

Using Graphic Organizers to Promote Students' Academic Language Production

In the content-based English classroom, students study difficult concepts. Oftentimes, however, there is little opportunity for students to talk or write about these concepts. Instead, students sit passively in their seats.

This presentation will:

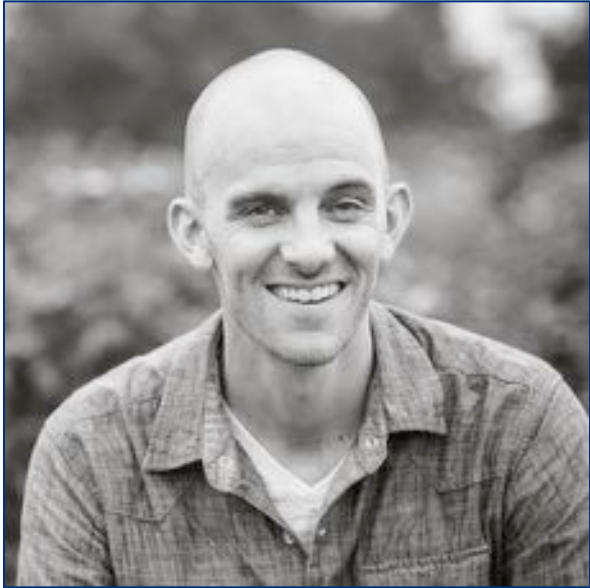
- introduce the graphic organizer as a tool to help students understand difficult concepts and produce related, meaningful academic English
- explore how to effectively integrate graphic organizers into their instruction as part of student-centered speaking and writing activities
- examine strategies that help students become more engaged and capable of effectively speaking and writing about content-area concepts



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



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Eric Wenninger is a language education consultant specializing in content-based English instructional techniques. He served two years as a U.S. Department of State English Language Fellow in Vietnam, where he taught professional English skills to government officials and mentored English teachers.

Eric received his Master of Education degree in Second Languages and Cultures Education from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. His professional interests include working with multi-level classes, designing and delivering content-based English instruction, and blending technology with teaching.



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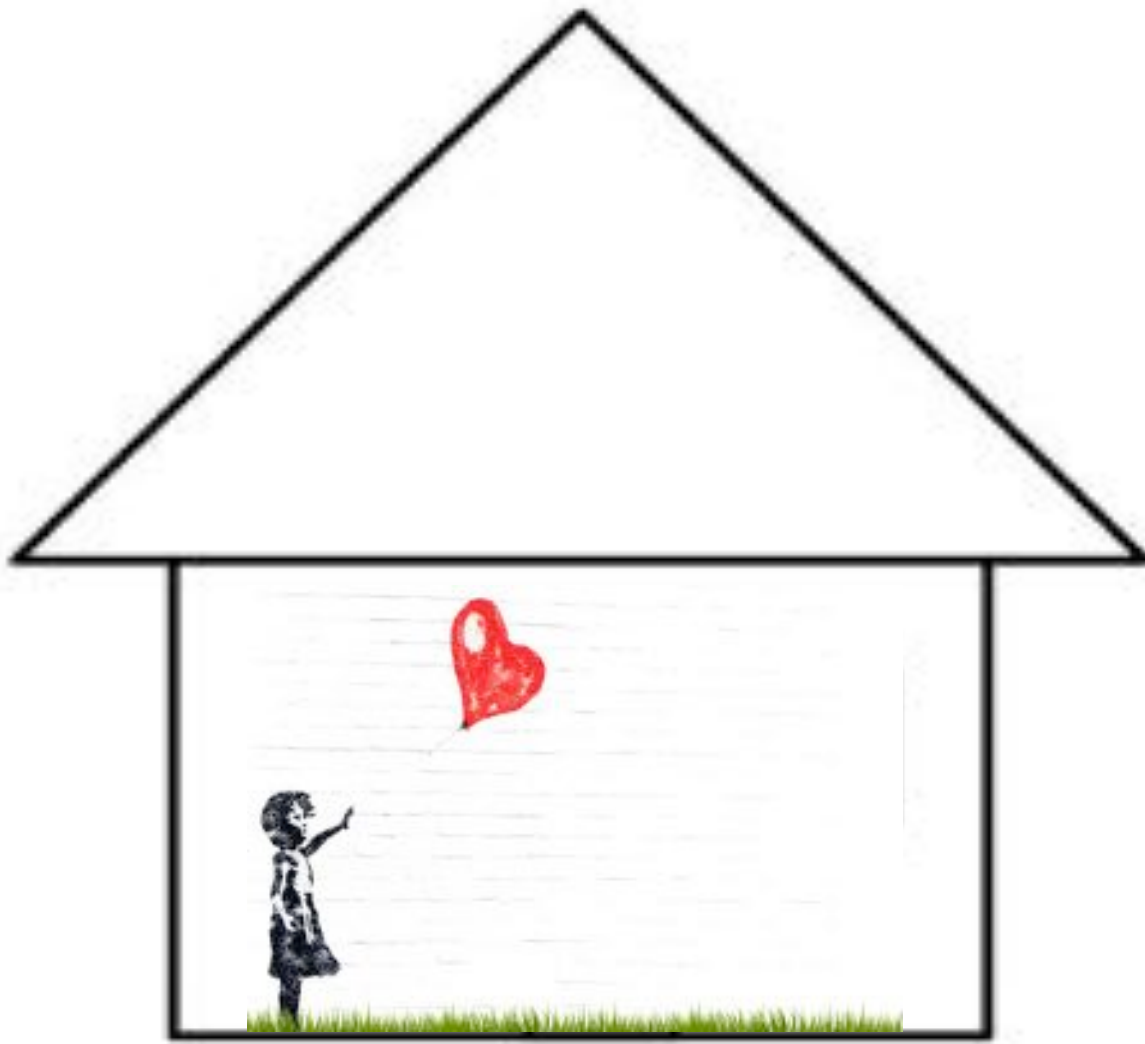
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Audience Questions

