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# Tiered Assignments

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# Tiered Assignments Overview

One way to ensure that all students in a classroom, regardless of ability levels, advance using the same skills and ideas is to tier lessons. Often referred to as scaffolding, tiered assignments offer multilevel activities based on key skills at differing levels of complexity. One example of this is leveled reading texts. All students, regardless of reading ability, can learn about the Civil War by reading texts that are leveled according to the different reading abilities in the classroom. You can also take this one step further and provide comprehension questions that are leveled, too. Each student comes away with essential grade-appropriate skills in addition to being appropriately challenged. The entire class works toward one goal (learning about the Civil War), but their paths to that goal depend on their abilities.

How do you tier lessons? First, pick the skill, concept, or generalization that needs to be learned. For example, a key concept would be using reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts. Then, think of an activity that teaches this skill, concept, or generalization. For this example, you could have students summarize the information and include a main idea in the summary. Next, assess students. You may already have a good idea of your students' ability levels, but you can further assess them through classroom discussions, quizzes, tests, or journal entries. These assessments can tell you if students are above grade level, on grade level, or below grade level. After you assess your students, take another look at the activity you developed. How complex is it? Where would it fit on a continuum scale? Is it appropriate for above-grade-level learners, on-grade-level learners, below-grade-level learners, or English language learners? Once this is answered, modify the activity to meet the needs of the other learners in the class. At this point, you should try to get help from the specialists in your school for English language learners, special education students, and gifted learners. For this example, summarizing with a main idea would be on grade level. For above grade level, students should include supporting details in their summaries. The below-grade-level students will have a few examples already filled out for their summaries. English language learners will begin with the examples given to below-grade-level students so they understand what is expected of them. Then, they will summarize information verbally to you.

Remember, just because students are above grade level does not mean they should be given more work. And, just because students are below grade level does not mean they should be given less work. Tiered lessons are differentiated because of complexity, not necessarily the quantity of work required for that lesson. Likewise, all tiered activities should be interesting and appealing.

# Tiered Assignments Overview *(cont.)*

## Steps for Using Tiered Assignments to Differentiate

1. Pick the grade level objective you will be covering.
2. Decide upon the specific skills, concepts, or generalizations that need to be learned.
3. Plan an activity that teaches the skills, concepts, or generalizations. The base activity should be on grade level. Also, it should be an activity that is best completed in small groups.
4. Take a close look at the planned activity. How complex is it? In what ways can the activity be simplified or made less complex? In what ways can aspects of the activity be increased in complexity?
5. Create the tiered (or scaffolded) assignments.
  - ▶ **English Language Learners**—Rewrite the activity to better meet the needs of English language learners. The first step is to add context to the activity. English language learners will learn and remember content much better if it means something personal to them. It is a good idea to focus on learning necessary vocabulary.
  - ▶ **Below Grade Level**—It is best to break apart these lessons and present them in small parts to these students. They need strong teacher guidance as well as visuals to understand the lesson’s objectives.
  - ▶ **Above Grade Level**—Look for ways to make this complex and challenging by adding open-ended, creativity-centered, or research-based activities. These students should be using higher-order thinking skills in both questioning and activities.
6. Assess students using classroom discussions, quizzes, tests, or journal entries. Use this as a pre-assessment to place students into ability groups for this objective.
7. Distribute the assignment sheets to the appropriate students and proceed with the lessons.

# Shaping Modern Governments

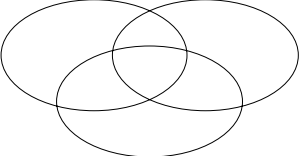
Student Readabilities Tiered Assignments

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Comparison Activity

**Directions:** You have done research on the development of modern governments for four nations. Your task now is to compare three of these countries.

- Choose three nations and label the circles on the Venn diagram below.
- Describe the similarities and differences by filling in the Venn diagram with at least two notes in each section.



