

An Interdisciplinary Unit: Examining the Grand Jury Documents from the Michael Brown Shooting

By:

Travis J. Bristol, Research & Policy Fellow at the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE)

Claude Goldenberg, Chair of Curriculum Studies and Teacher Education at the Stanford University Graduate School of Education.

Lesson One: Who is Telling the Truth?¹

(APPROX LENGTH: 50 MINS)

Learning objectives

SWBAT: Explain how eyewitness accounts of one incident changes based on who is telling the story.

The learning objective also addresses the following Common Core State Standard:

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Assessment: Student responses — both written and verbal.

Student Exit Ticket:

LAUNCH

Do Now and Mini-lesson (introduce new material)

What students are doing	What teacher is doing
<p>Do Now (~5 minutes)</p> <p>Group A: <i>The Three Little Pigs</i> Group B: <i>The True Story of the Three Little Pigs</i>.</p> <p>Instructions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) As a class, we will answer the following questions before reading. Base your responses on the covers from each text.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. What do you see?b. What do you think this story will be about?c. What from the cover supports your response to question b.?d. Compare the wolf in <i>The Three Little Pigs</i> and <i>The True Story of the Three Little Pigs</i>. Based on the cover, how are they similar? How are	<p>Show questions one at a time so as to scaffold students' ability to cite textual evidence and inferences, particularly for question 1d.</p> <p>Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.</p>

¹ The authors would like to thank **Brad Fogo**, Director of Curriculum Development for the Stanford History Education Group, and **Alice Laramore**, an 8th grade English teacher in Boston Public Schools, for their feedback on the lessons in this mini-unit.

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they different? How might their differences shape what we read?

The Three Little Pigs (Cover)



Circulating to check students understand the task. Clarify questions if needed and direct students to help each other but do not answer questions for them.

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs (Cover)



Direct two students, from each assigned text, to come together. Assign roles – one person shares summary, the other discuss the teller’s version of the truth.

Close Reading (~20 minutes)

- 2) Read your assigned text. In x sentences, summarize your text. [comprehension]
- 3) Who is telling the story?
- 4) What is the teller’s version of the truth? [analysis]

5) In a jigsaw, each group shares responses. After sharing responses, groups decide which version is the

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truth. Groups must provide textual evidence to support their claims. [evaluation]

Framing Lesson & Unit: (10 minutes)

Ask a volunteer to read the lesson’s objective.

SWBAT: Explain how eyewitness accounts of one incident changes based on who is telling the story.

Transition students into how today’s lesson is day 1 of unit that explores how we come to believe the truth.

K(now) W(ant to know) Learn - Michael Brown Shooting

K	W	L

Handout final unit assignment. Students read assignment silently and respond in writing to – what will you be expected to do at the end of the unit?

After responding, students share their responses with a partner.

Mini-Lesson: Objective & Task

Ask: What do you expect to learn in today’s lesson?

Ask: How do we come to believe that an account represents truth? Like the picture we discussed earlier, there are sometimes many versions of the “truth.”

To help us understand how we come to believe the truth, we are going to explore a recent event in the news that has created nation-wide protests, a grand jury’s decision not to bring formal charges against the White police officer, Darren Wilson, for shooting and killing an unarmed Black male, Michael Brown. Ask students to fill out the K and W re: the Michael Brown Shooting.

Prompt students to read final assignment, then answer what will you be expected to do at the end of the unit?

Solicit responses from pairs. End by transitioning students to the idea that if we are going to understand how the grand jurors came to their decision of the truth around what happened between Darren Wilson and Michael Brown, it is important to consider, as we did at the start of class, that the truth is never pure or simple.

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Closure — Activity to help students synthesize and reflect on new knowledge/material

What students are doing	What teacher is doing
<p>Discussion (5 minutes) In groups, students will begin to answer Wilde’s claim that the truth is rarely pure and never simple.</p> <p>Why are there varying versions of the truth? Which story is the most credible and why?</p> <p>Groups share answers discussing how they decided what was the truth, as well as providing evidence to support their claims.</p> <p>Exit Ticket (2 minutes) Which version of the three little pigs story do you believe? Why?</p>	<p>Discussion (5 minutes) Begin by framing discussion around the idea that the “truth is never pure and rarely simple.”</p> <p>Ask: Why are there two versions of the truth? Does one version appear more believable than the other? If so, why?</p> <p>End by suggesting over the coming days we will read testimonies (stories) from people who witnessed Michael Brown’s shooting.</p> <p>Exit Ticket (2 minutes) Make sure students understand question. Thank students as you collect responses.</p>

Lesson 1: Story Summary

The Three Little Pigs

Once upon a time, there were three little pigs who went off to build their houses.

