



Music Literacy Articles: The Benefits of Music Education Argument-Based Short Responses

Directions: Read the PBS.org article called “The Benefits of Music Education.” Then produce short responses to each of the argument-based questions below.

1. Supply the Missing Reasoning

All academic arguments contain an argumentative claim, evidence, and reasoning. Reasoning is the writer or speaker’s own analysis as to how the evidence proves the claim is true. Supply your own reasoning as to how the evidence below proves this claim is true, according to the article: Music education facilitates student learning in other subject areas.

Evidence: According to PBS.org (2013), “Making music involves more than the voice or fingers playing an instrument; a child learning about music has to tap into multiple skill sets, often simultaneously.”

Reasoning:

2. Supply the Argumentative Claim

Another argument made by the PBS.org article pertains to music and literacy (reading). For this argument, supply the missing argumentative claim

Argumentative claim:

Evidence: According to PBS.org (2013), “‘The development of language over time tends to enhance parts of the brain that help process music,’ says Dr. Kyle Pruett, clinical professor of child psychiatry at Yale School of Medicine and a practicing musician. ‘Language competence is at the root of social competence. Musical experience strengthens the capacity to be verbally competent.’”

Reasoning: Yale professor Pruett highlights the close, integral connection in the human brain between learning language and learning to play music. This close connection strongly suggests that a strong music education will improve students’ fundamental ability to read and use language, and therefore their literacy scores.

3. Supply the Evidence

One more argument made in the PBS.org article pertains to music and children’s IQ (intelligence quotient, a measure of intelligence in wider use in the 20th century than today). For this argument, supply a quote or summary from the article to supply its missing evidence.

Argumentative claim: Music education might also increase students’ overall intelligence, as measured by the IQ test.

Evidence:

Reasoning: Even if the increases in the IQ of the studied six-year olds were small, it is still very significant that these effects were recognized by what appears to be a valid social science research project. Data like this strongly suggests that musical education can increase, at least to some extent, students' IQ, and thus their overall intelligence.

3. Additional Support

The PBS.org article describes research done by Christopher Johnson at the University of Kansas in 2007. Which of the above arguments do you think this research provides the best additional support for? Explain in your response why you think it provides stronger support for this argument than for the others.

5. Counter-Argument and Response

In the article's final section, "Being Musical," Yale professor Kyle Pruett is quoted to provide what is in effect a counter-argument. He says, "It's important not to oversell how smart music can make you." The article ends somewhat surprisingly: how does it respond to this counter-argument?