- Create a list of possible reasons why there are inherent differences between the countries.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- On another sheet of paper, write a response to this prompt: *Assess to what extent political ideology, religion, and ethnicity play a factor in the development of a nation's modern government in three of the following countries: Iran, Mexico, China, and Zimbabwe.*

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## Skills Summary

### Social Studies Content

Governments around the world

### Literacy Skill

Research

### Differentiation Strategy

Tiered assignments  
(See pages 30–31 for more information.)

## Differentiation Management Tip

In some cases, it may help to have three students work together. This is especially useful for English language learners who know the content but have trouble expressing themselves on paper.

## Overview of Activity

- ▶ Students will look at the development of the governments of newly created nation states of the twentieth century.
- ▶ The prompt presented to the class is: *Assess the extent to which each of the following factors played an important role in the development of a nation's modern government: political ideology, religion, and ethnicity.*
- ▶ Students will use multiple sources, including their textbooks and various outside sources, to research the factors associated with nation building.
- ▶ This lesson will use the nations of Iran, China, Mexico, and Zimbabwe as examples. Other nations can be used as well; this depends on the resources the teacher has available.

## How This Strategy Benefits Students

- ▶ Students who are **above grade level** benefit from tiered assignments because the assignments are more complex and challenging, which enhances motivation for learning.
- ▶ When working on assignments created with appropriate complexity, **on-grade-level** students can work on assignments that are neither too hard nor too easy.
- ▶ Tiered assignments help **below-grade-level** students to find success at their own levels of readiness.
- ▶ **English language learners** fall into all three tiers of this lesson. This allows teachers to focus on the language needs of students.

## Learning Standards

- ▶ Students will understand political shifts in Europe and Asia following World War II and the impact of independence movements in various countries and whether they were successful.
- ▶ Students will use research skills to find information about given topics then create products to show this research.

# Shaping Modern Governments *(cont.)*



## Preparation

1. Copy *Nation Research Sheets* (pages 62–64; page062.pdf) so that each student has the correct level.
2. Copy the leveled *Comparison Activities* (pages 65–67; page065.pdf) so that each student has the correct level.
3. Copy *Factors of Modern Governments Rubric* (page 68; page068.pdf) for each student.

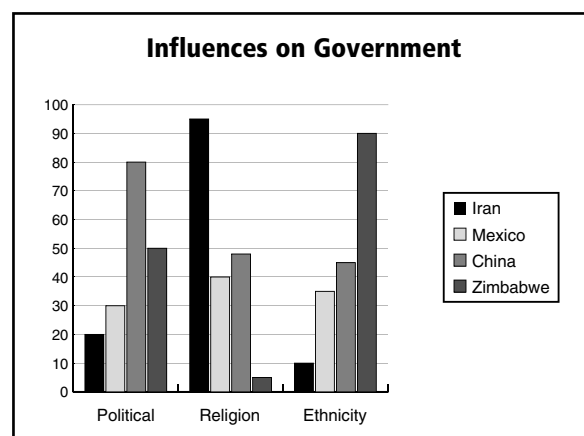
## Whole-Class Activity

1. Begin by asking students the following question: *If you were one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, what factors would be most important to you in creating an identity for your nation?*
2. Have them brainstorm different ideas either in small groups or as an entire class.
3. Have students share the factors they came up with as a whole class. Work together to narrow the choices down to three and ultimately selecting one choice as the most important factor.
4. Introduce the skill of constructing an argument and have students write a statement that takes a stand on why they feel this factor is the most important. Write the statement together to model the steps in constructing and defending the argument. This step is very beneficial for below-grade-level students and English language learners as it helps them see the steps in the process. Leave your example statement on the board for students to refer to during the lesson.
5. Transition this discussion to focus on three factors associated with forming governments: *political ideology, religion, and ethnicity*. Ask students to describe what extent these factors play in the creation of a modern government.
6. Discuss how many countries had to create their own governments in the twentieth century. Each of these nations was affected by various factors. This is similar to the situation the American colonies found themselves in during the 1770s. This lesson will explore the role that political ideology, religion, and ethnicity played in setting up governments.
7. Many nations could be used for this exercise, so you should choose four that you are comfortable with and that demonstrate a varied approach to politics. In this lesson plan, Iran, Mexico, China, and Zimbabwe are used.
  - ▶ Iran is a country with a high level of religious influence.
  - ▶ Mexico is a country that has multiple influences.
  - ▶ China is a country with political ideology influence.
  - ▶ Zimbabwe is a country with influences based on ethnicity.