1. How do you *help your students* understand difficult concepts and vocabulary in your classroom?
2. What percentage of your class time is devoted to students *actively practicing* speaking or writing?

***“Street art** is a form of artwork that is displayed in a community on its surrounding buildings, streets, trains, and other publicly viewed surfaces. Many instances...make a public statement about the society that the artist lives within. The work has moved from the beginnings of graffiti and vandalism to new modes where artists work to bring messages, or just simple beauty, to an audience.”*

-[Wikipedia](#)



Street Art

- Displayed on a community surface
- Publicly viewed
- Make a public statement

Visuals Support Us

Essential Question

How do we get students to speak and write about challenging academic topics in a non-native language?

ANSWER

Make it *visual* and provide *opportunities for practice*.

Session Overview

1. We will discuss challenges that go along with students learning ***academic language*** in a content-based English classroom.
2. We will discuss how teachers can use ***graphic organizers*** to ***scaffold their instruction*** of English learners.
3. We will discuss ***speaking and writing activities*** that teachers can use with ***graphic organizers*** to help students ***produce academic language*** in the classroom.

Academic Language – **High** Cognitive Demand



Explain a
demonstration



Defend an
argument

Context-
Embedded

Context-
Reduced

SCAFFOLDING



Face-to-face
conversation



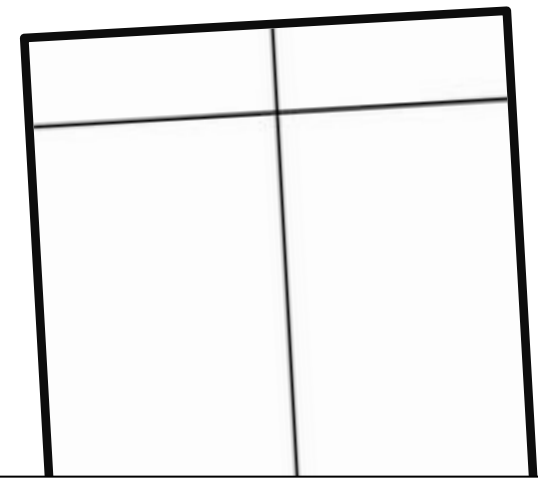
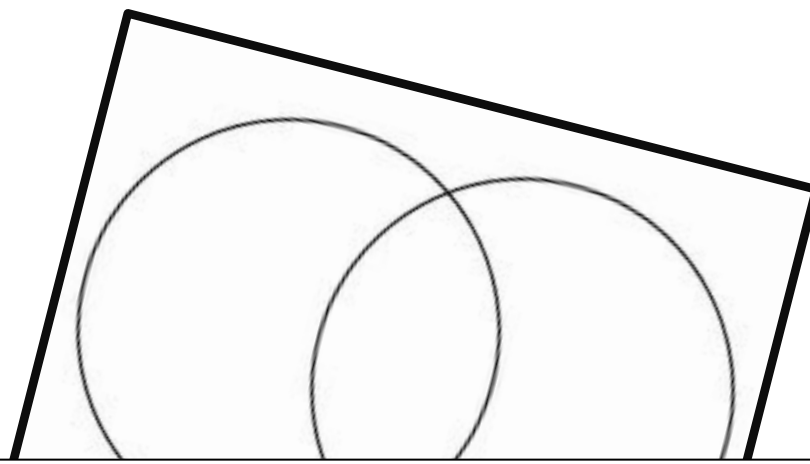
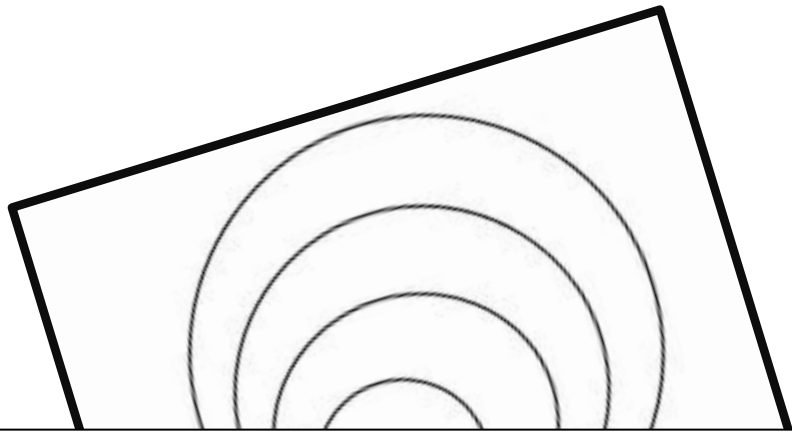
Phone
conversation

