

Custom Under Fire

Analyze how a literary argument uses evidence and a counterclaim.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.1 "Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the writer's central claim, circle each piece of textual evidence, and label the counterclaim 1 and its rebuttal 2.

An Argument About "The Lottery"

- ① In Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery," the village's ordinary routines make the final violence more disturbing than a frightening setting would. Jackson opens on a clear June morning, with flowers blooming and grass richly green. Children gather stones while they play, an action that initially seems harmless. Adults speak about planting and rain, placing the event among familiar seasonal concerns. This calm detail does not soften the story. Instead, it trains readers to expect a community celebration, so the later use of stones reveals how easily cruelty can hide inside accepted customs.
- ② The villagers' language supplies further evidence that tradition, rather than fear, protects the ritual. Old Man Warner calls the lottery an established practice and dismisses villages that have ended it as "a pack of crazy fools." His insult shows that he values conformity over moral judgment. Even Mr. Adams mentions that other villages are considering change, but no one seriously investigates that possibility. When Tessie Hutchinson protests that the drawing was unfair, her objection concerns procedure, not the killing itself. Jackson uses these responses to show a society whose members defend violence by treating custom as sufficient justification.
- ③ Some readers may argue that the story is mainly a warning about unquestioning obedience to authority, since Mr. Summers organizes the drawing and directs the villagers. That reading identifies an important pressure, but it is incomplete. Mr. Summers does not force each person to participate; neighbors collect stones, follow the rules, and turn on Tessie together. The danger comes from shared consent as well as leadership. Therefore, the story's cheerful setting and ordinary conversation matter: they expose the habits that let many people make a brutal act seem normal. Jackson's argument remains relevant wherever tradition is accepted without ethical examination.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What is the writer's central claim about the effect of the village's ordinary routines?

2 Identify two details from the first paragraph that support the writer's claim. Explain how those details shape a reader's expectations.

3 What counterclaim does the writer acknowledge in paragraph three, and how does the writer rebut it?

4 Why does Tessie Hutchinson's complaint about an unfair drawing support the writer's argument?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 140 to 170 word literary argument about a work you have studied. Make a precise claim, use at least two accurate textual details, acknowledge and rebut one counterclaim, and end with a formal concluding sentence.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the writer's central claim, circle each piece of textual evidence, and label the counterclaim 1 and its rebuttal 2. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the writer's central claim about the effect of the village's ordinary routines?	The ordinary routines make the final violence more disturbing because they hide cruelty inside familiar customs.
2	Identify two details from the first paragraph that support the writer's claim. Explain how those details shape a reader's expectations.	The clear June morning with blooming flowers and the adults' talk about planting and rain make the event seem like a harmless community celebration.
3	What counterclaim does the writer acknowledge in paragraph three, and how does the writer rebut it?	The counterclaim is that the story mainly warns about obedience to authority. The rebuttal is that villagers freely collect stones, follow the rules, and attack Tessie, showing shared consent.
4	Why does Tessie Hutchinson's complaint about an unfair drawing support the writer's argument?	Tessie objects to the procedure instead of the killing, showing that even a victim can accept violence as normal when tradition supports it.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, fear becomes powerful because the court treats accusation as proof. When Mary Warren tells the judges that the girls were pretending, Abigail Williams and the other girls mimic Mary's words and movements. The judges accept the performance as evidence that Mary has sent a spirit against them. Later, Deputy Governor Danforth refuses to delay executions even after Reverend Hale doubts the court's judgments. These moments show that official institutions, not only frightened individuals, turn rumors into deadly decisions. Some readers may argue that Abigail alone causes the tragedy because she begins the accusations. However, her lies succeed only because Danforth and the court punish doubt and reward agreement. Miller therefore criticizes a legal system that values its authority more than careful evidence.

Accept accurate paraphrases of the claim, evidence, counterclaim, and rebuttal. In the open response, look for a discipline-specific literary claim, relevant and accurate evidence, reasoning, a genuine counterclaim with rebuttal, and a formal conclusion.