

Essential Question: How do wheat farms benefit from dams on the Lower Snake River in Washington? Would Rep. Simpson’s proposal to improve salmon habitat by removing those dams outweigh the benefits?

Background



Figure 1: Ice Harbor Dam on the Snake River near Burbank, WA from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. *Ice Harbor Lock and Dam*, nwd.usace.army.mil/Media/Images/igphoto/2000790239/



Figure 2: A barge is loaded with wheat grain from Tri-City Herald, tri-cityherald.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/article217658985.html

Vocabulary

**hydropower:** energy from moving water is used to generate electricity without carbon emissions.

**carbon emissions:** the release of carbon (a greenhouse gas) into the atmosphere; in this case, by burning fossil fuels for electricity generation.

**irrigation:** water from a river or other source used to grow crops.

**opinion:** a specific type of article where the author presents a claim with evidence about a topic.

**breaching:** removing the structures of a dam that hold the water back in a reservoir.

**bias:** a preference towards one idea or claim. Unbalanced or misleading evidence.

Dams are structures built across a river to hold back water and create a reservoir. The reservoir, or pool of water behind the dam, is used to generate electricity through **hydropower**, and, in the case of the Ice Harbor Dam (fig. 1), provide water for **irrigation**.

Dams also allow barges to be able to move through the river system. Barges (fig. 2) are large ships used to move goods like wheat, soy, and corn to market.

Since they interrupt the natural river system, dams affect the environment both at the point of the dam and reservoir as well as up- and downstream. In particular, dams disrupt the migration of salmon who swim upstream to reproduce.

In the following **opinion** article you will read an argument about improving salmon habitat by **breaching**, or removing, dams on the lower Snake River. An opinion is a type of news article that argues for one claim and includes the author’s own ideas and analysis about the claim. Opinion pieces are great sources for specific claims and evidence but be wary of **bias** from the author. Take extra care to critique your source: examine what evidence is provided and see how convincingly it supports the author’s claim and how it compares to your background knowledge.

Read your article at least two times. Follow the instructions below for each time you read.

1. MARK THE TEXT

Underline claims the author makes. A claim is the idea (or ideas) the author will show you or try to convince you of.

2. CONNECT AND RESPOND

Use these symbols to mark sentences or paragraphs in the article. Explain your connections or responses in the **margin**. Include at least two of the following:

→ Something you have a connection to (Do you know something else about the point the author is making? Did you learn this information in another place?)

† Something you agree with

× Something you disagree with or have a counterclaim for

Circle the vocabulary words listed in the box above if you find them in the text.

Essential Question: How do wheat farms benefit from dams on the Lower Snake River in Washington? Would Rep. Simpson's proposal to improve salmon habitat by removing those dams outweigh the benefits?

**Editorial: Simpson's salmon proposal is a bold, needed step** *Idaho Press*  
February 13, 2021 by Idaho Press Editorial board

- 1 Salmon and steelhead are a precious resource in Idaho, vital to our culture and to the heritage of Northwest tribes.
- 2 For decades, preserving Idaho's dwindling salmon population has been pitted against the human interests of creating energy and transporting goods. Despite investing \$17 billion in salmon recovery over 30 years, the number of wild spring chinook salmon returning to spawn in Idaho is just a fraction of historic levels.
- 3 Clearly, our efforts aren't working well enough.
- 4 There is a delicate balance between human interests and the needs of salmon, but we should all agree it's time to start aggressively pursuing forward-thinking solutions before it's too late.
- 5 U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson this month presented a bold vision with that goal in mind. He proposes to remove four lower Snake River dams and infuse affected communities and industries with billions of dollars to help them transition.
- 6 If the proposal becomes legislation, it would be tied in with a massive federal infrastructure package coming down the pike, the Lewiston Tribune reported. Under Simpson's plan, phased dam removal would start in 2030.
- 7 There's no simple solution here. Dams that create barriers for fish also create livelihoods for people. Residents, farmers and other industries rely on the hydropower and the transportation routes that the dams provide. These communities are understandably worried by the proposed removal of their economic foundation. The four dams are all located in Washington, but their utility ripples into surrounding states including Idaho and Oregon.
- 8 Another complication is dams aren't the only obstacle salmon face on their 900-mile journey to the Pacific Ocean. Warming rivers and poor ocean conditions also diminish their chance of survival. However, many fisheries scientists see removing dams as a path to boost their survival rates.

