

Concept Claim Cards

A concept is

- usually abstract, as opposed to concrete;
- a product of the analysis and synthesis of facts and experiences;
- consistently subject to expansion of meaning and delineation of detail, as different settings, relationships and contexts complicate the meaning.

Students construct concepts using examples. This process of concept formation is ongoing, stimulated by active, meaningful involvement, and is developmental in nature. A non-exhaustive list of possible social studies concepts appears below.

war	imperialism	nationalism	colonialism
justice	nation	civilization	democracy
racism	capitalism	socialism	revolution
terrorism	genocide	totalitarianism	freedom

Claim Cards provide a formative practice that allows students to make an argument (claim with evidence and reasoning) about a concept using an example/non-example. The strategy provides teachers an opportunity to listen to student ideas about an often confusing or nuanced concept so they can better understand student misconceptions and help clarify and deepen understanding. Claim cards allow students to practice argumentation in a low-risk environment that supports discussion, analysis, and synthesis of many ideas and perspectives.


Steps for Teaching with Concept Claim Cards

1. Determine the concept that is important to your unit/year. Create a definition for the concept that is not confined to a single setting, relationship, or context but that is narrow enough that different examples can be argued to fit the concept.
 - a. For example: *Terrorism - the use of violence for political purposes and the attempt to influence politics through violence and intimidation, usually the resort of groups who are outside the political process.*
 - b. Provide for a whole class discussion on the critical characteristics of the concept.
 - c. Create a graphic organizer that includes the definition and space for groups to take notes during the process of using the claim cards (see example that follows).
2. Provide the concept definition to the class. Then, provide each student in the class with an example/non-example (or maybe one that defies categorization) of the concept printed on index cards. You can write these as single words, phrases, or lengthier (but still fairly short) case studies.
 - a. Examples for terrorism might include: Reign of Terror, Tar and Feathering of Tax Collectors during American Revolution

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Steps for Using Concept Claim Cards, continued

3. Provide time for individual students (or pairs) to brainstorm what they know about their topic (facts they've learned) and to think about if their example meets the critical characteristics of the concept and to write notes on their reasoning and evidence from their learning that helped them make the claim that the example did or did not meet the conceptual definition.
4. Place students in small groups (3-4 students if students worked individually in step three or 6 students if they worked in pairs). All students should have their own example card as well as a graphic organizer on which to take notes as the students share their ideas.
5. Ask one student to start the example share by:
 - a. Explaining the example they were provided;
 - b. Discussing their claim (does/does not fit with concept)
 - c. Support the claim with their reasoning (usually based on evidence they have learned in class compared with the critical characteristics of the concept).
 - d. NOTE: The students will not comment on the sharing student's claim or reasoning at this point. They will instead take notes on the graphic organizer.
6. The other group members will follow suit, sharing their examples with reasoning while the group members take notes.
7. When all members of the group have completed the sharing portion, the group will then discuss each example and reasoning together. Students will be encouraged to probe one another's thinking, ask questions for clarification, respectfully disagree with their group member's thinking based on evidence and reasoning, and come to consensus when possible.
 - a. Discussion stems examples follow which can be used as a scaffold for students.
8. The groups report out on their examples. One interesting way to see the examples is to have them placed on a spectrum rather than into two categories (see below).



Does not meet
concept definition

Meets all aspects
of concept definition

9. Debrief student learning around the concept. Ask students to explain why and how the concept is nuanced or tricky.
10. Ask students to complete the Reflection and Self-Assessment (see below).

Concept Claim Information Organizer

Concept & Definition
(underlined words and phrases represent critical characteristics)

Name:	Example 1 with Claim	Example 1 Reasoning & Evidence	Questions to Ask/Ideas to Share to Clarify Group Thinking about this Concept
Name:	Example 2 with Claim	Example 2 Reasoning & Evidence	Questions to Ask/Ideas to Share to Clarify Group Thinking about this Concept
Name:	Example 3 with Claim	Example 2 Reasoning & Evidence	Questions to Ask/Ideas to Share to Clarify Group Thinking about this Concept

Claim Card Discussion Stems

Can you please clarify why...?

Is this a good non-example? Why?

Could you think of that example in a different way if...?

What critical characteristics specifically does your example meet?

How are you defining...?

Does the time period or culture of the time matter to this example at all? Should that be taken into consideration?

What made you think of that?

I'm a little lost in your reasoning. Could you please say it in a different way?

How is your example similar to this other example? How are they different?

If you added the idea of _____ to your reasoning, how might your claim change?

Where on a spectrum between fully meeting the critical characteristics and not meeting the concept characteristics would we place this example? Why?

What if the example were flipped and this _____ was _____?

Are you making the claim that your example meets all of the critical characteristics or just some?

What is the most difficult aspect of this example?