Social Language – **Low** Cognitive Demand

Cummins (1979)

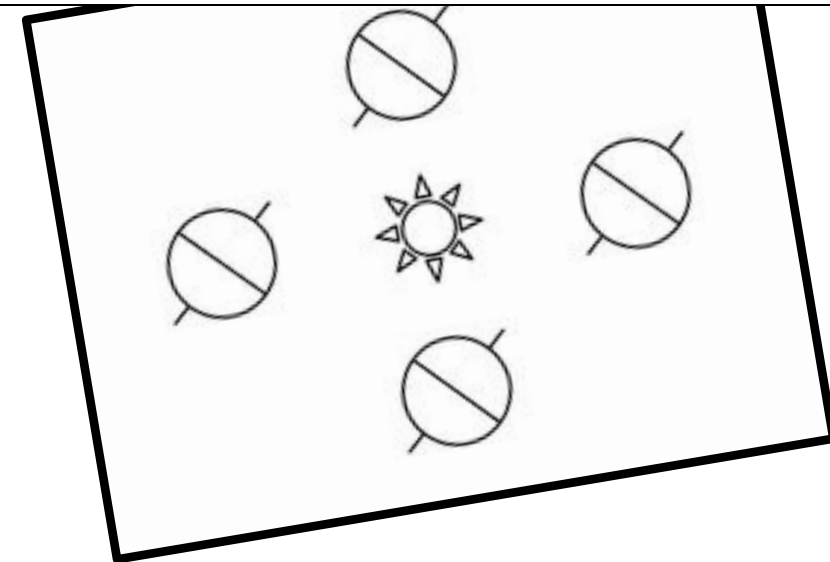
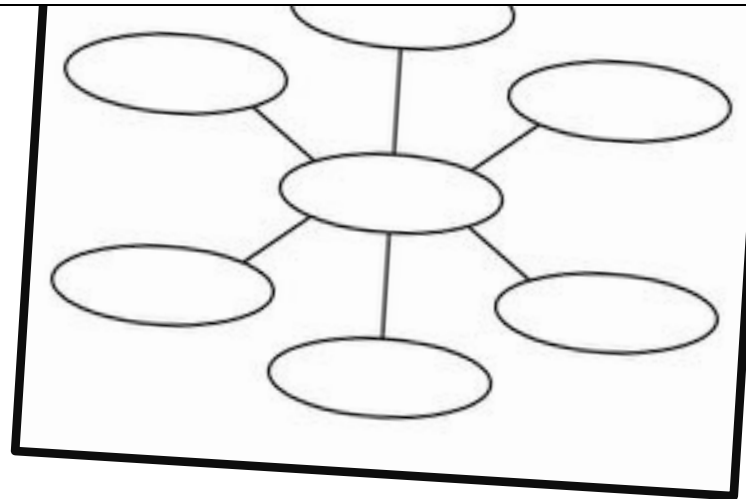
Graphic Organizers

*“A graphic organizer is a **visual aid** that helps language learners understand important **ideas** and their **relationship** to one another. It can also help students learn key **academic vocabulary** and **grammar** so that they can **engage** with each other about **content area topics**.”*



Which graphic organizers have you used in class? Why?

Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Refutation:
Closing Statement:	



Graphic Organizers Are Flexible

Ability levels – from beginner to advanced

Content areas – all learning environments

Language skills – reading, writing, listening, and speaking

Lesson phases – from introducing content topics and skills to assessing them

Scaffolding

- Begin with the ***end in mind***
- Write ***content*** and ***language objectives***

ALL teacher →
1. Planning phase



MOSTLY teacher →

2. Input phase

ALL teacher →

1. Planning phase



Scaffolding

- Give students a *lecture*
- Show students a *video* (TED Talk or YouTube)
- Have students do a *reading*
- **MODEL**

MOSTLY students →
3. Guided practice phase

MOSTLY teacher →
2. Input phase

ALL teacher →
1. Planning phase



Scaffolding

Students must DO something!

- ***Guided*** practice and application
- ***Independent*** practice and application

ALL students →
4. Output phase

MOSTLY students →
3. Guided practice phase

MOSTLY teacher →
2. Input phase

ALL teacher →
1. Planning phase



Scaffolding

- Students ***produce*** something
- Student ***work is assessed*** in some way

An aerial photograph of a dense urban neighborhood in San Francisco, showing a variety of colorful row houses in shades of blue, yellow, and white. The houses are built on a hillside, and the image is used as a background for a title slide.

