

THE WRITING ACADEMY®

Assessment Companion

Grade 4 · Cluster 4

Opinion/Argument (CREATURES)

Passage: The Wealth of Mansa Musa

Grade 4 Assessment Companion: Cluster 4

© 2026 The Writing Academy®, LLC. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher.

The Writing Academy® is a registered trademark of The Writing Academy, LLC.

Module 1 · Build a Claim (C) Take a defensible position

C L U S T E R 4 · M O D U L E 1 · M O D U L E A S S E S S M E N T M A P

What to Assess This Week

ASSESSMENT TARGET	Write a clear claim: a position on the prompt that the passage can support.
STANDARDS	4.12C(i) compose argument 4.11B(iii) develop an idea 4.11D(i) agreement
RPLD STAGE THIS WEEK	Emergent : Visible: students NOTICE and build a defensible claim (the C in CREATURES).
EVIDENCE TYPE	Daily Learning Artifact: one clear claim that answers the prompt and can be defended from the text.

Three Ways to Gather the Evidence

Path A

: Quick Check The 5-question Multiple-Choice Check: a fast grade of claim quality.

Path B

: Application Artifact Student writes a claim about Mansa Musa that the passage can support.

Path C

: Choice Demonstration Student may say, chart, or write the claim: same target, same scoring.

Grade the target, not everything. Collect the claim. Check that it takes a clear position AND is one

Multiple-Choice Check

Five questions on this module's target: writing a claim (the C in CREATURES).

The Wealth of Mansa Musa

A long time ago in West Africa, there was a strong and successful kingdom called Mali. One of its most well-known rulers was Mansa Musa. He became king in the early 1300s and is often remembered as one of the richest people in history. Mali became wealthy because it controlled important trade routes. Traders traveled across the hot Sahara Desert carrying gold and salt, which were very valuable. Mansa Musa made smart choices that helped his kingdom grow. He made sure traders could move safely, which brought more people and goods into Mali. As a result, cities like Timbuktu became busy and important places. Timbuktu was also known for learning, where people studied subjects like math, science, and religion. One of the most famous parts of Mansa Musa's life was his trip to Mecca, called a pilgrimage. During this journey, he gave away large amounts of gold to people in need. His actions made many people notice how wealthy Mali was. Because of the choices he made, Mali became known as a powerful and important kingdom. People still talk about Mansa Musa today when they learn about African history and how trade and education helped kingdoms grow. (Paired with "Four Regions, One Big Adventure.")

Grade 4, Cluster 4 (Scope & Sequence). Students meet CREATURES and build the foundation: C, R, E chain.

1. What is a claim in an argument?

- A. Just a fact from the passage.
- B. A clear position the writer will defend with reasons and evidence.
- C. A question for the reader.
- D. A list of everything that happened.

2. Which is the STRONGEST claim about the prompt?

- A. Mansa Musa was rich.
- B. I am not sure about Mansa Musa.
- C. Mali was an empire.
- D. Mansa Musa was a wise leader because of how he used his great wealth.

3. Which claim can the passage best DEFEND?

- A. Mansa Musa's wealth helped make him an important leader.
- B. Mansa Musa lived in the future.
- C. Mansa Musa was a poor farmer.
- D. Mansa Musa never ruled anything.

4. How is a claim different from a fact?

- A. They are exactly the same.
- B. A claim is always shorter.
- C. A claim takes a position you can argue; a fact simply states what is true.
- D. A fact always has reasons.

5. Which sentence has correct subject-verb agreement?

- A. Mansa Musa rules the empire of Mali.
- B. Mansa Musa rule the empire of Mali.
- C. Mansa Musa ruling the empire of Mali.
- D. Mansa Musa were rule the empire of Mali.

Purpose: a quick, gradeable check of 4.12C(i); building a clear, defensible claim. Administration: ~10 minutes, independent. Scoring: 5 points (1 each); Answer Key & Error Analysis on the next page.

Answer Key & Error Analysis

Not just the right answer: what a wrong choice reveals, and what to do about it.

1. What is a claim

Correct: B

A claim is a position defended with reasons and evidence. The others confuse it with a fact, a question, or a summary. Picking “just a fact” : reteach “a claim takes a position.”