# Shaping Modern Governments *(cont.)*

## Whole-Class Activity *(cont.)*

8. Place students in homogeneous pairs. Students will research the nations in regard to their independence movements of the twentieth century. Distribute the *Nation Research Sheets* (pages 62–64) and guide students in researching the various nations. Above-grade-level students should receive the triangle sheet. The square sheet is for on-grade-level students. The below-grade-level students and English language learners should receive the circle/star sheet.
9. After the *Nation Research Sheets* have been completed either for homework or in class, place students into heterogeneous groups. Each group should have a triangle student, a square student, and two circle students. The groups will work with one nation at a time and debate to what extent each factor played a role. The group should come up with a consensus and give each factor a score out of 100. For example, Iran's level of religious factor could be at 85 out of 100. Each group should discuss at least two of the nations.
10. Each group will then create a graph and chart this data. This graph will give students a visual guide from which they can compare at a glance the different role these factors played. By seeing the data this way, students will notice similarities and differences between the different causes. To the right is an example of what a possible chart might look like.
11. The final aspect of this tiered lesson is to take the information students gathered previously and use it to formulate answers to the writing prompt.
12. Distribute the *Comparison Activities* reproducibles (pages 65–67) to students, based on their learning levels. Each of these activities walks students through the steps of identifying the regions, focusing knowledge on identifying comparisons, and using this information to create a thesis statement.



## Assessment

Use the *Factors of Modern Governments Rubric* (page 68) to evaluate student work on the partner activity and the written assignment.

## Anchor Activity

- ▶ Place images for each of these regions in the room and have students describe what they see in the images and how the images show events that lead to change. Suggested images are:
  - The Iranian revolution of 1979 which shows the role Islamic fundamentalism played in bringing the Ayatollah Khomeini into power.
  - Conflicts in Zimbabwe or other African nations to demonstrate the continued role of ethnic conflict between former white settlers and Africans and also among different groups of Africans themselves (e.g., Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda).
  - The Long March in China where Mao Zedong and the Communists spread the ideology of communism to the peasants in China while they fled from the Guomindang.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Nation Research Sheet



**Directions:** Work with a partner to research these four nations and the formation of their governments. Complete the chart as thoroughly as possible.

Role of Ethnicity				
Role of Religion				
Role of Political Ideology				
Points of the Independence Movement				
People to Know				
Year of Independence				
Nation	Iran	China	Mexico	Zimbabwe



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Nation Research Sheet

**Directions:** Work with a partner to research at least three of these nations and the formation of their governments. Complete the chart as thoroughly as possible.

Role of Ethnicity				
Role of Religion				
Role of Political Ideology				
Points of the Independence Movement				
People to Know				
Year of Independence				
Nation	Iran	China	Mexico	Zimbabwe

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Nation Research Sheet



**Directions:** Work with a partner to research at least two of these nations and the formation of their governments. Complete the chart as thoroughly as possible.

Role of Ethnicity				
Role of Religion				
Role of Political Ideology				
Points of the Independence Movement				
People to Know				
Year of Independence				
Nation	Iran	China	Mexico	Zimbabwe

