



Jack and the Beanstalk: Can a Thief Be a Hero?

Unit Summary

Students analyze Jack's character in the fairy tale *Jack and the Beanstalk* and determine whether his actions are heroic. Using the *Showing Evidence Tool*, they make a claim about Jack's heroism and collect evidence from the text to support that claim. Students print out their project work from the tool and use it as an outline to write a persuasive essay.

Curriculum-Framing Questions

- **Essential Questions**
Is being bad for a good reason ever OK?
- **Unit Questions**
What are the traits of a hero?
When is it stealing OK?
- **Content Questions**
Which character traits does Jack possess?
How do choices by characters affect the outcome of a story?

Assessment Processes

View how a variety of student-centered [assessments](#) are used in the Jack and the Beanstalk Unit Plan. These assessments help students and teachers set goals; monitor student progress; provide feedback; assess thinking, processes, performances, and products; and reflect on learning throughout the learning cycle.

Instructional Procedures

Week 1

Read the Story

Write the Essential Question on the board, *Is being bad for a good reason ever OK?* Have students write their responses for 3 to 5 minutes in a journal. Give students the opportunity to share their responses from their journals. Conduct a general discussion about the question. Tell students you will be reading them a well-known fairy tale called *Jack and the Beanstalk* and you want them to keep this question in mind as they listen to the tale. Explain that *Jack and the Beanstalk* has many different versions and each story is written a little differently. Let them know they will be reading a version told by Joseph Jacobs, which is based on the oral versions he heard as a child. As an extension to this unit, have students read more than one version, and compare and contrast how Jack is depicted in each by using a Venn diagram or T-chart, or by writing a comparative essay.

A character's identity is revealed through actions, words, and interactions with other characters. The character's nature is also revealed through a sequence of events involving a conflict and resolution. Read *Jack and the Beanstalk* aloud to students while they follow along with their own copies. In small groups, have students examine Jack's behavior and the behavior of other characters to answer questions, such as:

- *Why did Jack climb the beanstalk the third time?*
- *Is Jack honest with his mother?*

At a Glance

Grade Level: 3-5

Subject: Language Arts

Topics: Character Traits, Heroism

Higher-Order Thinking

Skills: Argumentation, Analysis, Decision Making

Key Learnings: Literacy themes, Interpretations of Characters' Actions, Persuasive Writing

Time Needed: Four weeks, 45-minutes/four days per week

Background: Washington, United States

Things You Need

[Assessment](#)

[Standards](#)

[Resources](#)

Also discuss whether stealing the giant's property and taking the law into one's own hands can be justified. Have students share with a partner their thoughts on the following questions:

- *Why did Jack steal from the ogre?*
- *Is it ever OK to steal?*

Give students time to write their thoughts in their journals. Follow up with a class discussion and record students' thoughts on chart paper.

Examine Character Traits

Remind students that characters are an important element of a story. Traits of a character can be stated or can be shown to the reader by the character's actions. Use the [character analysis organizer](#) to analyze traits seen in Jack. Students should list a trait and provide evidence from the text showing Jack exhibiting the trait they recorded. Have students think about what they read that makes them connect the character trait with the character. Students may complete this organizer for other characters in the story, but their later work with the *Showing Evidence Tool* will focus directly on Jack.

After students finish the analysis, discuss how Jack's choices affect the outcome of a story. Have students share their final organizer with a partner and make any necessary changes based on feedback. Post the following questions on the board and have students focus on them as they share:

- *Do the chosen traits represent Jack?*
- *Does the evidence support the trait?*
- *Is the evidence from the text?*

Collect organizers as an assessment of student understanding. Redirect teaching as needed based on student work.

Further refine students' understanding of character traits with a dramatization of the story as a way to help students experience the characters. Group students and have them develop staged readings of *Jack and the Beanstalk* using the [Reader's Theater*](#) technique.

Next, pose the question, *Is Jack a hero?* Have students make an assertion about Jack's character and then back it up with textual evidence from the story. Have students read the story on their own and highlight or note sections of text that relate to the question, *Is Jack a hero?* Group students in teams of two or three, and ask them to discuss their findings in the text. Have students consider in their groups the most important characteristics of a hero. Have students discuss the following questions and record their responses in their journals:

- *What are the traits of a hero?*
- *Does a hero have to be nice?*

Read journals periodically to check for student understanding, and direct teaching as needed. Provide students with written feedback to acknowledge their opinions, offer suggestions, and write probing questions.