2. Strongest claim

Correct: D

The correct claim takes a position and hints at a reason. The others are a fact, an undecided sentence, or off-topic. Choosing the “not sure” option : practice committing to a position.

3. Defensible claim

Correct: A

A claim the passage can support (his wealth made him important). The others contradict the text. Choosing a false claim : the claim must be one the text can defend.

4. Claim vs. fact

Correct: C

A claim can be argued; a fact just states truth. The distractors are false or backwards. Choosing “the same” : contrast a fact with a position you must prove.

5. Subject-verb agreement

Correct: A

“rules” agrees with the singular subject “Mansa Musa.” The others use wrong forms. Wrong verb : singular- subject agreement practice. defensible claims before adding reasons and evidence.

If several students miss the same question, Questions 1 or 3 missed widely : more work on defensible claims before adding reasons and evidence.

Exemplars & Rubric

Prompt: “Write a clear, defensible claim answering: Was Mansa Musa a wise leader?” 4.12C(i) 4.12C(i)

4 “Mansa Musa was a wise leader because he used his enormous wealth in ways that strengthened his empire and left a lasting influence.”

SECURE · clear position + a hint of the reason; defensible · RPLD: Independent 3 “Mansa Musa was a wise leader because he used his wealth well.” · DEMONSTRATES · clear claim, general reason · RPLD: Visible 2 “Mansa Musa was very rich.” · DEVELOPING · a fact, not a claim · RPLD: Emergent · Next: take a position about him 1 “Mansa Musa.” · BEGINNING · a topic only · RPLD: Foundational · Next: model taking a side

Which rubric applies? This four-point Targeted Evidence Scale scores the claim (the C in CREATURES). The Multiple-Choice Check uses its own 5-point key.

TEACHER SCRIPT: EXPLAINING THIS TASK TO STUDENTS

SAY

SAY

“A claim takes a position you can defend. What do you decide about Mansa Musa: and can the text back it

SAY

SAY

“‘Mansa Musa was rich’ is a fact. ‘Mansa Musa was a wise leader’ is a claim you can argue.”

► Have students state a position aloud and check: “Can the passage defend this?” before writing.

“ ” = say word-for-word · ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Module 2 · Give Reasons (R) Reasons that support the claim

CLUSTER 4 · MODULE 2 · MODULE ASSESSMENT MAP

What to Assess This Week

ASSESSMENT TARGET	Add logical reasons that support the claim: the R in CREATURES.
STANDARDS	4.12C(i) reasons for a position 4.11C(ii) word choice
RPLD STAGE THIS WEEK	Visible: students CHOOSE logical, relevant reasons.
EVIDENCE TYPE	Daily Learning Artifact: a claim + one logical reason that supports it.

Three Ways to Gather the Evidence

Path A

: Quick Check The 5-question Multiple-Choice Check on choosing reasons that support the claim.

Path B

: Application Artifact Student adds one logical reason to their claim and explains why it fits.

Path C

: Choice Demonstration Student may chart, say, or write the reason: same target, same scoring.

Grade the target, not everything. Grade whether each reason logically supports the claim: a reason

Multiple-Choice Check

Five questions on this module's target: reasons that support the claim.

The Wealth of Mansa Musa

A long time ago in West Africa, there was a strong and successful kingdom called Mali. One of its most well-known rulers was Mansa Musa. He became king in the early 1300s and is often remembered as one of the richest people in history. Mali became wealthy because it controlled important trade routes. Traders traveled across the hot Sahara Desert carrying gold and salt, which were very valuable. Mansa Musa made smart choices that helped his kingdom grow. He made sure traders could move safely, which brought more people and goods into Mali. As a result, cities like Timbuktu became busy and important places. Timbuktu was also known for learning, where people studied subjects like math, science, and religion. One of the most famous parts of Mansa Musa's life was his trip to Mecca, called a pilgrimage. During this journey, he gave away large amounts of gold to people in need. His actions made many people notice how wealthy Mali was. Because of the choices he made, Mali became known as a powerful and important kingdom. People still talk about Mansa Musa today when they learn about African history and how trade and education helped kingdoms grow. (Paired with "Four Regions, One Big Adventure.")

