

CERCA SET **Railway Infrastructure**
English Language Arts

What factors should the U.S. government take into account when making decisions about investing in rail infrastructure?

LESSON TITLE **"Poor Funding, Leaders Are Destroying Amtrak" and "America Should Invest..."**

CERCA QUESTION Which columnist is more convincing in his presentation of Amtrak's poor service and the reasons behind it?

RESOURCES

- **Build Background Knowledge**
<https://www.pinterest.com/thinkcerca/railway-infrastructure-cerca-set-board/>
- **CERCA Framework**
- **Vocabulary Routine**
- **Speaking and Listening Routines**

Whole group	Online
Small group	Offline
Individual activity	Activity time period
Speaking and listening activity	Audio
Available in English and Spanish	

Introduce the CERCA Question



Define *columnist*, and explain they will be reading two articles by two columnists on the same topic. Explain what Amtrak is and some of the persistent problems it has had. Ask students to brainstorm qualities of a convincing argument (clear claim, strong evidence and reasoning).

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

► **ASK:** What is Amtrak, and what types of problems has it had?

Support language acquisition with the following sentence frame:

Amtrak is _____. Throughout its history there have been issues like _____ and _____.

1 Connect



Have students log in to ThinkCERCA and click into this lesson.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

Read the overview aloud and discuss vocabulary. Then read the writing prompt aloud for students before they answer.

Complete Step 1: Connect.

Introduce Vocabulary



Use **Semantic Webbing** to introduce vocabulary.

► **NOTE:** Some students will need support for additional words not listed on the student support page. Weave them into the instruction.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

Assign vocabulary words to small groups, or to partners. For small groups, assign a word and have them map it out on the whiteboard. Depending on student familiarity with the vocabulary words you can create webs for all new words, or just the most challenging words. When they are finished they can take a minute to explain it while classmates copy the map down. For partner work, have mixed ability pairs create maps for all assigned words in their notebooks.

After the routine have students add the focus words to their word notebooks.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

Have students brainstorm qualities of a convincing argument. What are some elements they use to convince others? What are some elements others have used to convince them?

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

Complete Step 1: Connect.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

Have students work in pairs to write their own definition of the word in English. Next, have them brainstorm an image or mental picture to illustrate each word.

After the routine have students add the focus words to their word notebooks.


Introduce the Summary

En | Sp




Remind students that this is a summary for the passage they will read. Point out the Vocabulary as you read.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

 Have students read the Spanish version on the student support page, if applicable, before you read the summary aloud and have students follow along.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging


 Ask a student to read aloud the summary in English to practice their fluency.


2 Read




Have students read the text, using Vocabulary from the student support page as appropriate.


LEVEL 3-4 Expanding


 Read comprehension questions with students before they begin reading the passage.

 Complete Step 2: Read.

 Discuss comprehension questions. Point out key vocabulary words in the text, especially as they are relevant to finding answers.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

 Complete Step 2: Read.

 Discuss comprehension questions. Point out key vocabulary words in the text, especially as they are relevant to finding answers.


3 Engage with the Text




NOTE: If you have concerns that your students are struggling with comprehension, you may wish to work with them on Step 4: Summarize before Step 3: Engage with the Text.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

 Model highlighting the text for students.


 Complete Step 3: Engage with the Text.


 Use the following sentence frames to discuss the highlights students made.

In the [first/second] article one piece of evidence offered that supports the claim that the government is responsible for fixing rail infrastructure is _____.

In the [first/second] article one piece of evidence offered that supports the claim that the Amtrak's leadership is responsible for fixing rail infrastructure is _____.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

 Complete Step 3: Engage with the Text.

 Discuss the highlighting students did. Ask students to share their highlights and notes, and use the following sentence stems to support student engagement in the conversation.

"_____ " is a quote from the [first/second] article that supports the claim that responsibility for fixing rail infrastructure lies with the U.S. government.


The claim that Amtrak's leadership is responsible for fixing rail infrastructure is supported the following quote from article [one/two] " _____."

4 Summarize



Prepare students to write a CERCA by having them summarize the text.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding


 Complete a summary of the article together using either the suggested sentence frames below or the stems in the product. Encourage students to use Vocabulary from the lesson.

Use the following sentence frames to create a summary.

These two stories offer differing perspectives about _____.


In the first article, one of the author's biggest grievances is _____.

The second article takes a more optimistic approach, and describes numerous improvements to Amtrak service, including _____ and _____.

