

## **Persuasive Nonfiction** by Justin Skeen

Grade: 6<sup>th</sup>

Unit writing Genre: Nonfiction

Unit writing Mode: Persuasive

Note: Prior to this unit the students were taught six writing traits and should now be showing evidence of each trait in their writing.

### **Week 1 Day 1:**

Standard 7: Students understand, interpret, and analyze narrative and informational grade level text.

Objective 1: Identify purposes of text

*Mini-lesson:* During the mini-lesson the teacher will review key elements that are present in persuasive writing (audience, facts, details, persuasive word choice, etc.)

*Time:* 45 minutes

#### *Materials:*

-a copy of "Going Green" for each student

-3 additional short examples of persuasion

-a copy of "The Night Tia Lola Came to Visit" for each student

-students' writing journals

-overhead projector or document reader for the teacher think aloud and write aloud

- Read the short story "Going Green" aloud to the class. Model for students using think aloud and write aloud a list of the strategies the author uses to convince the reader to conserve energy. Contrast the style of writing from "Going Green" to a narrative piece that was read the week before entitled "The Night Tia Lola Came to Visit." How did the two pieces of writing differ? Which words or facts were present in the persuasive piece that made you want to conserve more energy? How did the author's purpose direct the vocabulary and sentence structure? Consider the additional three examples of persuasion. The idea for this initial lesson is to provide multiple examples of persuasive writing. Persuasive writing is much different than narrative writing. The teacher should emphasize that some persuasive writing has two choices (argue one or the other) and some persuasive writing is about convincing someone that something is the best.
- Following the stories the teacher will provide two examples of when he/she has used persuasion to get something. Following the example by the teacher the students will write down in their journals one experience or a time they wanted something and had to

convince someone to allow them to do it or get it. (We will not take these examples all the way through the writing process; they will only be rough sketches focusing solely on content.) Students will then turn to a partner and share their short experience. After 10 minutes of sharing the teacher will ask for three examples that will be shared aloud with the class. The teacher will ask the following questions: what did you say to convince the person? Did you state any facts? These facts or reasons are your details that support your position.

*Accountability/Assessment:* While students are writing their short persuasive experience I will stop by their desks to see what they are writing about and ask questions as needed.

### **Week 1 Day 2:**

**Standard 8:** Students write daily to communicate effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

**Objective 1:** Prepare to write by gathering and organizing information and ideas

*Mini-lesson:* The teacher will teach about brainstorming and selecting a topic to write about. Briefly discuss the 5 paragraph format we will be using for our persuasive essays (Introduction, body 1, body 2, body 3, and conclusion). Make sure students understand that a persuasive essay doesn't have to be exactly 5 paragraphs, it can be shorter or longer, but for the purpose of this unit we will be writing 5 paragraph essays.

*Time:* approximately 45-60 minutes

*Materials:*

- Student writing journals
- document reader or overhead projector

Propose the following to the students: "During the next two weeks we will be working on a persuasive piece of writing. We haven't written anything in this genre in this class so I will be modeling each step of the process, and you will be expected to write your own essay going through the process I will be modeling for you. It is often helpful to start with a brainstorming activity to write down a variety of possible topics you could write about. Remember when selecting a topic it is important to pick something you know a lot about or a topic that is important to you. You must also take in consideration your audience when choosing what to write about and how to write about it. Your audience for this persuasive piece is going to be a friend your age."

- Model with the students how to take 3-5 minutes and make a list of possible persuasive topics that come to mind. "Write down as many ideas as you can. Don't worry about correct spelling or complete sentences. A brainstorm is simply a list of possible ideas that a person could write about." Model this through a think-aloud and write aloud in front of the class underneath the document reader so all the students can see what the teacher is writing down. (see example at the end of the document)

- Once ideas are brainstormed the teacher will discuss the process of looking through the ideas and choosing one particular topic. The teacher will remind the students to take in consideration the audience when selecting a topic (I will purposely brainstorm some ideas that don't fit the audience I am writing to). This is the very beginning of teaching persuasion. It is important to view this assignment from the eyes of a sixth grade student. You don't want students feeling like they have to have some amazing, complex topic in order to write persuasively. For this initial unit start simple! Showing your thinking as you go through the decision process will really help students to see how the teacher decides what to write about. This will help students to learn how to think through deciding on a topic.