Grade 4, Cluster 4 (Scope & Sequence). Students meet CREATURES and build the foundation: C, R, E chain.

1. Which reason BEST supports the claim that Mansa Musa was a wise leader?

- A. Mali is on a map.
- B. Gold is shiny.
- C. He used his wealth to strengthen his empire, not just for himself.
- D. Empires have borders.

2. Which is NOT a logical reason for the claim?

- A. Mansa Musa lived a very long time ago.
- B. He used his wealth to help his empire.
- C. He made wise choices with his power.
- D. His leadership had a lasting effect.

3. Which reason is most CONVINCING in an argument?

- A. I just think he was wise.
- B. Because.
- C. Everyone says so.
- D. His decisions as a leader improved life in his empire.

4. Which precise word best completes: "A strong reason ____ the writer's claim"?

- A. has
- B. supports
- C. does
- D. goes

5. Which sentence pairs a claim with a logical reason?

- A. Mansa Musa had gold.
- B. Mali was large.
- C. People traveled far.
- D. Mansa Musa was a wise leader because he used his wealth to benefit others.

Purpose: a quick, gradeable check of 4.12C(i): choosing logical reasons (the R in CREATURES). Administration: ~10 minutes, independent. Scoring: 5 points (1 each); Answer Key & Error Analysis on the next page.

Answer Key & Error Analysis

Not just the right answer: what a wrong choice reveals, and what to do about it.

1. Best reason

Correct: C

The correct reason backs the claim (used wealth for the empire). The others are facts, not reasons. Choosing a fact : ask “does this back the claim?”

2. NOT a logical reason

Correct: A

When he lived doesn't support wisdom. The others do. Missing it : test each reason against the claim.

3. Most convincing

Correct: D

A reason tied to an effect (improved life) convinces. The others are empty (“I just think,” “because,” “everyone says”). Choosing an empty reason : give a real, logical WHY.

4. Precise word

Correct: B

“supports” names what a reason does for a claim; the others are vague. Choosing a vague verb : trade for the precise argument word.

5. Claim + reason

Correct: D

This sentence pairs a claim with a reason (benefited others). The others state facts only. Choosing a fact : require the “because” + reason. fact; Question 3 : reasons tied to a real effect.

If several students miss the same question, Question 1 or 2 missed widely : reteach reason vs. fact; Question 3 : reasons tied to a real effect.

Exemplars & Rubric

Prompt: “Add one logical reason to your claim, and explain why it supports it.” 4.12C(i) 4.12C(i)

4 “Mansa Musa was a wise leader because he used his wealth to strengthen his empire. A leader who invests in his people, rather than only himself, shows real wisdom: and that is why his influence lasted.”
 SECURE · a reason that clearly backs the claim + explanation · RPLD: Independent 3 “Mansa Musa was a wise leader because he used his wealth to help his empire.” · DEMONSTRATES · a logical reason, light explanation · RPLD: Visible 2 “Mansa Musa was a wise leader because he was rich.” · DEVELOPING · reason doesn't fully back wisdom · RPLD: Emergent · Next: “how does wealth show wisdom?” 1 “Mansa Musa was a wise leader.” · BEGINNING · a claim with no reason · RPLD: Foundational · Next: add one reason with “because”

Which rubric applies? The four-point Targeted Evidence Scale scores the claim + reason. The MC Check keeps its 5-point key. A reason must logically back the claim.

TEACHER SCRIPT: EXPLAINING THIS TASK TO STUDENTS

SAY

SAY

“A logical reason holds up your claim. Ask: does this reason really support that Mansa Musa was wise?”

SAY

SAY

“‘Because he was rich’ isn’t enough. ‘Because he used his wealth to help his empire’ is a real reason.”

► Have students test each reason: “Does this back my claim: yes or no?” before writing.

“ ” = say word-for-word · ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Module 3 · Prove It With Evidence (E) Text proof for the reason

C L U S T E R 4 · M O D U L E 3 · M O D U L E A S S E S S M E N T M A P

What to Assess This Week

ASSESSMENT TARGET	Support the reason with text evidence: the E in CREATURES: then combine and edit.
STANDARDS	4.12C(ii) support with evidence 4.11C(i) combine 4.11D(ix) proper nouns
RPLD STAGE THIS WEEK	Independent: students SHOW evidence and OWN the C : R : E chain.
EVIDENCE TYPE	Daily Learning Artifact: one piece of text evidence that proves the reason.

