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ARGUMENT DESIGN: TOULMIN METHOD

British philosopher Stephen Toulmin points out that realistic arguments, ones that reveal both the strength and the limits of one's point, typically contain 6 elements.

These elements can be broken down further into primary and secondary elements:

PRIMARY

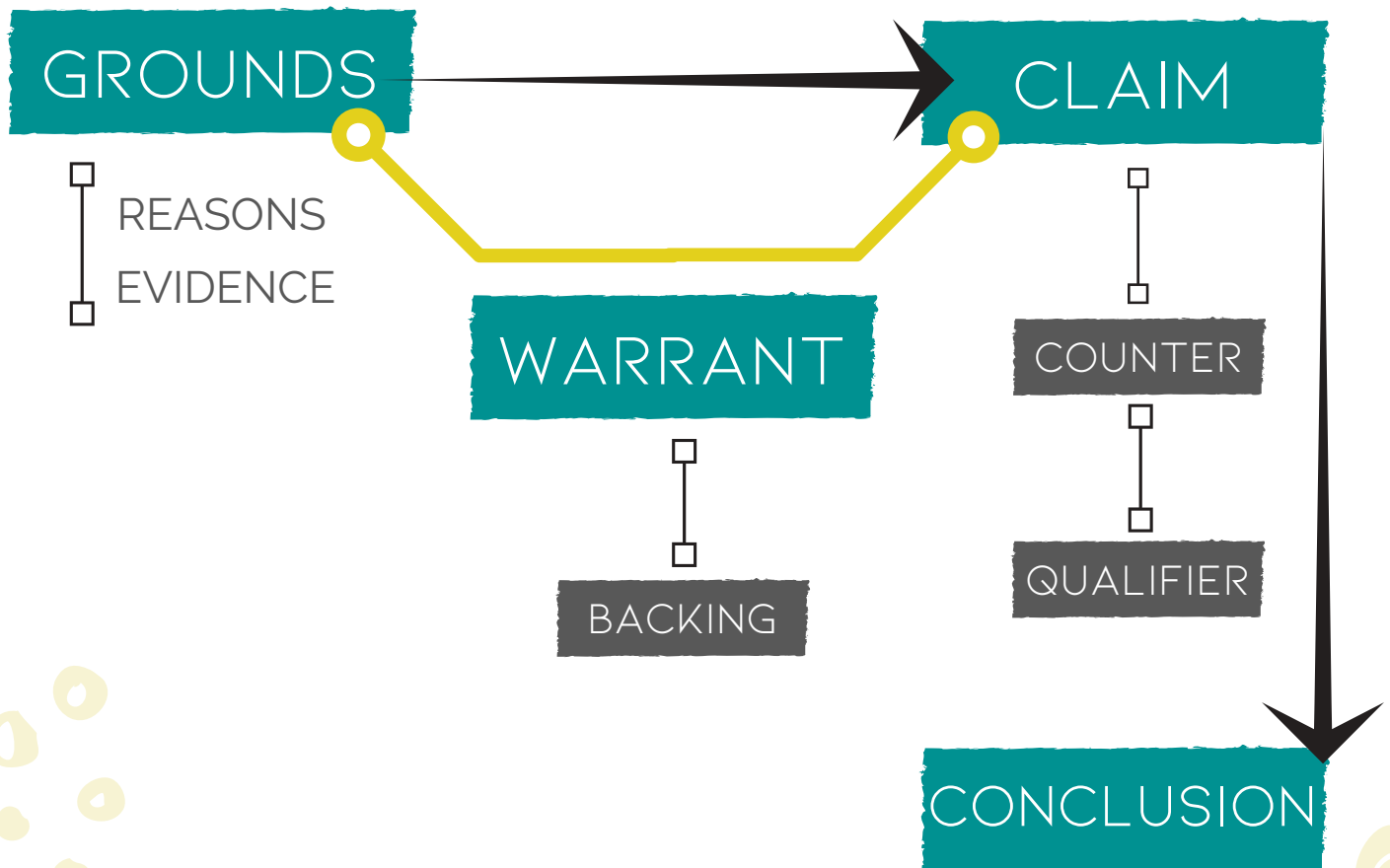
- ✓ Claim
- ✓ Grounds (reasons + evidence)
- ✓ Warrant

SECONDARY

- ✓ Backing
- ✓ Counter
- ✓ Qualifier

Notes on an Argument...

The 'flow' of a Toulmin argument, therefore, looks like this:



Notes on an Argument...

*BUT IT *SOUNDS* LIKE THIS...*

GROUNDS

The data says this (evidence)...

CLAIM

so I claim this...

GROUNDS

for this reason (reason)...

WARRANT

especially since we can assume that...

BACKING

and I know this to be true because...

COUNTER

HOWEVER, you still might be thinking...
but that's untrue/partially true/misled because...

QUALIFIER

so for the most part...

CONCLUSION

this is where I stand.

Argument Sample

Recent research suggests that sugar has particularly negative effects on the brain (*introduces topic*). According to these studies, results indicate that children who consume diets high in fat and sugar have poorer academic outcomes than those who do not, scoring an average of 4 points below that of their peers in science (*evidence*). Based on these findings, the government should ban further development of fast food restaurants (*main claim*) because of the serious risk they pose to youth health (*reason*). It is the government's job to protect the children of this country (*warrant*). In fact, programs to protect their health such as Michelle Obama's "Let's Move!" campaign easily reveal just how important youth health has been to the government in the past (*backing*), so it makes sense that they play a part in banning a service linked to youth health issues (*interim conclusion*).

Regardless of this proof, some might claim that banning these restaurants will limit options for children who come from impoverished homes and that 'food deserts' will skyrocket (*opposing view*). However, this view fails to consider the gaining momentum of urban gardening as a replacement for those fast food restaurants which currently exist (*counter*). Community leader Ron Finley of South Central Los Angeles is teaching families how to grow and share fresh foods in an area overridden with fast food chains (*evidence*). Finley's program is being replicated all over the country (*backing*), thus giving tremendous potential to his approach as an alternative. Therefore, while banning fast food might seem unrealistic to some, it is certainly possible if communities work together with each other and the government to minimize any consequence of action (*qualified conclusion*).



Yo, I'm Jill!

I live on macha green tea lattes + nerdy lesson planning sessions. I'm on a mission to flip the script on how we teach today's writers.

I empower secondary ELA teachers with the

resources + mindset

they need to make the

writing process

more

**relevant, authentic,
and applicable**

for today's learners and tomorrow's leaders.

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