The first little pig built his house of straw, which was not very strong.

One day, the big bad wolf came and said, “Little pig, little pig, let me come in.”

“Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin,” said the first little pig.

“Then I’ll huff and I’ll puff, and I’ll blow your house down.”

And he did. And he got the little pig and ate him all up.

The second little pig built his house of sticks, which were not very strong.

One day, the big bad wolf came and said, “Little pig, little pig, let me come in.”

“Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin,” said the second little pig.

“Then I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house down.”

And he did. And he got the little pig and ate him all up.

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The third little pig built his house of bricks, which were very strong.

One day, the big bad wolf came and said, "Little pig, little pig, let me come in."

"Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin," said the third little pig.

"Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down."

But no matter how much the wolf huffed and puffed, the house did not blow down.

So the big bad wolf said, "I'll come down the chimney and eat you all up."

But when the wolf came down the chimney, he fell into a pot of boiling water and boiled all up.

And the third little pig lived happily ever after in his house of bricks.

The end.

Lesson 1: About the Book



Although just about all of us think that we know the story of the three little pigs, in this comical picture book, A. Wolf clears up some misunderstandings. According to A. Wolf, we simply have not heard his side of the story — until now. While we may believe that the wolf who visited the three little pigs huffed and puffed to blow the pigs' houses down, it turns out that he simply had a bad cold and had a powerful sneeze. Who could blame him for eating the pigs that died when their houses fell as a result of his sneezing? Furthermore, the wolf was only visiting the pigs in the first place to borrow a cup of sugar to make a cake for his grandmother's birthday. The pigs wouldn't even give him any sugar! When the third pig insulted his grandmother, A. Wolf "got a little crazy." The police found him trying to break down the pig's door, and news reporters wrote the story that we have come to know.

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Lesson Two: When Accounts Conflict

(APPROX LENGTH: 60+ MINS)

Learning objectives

- SWBAT:
1. Analyze two conflicting **accounts** of an event by identifying (a) key aspects of each account and (b) specific aspects the accounts that conflict with each other.
 2. Evaluate the **credibility** of each account, state which one is more believable, and give reasons for the evaluation.

Key vocabulary: account, credibility, analyze, evaluate

Central Question — Why would Officer Darren Wilson and Dorian Johnson have different versions of the truth after witnessing the same event?

The learning objective also addresses the following Common Core State Standard:

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Materials:

- Dorian Johnson interview (0-2:20)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXTZOR-IHw0>

- Officer Darren Wilson interview (0:45-5:40)

<http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/darren-wilson-discusses-deadly-confrontation-michael-brown-27181675>

- Response sheet for noting key points, discrepancies and evaluation of which account is more credible (exit ticket)

Assessment: Student responses on response sheet (Exit Ticket)

What students are doing	What teacher is doing
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Sitting in large group; participating in class discussion (~5 minutes)

Listen to teacher's intro of the activity and statement of objective. (~5 minutes)

Say: "How many of you have had a disagreement or maybe even a fight with someone, and what you say happened and what the other person says happened didn't exactly agree?" Call on students to recount incidents... Who said what? Who was right? How do you know? Teacher provides if no student offers examples.

"Yesterday we read the wolf's **account** (write on board) of the story of the 3 little pigs that didn't exactly match what we all assume the real story of the 3 little pigs is. But that was make believe. What about when it's no fairy tale and someone is killed and there are **conflicting accounts** of what happened and who's right and who's wrong is important? How do you decide? That's what we're going to talk about today. And we're going to talk about using interviews of 2 people directly involved in the killing of Michael Brown last summer in Ferguson, MO. Do you all remember this incident? It was in all the newspapers, and on TV, lots of people were very angry and upset b/c a white officer shot an unarmed black teenager... but there were very different and **conflicting accounts** of what happened. So here are/is our objective(s) for today." Reads objective(s) already on the board. **[see sheet below]**

"Here's what we're going to do: You're going to watch 2 video interviews: one of Michael Brown's friend who was with him when Michael was shot; the other of the police officer who shot him. Watch and listen carefully. Try to form a mental picture of what each person is saying happened. Then I'm going to play each video again. This time I want you take notes about what each person's **account** of what happened. Zero in on the key aspects of each **account** that really matter in deciding whose fault it was that Michael

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2:30mins Students watch, listen, form mental picture of what Dorian says happened

5mins Students watch, listen, form mental picture of what Wilson says happened

5-10 mins Initial thoughts, reactions

5mins Students watch Wilson interview, noting down key points of his account.