 Complete Step 4: Summarize.


LEVEL 4-5 Bridging


 Complete Step 4: Summarize.

 Review the summaries to ensure that all students understand the big ideas of the passage. Encourage students to use Vocabulary from the lesson.

5 Build Your Argument



 Practice creating a CERCA together using the CERCA graphic organizer (online or offline) and the leveled frames below and on the student support pages. Remind students that some of their evidence can come from their highlighting work.

 **NOTE:** You may wish to have students orally respond to the CERCA question using a Listening and Speaking Routine instead of writing a response.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

Use the following sentence frames to complete the CERCA graphic organizer.

Claim _____ is more convincing in his presentation of Amtrak's poor service and the reasons behind it

Reason because _____.

Evidence In one of his strongest examples _____ notes that _____.

Reasoning This indicates that _____.

Counterargument While _____ makes a fair point about who is responsible for Amtrak's woes and rail infrastructure, _____ is more ultimately more convincing.

Complete Step 5: Build Your Argument.



LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

Have students share their thoughts with the group.

Use the following sentence frames to complete the CERCA graphic organizer.

Claim _____ is more convincing in his presentation of Amtrak's poor service and the reasons behind it

Reason because _____.

Evidence In one of his strongest examples _____ notes that _____.


Reasoning This indicates that _____.

Counterargument Although _____ makes a fair point about who is responsible for Amtrak's woes and rail infrastructure, _____ is more convincing because _____.

Evidence Elsewhere in the article he says _____,

Reasoning which is important because _____.

Have students complete the graphic organizer with at least one more piece of evidence and associated reasoning. Assist as needed.

 Complete Step 5: Build Your Argument.


6 Create Your CERCA




Have students write their CERCA in the lesson online so that you can provide feedback and monitor growth.


▶ **NOTE:** Remind students that they can use the Copy all button to move their work into the text box.


LEVEL 3-4 Expanding


 Use the responses students made in the graphic organizer to model writing in response to the CERCA question.

 Have students reread their draft. Then have them submit to complete Step 6: Write Your CERCA.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

 Have students write their CERCA. Provide support as necessary. Remind students that they can use vocabulary words as they write.

 Use this sentence frame to help students conclude their CERCA:
After weighting the two arguments regarding Amtrak's numerous problems and who is responsible for railway infrastructure, it is fair to say that _____ makes a more convincing argument because _____.

 Have students add a conclusion and then reread their draft. Then have them submit to complete Step 6: Write Your CERCA.

Complete Speaking and Listening Activities



Complete a whole group speaking and listening activity with all students who completed the grade level lesson. Prompt students to use the vocabulary from the passage in the activity.

LEVEL 3-4 Expanding

Do the **Think-Pair-Share** activity.

LEVEL 4-5 Bridging

Do the **Think-Pair-Share** activity.

Modify this activity by having students start with simple partner talk and then expand to small group discussion (4-6 students).

LESSON “Poor Funding, Leaders Are Destroying Amtrak” and “America Should Invest...”

CERCA QUESTION Which columnist is more convincing in his presentation of Amtrak’s poor service and the reasons behind it?

Vocabulary

administration (noun): a group of people who manage an organization

affiliates (noun): smaller, local parts of a large network

appropriations (noun): money set aside for a specific purpose

bedeviled (adj.): troubled repeatedly

benefits (noun): health insurance and vacation time that an employee receives as part of the conditions of his or her employment

bypass (verb): go around a blockage

commissioner (noun): a government official

congestion (noun): blockage; jam

coupling (verb): bringing together

diesel (noun): a type of fuel

disclaimers (noun): statements to prevent a misunderstanding or to deny responsibility for something

disintegration (noun): the process of breaking apart into pieces

Vocabulary continued

dreary (adj.): discouraging; sad

filth (noun): dirtiness

fiscal (adj.): financial; relating to money

Good Friday (proper noun): the Friday before Easter Sunday, on which Christians commemorate the Crucifixion of Christ, traditionally a day of fasting and penance

GOP (proper noun): Grand Old Party; a nickname for the Republican Party

*infrastructure (noun): the parts of a system such as roads and bridges that are needed for a country to function properly

*investment (noun): money given to a company in order to improve or grow the company

leg (noun): one part of a longer journey

lobbyists (noun): people employed by an organization who attempt to convince politicians to vote in a way that benefits that organization

majority (noun): more than half; in this case, the author means the House of Representatives had more Republicans than Democrats

military industrial complex (noun): cooperation between the military and private industries