Weeks 2-3

Practice Using the Tool

Create an example project, using the simplified version, to give students experience moving evidence and linking it to the claim. A possible prompt for the example could be: *Should schools require students to wear uniforms?* Create a claim and add three to four pieces of evidence for students to manipulate. Have students add additional pieces of evidence for practice.

Set Up the Project

Before proceeding with the next activity, click [here](#) to set up the *You call that thief a hero?* project in your workspace. Group students with like-minded classmates according to their claim of Jack's heroic nature. In this project, encourage students to agree and work together to collect and link evidence. Tell them that completing the project is more important than disagreeing on the claim and spending time sorting out which claim the group will make. Distribute the [evidence rubric](#) and ask students to review, check for understanding, and encourage them to refer to it as they build their case.

Use the Tool

Have students log into their *Showing Evidence* team space. Point out the prompt that guides their work, *In the story Jack and the Beanstalk, is Jack a hero?* Have each student group use their research from the previous activities to make a claim and back it up with evidence.

Students use *Showing Evidence Tool* to structure the support for their answer. Using the [tool instructions](#), students are reminded how to correctly cite evidence and construct a claim. Working in teams of two or three, have students use their decision-making skills to make a claim about Jack's heroic nature. Instruct students to use the text and their completed [character analysis organizer](#) to gather evidence. To cite the evidence, have students identify the page, column, and paragraph where the information is found. The explanation section of the evidence must include the quote from the text. Tell teams to gather five pieces of evidence to support their claim and three pieces of evidence that could weaken the claim. Encourage students to use strong argumentation skills and persuasiveness to argue their point and make others want to support their claim.

Conduct a series of mini-lessons about using strong words to convey support for a claim and give examples of how to be

persuasive.

Review Evidence

Assign each student team another team's work to review. Have students use the [rubric](#) to help in their reviews. For the initial reviews, join like-minded teams. This allows students time to share support for their claim. After the first review, allow teams one lab day to make necessary changes and improvements before moving into the secondary review phase. For the secondary review, join teams with opposing claims in the review process. This gives students a different perspective and helps them become aware of possible counterarguments. Give students time to make any necessary revisions based on both teams' feedback and suggestions.

Examine the Showing Evidence Activity

The *Showing Evidence Tool* space below represents one team's investigation in this project. You can double-click on the evidence or comments to read the team's descriptions.

Project Name: [You call that thief a hero?](#) (Click here to set up this project in your workspace)

Prompt: In the story, "Jack and the Beanstalk," is Jack a hero?

VIEW-ONLY MODE

As a viewer, you can view but cannot edit this project.

Claim

YOUR CLAIM

I think that Jack was not a hero.

Your Explanation

Jack didn't show many characteristics of a hero--he lied, killed, stole, and disobeyed.

Your Rating

★★★★★

Evidence

- Stole ogre's property
- Killed ogre
- Made wife a widow
- Greedy actions
- Disobeyed mom
- Lied about gold
- Saved the town
- Clever trade
- Saved his mom

EVIDENCE BIN

- Greedy actions
- Lied about gold
- Disobeyed mom
- Saved his mom
- Clever trade
- Made wife a widow
- Killed ogre
- Saved the town
- Stole ogre's property

CLAIMS WORKSPACE

Week 4

Writing the Essay

Have students print their project work from *Showing Evidence* and use the hard copy as an outline to write their essay. Pose the prompt *Is Jack a Hero?* to students again. Tell students that they will craft a persuasive essay in which their claims become their thesis statements. Remind students to use the writing process, which includes prewriting, rough drafts, peer editing, revising, and publishing. Explain to students that they need to meet with you to get their drafts approved before they begin each step in the writing process. Describe to students that the most important features of creating a persuasive writing piece are:

1. Make a claim. The claim is the thesis or point and is central to the argument—what a writer wants to convince readers is true.
2. Support the claim with reasons and evidence. The evidence in this case consists of text used to prove a point.
3. Analyze the evidence. Review the evidence and explain how the evidence backs up the point and helps readers understand why the evidence supports the claim. Persuasive language should be used to persuade the audience to support the claim.
4. Anticipate counterarguments. Acknowledge and refute counterarguments. Explain why the counterarguments are not as strongly supported as the claim.

