



Proficient | Exemplar Essay

Investigating Change

New Evidence Changes Old Ideas



Claim and Focus

The essay includes a clear claim (“Evidence can be affected by many different things, but in the end that evidence can explain how and why people change their minds”), and it maintains focus on that claim and the supporting sources throughout. A counterclaim is acknowledged (“Even though evidence is a major influence in changing minds, authority and social pressure could be considered major too”) and developed.



Analysis and Evidence

The essay cites sufficient and appropriate evidence, which is drawn from multiple sources provided with the prompt. This evidence is used both to support the claim and discuss the counterclaim. It is effectively integrated into the essay (“However, there was some evidence showing some planets, such as Mars, involved ‘in a ‘retrograde motion...’ [which] means backwards’ (Source 2)”), helping to demonstrate the writer’s understanding of the sources and how they relate to the claim.



Organization

An effective organizational structure is used in this essay, demonstrating a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. A logical progression of thoughts is evident, using clear transitions (“However,” “Seeing this,” and “Even though”) to show the relationships between and among the ideas of this essay.



Language and Style

The essay employs a formal style throughout, including precise and domain-specific language to discuss the topic (“Ptolemy’s geocentric universe theory was challenged by Copernicus...”). The use of this language works to address the complexity of the topic, avoiding errors that would confuse the reader.



Using Exemplars in Your Lessons

Exemplar essays are tools to take abstract descriptions and make them more concrete for students. One way to use them is to print the clean copies of the essays and allow students to use the rubric to make notes or even find examples of important elements of an essay - thesis statements, introductions, evidence, conclusions, transitions, etc. Teachers can also use exemplars to illustrate what each score point within a trait ‘looks like’ in an authentic student essay. For additional ideas, please see “25 Ways to Use Exemplar Essays” by visiting the Curriculum Resources page in Help.

Investigating Change



New Evidence Changes Old Ideas

Since the beginning of time people have been using evidence to prove their points and to persuade others to believe the same. When evidence changes, it can also change people's minds about that topic. Evidence can be affected by many different things, but in the end that evidence can explain how and why people change their minds.

One big example of evidence being used to change someone's mind is regarding our thoughts on the structure of the Universe. For a very long time, people thought that the earth was the center of the universe, and that all of the planets circled around the earth. "For more than 1,500 years, people accepted this view as the correct one" (Source 1). The creator of this idea, Ptolemy, "believed that the Earth was at the center of the Universe and that the Sun, Moon, planets, and stars went around the Earth" (Source 1). Because Ptolemy thought this and wrote about it in a book, other people believed that same thing. However, there was some evidence showing some planets, such as Mars, involved "in a 'retrograde motion...' [which] means backwards" (Source 2). Seeing this, Ptolemy explained this as "smaller orbits called 'epicycles'" (Source 3). This shows that people often will change their minds when there is evidence being backed up with more explanations about some unsolved mysteries.

When people see evidence with their own eyes, they can start to decide if what they believe is actually true and what is false. Ptolemy's geocentric universe theory was challenged by Copernicus when he used some mathematical equations that found mistakes with Ptolemy's model (Source 4). He found that "The predictions

about the movement of the epicycles would be way more accurate if the Earth revolved around the Sun" (Source 4). Copernicus's heliocentric theory and equations solved problems such as the retrograde motion issue and issues that challenged the logic of the geocentric theory (Source 4).

Even though evidence is a major influence in changing minds, authority and social pressure could be considered major too. Scientists "were afraid to publish their new ideas with good reason" (Source 8). Because the Roman Catholic Church believed the Earth was the center of the universe, people followed their authority, and had their minds set on one idea. When the church dropped its belief in the Earth as the center of the universe, a lot of people did too because of social pressure.

Overall, people can and will continue to be persuaded to change their minds due to the presentation of new evidence. Sometimes other things could have a hand in changing how people view something, but overall, being able to see evidence with your own two eyes will always be the deciding factor for most people, and will be the thing that eventually makes them change their mind about a topic.