Explain or Argue?

Sort social studies thesis statements by purpose.

WG.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 states what a piece will explain. It does not ask readers to support a position.

Maya astronomers used observations of Venus to track time.

ARGUMENTATIVE CLAIM

An argumentative claim takes a position on an issue people can reasonably debate. The writer must support that position with evidence.

City libraries should remain open later because evening hours serve shift workers.

1 SORT

8 items

Circle EXPLAIN or ARGUE for each statement, then choose one item from each category and explain which words helped you decide.

1.	The Silk Road connected trading centers across Asia and Europe.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
2.	Governments should lower the voting age to 16 to give more young people a voice.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
3.	Countries should reduce import taxes to make foreign goods more affordable.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
4.	The U.S. Constitution divides federal power among three branches.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
5.	Migration to U.S. cities increased as factories expanded in the late 1800s.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
6.	The printing press helped spread new ideas across Europe during the Renaissance.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
7.	National parks should limit private vehicles to reduce air pollution.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
8.	The Erie Canal linked the Hudson River and Lake Erie, helping move goods between regions.	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 two new social studies thesis statements: one EXPLAIN statement about a historical topic and one ARGUE statement that takes a position on a debatable issue.

EXPLAIN _____

ARGUE _____

CHALLENGE

Choose one EXPLAIN item, rewrite it as an ARGUE claim about the same topic, then add one sentence stating a reasonable opposing claim.

ANSWER KEY

Explain or Argue?

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	The Silk Road connected trading centers across Asia and Europe.	**EXPLAIN**	States a historical fact without taking a position.
2	Governments should lower the voting age to 16 to give more young people a voice.	**ARGUE**	Recommends a debatable change in voting policy.
3	Countries should reduce import taxes to make foreign goods more affordable.	**ARGUE**	Takes a position on a debatable trade policy.
4	The U.S. Constitution divides federal power among three branches.	**EXPLAIN**	Describes the structure of the federal government.
5	Migration to U.S. cities increased as factories expanded in the late 1800s.	**EXPLAIN**	Describes a historical pattern without recommending a policy.
6	The printing press helped spread new ideas across Europe during the Renaissance.	**EXPLAIN**	Explains a historical effect without taking a position.
7	National parks should limit private vehicles to reduce air pollution.	**ARGUE**	Recommends a debatable policy for national parks.
8	The Erie Canal linked the Hudson River and Lake Erie, helping move goods between regions.	**EXPLAIN**	Describes the canal's route and role in trade.

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**: Song dynasty officials issued paper currency to support trade.
- **ARGUE**: States should offer free admission to history museums to make exhibits available to more residents.

Challenge: Governments should fund canal construction to improve trade between regions. Opponents might argue that governments should spend that money on roads instead.

For Part 2, accept explanations that identify a debatable recommendation in an ARGUE item or a factual explanation without a proposed side in an EXPLAIN item. The challenge sample builds on item 8.