Distribute the [persuasive essay scoring guide](#) before students begin writing and go over the criteria so students know what is expected of them. Give students the [writing process checklist](#) to help them document each step. The [student](#)

essay should use the support collected while using *Showing Evidence* to back up their thesis.

Wrapping Up and Revisiting the Essential Question

Pose the Essential Question again, *Is being bad for a good reason ever OK?* In small groups, have students discuss the question in relation to what they have learned from reading *Jack and the Beanstalk* and by using the *Showing Evidence Tool*. Allow students time to record their thoughts in their journals. Bring the discussion back to the whole group and give students an opportunity to share what they talked about. Give students an opportunity to share real-life examples as well.

Prerequisite Skills

- Basic computer skills
- Experience with the writing process

Differentiated Instruction

Resource Student:

- Pair the student with a stronger reader during reading activities
- Supply a copy of the book on CD
- Teach the resource teachers how to use the *Showing Evidence Tool*

Gifted Student:

- Offer the student alternative versions of *Jack and the Beanstalk* and have the student compare and contrast the different versions using a Venn diagram
- Have the student read *Giants Have Feelings, Too/Jack and the Beanstalk (Another Point of View)*, by Alvin Grawowsky and Henry Buerchkholtz, and then have the student write a persuasive essay from the giant's perspective
- Have the student orchestrate a mock trial and put Jack on trial to evaluate his actions
- Require the student to find more evidence to both support and weaken the claim

English Language Learner:

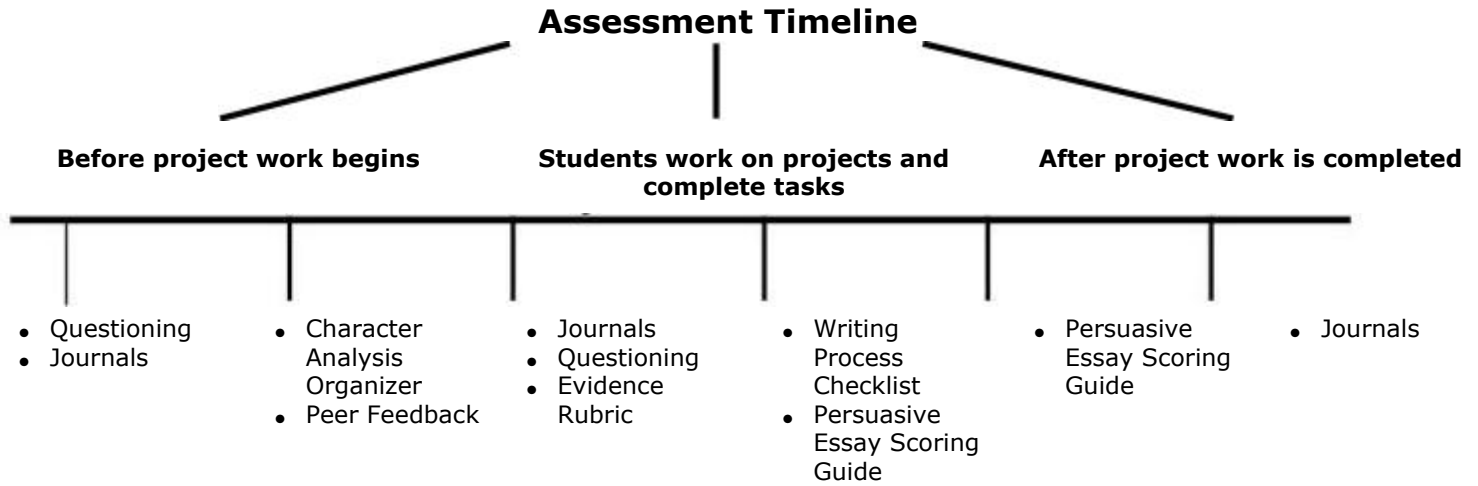
- Pair the student with a stronger reader during reading activities
- Provide copies of the text in the student's first language, if available
- Provide a glossary of important terms
- Teach the ELL teachers how to use the *Showing Evidence Tool*

Credits

Joel Lang is a sixth-grade teacher in Lacey, Washington. He participated in the Intel® Teach Program, which resulted in this idea for a classroom project. A team of teachers expanded the plan into the example you see here.