THEMATIC UNITS

FOCUS #1 – THEMATIC UNITS

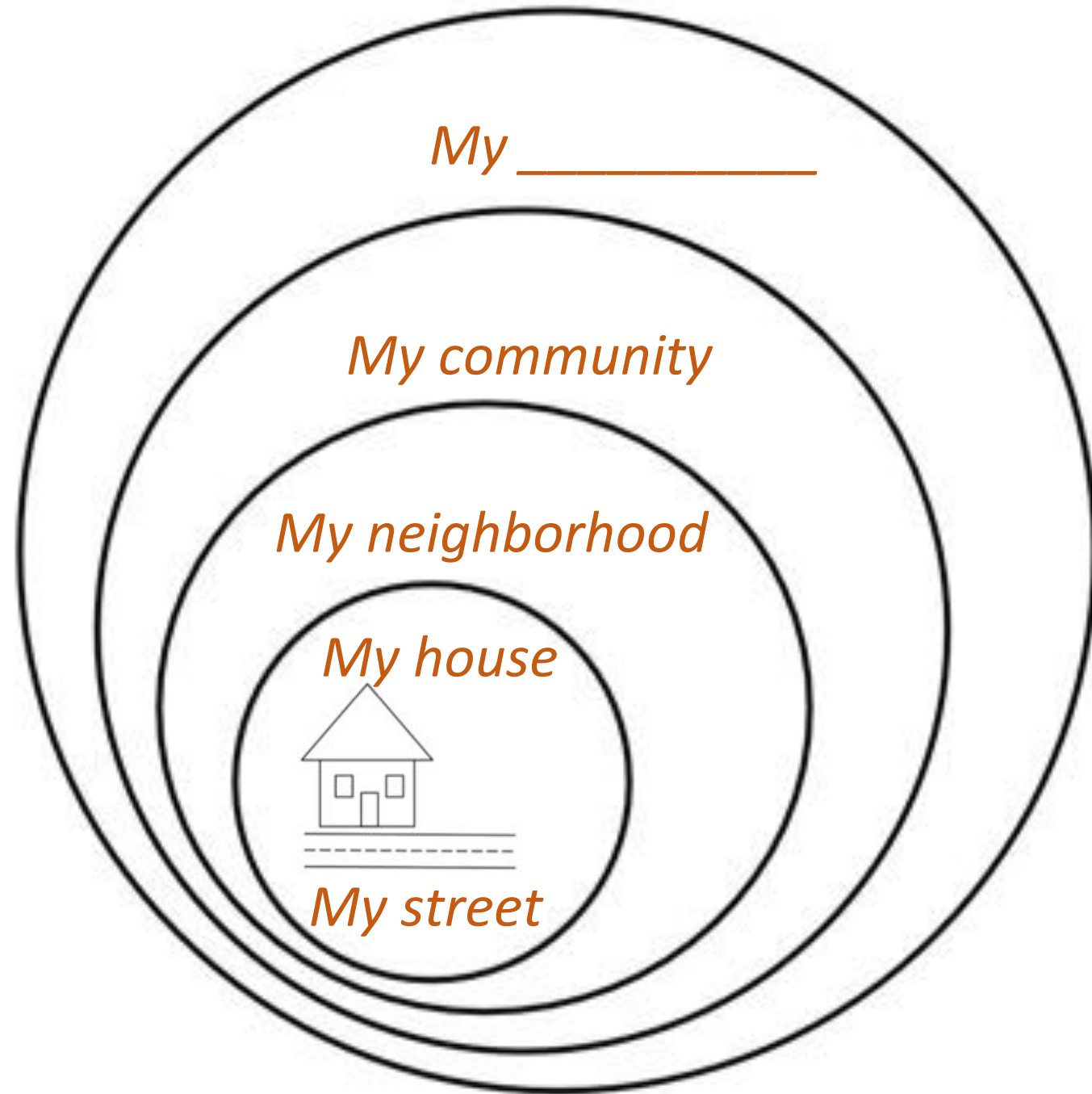
END GOAL: *Students can differentiate between places/activities in their neighborhood and in their community.*

Content Objectives

1. Identify **places** in their **neighborhood**.
2. Identify **places** in their **community**.
3. Describe **activities** they do in their neighborhood and community.

Language Objectives

1. Use neighborhood and community vocabulary (**verbs** and **nouns**).
2. Differentiate between **first person** and **third person**.
3. Compare themselves with a classmate.

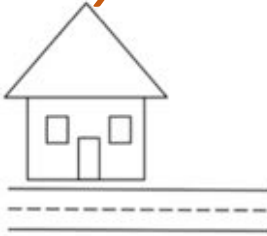


My _____

My community

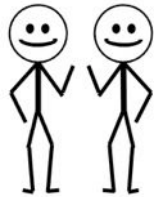
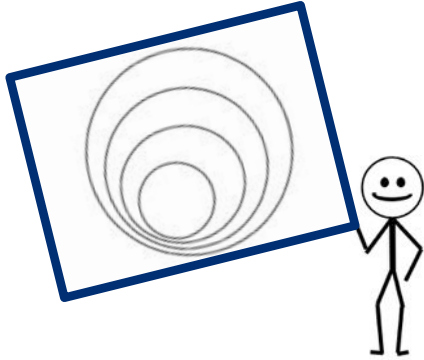
My neighborhood