5-10mins Students discuss, finish writing key points.

2:30mins Students watch Johnson interview, noting down key points of his account.

5-10mins Students discuss, finish writing key points.

10mins Students discuss, indicate which account appears more credible and give specific reasons why.

Brown was shot and killed.”

Play Dorian Johnson video. Remind students, “Remember try to make a mental movie of

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5mins Students state their evaluations and give reasons.

what Dorian is saying happened.”

Play Off. Wilson video. Remind students, “Remember try to make a mental movie of what Wilson is saying happened.”

“What did you think? Any quick thoughts or reactions before we watch again? Talk to your table partner/group.”

“Ok, we’re going to watch these videos again, and this time I want you to note down on this sheet key points about each person’s account of what happened. The most important thing to note are details that would help you determine who was at fault in the death of Michael Brown. This time we’ll watch them in reverse order. So here’s Off Wilson’s interview; make notes and after it’s over I’ll give you 5-10 mins to discuss and make sure you get what you think are the key points.” Teacher circulates as students discuss and note key points of Wilson account.

“Ok, now we’ll do the same with Dorian Johnson’s interview. Make notes as you watch and after it’s over I’ll give you 5-10 mins to discuss and make sure you get what you think are the key points of his account.” Teacher circulates as students discuss and note key points of Johnson account.

“Now finally, I want you to evaluate the **credibility** (write on board) of these accounts. What does that mean? Take responses. Anyone ever hear of “cred” or “creds” or “street cred”? (write cred just below credibility). What does that mean? State or summarize by saying, “Right, credibility means believability. Who is more credible means which one do you believe? AND WHY? Using what’s in your notes, discuss in your groups which account is more credible, and why. I’ll give you 5-10 mins to discuss, you can take some more notes, and then I want each of you

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	<p>to fill out the bottom portion of the sheet... who's account is more credible and why? You need to be specific, not just say, "Because I believe him more."</p>
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	<p>Wrap-up by calling on several students to state their evaluation and give reasons.</p>
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Conflicting accounts

Key points about Dorian Johnson's account	Key points about Off. Wilson's account
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

What are the most important discrepancies (differences) between the two accounts? An important discrepancy is a difference that would influence your decision about who was to blame for the death of Michael Brown.

Which account do you find more **credible** (believable)? Give specific reasons that use key points and discrepancies you identified above.

I believe _____'s account is more credible because:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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Lesson Three: Is the Eye-Witness Telling the Truth? Was She Even Present?

(APPROX LENGTH: 60+ MINS)

Learning objectives

SWBAT: Evaluate the credibility of an eyewitness account to determine whether the journal entry and grand jury testimony supports Darren Wilson’s account of what happened.

The learning objective also addresses the following Common Core State Standard:

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Assessment: Student responses — both written (e.g. graphic organizer) and verbal.

Student Exit Ticket

What students are doing	What teacher is doing
<p>Do Now (~5 minutes)</p> <p>Re-read an excerpt from witness 40’s journal entry (4 p.m.)</p> <p>1) How does witness 40 describe the events that occurred in Ferguson on August 9th?</p> <p>Now, read witness 41’s deposition transcript (9 a.m.)</p> <p>1) Why does witness 41 decide to visit</p>	<p>Circulating. Identifying which students are struggling. Asking students probing questions if they appear stuck.</p>

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Ferguson on August 9th?

- 2) Does witness 40's journal entry at 9 a.m. change your **reading** of her eye-witness account at 4 p.m.?
- 3) What other questions/thoughts do you have about witness 40's testimony?

Now, with a partner, share your response to question number 2.

Share Out (~5 minutes)

Students share out.

Framing Lesson & Unit: (~3 minutes)

Ask a volunteer to read the lesson's objective.

Whole-class examination of one piece of evidence (~10 minutes)

Show MSNBC [clip](http://www.msnbc.com/all-in/watch/ferguson--was-witness-40-even-there--369446467820) (0:00 — 3:15) [End when Chris Hayes says "... supports Darren Wilson"
<http://www.msnbc.com/all-in/watch/ferguson--was-witness-40-even-there--369446467820>

Transition students into a larger discussion

Why might prosecutors choose to include witness 40's journal entry to the grand jury?

[Transition students to begin thinking about the other pieces of evidence they will read and how that evidence might have influenced the grand jury's decision]

Pair work: close reading of four pieces of evidence (~25 minutes)

Directions - With a partner, complete the graphic organizer. Describe two pieces of evidence; then, respond to the questions in the graphic organizer being sure to support claims with textual evidence.

