



**THE NEW JERSEY  
ITALIAN HERITAGE COMMISSION**



**Giovanni Pico della Mirandola**  
The Concept of Progress

**Grade Level: 6-12**

**Subjects:** World History / Science / Language Arts

**Categories:** History and Society

**Standards:**

Please read the New Jersey Student Learning Standards on page 7 before conducting the lesson. They will help you give explicit instructions to your students and help you create rubrics most appropriate for your class.

**Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

1. propose why, during the Renaissance, the center of focus moved from otherworldliness to a focus on this world and this life on Earth.
2. explain what effects this change had on society.
3. predict how this change eventually led to the development of the scientific method and scientific inquiry.

**Abstract:**

Explore the evolution of thought enabling individuals to alter the human condition. From recorded history to the renaissance, most cultures accepted and remained within the status quo. Pico della Mirandola convinced to his contemporaries to break away from that timeless tradition and change their environment and subsequently, their lives.

**Key Terms:**

A priori	<i>Latin</i>	Proceeding from a known or assumed cause to a necessarily related effect; deductive.
Induction	<i>Latin</i>	The process of deriving general principles from particular facts or instances.
Otherworldliness		Concerned with the afterlife, especially when inattentive to the present.
Scholasticism	<i>Latin</i>	The system of philosophy dominant in medieval Europe; based on Aristotle and the Church Fathers .

## **Background:**

Humanism was an intellectual movement that shifted much of European society from the theocratic, God-centered one of the Medieval Period, to an anthropocentric or man-centered world of the Renaissance. Pico's treatise, *The Oration on the Dignity of Man* gave impetus to the notion that man had an individual personality. It emphasized the uniqueness and worth of the individual. Pico's work began an earnest study of the process of change. People began to be interested in history. If there is change, there can be progress. The concept of progress is antithetical to Medieval thought, where scholars focused on the eternal and unchanging nature of God. Pico's nascent stirrings gave birth to scientific inquiry found in Galileo's study of the heavens. It also eventually gave birth to the Martin Luther's and John Calvin's justifications for the Protestant Reformation and their reliance on the individual conscience. Pico's reasoning inspired the attention paid to the human body and to the faces of individuals in Renaissance art. It allowed people to develop the concept of the autonomous individual. Likewise, the idea of the sovereign nation-state began to develop as a replacement for the ideal of a united Christendom.

Humanism was not an atheistic or anti-Christian movement. In fact, much of the Italian Catholic Church enthusiastically embraced the movement. Pico, himself, believed that there "is nothing more wonderful than man" because man could achieve union with God if he wills to do so. The change in perspective, not only noticed and acknowledged change, it engendered the pursuit of progress as an honorable quest.

## **Procedures:**

- I. Review Humanism and Pico with the class (see background material for more information). Explain to students that most cultures in the world do not advocate the concept of progress the way the west does. Even in the west, it took a long time for people to be effected by progress. A peasant in Sicily, Tuscany, or Lombardy lived pretty much the same in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as she had lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Ninety-five percent of the people were of the peasant class.
- II. Break the students into 6 groups. Tell them they are on a research-based scavenger hunt in their library or on the Internet.
- III. Give each group a time period to research. Have group one research the 20<sup>th</sup> century, group two research the 19<sup>th</sup> century, group three research the 18<sup>th</sup> century, group four research the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, group five research the 10<sup>th</sup> through 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, and group six research the 4<sup>th</sup> through the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- IV. Give them one class period to find as many inventions as they can in their assigned centuries. Offer the top group some type of prize, but you will have to reward all of the students because the deck is clearly stacked in favor of the more modern centuries.
- V. Have the groups list the inventions, the inventors, and the countries or regions where the inventions were constructed.
- VI. After one full period of research, have each group announce how many

inventions they could find during their assigned centuries.

VII. Once this is complete (if all groups make commensurate efforts) Group one should have the most inventions, followed by group two, then three, and so on. (a group could be out of order, but probably only by one).