*modernize (verb): use the newest methods or technology

personnel (noun): the people who work for an organization

Vocabulary continued

procured (verb): got

revenue (noun): money earned from selling something

rhetoric (noun): a way of writing to influence readers' opinions

shunted (verb): pushed to the side

sidings (noun): short sections of a train track where trains are kept when they aren't being used

slipshod (adj.): careless

socialistic (adj.): relating to a community in which industries are owned by the government

spokesperson (noun): a representative

*subsidies (noun): money given by the government to in order to help the public

Tea Party (proper noun): a conservative part of the Republican party

track-bed (noun): the ground on which train tracks are set

unionized (adj.): organized into a group that can demand better working conditions together

Whip (proper noun): a government representative who ensures that members of his or her political party vote on important issues

LESSON “Poor Funding, Leaders Are Destroying Amtrak” and “America Should Invest...”

CERCA QUESTION Which columnist is more convincing in his presentation of Amtrak’s poor service and the reasons behind it?

Summary

Both articles discuss problems related to Amtrak’s service, but each offers differing explanations for why that is.

One point of view:

According to journalist Douglas Turner, Amtrak is the United States’s ailing public rail transportation system. The tickets are often more expensive than flying, and it seems like a waste of money when one considers the common delays and poor service by unionized crew members. Whether it be because of inadequate leadership whom are overpaid and underperforming, aging infrastructure, or limited government subsidies, Amtrak has a long way to go if it hopes to modernize and correct the many problems with its service. While their ridership continues to grow, service hasn’t improved enough in recent years.

A second point of view:

In response to Douglas Turner’s article, Amtrak’s VP of Corporate Communications, Rob Gibbons makes a plea to consider the improvements Amtrak has made in recent years, particularly in light of the challenges it has faced. Gibbons is initially apologetic for Turner’s poor experience, but he goes on to note that while Amtrak’s ridership has steadily increased the amount government subsidies they receive is low. The GOP find Amtrak to be too socialistic, and lobbyists have stirred funds towards airlines and highways; therefore, Congress does not appropriate much money for the rails, only \$0.07 for every dollar spent by the transportation company is from the government. Thankfully, they’ve had record revenue and been able to introduce advancements such as wifi and e-ticket technology, but Gibbons says it is not enough and strongly encouraged the government to make further investments in their future.

“Poor funding, leaders are destroying Amtrak” and “America should invest more in rail infrastructure”

Which columnist is more convincing in his presentation of Amtrak's poor service and the reasons behind it?

¿Cuál de los columnistas es más convincente en su representación sobre el mal servicio de Amtrak y los motivos de ello?

Vocabulary

English

administration

(noun): a group of people who manage an organization

affiliates

(noun): smaller, local parts of a large network

appropriations

(noun): money set aside for a specific purpose

bedeviled

(adj.): troubled repeatedly

benefits

(noun): health insurance and vacation time that an employee receives as part of the conditions of his or her employment

bypass

(verb): go around a blockage

commissioner

(noun): a government official

congestion

(noun): blockage; jam

Español

administración

(sustantivo): un grupo de personas que dirige una organización

afiliado

(sustantivo): pequeñas partes locales de una red grande

dotación

(sustantivo): dinero reservado para un propósito específico

acosado

(adjetivo): molestado en repetidas ocasiones

beneficios

(sustantivo): seguro de enfermedad y tiempo de vacaciones que un empleado recibe como parte de las condiciones de su empleo

evitar

(verbo): rodear una obstrucción

comisionado

(sustantivo): un funcionario del gobierno

congestión

(sustantivo): bloqueo; tráfico

Vocabulary continued

coupling

(verb): bringing together

acoplar

(verbo): reunir

diesel

(noun): a type of fuel

diésel

(sustantivo): un tipo de combustible

disclaimers

(noun): statements to prevent a misunderstanding or to deny responsibility for something

descargo de responsabilidad

(sustantivo): declaraciones para evitar un malentendido o negar la responsabilidad de algo

disintegration

(noun): the process of breaking apart into pieces

desintegración

(sustantivo): el proceso de deshacer algo en partes

dreary

(adj.): discouraging; sad

lúgubre

(adjetivo): desalentador; triste

filth

(noun): dirtiness

inmundicia

(sustantivo): suciedad

fiscal

(adj.): financial; relating to money

fiscal

(adjetivo): financiero; en relación al dinero

Good Friday

(proper noun): the Friday before Easter Sunday, on which Christians commemorate the Crucifixion of Christ, traditionally a day of fasting and penance