Mini-Lesson: Objective & Task

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	What is it? (Describe this piece of evidence)	According to this document, <u>did Michael Brown charge at Darren Wilson?</u>	According to this document, <u>did Michael Brown put his hands at his waist?</u>	According to this document, <u>was Michael Brown kneeling when fired upon?</u>	Why might this be a credible source?	Why might this not be a credible source?
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Close (~5 minutes)

As students complete graphic organizer — transition to a whole group discussion where they share “L” from KWL chart.

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Dorian Johnson						
Witness 40						
Darren Wilson						
Witness 41-1						

Directions: With a partner, complete the graphic organizer. Describe two pieces of evidence; then, respond to the questions in the graphic organizer being sure to support claims with textual evidence.

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DJ = Dorian Johnson

P = Prosecutor

DJ: We continued to walk and have our conversation, but almost a split second we heard the tires screech, and the officer, he pulled back in the truck very fast to the point at an angle if we didn't hear his tires screech, the back of his cruiser would have struck one of us, not both of us, it would have struck both of us or one of us because of the way he angled in reverse.

And at that time he never attempted to open the door again like to try to get back out, but his arm came out the window and that's the first initial contact that they had. The officer grabbed, he grabbed ahold of Big Mike's shirt around the neck area.

I'm watching the officer, he's walking and Big Mike gets past the third car, the final car before the second shot was fired. It was the second shot fired, pow, the officer shot. I don't know if it hit, I wasn't that close to see that it struck Big Mike, but the manner that he jerked and just stopped in his track, I sense that he was hit again.

The second time he shot, I didn't know if it hit him or not, but he kind of jerked and that's when he stopped running. He just kind of stopped and turned around at the officer. And now he's face-to-face with the officer, but not so close. Now, Big Mike is probably, he's not fully at the driveway, but he gets probably to the curb of the driveway when the second shot, and now at the second shot, the officer, I'll just put [Darren Wilson], he's passing the third vehicle.

P: What is Big Mike doing?

DJ: At that time Big Mike's hands was up, but not so much up in the air because he had been struck already in this region somewhere on this. It was like this hands is up and this hand is kind of like down sort of.

P: His hands were nowhere near his waist?

DJ: No, his hands never went down towards his waistline or anything, like he didn't have a belt on or anything.

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DW = Darren Wilson

DW: He [Michael Brown] then grabs my door again and shuts my door. At that time is when I saw him coming into my vehicle. His head was higher than the top of my car. And I see him ducking and as he is ducking, his hands are up and he is coming in my vehicle.

DW: So when he stopped, I stopped. And then he starts to turn around, I tell him to get on the ground, get on the ground. He turns, and when he looked at me, he made like a grunting, like aggravated sound and he starts, he turns and he's coming back towards me. When he does that, his left hand goes in a fist and goes to his side, his right one goes under his shirt in his waistband and he starts running at me.

DW: As he is coming towards me, I tell, keep telling him to get on the ground, he doesn't.

DW: At this point I start backpedaling and again, I tell him get on the ground, get on the ground, he doesn't. I shoot another round of shots. Again, I don't recall how many it was or if I hit him every time. At this point it looked like he was almost bulking up to run through the shots, like it was making him mad that I'm shooting at him.

DW: And the face that he had was looking straight through me, like I wasn't even there, I wasn't even anything in his way. His hand was in a fist at his side, this one is in his waistband under his shirt, and he was like this. Just coming straight at me like he was going to run right through me. And when he gets about that 8 to 10 feet away, I look down, I remember looking at my sites and firing, all I see is his head and that's what I shot. I don't know how many, I know at least once because I saw the last one go into him. And then when it went into him, the demeanor on his face went blank, the aggression was gone, it was gone, I mean, I knew he stopped, the threat was stopped. When he fell, he fell on his face.

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Witness 41

August 26, 2014 9:32 a.m.

SA = FBI special agent

(UI= Unintelligible)

SA You heard two shots?

I heard two shots.

SA Okay.

And I, that's when I ran down to the lot to see what was goin' on.

SA Okay.

And um, Michael Brown's on his knees with his hands up and he was being shot up. And then he-he fell. The officer got out of his truck, SUV rather and that's when he stood over the boy and just emptied his clip.

SA Um, okay, so you said that you saw-you saw Michael down on his knees. Was he facing the police officer?

Yes, he was.

SA Where was the police officer at the time?

The police officer was coming toward him. He was on his knees.

SA So the police, so Michael Brown was on his knees.