VIII. Ask students to explain why the later groups have more inventions than the earlier groups. Relate this back to Pico and the change in worldview that took place during the Renaissance.

**Assessment:**

Have students explain their reasoning in a structured paragraph. Ask them to use an introductory sentence. Use the subsequent sentences to explain their supporting details and instruct them to use a concluding sentence. Students should explain that the later inventions were built on the technology of the earlier inventions.

Review or grade the paragraph to gauge the student's mastery of the content, by using the *New Jersey Registered Holistic Writing Rubric* for scoring. Or, use a teacher-made check list to assess students' comprehension through observation during the discussion.

**Extension:**

Have students review their lists and then write down where the inventions took place in descending order, e.g. USA 38, UK 18, Germany 14, Italy 8, France 6, etc. Then, ask the students why most of the inventions come from certain parts of the world and not from other areas. Ask them if this has anything to do with the concept of "progress" developed during the Renaissance in Italy. Ask students to explain why most people in the world have yet to make their first telephone call.

The class can then discuss history and the changes that took place in Europe, or the economy and how the free-market developed and produced more wealth and goods. They can discuss science and how the concept of progress led people like Francis Bacon to develop the method of induction-- the approach used by modern science, instead of the *a priori* method of Medieval scholasticism.

**Resources:**

Norman Davies. *Europe: A History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

# Supplemental Information

## Giovanni Pico della Mirandola

Giovanni Pico was an Italian philosopher and scholar, born February 24, 1463. He died a mere thirty-one years later on November 17, 1494. Pico belonged to an aristocratic family who lived in the Castle of Mirandola in the independent Duchy of Modena. Early on, Pico abandoned his fiefdom of Concordia to his brothers; thus, he could then devote all of his energies to academic and philosophical pursuits.

Pico quickly rejected the positive science of law. He embraced Platonic philosophy in reaction to the cold logic of the medieval Scholastic Aristotelians. His study of Plato led him to an exploration of Christian mysticism and the Jewish mysticism of Kabala. Pico practiced an eclectic type of study. He advocated investigation into Hebrew and Talmudic sources, while he retained the best aspects of Scholasticism.

In humanist tradition, Pico looked to reconcile philosophy and religion. His greatest contribution was to develop a new system of philosophy called syncretism that was an amalgamation of all philosophies and thinkers that Pico had encountered. Syncretism holds that all schools of philosophy have some truth; thus, they should be examined and defended. His work synthesizes all the strains of Renaissance and late medieval thinking: Neoplatonism, humanism, Aristoteleanism, Averroism (a form of Aristoteleanism), and mysticism. Pico believed that no system of thought has all the truth.

Blessed with a prodigious intellect, Pico had a photographic memory, an insatiable curiosity, and a confidence in his own abilities that has been very rarely equaled. While other humanists sought to reconcile the classical philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome with Christianity, Pico sought to reconcile every human philosophy and every human religion with Christianity. At the youthful age of twenty-three Pico composed a list of nine hundred propositions, using various Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, and Roman philosophies, to summarize his views. He invited scholars from all over Europe to come to Rome, where he would defend his positions against all and every challenger.

Pico demonstrates in his syncretism of the philosophy that religious truth was in part revealed to all, to both Christians and to non-Christians. Here, he parallels his fellow Italian and predecessor Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas, the "Prince of Scholasticism," taught that like Christians, non-Christians were able to discern natural law, despite being outside of the Church. Pico and the humanists took this thought one step further and wanted to conform non-Christian thinking, especially Plato, to Christian thinking. Pico demonstrated through exhaustive textual scholarship, the similarities between non-Christian philosophies and religions and Christian philosophies and religion.