9 Simpson didn't set out to propose removing dams. He thought there must be another way. He and his staff for three years researched the issue and held 300 meetings with stakeholders.

10 "In the end, we realized there is no viable path that can allow us to keep the dams in place," Simpson said in a video announcing his proposal. "... I am certain that if we do not take this course of action, we are condemning Idaho salmon to extinction."

11 Simpson is taking a political risk with this plan — something far too many elected officials are unwilling to do. For that, and for his sense of urgency to save Idaho salmon before it's too late, we applaud him. This is a bold step and the most comprehensive plan on the salmon issue we've seen from an elected official. We don't have time to delay.

Adapted from Idaho Press Editorial Board. "Editorial: Simpson's salmon proposal is a bold, needed step." *Idaho Press*, 13 February 2021.

[www.idahopress.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-simpsons-salmon-proposal-is-a-bold-needed-step/article\\_717133ed-6889-57d6-80fb-ce4b46f5de97.html](http://www.idahopress.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-simpsons-salmon-proposal-is-a-bold-needed-step/article_717133ed-6889-57d6-80fb-ce4b46f5de97.html)

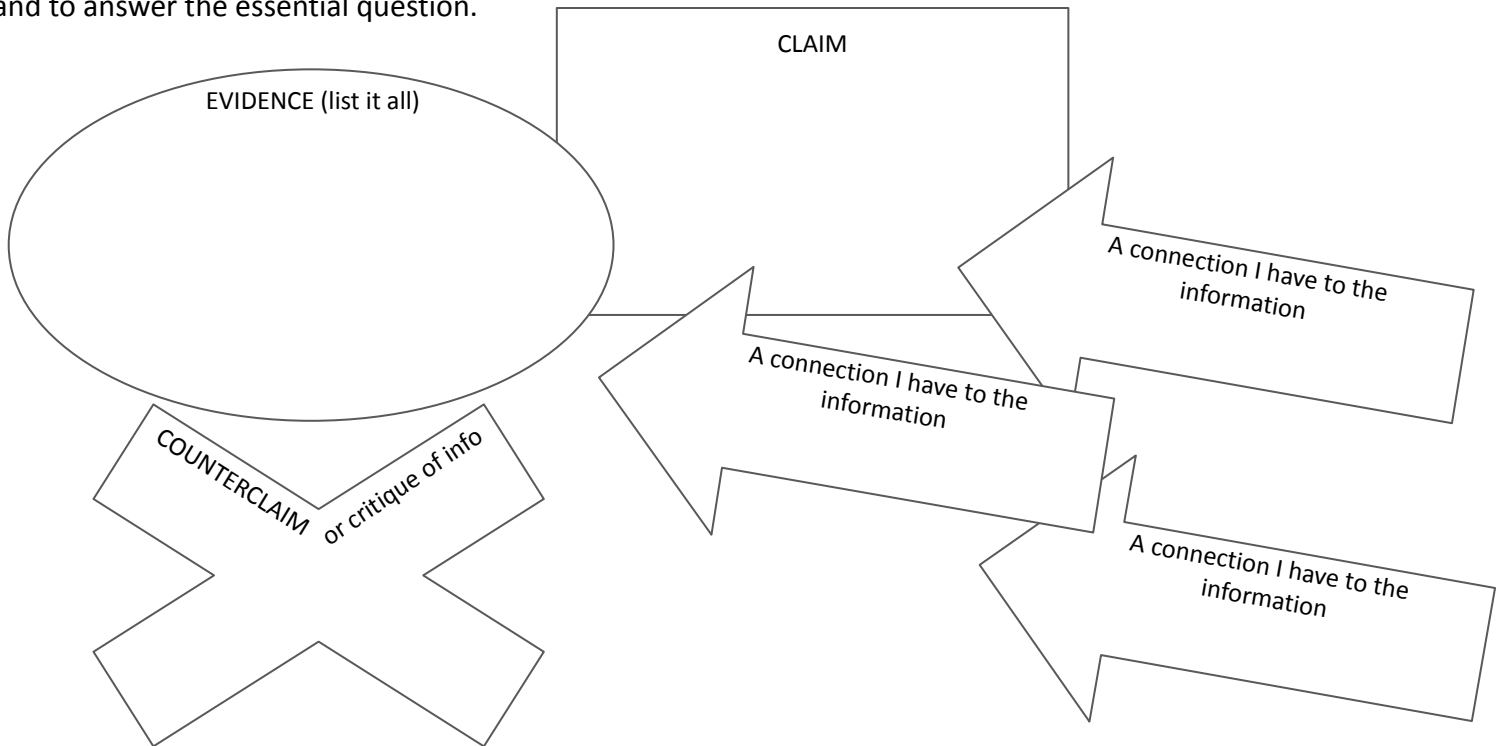
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**Summary:** Review the essential question and your annotations. Answer at least two of the following questions in the space below. What claim(s) does the author make about the essential question? Do you agree with the claims? Are they well supported by evidence from the article? What connections did you make that help you evaluate the author's claim?

