

Lesson Skill: Identifying viewpoint and theme

Strand Reading--narrative nonfiction

SOL 6.5
7.5
8.5

Materials

- Copies of the attached “Letter to the Editor: Street Basketball”
- Highlighters or colored pencils

Lesson

1. Distribute copies of the “Letter to the Editor: Street Basketball” handout.
2. Ask students to identify the author’s *viewpoint* (opinion, attitude) about street basketball and to highlight key facts and sentences in the text that support and express this viewpoint. Have students decide the purpose of the text, based on the author’s viewpoint.
3. Have students develop a *main message* or *theme* statement for the text, either as a class or individually.
4. Review with the class the difference between *viewpoint* and *point of view*. Make sure students realize that in regard to informational text, the term *viewpoint* denotes the author’s opinion or attitude, whereas in narrative text, the author uses a *point of view* that denotes his/her vantage point from which the narrative is told. These terms can be easily confused.

Letter to the Editor: Street Basketball

To the Editor:

Basketball is supposed to be a sport, not a problem. However, that's what it has become in many neighborhoods, where hoops are set on sidewalks for players whose "courts" are our streets. For the safety and convenience of all, the proposed city ordinance prohibiting street basketball deserves our support.

Young people caught up in an exciting game may not see or hear oncoming cars. Drivers may fail to brake in time to keep from hitting a player. They also risk damaging their cars or other property when swerving or stopping abruptly. This danger is especially acute when games continue into the evening and visibility diminishes.

Street basketball also limits the use of public space by other residents. Pedestrians, people pushing strollers, and children riding tricycles are forced into the street where sidewalks are blocked by basketball hoops. Bicyclists and joggers are inconvenienced or even endangered when they must stop suddenly or go out of their way to avoid basketball players who are inattentive to others' needs.

Since our streets are not all equipped with trash cans, litter is also a concern. Some players are inconsiderate about trash disposal, littering sidewalks and yards with debris from their snacks and drinks. When those who participate in the game don't accept this responsibility, other residents are left with a mess to clean up.

We are fortunate to live in a city where there are basketball courts in most schools, parks, and recreation centers. Those who want to play this sport should use properly equipped facilities and leave our streets and sidewalks to motorists and pedestrians for whom they were intended.

To avert potential tragedy and resolve neighborhood controversy, let's urge our city council members to back the ban on street basketball.

Sincerely,

Tony Pérez
Concerned Parent