My house



My street

Think-Pair-Share



1. What do you ***have*** in your ***neighborhood***?
2. Where do you ***go*** in your ***community***?

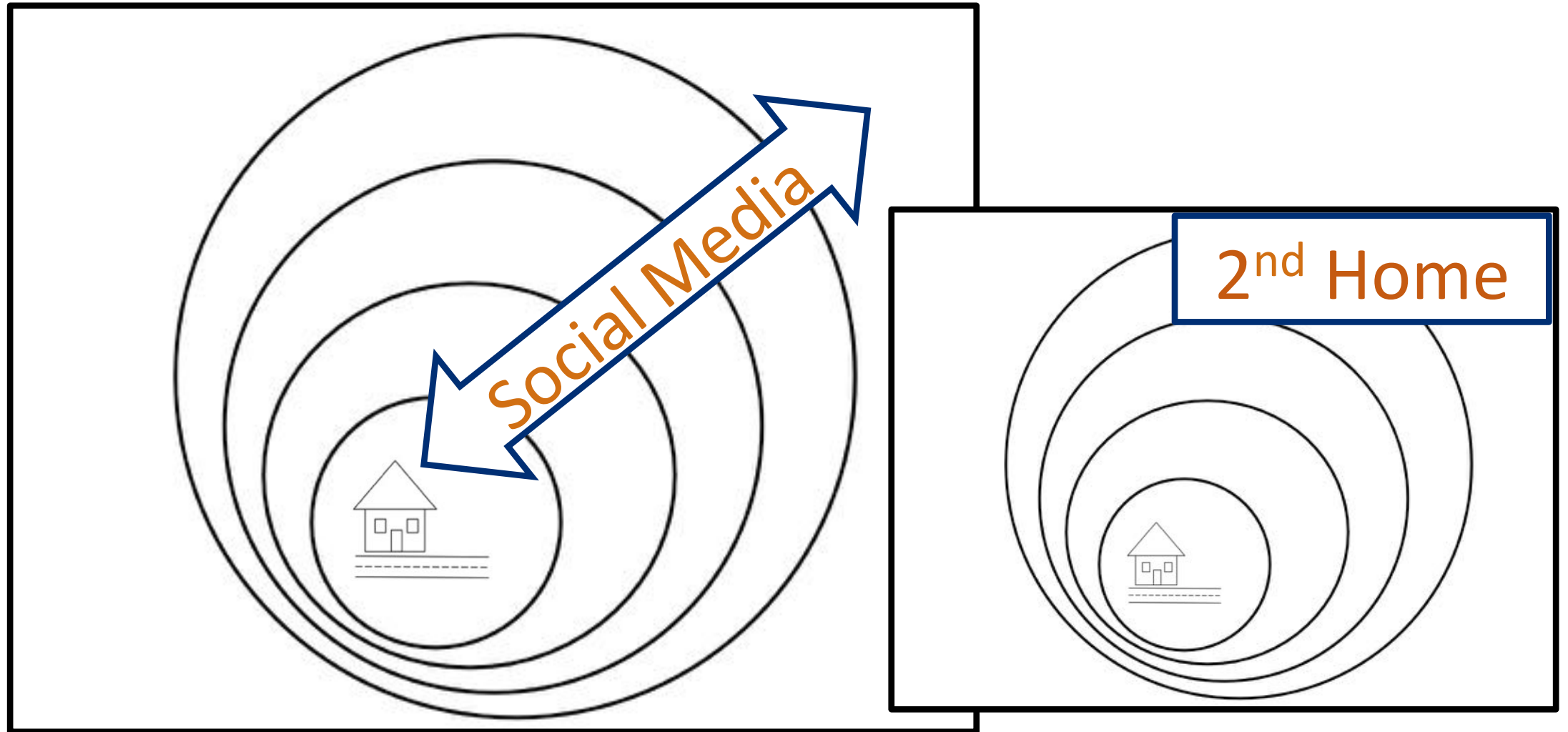
Class Mingle

Name	Neighborhood	Community
<i>Eric</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>an airport</i>• <i>school</i>• <i>park</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>grocery store</i>• <i>my work</i>
<i>Angela</i>		
<i>Mai</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>a gas station</i>• <i>grocery store</i>• <i>restaurant</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>volunteer center</i>• <i>school</i>
<i>Fazliddin</i>		

Writing Extension

In my neighborhood, I have a park and a school. Mai has a gas station and a restaurant.