Three Ways to Gather the Evidence

Path A

: Quick Check The 5-question Multiple-Choice Check on evidence, the C : R : E chain, combining, and proper nouns.

Path B

: Application Artifact Student adds one detail from the text that proves the reason.

Path C

: Choice Demonstration Student may chart, say, or write the evidence: same target, same scoring.

Grade the target, not everything. Grade whether the evidence comes from the text and proves the

Multiple-Choice Check

Five questions on this module's target: proving the reason with evidence and building the chain.

The Wealth of Mansa Musa

A long time ago in West Africa, there was a strong and successful kingdom called Mali. One of its most well-known rulers was Mansa Musa. He became king in the early 1300s and is often remembered as one of the richest people in history. Mali became wealthy because it controlled important trade routes. Traders traveled across the hot Sahara Desert carrying gold and salt, which were very valuable. Mansa Musa made smart choices that helped his kingdom grow. He made sure traders could move safely, which brought more people and goods into Mali. As a result, cities like Timbuktu became busy and important places. Timbuktu was also known for learning, where people studied subjects like math, science, and religion. One of the most famous parts of Mansa Musa's life was his trip to Mecca, called a pilgrimage. During this journey, he gave away large amounts of gold to people in need. His actions made many people notice how wealthy Mali was. Because of the choices he made, Mali became known as a powerful and important kingdom. People still talk about Mansa Musa today when they learn about African history and how trade and education helped kingdoms grow. (Paired with "Four Regions, One Big Adventure.")

Grade 4, Cluster 4 (Scope & Sequence). Students meet CREATURES and build the foundation: C, R, E chain.

1. Which sentence uses EVIDENCE from the text to support a reason?

- A. The passage describes how Mansa Musa used his great wealth as a leader of Mali.
- B. Gold is valuable.
- C. I think he was great.
- D. History is interesting.

2. Best way to combine: “Mansa Musa was wealthy. He used his wealth to lead.”

- A. Mansa Musa was wealthy he used his wealth to lead.
- B. Mansa Musa. Wealthy. Lead. Wealth.
- C. Mansa Musa was wealthy, and he used his wealth to lead his empire.
- D. No change is needed.

3. What completes a strong C : R : E chain?

- A. A claim and nothing else.
- B. A claim, a logical reason, and evidence from the text that proves it.
- C. A reason with no claim.
- D. Only a fact.

4. In “Mansa Musa” and “Mali,” what kind of nouns are these?

- A. Common nouns: they name general things.
- B. Verbs: they show action.
- C. Adjectives: they describe.
- D. Proper nouns: they name a specific person and place.

5. In “a wise leader,” which word is a singular noun?

- A. a
- B. wise
- C. leader
- D. very

Purpose: a quick, gradeable check of 4.12C(ii) / 4.11C(i): evidence, the C : R : E chain, combining, and proper nouns.

Administration: ~10 minutes, independent. Scoring: 5 points (1 each); Answer Key & Error Analysis on the next page.

Answer Key & Error Analysis

Not just the right answer: what a wrong choice reveals, and what to do about it.

1. Evidence**Correct: A**

The correct sentence points to the text (how he used his wealth). The others are general or opinions. Choosing a general statement : point back to the text for evidence.

2. Best combine**Correct: C**

The correct answer joins the two and stays correct. The others are a run-on, fragments, or unchanged. Choosing “no change” : model “combine + keep correct.”

3. Complete chain**Correct: B**

A full chain is claim : reason : evidence. The distractors are missing parts. Choosing an incomplete option : require all three (C, R, E).

4. Proper nouns**Correct: D**

“Mansa Musa” and “Mali” name a specific person and place : proper nouns. The others are wrong types. Choosing another type : specific names are proper.

5. Singular noun**Correct: C**

“leader” names one person. “a” is an article; “wise” describes; “very” is an adverb. Choosing a non-noun : sort words into noun vs. not-a-noun. the complete C : R : E chain; Questions 2/4 : combining and proper nouns.

