

Lesson Skill: Analyzing and planning persuasive writing

Strand Writing

SOL 6.7
7.7
8.7

Materials

- Copies of the attached Wes’s Letter to the Editor handout
- Copies of the attached Wes’s Letter to the Editor Graphic Organizer
- Highlighters in two colors
- Copies of a teacher-compiled list of persuasive writing topics about which students will write persuasive letters to the editor

Lesson

Note: This lesson can be expanded to emphasize reading and analysis of persuasive techniques.

1. Tell the students to imagine that the city council has decided to ban all fast food restaurants and discount stores from the area. Ask them what reasons they would give for the council to reconsider and reverse its decision. Have students work in pairs to list their ideas.
2. Have student pairs share their ideas with the class. Discuss the reasons presented, pointing out or eliciting from students which reasons are fact and which are opinion.
3. Pass out copies of the attached Wes’s Letter to the Editor handout. Read through the letter as a class. Discuss, and ask students to explain Wes’s main idea.
4. Pass out highlighters and copies of the attached Wes’s Letter to the Editor Graphic Organizer. Have students write in the organizer the main idea, position, or thesis identified by the class. Then, have them identify the arguments in each of the six paragraphs and summarize them in the organizer.
5. Have students highlight the arguments written in their organizer, using one color for fact and one for opinion. Discuss the effectiveness of these arguments and the reasons for including both facts and opinions in persuasive writing, noting that opinion must be based on fact to be credible.
6. Put students in groups of four. Give each group a copy of a list of persuasive writing topics and a blank copy of the graphic organizer. Allow each group to select one of the topics from the list. Tell them to select the one they feel the most strongly about because they will be more successful in developing arguments for it than for the topics of lesser interest.
7. Have each group decide on their main idea and then brainstorm arguments to support it. Remind them to refer to Wes’s letter to the editor for ideas.

8. Have groups complete their graphic organizers, summarizing arguments for each paragraph. They may wish to adjust the number of paragraphs. Remind groups to include a balance of facts and opinions.
9. If there is time, have students begin writing a persuasive letter to the editor about the topic they selected, using their ideas written on the graphic organizer. In any case, have students complete the first draft of the letter by the next class period.

Wes's Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

- 1 Brockingham is run by people who are more interested in tourists than its residents. The problem is that the people running the government, and nearly everything else in Brockingham, refuse to accept new ideas. By banning all fast-food restaurants and discount stores, they take away all the places kids can afford to shop.
- 2 These people forget that when they were young, they could go to the South Street Soda Fountain and get an ice-cream soda for 25 cents. Today you can't find an ice-cream soda anywhere in Brockingham for less than \$2! Why? Because the only places selling ice cream in Brockingham are Danker & Phillips, de Chambord, and The Emporium Restaurant. Have you tried buying a hamburger in one of those places? You can get an Emporium Deluxe with lettuce, tomato, cheese, and a pickle for a mere \$6.98! Where can kids go for a snack?
- 3 There is not a single restaurant in Brockingham where a family of four can eat dinner for less than \$100. Add a 15% tip and sales tax and you have spent nearly \$125 to eat a meal you could prepare at home for about \$12. Have you noticed that Brockingham families never dine in Brockingham? But take a look at Parkersburg on a Friday night. It seems as if you're walking down a Brockingham High corridor when you walk down South Main Street in Parkersburg.
- 4 Fast-food restaurants are also a good place for school kids to get an after-school job. Fast-food restaurants are busiest during the early supper hours when students are able to work, whereas the fancy food restaurants cater to late-night diners. Working in one of these establishments requires working shifts that are too late for most students.
- 5 The City Council claims that local merchants, rather than national chains, should benefit from the tourist business. I agree that it is important to support local businesses, but I think the fast-food restaurants would encourage more people to shop in Brockingham. As it is now, most tourists who come to Brockingham stop to eat at low-cost, convenient places in Southport or Regis Landing. How does that help Brockingham food establishments? Many people who stay overnight in Brockingham drive 25 miles to Parkersburg for breakfast at Jiffy Burger. That place is packed every weekend morning. Those profits could be kept in Brockingham.
- 6 Another thing that disturbs me is that we must travel 25 miles to the nearest discount store. If I need a tire for my bike, I have a choice of buying one at Surf and Peddle Sport Shop for \$15 or driving to Parkersburg Discount Center where I can buy the same kind of tire for \$9. When I am in Parkersburg, Dad always fills up the tank of the car, since the same brand of gas is at least 8 cents cheaper there than in Brockingham. Again, I think the ban on all food chains and discount houses is counterproductive for our city.

Wes Woodrow

Wes Woodrow

Wes's Letter to the Editor Graphic Organizer