Showing Evidence Tool: Jack and the Beanstalk Assessment Plan

Assessment Plan



Use questioning throughout the unit to assess prior knowledge and spark whole and small group discussions. Collect journals on a daily basis to give students feedback and check for understanding of concepts. Redirect teaching as needed, if students are not understanding important concepts.

Use the [character analysis organizer](#) to assess students' understanding of character traits and evidence to support the trait. Provide students with the [evidence rubric](#) to guide them through their work with the *Showing Evidence Tool*.

During the writing process, ask questions, preview drafts, and give students feedback as they read the text and draft their essays. Provide time for students to give peer feedback on how to improve the final products as well. Supply students with the [writing process checklist](#) to keep track of the writing process while they write. Assess student essays using the [persuasive writing scoring guide](#). Review students' final reflections on the Essential Question, *Is being bad for a good reason ever OK?*

Showing Evidence Tool: Jack and the Beanstalk

Content Standards and Objectives

Standards and Objectives

Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements

Reading

- State both literal and/or inferred main ideas and provide supporting text-based details.
- Use multiple sources of information from the text (e.g., character's own thoughts or words, what others say about the character, and how others react to the character) to describe how a character changes over time or how the character's action might contribute to the problem.
- Describes the author's or character's reasoning or problem with the reasoning.
- Understand and apply knowledge of text components to comprehend text.

Writing

- Writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes.
- Understands and uses the steps of the writing process.

Student Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Use knowledge of a situation and characters' actions, motivations, feelings, and physical attributes to determine characters' traits
- Draw conclusions from text, citing text-based information to support the conclusions
- Use the steps of the writing process to answer the essential question in the form of a persuasive essay

Showing Evidence Tool: Jack and the Beanstalk

Resources

Materials and Resources

Printed Materials

- *Jack and the Beanstalk*, one copy for each student (make sure all students are discussing the same version)

Internet Resources

- *Jack and the Beanstalk*
www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0328jack.html*
Three versions of the fairy tale
- BBC-CBeebies
www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/rolymo/bedroom/stories/growingup.shtml*
An alternative, animated version of the story
- Junior Great Books
<http://talk.greatbooks.org/igb/action/jack>*
Provides a process for students to share their own ideas and answers to open-ended, interpretive questions
- EconEdLink
www.econedlink.org/lessons/index.cfm?lesson=EM66*
An extension lesson about money and banks
- SurLaLune Fairy Tales
www.surlalunefairytales.com/jackbeanstalk/index.html*
An annotated Web version of the tale with links to history, modern interpretations, and similar tales across cultures

