

# INTRODUCTORY LESSON: MAKE YOUR CASE!

## MATERIALS

-  Student Handout - Make Your Case!

## COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT

-  Page 61 - #1 (Gr. 6-10), #2 (Gr. 6-8), #6 (Gr. 6-12), and #8 (Gr. 6-12)

## PLAN OF INSTRUCTION

### 1 Introduction.

Explain to students:

*This lesson is about the skill of corroboration. Corroboration is the act of comparing pieces of evidence and seeing where they agree and disagree. When you have multiple pieces of evidence that say the same thing, your argument is stronger. When you only have one perspective on an event, you risk that it might be incomplete or maybe even wrong.*

*Historians corroborate evidence when they try to figure out what happened in the past. If they find multiple pieces of evidence that support their initial hunch, their case becomes stronger. If they can't find enough evidence to support a particular argument about what happened in the past, they consider other explanations or interpretations.*

*Because the goal of corroboration is to build a strong argument, it also involves sourcing. You want to source for two reasons: (1) you want each piece of evidence to be reliable; and (2) you want to see if people with different perspectives agree about what happened. It's always more convincing when two people who usually disagree happen to agree.*

*For example, a famous painting of the Battle of Lexington shows the American colonists standing their ground and fighting while the British fired on them. If you read the primary sources about the event, the Americans say the British fired first, and the British say the Americans fired first. So they disagree about who shot first. But both say the colonists scattered and ran away once the shooting started. So although we might not know who shot first, we can say with some confidence that the colonists did not stand their ground, despite the portrayal in the painting, because both sides agree on that point.*

*We're going to practice corroboration today with two examples.*

### 2 Distribute the Make Your Case! handout.

Have students complete worksheet in pairs.

### 3 Debrief student answers.

As you review student answers, be sure to discuss how each additional piece of evidence makes the initial claim stronger or weaker.

#### Scenario A:

- (a) Both pieces of evidence corroborate the claim that the Panthers were out for pizza when the locker room was vandalized.
- (b) Evidence B is stronger because the running back is from the opposing team and would have less personal motive to protect the Panthers.

#### Scenario B:

- (a) What does each account say about who started the fight?

The three accounts differ: Justin and Max blame each other, and Jamie says he didn't see the fight. Therefore, we cannot determine who started the fight because none of the accounts corroborate.

- (b) What does each account say about how Max and his friends treat Justin?

The three accounts suggest that Max and his friends are not that nice to Justin and possibly harass him. Justin and Jamie say so explicitly, and Max implies it. Although we can't be sure as to the extent of the teasing/bullying, we can cautiously conclude that Max and his friends make Justin feel uncomfortable.

- (c) Why does Jamie's account (Account C) help you build a stronger case than if you just had Max's or Justin's account?

Jamie's account adds a more objective perspective. The truth is that we don't know whether Jamie secretly hates Max, etc. He could be a notoriously unreliable source. However, if we take him at his word (that he's not friends with either Justin or Max), then his account adds an element of neutrality.

# MAKE YOUR CASE!

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## DIRECTIONS

For each of the scenarios below, explain how each piece of evidence corroborates the initial account. Then choose the piece of evidence that would make a stronger case and explain your selection.

## SCENARIO A

On the night before the big game between your school's team, the Panthers, and your biggest rivals, the Bears, the Bears' locker room was vandalized. Many of the players from the Bears are accusing members of your team of committing the vandalism. The Panthers say that they couldn't have vandalized the locker room because they were all out for pizza when the locker room was raided. Additional testimony:

### Account A:

*Statement by the Panther quarterback's older sister saying that she drove them to the pizza place on the night the locker room was vandalized.*

### Account B:

*Statement from the Bears' running back saying that he saw the Panthers at the pizza place the night the locker room was vandalized.*

## QUESTIONS

(1) How do both Account A and Account B corroborate the Panthers' account?

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(2) Which of the two pieces of testimony would make their case stronger? \_\_\_\_\_ Explain.

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CONTINUE 

## SCENARIO B

You are a principal who is trying to figure out the truth about a lunchroom fight. The fight was between Justin and Max. Justin is a new student. He is shy and doesn't have many friends. Max is a popular student who is known for his friendliness.

### Account A: Justin

*"Max started it. I was just standing in line waiting to pay for my food, and he shoved me super hard. And for no reason! He just freaked out on me. I don't even know the kid, and he's been weird to me ever since I started going to this school. Him and his friends glare at me in English class for no reason."*

### Account B: Max

*"That kid is psycho. He turned around and punched me out of nowhere. Me and my friends were standing in line just joking around, and he turned around and punched me for no reason. He's messed up and creepy. Ask anyone."*

### Account C: Jamie (student who has class with Max and Justin right before lunch)

*"I wasn't in the cafeteria today, and I'm not friends with any of those guys, but I've seen Max and his friends be mean to Justin in the hallways and in class when the teacher isn't looking. Not physical or anything, but they'll like say jokes under their breath and then laugh and stuff like that. They make him uncomfortable."*

(3) What does each account say about who started the fight?

(a) Account A: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Account B: \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Account C: \_\_\_\_\_

(4) Based on these three accounts, can you determine who started the fight? (Circle One.)

(a) Yes

(b) No

(5) Explain your answer to question #4 (above):

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(6) What does each account say about how Max and his friends treat Justin?

(a) Account A: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Account B: \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Account C: \_\_\_\_\_

(7) Based on these three accounts, can you determine how Max and his friends treat Justin?

(a) Yes

(b) No

(8) Explain your answer to question #7 (above):

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(9) Why does Jamie's account (Account C) help you build a stronger case than if you just had Max's and Justin's accounts?

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