Limitations





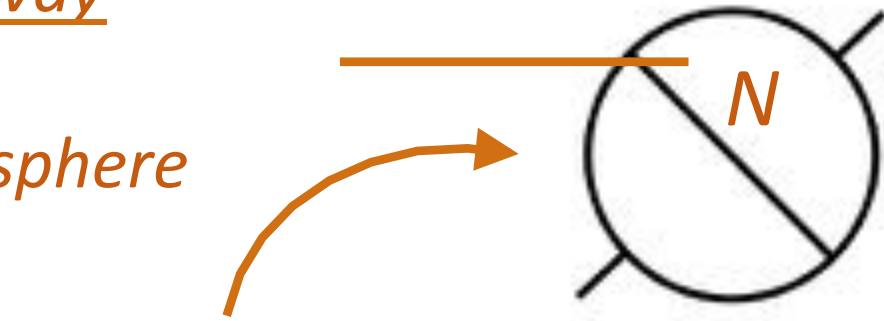
CONTENT AREAS

Focus #2 – CONTENT AREAS

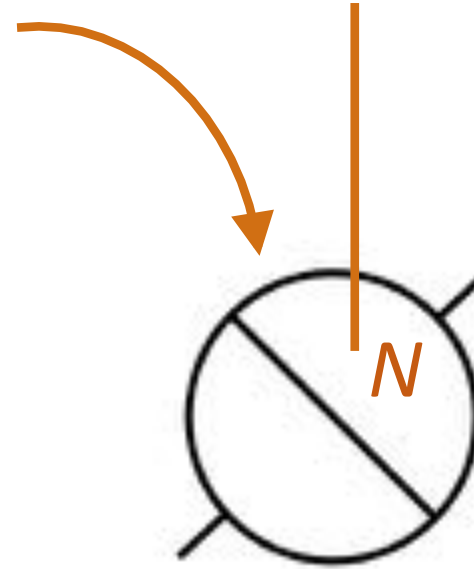
END GOAL: *Students can use scientific language to explain why people on the Earth experience seasons.*

Content Objectives	Language Objectives
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Demonstrate that the Earth is tilted and revolves around the sun.2. Explain Earth's position relative to the season experienced in the northern and southern hemispheres.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Use scientific vocabulary related to Earth's position (axis, tilted, hemisphere, etc.)2. Use prepositions to explain Earth's position (towards, away from)

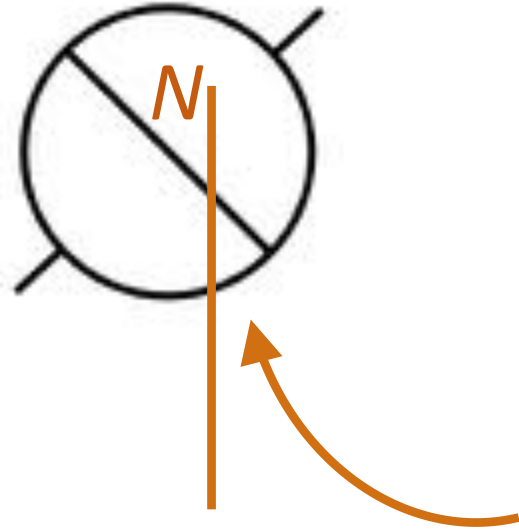
- Begins to tilt away from the sun
- Northern hemisphere = fall



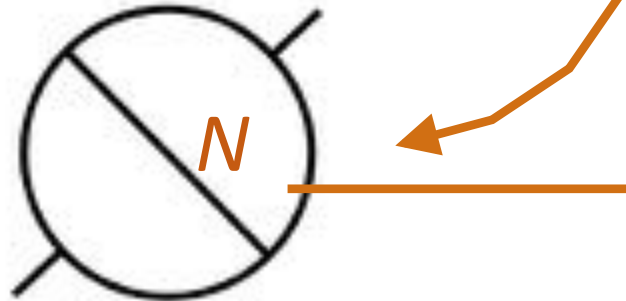
- Tilted away from the sun
- Northern hemisphere = winter



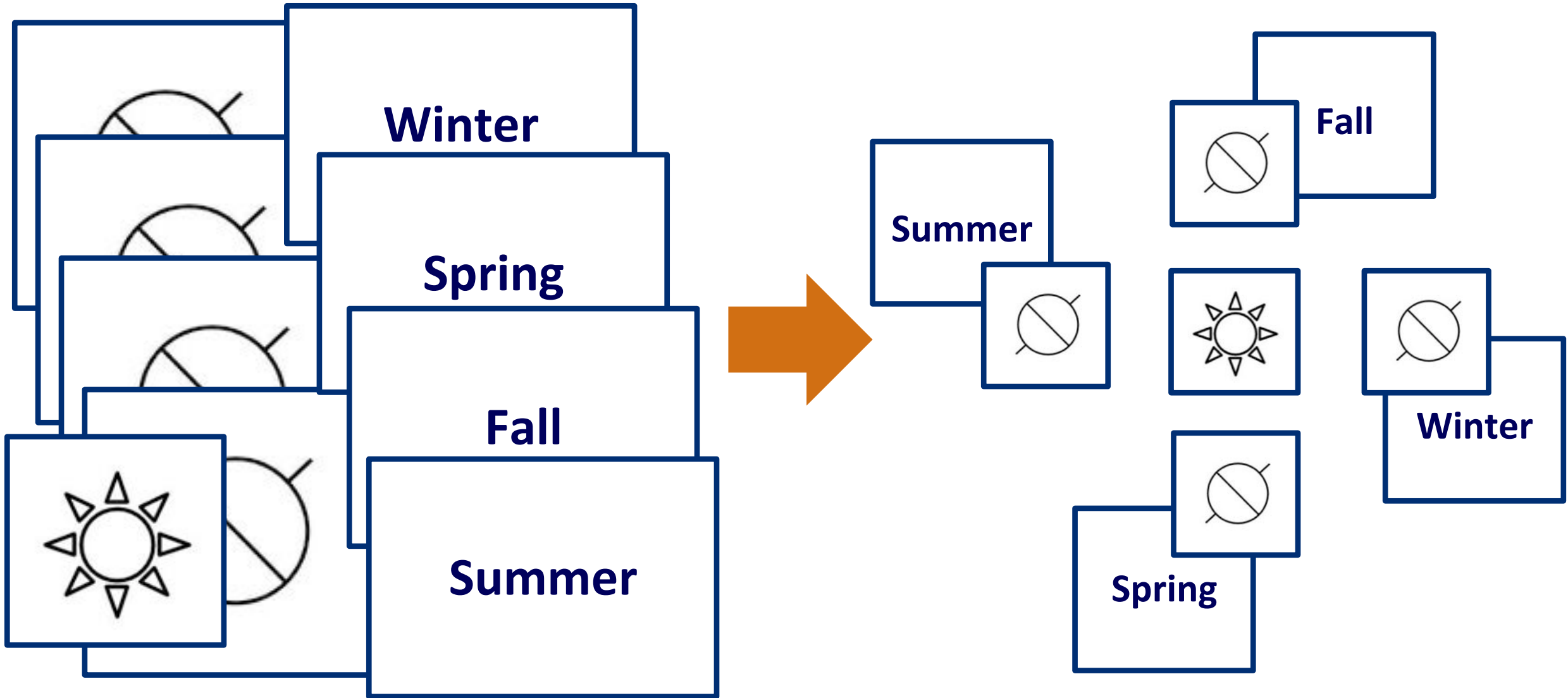
- Tilted towards the sun
- Northern hemisphere = summer