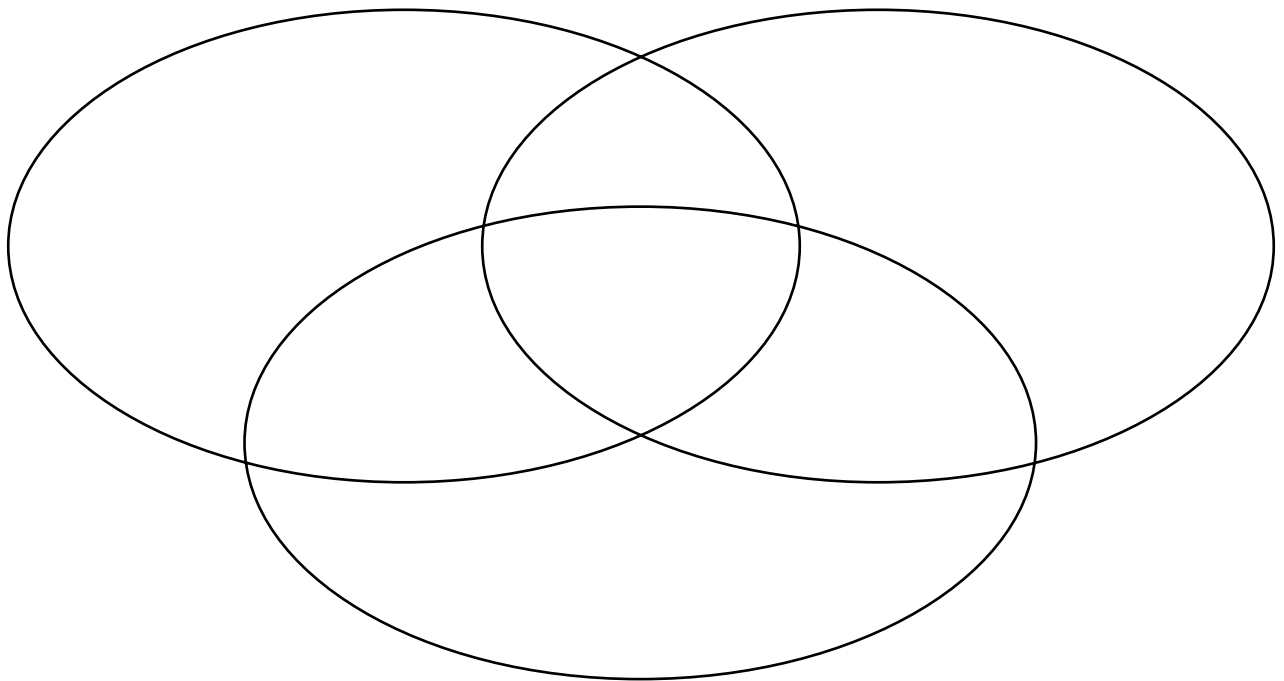
Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Comparison Activity



**Directions:** You have done research on the development of modern governments for four nations. Your task now is to compare three of these countries.

1. Choose three nations and label the circles on the Venn diagram below.
2. Describe the similarities and differences by filling in the Venn diagram with at least two notes in each section.



3. Create a list of possible reasons why there are inherent differences among the countries.

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4. On another sheet of paper, write a response to this prompt: *Assess to what extent political ideology, religion, and ethnicity play a factor in the development of a nation's modern government in **three** of the following countries: Iran, Mexico, China, and Zimbabwe.*