If several students miss the same question, Questions 1 or 3 missed widely : reteach evidence + the complete C : R : E chain; Questions 2/4 : combining and proper nouns.

Exemplars & Rubric

Prompt: “Add one piece of text evidence that proves your reason, completing a C : R : E chain.” 4.12C(ii)

4 “*Claim: Mansa Musa was a wise leader. Reason: he used his wealth to strengthen his empire. Evidence: the passage describes how he directed his great wealth into his kingdom as a leader: which proves he thought beyond himself.*”

SECURE · a complete C : R : E chain with text evidence · RPLD: Independent 3 “Mansa Musa was wise because he used his wealth well, as the passage shows.” · DEMONSTRATES · claim + reason + a light evidence reference · RPLD: Visible 2 “Mansa Musa was wise because he was rich.” · DEVELOPING · claim + reason; no text evidence · RPLD: Emergent · Next: add a detail from the passage 1 “Mansa Musa was rich.” · BEGINNING · a fact, no chain · RPLD: Foundational · Next: build claim : reason : evidence

Which rubric applies? The four-point Targeted Evidence Scale scores the C : R : E chain. Proper- noun editing is scored on the Standards Sweep tracking sheet.

TEACHER SCRIPT: EXPLAINING THIS TASK TO STUDENTS

SAY

SAY

“Now prove it. Find a detail in the passage that shows your reason is true.”

SAY

SAY

“A complete chain has all three: your Claim, your Reason, and Evidence from the text.”

► Have students label C, R, and E in their own sentences before combining.

“ ” = say word-for-word · ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)

Module 4 · Own & Defend: Full Argument The independent argumentative ECR

C L U S T E R 4 · M O D U L E 4 · M O D U L E A S S E S S M E N T M A P

What to Assess This Week

ASSESSMENT TARGET	Write a complete argument: claim, reasons, and evidence (C : R : E), with a conclusion: then check spelling.
STANDARDS	4.12C(i-ii) argumentative ECR 4.11B(iii) develop 4.11D(xxxv) spelling
RPLD STAGE THIS WEEK	Independent : Reflective: students OWN and DEFEND a full CREATURES argument.
EVIDENCE TYPE	Monthly-facing Module Evidence: the culminating argumentative ECR (claim : reasons : evidence : conclusion).

Three Ways to Gather the Evidence

Path A

: Quick Check The 5-question Multiple-Choice Check on organizing and finishing an argument.

Path B

: Application Artifact Student writes the full argument: claim, reasons, evidence, and a conclusion.

Path C

: Choice Demonstration Student may plan-then-write or dictate-then-write: same target, same scoring.

Grade the target, not everything. This is the cluster's anchor evidence. Score the full argument on

Multiple-Choice Check

Five questions on this module's target: organizing the C : R : E argument, and spelling.

The Wealth of Mansa Musa

A long time ago in West Africa, there was a strong and successful kingdom called Mali. One of its most well-known rulers was Mansa Musa. He became king in the early 1300s and is often remembered as one of the richest people in history. Mali became wealthy because it controlled important trade routes. Traders traveled across the hot Sahara Desert carrying gold and salt, which were very valuable. Mansa Musa made smart choices that helped his kingdom grow. He made sure traders could move safely, which brought more people and goods into Mali. As a result, cities like Timbuktu became busy and important places. Timbuktu was also known for learning, where people studied subjects like math, science, and religion. One of the most famous parts of Mansa Musa's life was his trip to Mecca, called a pilgrimage. During this journey, he gave away large amounts of gold to people in need. His actions made many people notice how wealthy Mali was. Because of the choices he made, Mali became known as a powerful and important kingdom. People still talk about Mansa Musa today when they learn about African history and how trade and education helped kingdoms grow. (Paired with "Four Regions, One Big Adventure.")

Grade 4, Cluster 4 (Scope & Sequence). Students meet CREATURES and build the foundation: C, R, E chain.

1. Which is the BEST conclusion for this argument?

- A. That's the end of my argument.
- B. I hope you agree with me.
- C. Mali is a place.
- D. Because he used his wealth to strengthen his empire, Mansa Musa proved to be a wise and lasting leader.