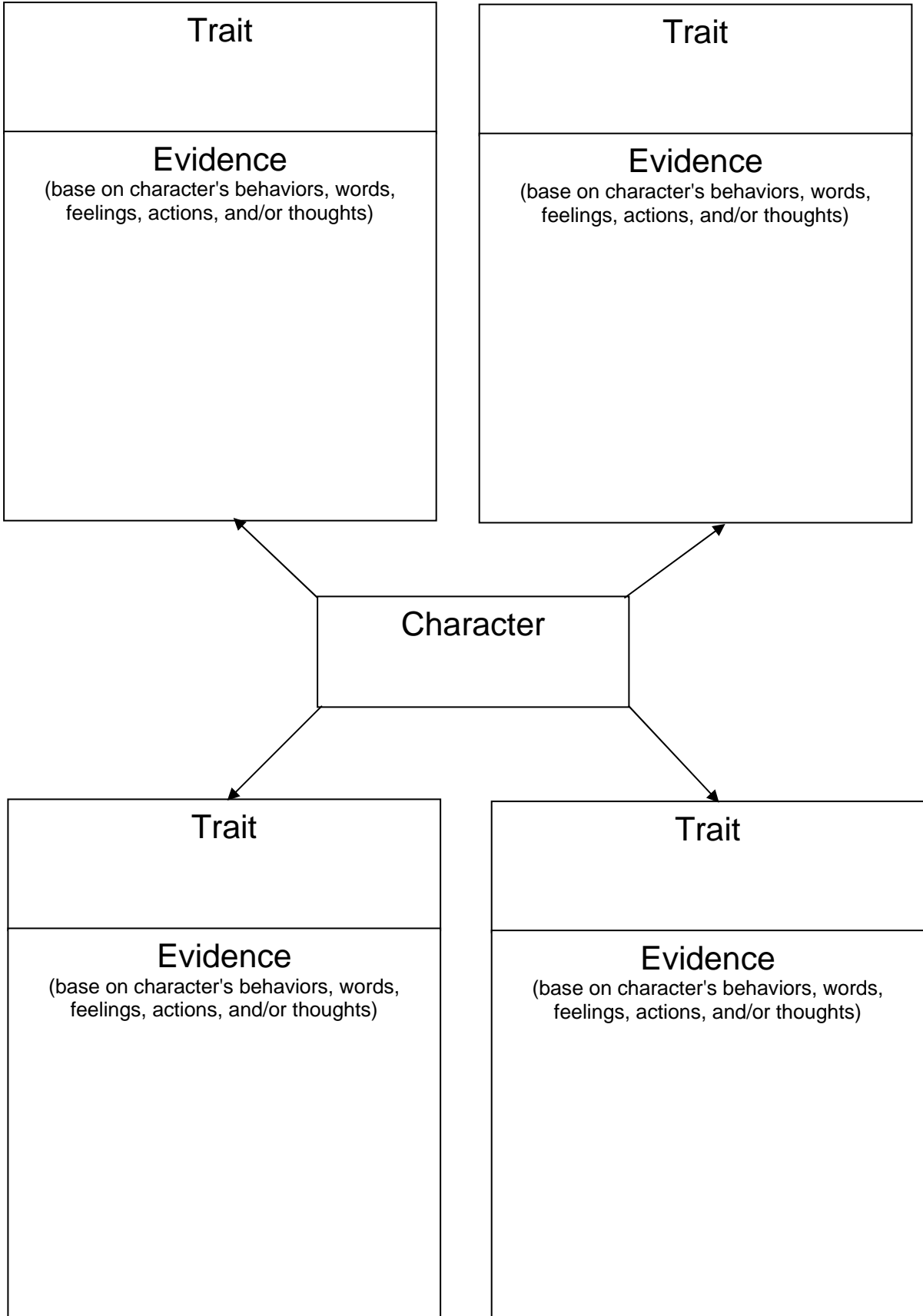
Technology – Hardware

- Computers with Internet access for using the *Showing Evidence Tool*

Technology – Software

- Word processing software for writing the persuasive essay

Character Analysis Organizer



Showing Evidence Rubric

Jack and the Beanstalk

	4	3	2	1
Statement of Claim	My claim is stated in one clear, concise, descriptive sentence.	My claim is stated clearly in one sentence.	My claim is stated in more than one sentence or in a confusing manner.	My claim is incomplete.
Amount of Evidence GOAL: 5 to support claim 3 to counter claim	The amount of evidence I gathered exceeds the goal. I used effective argumentation to support and refute my claim.	The amount of evidence I gathered meets the goal. I used argumentation to support and refute my claim.	The amount of evidence I gathered is below the goal. I used little argumentation to support or refute my claim.	I gathered little or no evidence. I did not effectively use argumentation to support or refute my claim.
Evidence Explained and Analyzed	I selected quotes from text and explained them appropriately and fully. I thoroughly analyzed the evidence to make sure it supports my claim.	I selected quotes from text but only partially explained them. I analyzed the evidence to make sure it supports my claim.	I selected some quotes from text but did not explain them. I attempted to analyze the evidence, but the evidence does not effectively support my claim.	I did not select or explain quotes. I did not analyze the evidence.
Evidence Citations Form: Page # Column # Paragraph #	My citations are complete and accurate.	My citations are mostly complete and accurate.	My citations contain many errors.	My citations are incomplete, incorrect, or missing.
Conclusions	My conclusions reflect a clear and logical interpretation of quality evidence.	My conclusions are based on facts and evidence.	My conclusions use no facts or evidence.	My conclusions are missing or unrelated to the evidence.

