

- Arrange the sentences
- Complete the sentences with evidence
- Place transitions
- Edit your paragraph



Date Completed: _____

Paragraph Constructor 3

Now it's time to create your final body paragraph. For your 3rd body paragraph, make sure to support your reason with evidence. This time you are ready to write the whole paragraph yourself. If you get stuck, use the blue evidence buttons for help.

Here are your objectives:

- Write your paragraph using your third reason and evidence
- Edit and check your paragraph



Date Completed: _____

Critic Crusher

The Critic Crusher will help you look at the other side's argument. You can see your opponent's reasoning and use your evidence to shoot it down. The first exercise will guide you through how to write a rebuttal paragraph and the second exercise will let you try it yourself. At the end, you will pick which paragraph you think is best.

Here are your objectives:

- Acknowledge the other side's reason
- Use your reasons & evidence to show the other side is wrong
- Restate your claim to make your point
- Pick a paragraph
- Place transitions
- Edit and check



Date Completed: _____

DRAFTING BOARD

Introduction Introducer

The Introduction Introducer will provide you with strategies to create a strong opening paragraph that will grab your reader's attention. Remember, you only have one chance to make a first impression.

Here are your objectives:

- Sort the hook sentences
- Edit your paragraph
- Choose a hook for your paragraph
- Place transitions



Date Completed: _____

Intro Strategies

Background info gives the reader a better understanding of the history behind the problem.

Statistics or quotes can engage the reader and get them interested in your side of the debate.

Questions or scenarios catch the reader's attention and makes them curious.

Conclusion Crafter

The Conclusion Crafter will give you the strategies for creating a strong closing paragraph that summarizes your argument. You will have the chance to put everything in your own words and make an impact!

Here are your objectives:

- Summarize your side of the issue
- Pick a clincher sentence
- Restate your reasons
- Place transitions
- Sort the clinchers
- Edit and check



Date Completed: _____

Closing Clincher Strategies

Statistics or quotes reinforce your message by showing that you can back it up with facts and figures.

Next steps gives you a chance to make suggestions based on your argument.

Consequences can show your reader what might happen if something isn't done to solve the issue.

One last edit & check, and you are done!

Student Expression

Name: _____

STEP ONE Give Compliments! Mark places in the text where the writing is effective. For example:

STEP TWO Make Suggestions. Offer specific ideas for how to improve the writing. For example:

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!

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.

STEP THREE 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

Student Expression

Name: _____

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Drafting Board

Peer Edit Guide