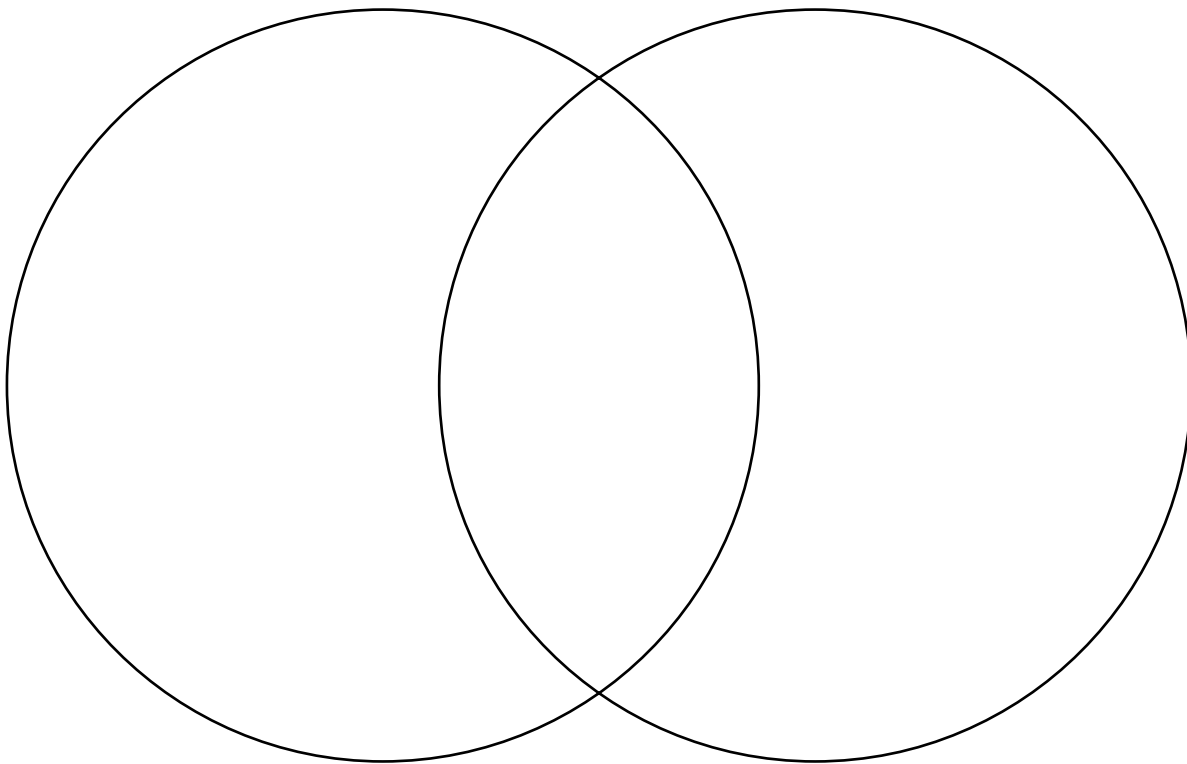
Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Comparison Activity



**Directions:** You have done research on the development of modern governments for at least three nations. Your task now is to compare two countries.

1. Choose two nations and label the circles on the Venn diagram below.
2. Describe the similarities and differences by filling in the Venn diagram with at least three notes in each section.



3. List at least two possible reasons why there are inherent differences between countries.

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4. On another sheet of paper, write a response to this prompt: *Assess to what extent political ideology, religion, and ethnicity play a factor in the development of a nation's modern government in **two** of the following countries: Iran, Mexico, China, and Zimbabwe.*

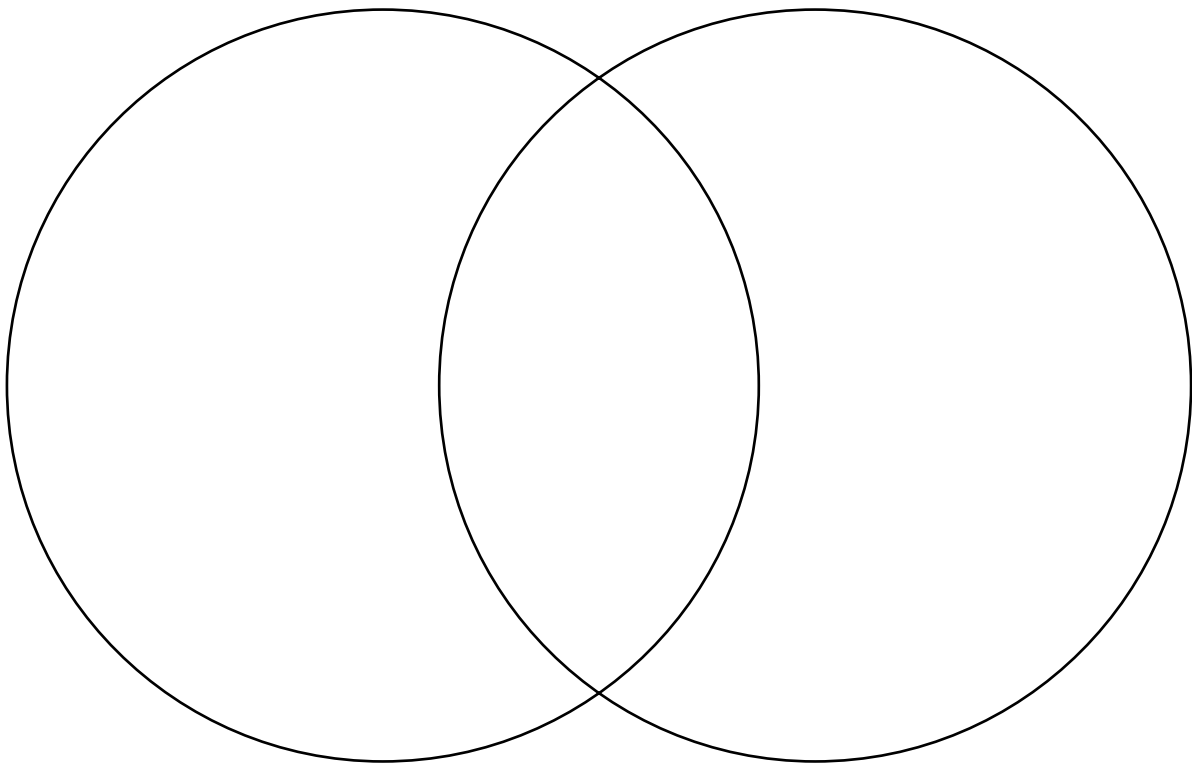
Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Comparison Activity



