How Does the Evidence Contribute to the Conversation?

A Critical Thinking Guide for Considering Evidence in Argument Writing

As you read and interact with "A Month Without Sugar," describe how the writer has used various kinds of evidence from the common types of evidence to build his argument. Also, consider the form of the evidence. Record your ideas in the "Examining the Evidence" section.

Then, make a judgment: Do you share a contract of reciprocity with this writer? Do you share the same norms and expectations? If so, why? If not, why not? Record your reactions to that kind of evidence in the "Contributing to the Conversation" section.

Examining the Evidence			Contributing to the Conversation
Evidence (copy/paste a quote or screenshot here)	**Type** Scientific Law Statistical Data Expert Opinion Opinion of Noted Individual Anecdote	**Form** Quote? Link? Image? Video? Other?	*What counts as evidence?* Why is the writer using this type of evidence in this manner? *For whom?* By using this evidence, what is the assumption that the writer makes about her/his readers? *In what context?* How might a reader disagree with or challenge the way the writer has used this evidence?
"Our national sugar habit is the driving force behind the diabetes and obesity epidemics and may be a contributing <factor> to cancer and Alzheimer's."	Expert opinion and statistical data cited in an article from the news media	The word "factor" is hyperlinked. It leads to a summary of findings from scientific studies, as cited in another reputable publication, *The Wall Street Journal*.	In this sentence, David Leonhardt summarizes the scientific research about the effects of sugar from another article in *The Wall Street Journal*, and he includes a link to that article. Without reading the other article in full, it is difficult to know whether the scientific data/studies are accurate and appropriate. As a journalist from a reputable news organization, Leonhardt wants to show that other high-quality news sources are reporting on the same topics. Because his piece is an op-ed, he must back his opinions with evidence from other sources. He might want to cite the original scientific article, not a second-hand report. Also, this article is shared behind a paywall, so readers can't even see the entire article to know what studies it cites or whether the data supports the claims the author is making.

"Yet it needs to drop a lot more — another 40 percent or so — to return to a healthy level. "Most public authorities think everybody would be healthier eating less sugar," says Marion Nestle of N.Y.U. "There is tons of evidence.""	Expert Opinion	Direct quote from a professor at New York University. Includes a link to Dr. Marion Nestle's website, Food Politics.	By invoking another expert and providing a direct link to her website, David Leonhardt reiterates the point that eating less sugar is becoming a commonly accepted conclusion amongst medical professionals. He makes the assumption that readers will find Dr. Nestle's credentials and resources to be credible, especially given that she is a professor at a major university. Again, like the link to *The Wall Street Journal*, Leonhardt is relying on another source who has summarized more complicated research and distilled the message to something quite simple: eat less sugar. Assuming that readers would not be turned off by Dr. Nestle's website and the attempt to sold the book, this, too, could be convincing evidence.
Interactive quiz: How Much Sugar Can You Avoid Today?	Scientific law illustrated with reader's own anecdotal evidence	A multimedia feature that invites readers to construct a daily diet and examine the sugar content of common food items.	In this quiz, Leonhardt and his multimedia team have developed an interactive way for users to calculate their daily sugar intake by selecting common food items for meals and snacks. The tally of daily sugar intake then accumulates through a graph that continually updates as foods are added and subtracted. Since calories are measured through precise scientific inquiry and food labels percent this data, most viewers of this article/interactive quiz would likely agree that the calculations are, indeed, accurate. It is hard to disagree with the specific numbers and accumulated calories in the graph.

SAMPLE