- Begins to tilt towards the sun
- Northern hemisphere = spring



Sorting

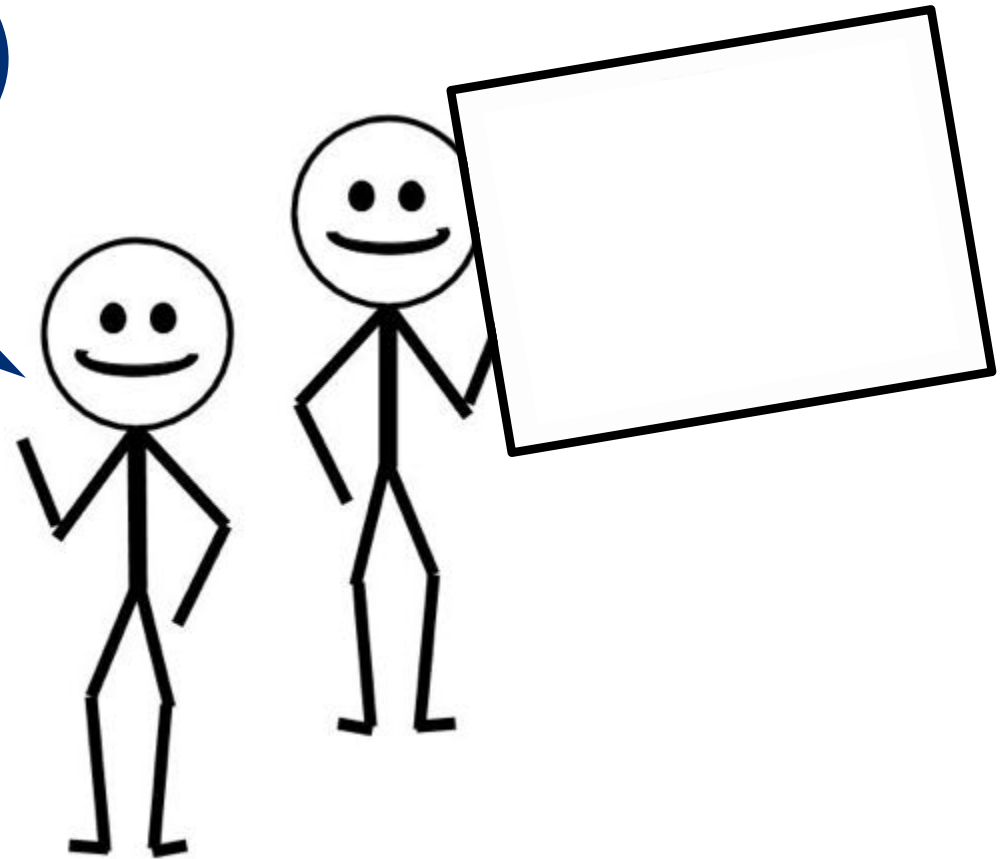


Look/No Look

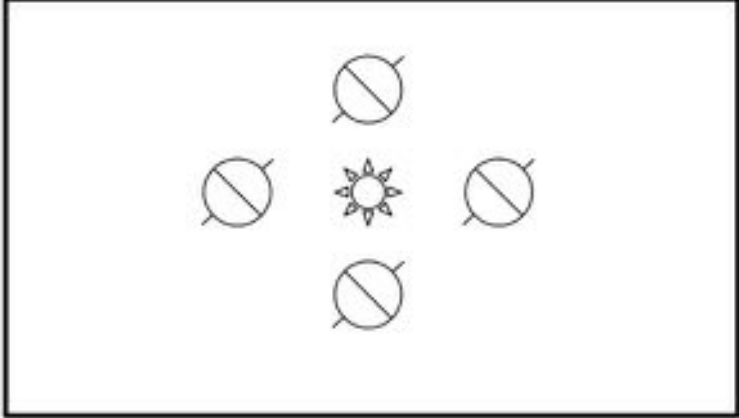
*When the Earth's axis
is tilted away from the
sun, then we have
winter...*