Viernes Santo

(sustantivo propio): el viernes antes del Domingo de Pascua, en el que los cristianos conmemoran la crucifixión de Cristo, tradicionalmente un día de ayuno y penitencia

GOP

(proper noun): Grand Old Party; a nickname for the Republican Party

GOP

(nombre propio): Grand Old Party; un apodo para el Partido Republicano

***infrastructure**

(noun): the parts of a system such as roads and bridges that are needed for a country to function properly

***infraestructura**

(sustantivo): las partes de un sistema tal como las carreteras y puentes que son necesarias para que un país funcione correctamente

Vocabulary continued

*investment (noun): money given to a company in order to improve or grow the company	*inversión (sustantivo): el dinero entregado a una empresa con el fin de mejorar o hacer crecer la empresa
leg (noun): one part of a longer journey	tramo (sustantivo): una parte de un viaje más largo
lobbyists (noun): people employed by an organization who attempt to convince politicians to vote in a way that benefits that organization	cabilderos (sustantivo): personas empleadas por una organización que tratan de convencer a los políticos de votar de una manera que beneficie a esa organización
majority (noun): more than half; in this case, the author means the House of Representatives had more Republicans than Democrats	mayoría (sustantivo): más de la mitad; en este caso, el autor quiere decir la Cámara de Representantes tuvo más republicanos que demócratas
military industrial complex (noun): cooperation between the military and private industries	complejo industrial militar (sustantivo): la cooperación entre los sectores privados y militares
*modernize (verb): use the newest methods or technology	*modernizar (verbo): utilizar métodos o tecnologías más recientes
personnel (noun): the people who work for an organization	personal (sustantivo): las personas que trabajan para una organización
procured (verb): got	procurar (verbo): obtener
revenue (noun): money earned from selling something	ingresos (sustantivo): dinero obtenido de la venta de algo
rhetoric (noun): a way of writing to influence readers' opinions	retórica (sustantivo): una forma de escritura que tiene la finalidad de influir en las opiniones de los lectores

Vocabulary continued

shunted (verb): pushed to the side	apartar (verbo): hacer a un lado
sidings (noun): short sections of a train track where trains are kept when they aren't being used	vías muertas (sustantivo): secciones cortas de una vía de tren donde se guardan los trenes cuando no están siendo utilizados
slipshod (adj.): careless	descuidado (adjetivo): negligente
socialistic (adj.): relating to a community in which industries are owned by the government	socialista (adjetivo): relacionado con una comunidad en la que las industrias son propiedad del gobierno
spokesperson (noun): a representative	portavoz (sustantivo): un representante
*subsidies (noun): money given by the government to in order to help the public	*subvenciones (sustantivo): dinero entregado por el gobierno con la finalidad de ayudar a la gente
Tea Party (proper noun): a conservative part of the Republican party	Tea Party (sustantivo propio): una parte conservadora del partido republicano
track-bed (noun): the ground on which train tracks are set	vía (sustantivo): el suelo sobre el cual se colocan las vías del tren
unionized (adj.): organized into a group that can demand better working conditions together	sindicalizado (adjetivo): organizado en un grupo que puede exigir mejores condiciones de trabajo en conjunto
Whip (proper noun): a government representative who ensures that members of his or her political party vote on important issues	Whip (sustantivo propio): un representante del gobierno que garantiza que los miembros de su partido político voten sobre asuntos importantes

“Poor funding, leaders are destroying Amtrak” and “America should invest more in rail infrastructure”

Which columnist is more convincing in his presentation of Amtrak's poor service and the reasons behind it?

¿Cuál de los columnistas es más convincente en su representación sobre el mal servicio de Amtrak y los motivos de ello?

Summary

English Both articles discuss problems related to Amtrak's service, but each offers differing explanations for why that is.

One point of view:

According to journalist Douglas Turner, Amtrak is the United States's ailing public rail transportation system. The tickets are often more expensive than flying, and it seems like a waste of money when one considers the common delays and poor service by **unionized** crew members. Whether it be because of inadequate leadership whom are overpaid and underperforming, aging **infrastructure**, or limited government **subsidies**, Amtrak has a long way to go if it hopes to **modernize** and correct the many problems with its service. While their ridership continues to grow, service hasn't improved enough in recent years.

