

Lesson Skill: Persuasive writing

Strand Writing

SOL 4.7

5.7

Materials

- Examples of persuasive writing on various topics
- Persuasive Writing Organizer (attached)
- Available technology

Lesson

1. Discuss a policy that has two distinct sides, be it a policy at school, the local supermarket, or the national level. Explain why the policy should be changed. Explain that as members of a democratic society, people can express concerns and opinions. Tell students that politicians and activists often use persuasive writing to convince others that something should change. Define persuasive writing as writing intended to convince the audience to think, feel, or believe what the author thinks, feels, or believes about a certain topic.
2. Read well-written and interesting persuasive articles to students as models of good writing. Display the articles using available technology, or have a copy for every student. Point out organizational techniques such as clear, interesting position/opinion sentences; supporting paragraphs developed around the central position or opinion; and the concluding paragraphs. Discuss the intended audience and how the techniques employed in the article cater to the audience. Persuasive articles should be on a range of topics of interest to students.
3. Next, have students make a T-chart and record their topic on the left side of the T and possible audiences on the right side of the T. Define the audience in this case as the person or people the author is trying to convince. Have students share their ideas on a class T-chart.
4. Next, model completing the attached Persuasive Writing Organizer for the topic. Display the organizer for students. Attempt to match each pro, or argument, with its con, or counter-argument. Explain that it is important to have a “cons” list because a persuasive author will need to know the arguments against his/her opinion in order to convince the reader. Then, circle the three strongest pros and cons.
5. Have students circle one topic on their T-chart they would like to write about. Then, have them begin their own Persuasive Writing Organizer. Afterward, have students choose their three strongest pros and cons.
6. Reread some of the introductory paragraphs from the collected persuasive essays, and discuss how they are organized. A good persuasive essay often begins with a powerful statement of the position or opinion and mentions the supporting details (from the “pros” list). Model writing an introductory paragraph using a think-aloud strategy. Students will see that good writing is a thoughtful process and it does not happen

- effortlessly. Have students begin their paragraphs and then share them with the class. Have the class comment on the strength of the author's introductory paragraph.
7. Look again at the examples of persuasive essays to determine how the bodies of the essays are organized into supporting paragraphs. Students will notice that each argument for the opinion (the pros) has a paragraph of its own. Often, the counter-arguments (cons) are mentioned within the pros paragraphs. Have students take note of the organizational and style techniques. Model how to begin writing the body of the essay. Mention one of the pros and the counter-argument (con) in the supporting paragraph. Have students begin to write the body of their piece with at least three pros and cons in three supporting paragraphs. Have them share one of their paragraphs with the class and comment on the techniques of others.
 8. Have students look again at the examples of persuasive essays to analyze the concluding paragraphs. Point out that these paragraphs restate the opinion and pros in a different way than in the introductory paragraph. However, the opinions are written strongly. Model the concluding paragraph, restating your opinion and the three pros. Give students time to write their own concluding paragraphs. Afterward, have them share their introductory and concluding paragraphs with a partner to explain how they restated their opinions and their pros.
 9. Have students revise their piece. Have them think about the following questions, one at a time, as they reread their piece.
 - Is this clear and easy for my reader to understand?
 - Can I use stronger verbs to get my point across?
 - Can I vary my sentences?
 10. Model using the same questions to revise your own piece, and take suggestions from students. In order to revise word choice, circle verbs and determine whether a stronger verb would be more appropriate. Have students revise their work, using their initial sentence and the changes made. Students are now ready to edit their writing. Model the process, looking for misspellings, capitalization errors, punctuation errors, etc. Have students do the same with their writing. For the last step, have students write their final draft and share their piece with their intended audience.

Strategies for Differentiation

- Preteach all critical vocabulary, i.e., *argument*, *opinion*.
- Use children's novels or picture books to teach the concept of persuasion.
- Role-play a debate situation on a topic important to students to more fully understand the concept.
- Provide a structured comment card for feedback as a differentiation to step 8.
- Complete the lesson in groups created according to readiness, interest, learning styles, or affect (student level of comfort).
- With step 9, use highlighters/color coding or sticky notes to identify the pros and cons within the essay.

Persuasive Writing Organizer

Name _____ Date _____

Persuasive Writing

Persuasive writing is intended to convince the audience to think, feel, or believe what the author thinks, feels, or believes about a certain topic.

Topic _____

Opinion or Position _____

Pros – Arguments for the opinion	Cons – Arguments against the opinion