And he had his hands up. He had his hands up.

SA And the police officer's walkin' toward him?

Yes, and he had his hands up and the police was shootin' him as he was comin' toward him.

SA But he was on his knees?

(UI) Michael was on his knees with his hands up. (UI)

SA Okay, okay, and then did Michael Brown fall?

And yeah, he eventually fell and fell face down and that's when...

SA He fell face down?

...that's when the policeman came over and just finished him up.

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Witness 40

August 9th Saturday 4 PM

It was crazy. I dont even know where I was. I asked Q.T. guy for directions but went wrong way. I just wanted to take a drive. I ended up in some apartment complex & asked directions again. Real nice kid said he had no idea. He asked guy in green shirt & jeans who was really sweet. Then I heard a weird noise that caught my attention. This cop was backing up saying something I couldn't hear but there were some kids I almost hit with car. A big one and a skinny one. The cop tried getting out & the big one hit the door the cop looked pissed & tried opening door again. The big kid hit the door with his gut & the little one punched the mirror. Something gold fell on the ground. The big one is half in the window/door. Can't remember but I swear the little one had the cop's leg. I heard a noise not sure what. The guy in the green shirt was yelling Stop! The big kid pulled his pants up. They were tan shorts & he started running. The skinny one took off in opp direct. The cop got out, left hand on face, right hand on gun. The cop screamed but I could not understand. Every one was screaming. I heard "lay yo stupid ass down." I think it was a lady next to me. The cop was wobbling the big kid turned around and had his arms out with attitude. The cop just stood there. Dang if that kid didn't start running right at the cop like a football player. Head down. I heard 3 bangs but the big kid wouldn't stop. I heard the cop say something, but not sure what or if he was just making noise. Cop took a couple of steps forward then backwards and the gun went off 2 more times. The last one on top of the kids head. Omg the blood. The green shirt man grabbed my arm and said "get your ass out of here." I got in my car & drove into neighborhood. Somehow I went through parking lot across the street & back to Main Rd.

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Lesson Four²: Making the Case

See attached pdf, "Reconstruction_SAC" for use with Lesson Four

(APPROX LENGTH: 65 MINS)

Learning objectives

SWBAT: Create and present a logical and convincing argument based on their reading of two different texts.

The learning objective also addresses the following Common Core State Standard:

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

Materials:

- Copies of Dorian Johnson testimony
- Copies of Darren Wilson testimony
- Copies of Witness 40 testimony
- Copies of Witness 41 testimony

Assessment: Graphic organizers; coming to consensus chart; small and large group discussions

What students are doing	What teacher is doing
<p>Do Now (~5 minutes)</p> <p>List two — four techniques you would use to persuade someone to agree with your argument. Why do you think these techniques will work (be effective?)</p> <p>Share Out (~5 minutes)</p> <p>Students share out.</p> <p>Framing Lesson: (~3 minutes)</p> <p>In assigned groups, students use the Ferguson Grand Jury document from Lesson 3 to collect</p>	<p>Circulating. Identifying which students are struggling. Asking students probing questions if they appear stuck.</p> <p>Helping students who are having trouble.</p>

² This lesson is modeled after the Reconstruction Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) as designed by the Stanford History Education Group.

An Interdisciplinary Unit: Examining the Grand Jury Documents from the Michael Brown Shooting

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data for their side.

Document A: Dorian Johnson

Document B: Witness 41

Document C: Officer Darren Wilson

Document D: Witness 40

Team A argues that Officer Darren Wilson *used excessive force* when he shot and killed Michael Brown

Team B argues that Officer Darren Wilson used self-defense to protect himself against Michael Brown

Crafting Arguments

Teams use graphic organizer to collect data for their side. (~15 minutes)

Structured Academic Controversy (SAC)

Team A presents to Team B, and Team B repeats arguments back to Team A, until Team A is satisfied. (~15 minutes)

Team B presents to Team A, and Team A repeats arguments back to Team B, until Team B is satisfied. (~15 minutes)

Whole-Class Construction (~5 minutes)

Share out groups' consensus. Discuss:

Was Officer Darren Wilson justified in using force when he shot and killed Michael Brown? Why? Why not?

How did you and your team come to a consensus on who was telling "the truth?"

Why do you think your classmates came to a similar/different conclusion than the grand jurors?

Divide students into groups of four and then divide students into Team A and Team B. After dividing students into groups, draw their attentions back to the two — four techniques one can use to persuade discussed during the do-now. Encourage students to use these techniques as they craft their arguments.

Circulates and push students' thinking as they complete the graphic organizer.