Talking Frames

*When _____ the sun,
then _____*



Journal Writing

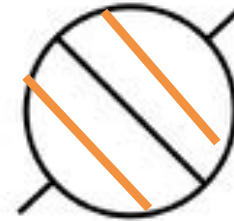
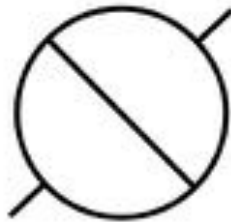
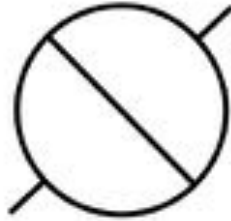


When the Earth's axis is tilted towards the sun, it is summer in the northern hemisphere.

- Students draw the diagram and label it.
- Students explain the diagram in the space below.

Limitations

Inaccuracies



Degree of
complexity



HIGHER ED

Focus #3 – HIGHER ED

END GOAL: *Students can defend and argument with evidence and reasoning in an organized way.*

Content Objectives	Language Objectives
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Take a position on an argument.2. Defend their position through providing evidence and reasoning.3. Refute counterclaims.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide coherent organization of ideas.2. Use appropriate transition words.3. Speak diplomatically.



Graffiti



Group 1



Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Refutation:
Closing Statement:	

Group 2



Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Refutation:
Closing Statement:	

Claim: *Street art is positive for communities*

Reason 1: *Educates people on important issues*

Reason 2: *Makes spaces more attractive*

Evidence:
Often contains a social message

Evidence:
Instead of dull walls, you get beautiful paintings

Counterclaim:
Property values will go down

Refutation:
Actually brings in more tourism

Closing Statement:

Street art is positive for communities





VANDALISM

Debate



ART

Steps

1. Presents claim in opening statement
3. States reasons and evidence
6. Gives counter
8. Gives closing statement

Steps

2. Presents claim in opening statement
4. Gives counter
5. States reasons and evidence
7. Gives closing statement

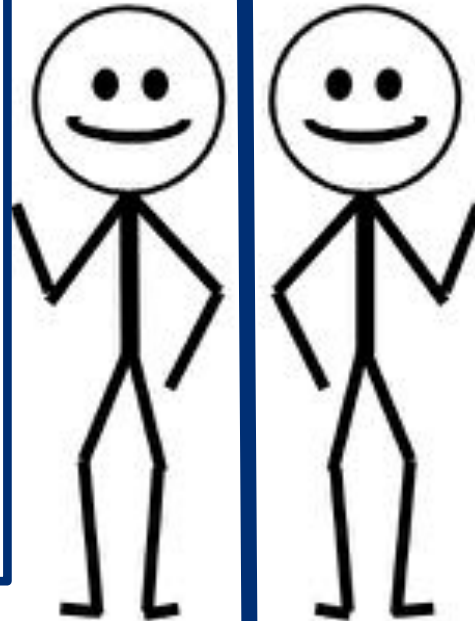




Debate



Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Refutation:
Closing Statement:	



Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Refutation:
Closing Statement:	

Argumentative Writing

Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Refutation:
Closing Statement:	

Options

- Students can turn their debate position into a persuasive essay.
- Students can take a position on a new topic.

Limitations

3rd option

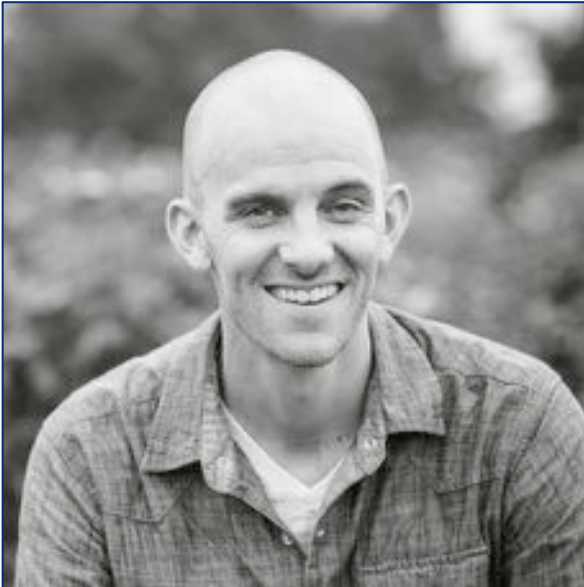
Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Refutation:
Closing Statement:	



Review

- Start with an ***end goal*** and ***find/design graphic organizers*** that help your students get there
- Incorporate graphic organizers ***throughout your lessons*** as a ***scaffold*** for ***all language skills***
- Give your students ***time to practice speaking*** and ***writing*** in class.

Thank you!



Questions?

Twitter - @erwenninger

References

- Cummins, J. (1979). *Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age question and some other matters*, Working Papers on Bilingualism 19, 121–129.
- Gonzalez, Jennifer (2018). [*To Learn, Students Need to DO Something*](#). Cult of Pedagogy
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- Wise, Mark and Cooper, Carol (2019). [*Increasing the Value of Graphic Organizers*](#). Edutopia

Thank you!

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