Name _____

Writing Checklist

Check off each step of the writing process after you complete it.

- Prewriting—I brainstormed and mapped out my ideas.
- Rough Draft—I wrote a rough draft using my prewriting.
- Peer Editing—A peer read and edited my work.
- Revising—I received my peer’s feedback and revised my work. I double-checked my spelling and grammar to make sure my work is the best it can be.
- Teacher Conferencing—I received my teacher’s feedback and revised my work.
- Publishing—My essay is in final form, neatly written or typed, and ready to be turned in.
- Self-Assessing—I used the persuasive essay scoring guide to help guide my writing.

Notes:

Scoring Guide for Writing—Persuasive Prompt
Jack and the Beanstalk

Name _____ Teacher _____ Title of Piece _____

Content (x3)	4	3	2	1	Notes
Topic (claim) is appropriately narrowed and specific to purpose with ample concrete details, facts, or reasons and supported by ample explanation, examples, and evidence.					
Student's ideas are thoughtful, engaging, and/or unique.					
Student anticipates readers' questions or counterarguments, and provides answers and reasoning for why the claim is a strong claim.					
Conclusion is clearly related to the claim and shows a thorough understanding of the issue.					
Organization					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction is focused and engaging—the position is stated clearly. • Body connects logically and smoothly to the introduction and conclusion. • Conclusion summarizes the main points and leaves the reader with an important concept to think about in relation to the topic of the essay. 					

Student maintains a smooth and balanced pace and provides effective transitions with smooth, logical connections that lead from one idea to the next.					
Style					
<p>Word choice is appropriate for the audience and purpose, and has the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoids repetition • Includes powerful vocabulary (action verbs, specific nouns) • Uses persuasive language • Avoids the use of slang, conversation style, and clichés 					
Student uses language effectively by varying phrases, sentence lengths, and sentence structures.					
Conventions					
Student uses correct capitalization and punctuation.					
Student writes complete sentences.					
Student makes appropriate paragraph breaks.					
Student uses invented spelling and correct sight word spelling.					
TOTAL: /80					

Showing Evidence Instructions

1. Sign in with the teacher ID, team ID, and password:

Teacher ID: _____

Team ID: _____

Password: _____

2. Click **You call that thief a hero?**
3. Work together to:
 - Create a claim (answer the question in a complete sentence)
 - Select evidence (eight items—five to support your claim, and three to counter it)
 - Write a conclusion

Creating Evidence

To support your claim, think of **five** things the characters in the story did or said that led to your decision.

Think of **three** things the characters in the story did or said that would support the opposite viewpoint.

How? Look at the image on the Tool for a tour.



Evidence Summary:

Give the evidence a title that represents the ideas. This should be less than five words.

Example: “Jack stole”

Explanation:

Describe how the evidence supports (or does not support) your claim. Have a short retelling or quote from the story, but make sure the section is not too long.

Source:

Ensure that the source information is precise, including:

Page #:

Column #:

Paragraph #: (if the information comes from many paragraphs, note the paragraph number to indicate where the idea first begins)

Work as a team and take turns for each role:

- *Computer Operator*: Inputs evidence the group agrees on
- *Evidence Seeker(s)*: Provides evidence that supports or does not support a claim

If team members disagree about the claim or evidence, team members must maturely discuss the issue.

Refer to the rubric often to make sure the team achieves success!

Is Jack a Hero?
By Bo

I think that Jack was not a hero. One reason I think this is because he stole. It was acceptable when Jack and his mother had nothing for Jack to steal the gold and the hen. And the ogre had a lot of money. But when Jack stole the harp, he went too far. He was now stealing just because he was not content and heroes only take what they need.

Another reason Jack was not a hero is because Jack killed an innocent ogre. The ogre was trying to live the way he saw fit until Jack came along and stole his stuff. The one time the ogre sees Jack stealing, the ogre goes after him. The ogre only wanted his harp back and he gets killed in the process. Jack doesn't think about the ogre's wife who has just become a widow. Thanks to Jack, he has just killed an innocent ogre.

The last reason Jack was not a hero is because Jack does not listen to his mother. Jack was told to go to the market and sell Milky-White, but instead he met a man and traded the cow for five paltry beans. Heroes listen to other people and their needs. Jack ignored his mother's wishes.