Explain or Argue?

Sort social studies thesis statements by purpose.

MWH.P.4.1 "Summarize and paraphrase, integrate evidence, and cite sources to create written products, research projects, and presentations for multiple purposes related to social studies content. Compose informative essays and written products..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

INFORMATIVE THESIS

An informative thesis tells readers what a piece will explain. It does not ask them to agree with a judgment or recommendation.

Polynesian navigators used stars and ocean swells to guide long voyages across the Pacific.

ARGUMENTATIVE CLAIM

An argumentative claim takes a position that readers could reasonably challenge. The writer must support that position with reasons and credible evidence.

Historic marketplaces deserve legal protection because they preserve local culture and support small businesses.

1 SORT

8 items

Circle EXPLAIN or ARGUE for each item, then pick two items and explain in writing why each fits its category.

1.	1. This essay explains how the U.S. Census records population changes across states.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
2.	2. A report on the Berlin Wall traces events from its construction to its fall.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
3.	3. Museums should return artifacts acquired through colonial violence because communities deserve control of their heritage.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
4.	4. This essay describes the effects of monsoon rains on farming in South Asia.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
5.	5. School districts should teach local labor history because it helps students understand their communities.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
6.	6. Governments should make public transit free because it can expand access to jobs.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
7.	7. This report compares the goals of the League of Nations and the United Nations.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
8.	8. This essay outlines the causes of the Haitian Revolution and its effects on slavery in the region.	EXPLAIN ARGUE

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one new informative thesis and one new argumentative claim about two different social studies topics not used above.

EXPLAIN _____

ARGUE _____

CHALLENGE

Choose one informative thesis from Part 1, rewrite it as an argumentative claim with a reason, and name a credible source that could help test your claim.

ANSWER KEY

Explain or Argue?

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PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	1. This essay explains how the U.S. Census records population changes across states.	**EXPLAIN**	It identifies a process to explain without taking a position.
2	2. A report on the Berlin Wall traces events from its construction to its fall.	**EXPLAIN**	It sets out a sequence to describe without making a judgment.
3	3. Museums should return artifacts acquired through colonial violence because communities deserve control of their heritage.	**ARGUE**	It recommends an action and gives a reason that can be debated.
4	4. This essay describes the effects of monsoon rains on farming in South Asia.	**EXPLAIN**	It identifies effects to explain without recommending an action.
5	5. School districts should teach local labor history because it helps students understand their communities.	**ARGUE**	It recommends a curriculum choice and gives a reason.
6	6. Governments should make public transit free because it can expand access to jobs.	**ARGUE**	It takes a debatable policy position and gives a reason.
7	7. This report compares the goals of the League of Nations and the United Nations.	**EXPLAIN**	It identifies subjects to compare without arguing for a position.
8	8. This essay outlines the causes of the Haitian Revolution and its effects on slavery in the region.	**EXPLAIN**	It identifies causes and effects to explain without making a recommendation.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **EXPLAIN**: This essay explains how Ghana gained independence from Britain in 1957.
- **ARGUE**: States should make voter registration more accessible because complicated procedures can prevent eligible citizens from participating.

Challenge: Congress should use recent census counts when distributing federal funds because population shifts change where services are needed. U.S. Census Bureau state population tables could help test whether those shifts occurred.

Items 1, 2, 4, 7, and 8 explain; items 3, 5, and 6 argue. For Part 2, look for an explanation of the statement's purpose or debatable position, not just its tag.