The *Oration on the Dignity of Man* was to serve as an introduction to Pico's proposed debate in Rome. In the *Oration*, he argues that God gave all creatures, other than humans, a singular, fixed nature. They have certain attributes that they cannot change. Human beings, conversely, do not have a given nature. Pico evinces that humans, unlike all other creation, have the freedom to choose what they will become. To Pico, the

ability to choose gives humanity its dignity. The capacity to choose also allows humanity to progress forward. Humans have the capability to better themselves, to better their own environment, and to better society. This view of reality contradicts the Medieval (and Aristotelian) worldview that emphasized the eternal, unchanging nature of the Kingdom of God. Pico was able to articulate what Renaissance humanists saw in Europe's classical precedents. The *Oration* helped Renaissance thinkers look toward improving society and the condition of humanity.

Pico's notion of human intellectual and moral freedom was a radical and nearly heretical departure from Christian tradition. Christianity teaches as dogma that God created human beings as free creatures and intended them to be free and independent throughout their lives. Christianity also teaches that freedom was lost when Adam and Eve committed the original sin of hubris, where they disobeyed God in their pursuit of "becoming like God." Pico, however, believed that humans had the freedom to become whatever they wanted to become. This, he proclaimed, is the paramount virtue of humanity. Pico's views contradicted the Augustinian view of predestination and bordered on the Pelagian heresy of salvation through merit. Pico believed that redemption had restored humanity to its rightful place prior to the fall. Pico's ideas about the nature of humanity and free inquiry eventually became the basis of the modern worldview.

Because Pico questioned some of the Church's long held positions, Pope Innocent VIII suspended the proposed debate and appointed a commission to investigate the nine hundred theses. Seven out of Pico's nine hundred propositions were subsequently declared unorthodox and six more were ruled dangerous. The overwhelming majority (nearly 99%) of Pico's propositions were held to be orthodox in content.

An irate and probably injudicious Pico publicly objected to the decision. He quickly published a defense of his positions. In reaction, Innocent condemned all nine hundred propositions, while commenting, "That young man wants someone to burn him."

Pico immediately ran to France but was quickly arrested by papal envoys. His friends were able to get the French King, Charles VIII, to secure his release. The young, discredited philosopher spent the rest of his short life in Florence under the protection of the powerful Lorenzo de Medici. In Florence, Pico decided to devote the rest of his life to a defense of Christianity against Judaism, Islam, and astrology.

Pico was one of the early humanists and is sometimes described as being anti-Christian or anti-religious because of his altercation with Innocent. Renaissance Humanism, however, is not an anti-Christian school of thought. Late medieval and Renaissance humanism reacted against the educational program in universities that focused on the logic, semantics and pure reason of Scholasticism.

Humanists rejected a strict focus on logic, semantics, and proposition analysis. Instead, they studied the relation of humans with God. They viewed human beings as the apex of God's creation, with all other creation in subordinate roles. Since their prime focus was on the relation of humans to the divine they called themselves "humanists." At no point do they ignore Christianity. Renaissance Humanism was primarily a religious and educational movement, not a secular one.

Pico's treatise, *The Oration on the Dignity of Man* gave impetus to the notion that man had an individual personality. It emphasized the uniqueness and worth of the individual. Pico's work began an earnest study of the process of change. People began to be interested in history. If there is change, there can be progress. The concept of progress is antithetical to medieval thought, where scholars focused on the eternal and unchanging nature of God. Pico's nascent stirrings gave birth to scientific inquiry found in Galileo's study of the heavens. It also eventually gave birth to the Martin Luther's and John Calvin's justifications for the Protestant Reformation and their reliance on individual conscience. Pico's reasoning inspired the attention paid to the human body and to the faces of individuals in Renaissance art. It allowed people to develop the concept of the autonomous individual. Likewise, the idea of the sovereign nation-state began to develop as a replacement for the ideal of a united Christendom.

**Sources:**

Jacques Barzun. *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 of Western Cultural Life*. Hapers Collins, Publishers. 2000.

Norman Davies, *Europe: A History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

# **New Jersey Student Learning Standards**

## **Social Studies**

- 6.2.12.D.2.a Determine the factors that led to the Renaissance, the significance of the location of the Italian city-states as the center of the Renaissance, and the impact on the arts.