2. Which sentence does NOT belong in an argumentative ECR?

- A. Mansa Musa was a wise leader.
- B. Mansa Musa's story is honestly kind of long and boring.
- C. He used his wealth for his empire.
- D. The passage shows his influence.

3. Which sentence is spelled correctly?

- A. Mansa Musa used his wealth to strengthen his empire.
- B. Mansa Musa used his welth to strengthen his empire.
- C. Mansa Musa used his wealth to strengthen his empyre.
- D. Mansa Musa used his wealth to strenthen his empire.

4. Which sentence has correct subject-verb agreement?

- A. His choices shows wise leadership.
- B. His choices is show wise leadership.
- C. His choices show wise leadership.
- D. His choices showing wise leadership.

5. Which order BEST organizes an argument (CREATURES foundation)?

- A. Just a list of facts.
- B. A claim, reasons, and evidence that prove it, with a conclusion.
- C. One sentence with no reason.
- D. The conclusion first, then random facts.

Purpose: a quick, gradeable check of 4.12C(ii) / 4.11D(xxxv): organizing and finishing an argument. Administration: ~10 minutes, independent. Scoring: 5 points (1 each); Answer Key & Error Analysis on the next page.

Answer Key & Error Analysis

Not just the right answer: what a wrong choice reveals, and what to do about it.

1. Best conclusion

Correct: D

The correct conclusion restates the claim with its reason. The others just stop, plead, or name a place. Choosing “the end” : model conclusions that restate the claim.

2. Does not belong

Correct: B

An opinion that the story is boring isn't an argument. The other three are claim/reason/evidence. Missing it : keep only claim, reasons, and evidence.

3. Correct spelling

Correct: A

This sentence spells “wealth,” “strengthen,” and “empire” correctly. The others misspell them. Repeated misses : a spelling sweep (11D(xxxv)).

4. Subject-verb agreement

Correct: C

“show” agrees with the plural subject “choices.” The others use wrong forms. Wrong verb : agreement practice (11D(i)).

5. Best organization

Correct: B

The argument shape is claim : reasons : evidence : conclusion. The distractors are a list, one sentence, or backwards. Choosing a list : require a claim-first plan. on 1 or 5 : reteach the C : R : E argument structure; miss on 3 : a spelling sweep.

If several students miss the same question, This is the pre-assessment check. Widespread misses on 1 or 5 : reteach the C : R : E argument structure; miss on 3 : a spelling sweep.

Exemplars & Rubric

Prompt: “Was Mansa Musa a wise leader? Write a full argument: claim, reasons, and evidence,”

4 “Mansa Musa was a wise leader. First, he used his enormous wealth to strengthen his empire rather than only himself. The passage describes how he directed his riches into his kingdom as a leader, which shows he thought about his people’s future. A ruler who invests in his empire and leaves a lasting influence has led wisely: and that is what makes Mansa Musa a wise leader.”

SECURE · claim + reasons + text evidence + conclusion (CREATURES) · RPLD: Independent

3 “Mansa Musa was a wise leader because he used his wealth to help his empire. The passage shows his influence, which proves he led well.”

DEMONSTRATES · claim + reason + a light evidence + ending · RPLD: Visible

2 “Mansa Musa was a wise leader because he was rich.”

DEVELOPING · claim + weak reason; no evidence · RPLD: Emergent · Next: add a reason that fits + text evidence 1
“Mansa Musa was rich.” · BEGINNING · a fact, no argument · RPLD: Foundational · Next: take a position + give a reason

Which rubric applies? The four-point Targeted Evidence Scale scores this anchor argumentative ECR: the cluster’s strongest single piece of evidence, and the score to record if you take a Cluster 4 grade.

TEACHER SCRIPT: EXPLAINING THIS TASK TO STUDENTS

SAY

SAY

“This is your full argument. State your claim, give reasons, and prove them with evidence from the passage: then conclude.”

SAY

SAY

“Follow CREATURES: Claim, Reasons, Evidence. What claim can you defend, and which detail proves your

► Give a plan box (claim / reason 1 / reason 2 / evidence). Independent write; conference after the draft.

“ ” = say word-for-word · ► = teacher direction (do not read aloud)