**Directions:** You have done research on the development of modern governments for at least two nations. Your task now is to compare these two countries.

1. Choose two nations and label the circles on the Venn diagram below.
2. Describe the similarities and differences by filling in the Venn diagram with at least three notes in each section.



3. List at least two possible reasons why there are inherent differences between countries.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Fill in the blanks to complete this statement: There were several factors that brought about the development of modern governments in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ during the twentieth century. These factors include \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. The most influential factor was \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Factors of Modern Governments Rubric

**Directions:** Mark each section as appropriate for each student. Then, total the points (1–4) for each section and give students a total out of 16 points.

	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each assigned nation is thoroughly examined and researched.</li> <li>The details of the government are divided into separate parts.</li> <li>The causes, effects, and motives that caused changes in the nation are revealed in depth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each assigned nation is examined and researched.</li> <li>Most of the details of the government are divided into separate parts.</li> <li>The causes, effects, and motives that caused changes in the nation are revealed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most of the assigned nations are examined and researched.</li> <li>Some of the details of the government are divided into separate parts.</li> <li>The causes, effects, and motives that caused changes in the nation are not fully revealed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Few of the assigned nations are examined and researched.</li> <li>Few, if any, of the details of the government are divided into separate parts.</li> <li>The causes, effects, and motives that caused changes in the nation are not revealed.</li> </ul>
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is expansive information about each of the assigned nations.</li> <li>A strong, clear focus is stated and understood.</li> <li>An extensive amount of research is documented throughout.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is information about each of the assigned nations.</li> <li>A clear focus is stated and understood.</li> <li>Research is documented throughout.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is little information about the assigned nations.</li> <li>A focus is not clearly stated or understood.</li> <li>Research is not documented throughout.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no information about the assigned nations.</li> <li>No focus is stated or understood.</li> <li>Research is not documented.</li> </ul>
Cooperation and Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students worked well together.</li> <li>Both partners contributed a variety of information.</li> <li>There is active participation displayed through clear leadership and staying focused.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students worked well together at times.</li> <li>Both partners tried to contribute a variety of information.</li> <li>There is some active participation displayed through leadership and staying focused.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students did not always work well together.</li> <li>At times, partners tried to contribute information.</li> <li>There is little active participation displayed through leadership and staying focused.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students did not work well together.</li> <li>Partners did not try to contribute information.</li> <li>There is no active participation displayed through leadership and staying focused.</li> </ul>
Persuasive Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The written response is outstanding and highly effective.</li> <li>The reader easily grasps and understands the argument or point of view of the fully developed response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The written response is well written and effective.</li> <li>The reader understands the argument or point of view of the response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The written response is not very well written or effective.</li> <li>The reader has trouble understanding the argument or point of view of the response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The written response seems to lack a thesis.</li> <li>The reader is unable to follow the argument or point of view since the thesis was not developed.</li> </ul>