## **English Language Arts**

SL.6.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.6.1b Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

SL.6.2 Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

SL.6.4 Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate speaking behaviors (e.g., eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation)..

SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.7.1b Follow rules for collegial discussions, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

SL.7.2 Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media And formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.

SL.7.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, Coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on their ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.8.1b Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

SL.8.2 Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with peers on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.9-10.1b Collaborate with peers to set rules for discussions (e.g. informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views); develop clear goals and assessment criteria (e.g. student developed rubric) and assign individual roles as needed.

SL.9-10.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, qualitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically. The content, organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with peers on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.11-12.1b Collaborate with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and assessments (e.g., student developed rubrics), and establish individual roles as needed.

SL.11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, qualitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically. The content, organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.6.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

W.6.1.a Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.

W.6.1.a Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

W.6.1.c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.

W.6.1.d. Establish and maintain a formal/academic style, approach, and form.

W.6.1.e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.

W.6.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W.6.2.a Introduce a topic and organize ideas, concepts, and information, using text structures (e.g., definition, classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, etc.) and text features (e.g., headings, graphics, and multimedia) when useful to aiding comprehension.

W.6.2.b Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

W.6.2.c Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

W.6.2.f Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.

W.6.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, voice, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

W.6.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grade 6)

W.6.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

W.6.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.

W.6.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

W.7.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

W.7.1.a Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.

W.7.1.b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

W.7.1.c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence.

W.7.1.d. Establish and maintain a formal style/academic style, approach, and form.

W.7.1.e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

W.7.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W.7.2.a. Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using text structures (e.g., definition, classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, etc.) and text features (e.g., headings, graphics, and multimedia) when useful to aiding comprehension.

W.7.2.b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

W.7.2.c. Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

W.7.2.e. Establish and maintain a formal style/academic style, approach, and form.

W.7.2.f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

W.7.4 . Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, voice, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

W.7.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grade 7)

W.7.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

W.7.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

W.7.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

W.8.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

W.8.1.a. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.

W.8.1.b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

W.8.1.c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

W.8.1.d. Establish and maintain a formal style/academic style, approach, and form.

W.8.1.e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

W.8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W.8.2.a Introduce a topic and organize ideas, concepts, and information, using text structures (e.g., definition, classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, etc.) and text features (e.g., headings, graphics, and multimedia).

W.8.2.b. Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

W.8.2.c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

W.8.2.e. Establish and maintain a formal style/academic style, approach, and form.

W.8.2.f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.  
W.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task,

purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

W.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

W.8.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

W.8.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

W.8.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

W.9-10.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W.9-10.1. a. Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

W.9-10.1.b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims avoiding common logical fallacies, propaganda devices, and using sound reasoning, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level and concerns.

W.9-10.1.c. Use transitions (e.g. words, phrases, clauses) to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

W.9-10.1.d. Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose (e.g. formal and objective for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

W.9-10.1e. Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented.

W.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W.9-10.2.a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g.,

headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

W.9-10.2.b. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.

W.9-10.2. c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

W.9-10.2.e. Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose (e.g. formal and objective for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

W.9-10.2. f. Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

W.9-10.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

W.9-10.5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, or consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grades 9–10).

W.9-10.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

W.9-10.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation (MLA or APA Style Manuals).

W.9-10.9 Draw evidence from literary or nonfiction informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W.11-12.1.a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

W.11-12.1.b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims avoiding common logical fallacies and using sound reasoning and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

W.11-12.1.c. Use transitions (e.g. words, phrases, clauses) to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

W.11-12.1.d. Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose (e.g. formal and objective for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

W.11-12.1.e. Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W.11-12.2.a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

W.11-12.2.b. Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.

W.11-12.2.c. Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

W.11-12.2.e. Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose (e.g. formal and objective for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

W.11-12.2.f. Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

W.11-12.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, or consulting a style manual (such as

MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grades 11-12.)

W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

W.11-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation (MLA or APA Style Manuals).

W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.