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ PRD: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Discussion** Use your annotations on your article and fill in the shapes to help you prepare for the discussion and to answer the essential question.



During the discussion, use the sentence frames below to get you started.

**Near the beginning**

Give (and analyze) claims and evidence

My article says...but I think...

My article says...and I think...

**In the middle**

Evaluate information and look for connections and/or counterclaims

From what I know...because...

A counterclaim would be that...

Does anyone have more information about...

**Near the end**

Answer the essential question

When you said...I thought...

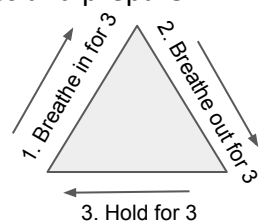
Does the group agree that...?

After listening to everyone's thoughts, I think...

**Nervous about speaking? It's normal.**

Here are some things that might help:

Breathe. Use a triangle breath to regulate your nerves and prepare yourself to speak.



Go back to your article and look for where you noted **personal connections** to the text. Speaking about something you have experience with may be easier in the group discussion.

Look at the sentence starters above. Write out what you are going to say by filling in the blanks and be on the lookout for when to add your thoughts.

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**Reflection** Think about what you read and what others said in the group discussion to answer the following questions.

1. Rate your participation during the discussion by checking the ways you participated below:

→ Shared information by stating (at least 1)

- My article's claim, quoted directly from article**
- My analysis of the claim
- Relevant connection or background information**
- Evidence, quotes directly from article

→ Responded to others ideas by (at least 1)

- Pointing out a counterclaim
- Asking for examples
- Asking for evidence
- Saying more about others' ideas**
- Prompting someone else to respond

→ Showed respect for others' ideas by (at least 1)

- Paying attention to people who are talking**
- Staying on-topic
- Re-engaging the group after a period of silence or if you go off-topic
- Monitoring time

→ Answered the essential question by (at least 2)

- Saying my ideas about the essential question**
- Using evidence to back up my ideas**
- Providing a different answer or idea
- Giving OR asking for a summary

2. What did you get out of this activity?

- |                     |                                |                                   |                                     |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| I learned           | <input type="checkbox"/> a lot | <input type="checkbox"/> a little | <input type="checkbox"/> nothing    |
| I participated      | <input type="checkbox"/> a lot | <input type="checkbox"/> a little | <input type="checkbox"/> not at all |
| My thinking changed | <input type="checkbox"/> a lot | <input type="checkbox"/> a little | <input type="checkbox"/> not at all |
| I enjoyed it        | <input type="checkbox"/> a lot | <input type="checkbox"/> a little | <input type="checkbox"/> not at all |

3. How would you answer the essential question in 2-3 sentences? Consider the claims and evidence from your article, along with connections, background information, and counterclaims and evidence brought up during the discussion. Use the graphic organizer on the previous page to help you with your writing.