

2.3 Identifying claims and evidence

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 11 marks

Objective

Build the skills to identify claims and evidence in a text with **more than one claim**.

You must be able to:

- separate a main claim from supporting sub-claims
- attach each piece of evidence to the claim it serves
- notice evidence that supports nothing
- state the relationship between two claims in a passage

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Main claim and sub-claims

A passage usually argues one thing overall and several things along the way. The **main claim** is what the passage would fail without; a **sub-claim** supports it. Ask which depends on which.

■ Attaching evidence

Each piece of evidence belongs to a particular claim. Mark them: this statistic supports sub-claim 2, this anecdote supports sub-claim 1. Evidence that attaches to nothing is a signal —either a gap in the reasoning or a bid for the reader's sympathy.

■ Relationships between claims

Two claims may be **cumulative** (each adds weight), **conditional** (the second holds only if the first does), or in **tension** (the writer is qualifying). Naming the relationship is the analysis.

2 Practice

2.1 State how to tell a main claim from a sub-claim.

[2]

2.2 State one thing unattached evidence may indicate. [2]

2.3 A passage argues that a policy is unaffordable and separately that it is unfair.

(a) State the relationship between the two claims. [1]

(b) State what the writer gains by making both. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A claim that holds only if an earlier one does is [1]

- **A** cumulative
- **B** conditional
- **C** in tension
- **D** unattached

3.2 A vivid story that supports no stated claim most likely functions to [1]

- **A** prove the thesis
- **B** engage the reader's sympathy
- **C** qualify a claim
- **D** define a term

3.3 A passage offers four statistics; three support the main claim and one supports a sub-claim.

(a) State why marking which is which matters. [1]

(b) Explain how this affects an analysis of the line of reasoning. [2]

4 Go further

- work through the **2.3 Identifying claims and evidence** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Audience, Thesis, and Supporting Evidence** section of the AP English Language handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 the main claim is what the passage would fail without; a sub-claim exists to support it.

2.2 a gap in the reasoning; or an appeal aimed at sympathy rather than proof.

2.3 (a) cumulative —each adds independent weight. (b) a reader who rejects one may still accept the other.

3.1 B. its truth depends on the earlier claim.

3.2 B. unattached vivid material usually works on feeling rather than proof.

3.3 (a) it shows which parts of the argument are load-bearing. (b) the reasoning can then be described as a structure rather than as a list of things the writer mentions.