A second point of view:

In response to Douglas Turner's article, Amtrak's VP of Corporate Communications, Rob Gibbons makes a plea to consider the improvements Amtrak has made in recent years, particularly in light of the challenges it has faced. Gibbons is initially apologetic for Turner's poor experience, but he goes on to note that while Amtrak's ridership has steadily increased the amount government **subsidies** they receive is low. The **GOP** find Amtrak to be too **socialistic**, and **lobbyists** have stirred funds towards airlines and highways; therefore, Congress does not **appropriate** much money for the rails, only \$0.07 for every dollar spent by the transportation company is from the government. Thankfully, they've had record **revenue** and been able to introduce advancements such as wifi and e-ticket technology, but Gibbons says it is not enough and strongly encouraged the government to make further **investments** in their future.

Español En ambos artículos se discuten los problemas relacionados con el servicio de Amtrak, pero cada uno ofrece diferentes explicaciones de por qué es así.

Un punto de vista:

Según el periodista Douglas Turner, Amtrak es el sistema de transporte público ferroviario en

Summary continued

crisis de los Estados Unidos. Los boletos a menudo son más caros que los boletos aéreos y parece un desperdicio de dinero cuando se tienen en cuenta los retrasos comunes y el mal servicio por parte de los miembros de la tripulación sindicalizados. Ya sea debido a la falta de liderazgo de las personas que reciben pago en exceso y tienen un bajo rendimiento, la **infraestructura** obsoleta, o los **subsidios** gubernamentales limitados, Amtrak tiene un largo camino por recorrer si pretende **modernizar** y corregir los muchos problemas con su servicio. Si bien su número de usuarios sigue creciendo, el servicio no ha mejorado lo suficiente en los últimos años.

Un segundo punto de vista:

En respuesta al artículo de Douglas Turner, el vicepresidente de comunicaciones corporativas de Amtrak, Rob Gibbons hace un llamado a considerar las mejoras que Amtrak ha hecho en los últimos años, particularmente a la luz de los desafíos que ha enfrentado. Gibbons inicialmente se disculpa por la experiencia negativa de Turner, pero él continúa señalando que, si bien la cantidad de pasajeros de Amtrak ha aumentado constantemente los **subsidios** gubernamentales que reciben son bajos. El **GOP** considera que Amtrak es demasiado **socialista** y los **cabilderos** han llevado los fondos a las líneas aéreas y carreteras. Por lo tanto, el Congreso no **otorga** mucho dinero al tren, solamente \$0.07 por cada dólar gastado por la empresa de transporte viene del gobierno. Afortunadamente, han tenido un récord de **ingresos** y han sido capaces de introducir avances como la tecnología Wi-Fi y el boleto electrónico, pero Gibbons dice que no es suficiente y alienta encarecidamente al Gobierno a incrementar las **inversiones** en su futuro.

LESSON “Poor Funding, Leaders Are Destroying Amtrak” and “America Should Invest...”

CERCA QUESTION Which columnist is more convincing in his presentation of Amtrak’s poor service and the reasons behind it?

4 Summarize

These two stories offer differing perspectives about

_____.

In the first article, one of the author’s biggest grievances is

_____.

The second article takes a more optimistic approach, and describes numerous improvements to Amtrak service, including

_____ and _____.

5 Build Your Argument

Claim _____ *is more convincing in his presentation of Amtrak’s poor service and the reasons behind it*

Reason *because* _____.

Evidence *In one of his strongest examples* _____ *notes that* _____.

Reasoning *This indicates that* _____.

Counterargument *While* _____ *makes a fair point about who is responsible for Amtrak’s woes and rail infrastructure,* _____ *is more ultimately more convincing.*

LESSON “Poor Funding, Leaders Are Destroying Amtrak” and “America Should Invest...”

CERCA QUESTION Which columnist is more convincing in his presentation of Amtrak's poor service and the reasons behind it?

5 Build Your Argument

Claim _____ *is more convincing in his presentation of Amtrak's poor service and the reasons behind it*

Reason *because* _____.

Evidence *In one of his strongest examples* _____ *notes that* _____.

Reasoning *This indicates that* _____.

Counterargument *Although* _____ *makes a fair point about who is responsible for Amtrak's woes and rail infrastructure,* _____ *is more convincing because* _____.

Evidence *Elsewhere in the article he says* _____,

Reasoning *which is important because* _____.

6 Create Your CERCA

After weighting the two arguments regarding Amtrak's numerous problems and who is responsible for railway infrastructure, it is fair to say that _____ *makes a more convincing argument because* _____.