### Ideas brainstormed

- conserving energy--I would need some time to research this topic. Also, I think this would be a better topic for a different audience.
- vending machines in schools--I don't have to convince a 12 year old that it would be neat to have vending machines, but once again I would be convincing the wrong audience.
- lockers for elementary students
- cell phones in schools--Most kids would love both (lockers and cell phones) of these, but once again this would be a topic to write about to the principal or superintendent or something
- read my favorite book--Most kids would love both of these, but once again this would be a topic to write about to the principal or superintendent or something
- the best holiday--Most kids would love both of these, but once again this would be a topic to write about to the principal or superintendent or something
- **move to my town--Although I thought I might write about my favorite holiday or my favorite book I decided this will be perfect topic for a person who is 12 years old. I can already think of many reasons why Ogden is a great place to live.**
- living by the mountains is better than living by the beach--I have never lived by the beach so I don't know that I can say that living by the mountains is better than living by the beach.
- the Jazz are the best basketball team--Tough to persuade because they have never won a championship
- Sixth graders should get seconds at lunch--Tough to persuade because they have never won a championship
- best sport-- Tough to persuade because they have never won a championship

- I have chosen to model for the students how to persuade someone my age to move to my town. I will let the students know that we will be writing this from the perspective of a sixth grade student.
- The students will now go through their list and make a decision on what they will write about using the strategy I modeled for them.
- “Now we have chosen our topic we are ready to get started. Before we begin writing we must decide on the reasons that support why a person should move to my town. Each of these reasons will be discussed in one of the body paragraphs we talked about earlier. When choosing a reason it must fit the audience we are talking to. Do you think it would be very persuasive to tell a 6<sup>th</sup> grader that they should move here because we have a rest home close by? Of course not, at their age most sixth graders are not concerned about rest homes, we must be cautious of our audience. I find it to be helpful to brainstorm some possible ideas. Model underneath the document camera for the students how to make a list of possible reasons. “Write your topic at the top of the page in your writing journal. I will give you three minutes to make a list of all the reasons or facts that support your topic. Now read through your selection and choose what you feel are the three most persuasive reasons and circle them.”

*Accountability/Assessment:* I will be walking around and stopping by students’ desks to listen to partner discussions and to look at what ideas they are writing down in their writing journals. I will be briefly conferring with students as I walk around. This gives me an idea of students who may need additional help.

### **Week 1 Day 3**

**Standard 8:** Students write daily to communicate effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

**Objective 1:** Prepare to write by gathering and organizing information and ideas (prewriting).

(A lot was covered yesterday; the beginning of today the teacher may need to finish choosing the three supporting details that make up the body paragraphs.)

*Materials:*

- Persuasive essay graphic organizer (some of the ideas from the organizer are taken from the Step-Up to writing program)
- document camera

*Mini-lesson:* How to take the ideas and put them on a graphic organizer to prepare to write a rough draft. The teacher will teach that the graphic organizer is a plan of what we will be writing. The graphic organizer does not have to have complete sentences, and when you start to write you can make changes to what you have put in the organizer. Writing is a process that requires making changes. I have found it helpful to encourage students to use a pencil so they can make changes more easily. (See graphic organizer sample at the end of the document)

- Model for the students by taking one of the three reasons why a person should move to my town. Tell students this is body paragraph #1. State the reason and list 3-4 details or examples that support that reason. “It is very important that all the details and examples support your reason. Don’t get caught adding details that don’t fit the paragraph you are writing. For example, if your detail is cell phones are not good in class because they are a distraction and in that same paragraph you talk about how your cell phone could get stolen you are bouncing around from one idea to the next. This is a problem because the detail/example must support the reason.” Write the reason and details on the graphic organizer. Model the same thing for body paragraphs 2 and 3. (I have found initially it seems to be easier for students to start with the body paragraphs and then move to the introduction and conclusion.)
  
- I will leave my filled out graphic organizer up for students to refer to. Students will be given 20 minutes to work on getting their ideas down on the graphic organizer. Some students will finish all three body paragraphs and others will not. Those who do not finish all three body paragraphs will finish them at the beginning of the lesson tomorrow. The last 5-10 minutes students will share their ideas with a partner and they will ask for any additional suggestions.

*Accountability/Assessment:* I will be conferencing with students and taking note of their persuasive writing topics and supporting details they have been writing on their graphic organizer.

#### **Week 1 Day 4:**

**Standard 8:** Students write daily to communicate effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

**Objective 1:** Prepare to write by gathering and organizing information and ideas (prewriting).

*Mini-lesson:* Teach the students the purpose of the introduction and conclusion. The introduction hooks the reader and states the three details that will be discussed in the paper. The conclusion should restate the three reasons and leave the audience with a final thought to ponder about why they should do what you’re persuading them to do.

- The teacher will model (on the graphic organizer) how to start the introduction with a hook and a main idea sentence that includes the three persuasive reasons that will be discussed in depth in the body paragraphs.
  
- The teacher will model (on the graphic organizer) how to conclude the paper by restating the three reasons and making a strong concluding sentence that leaves the reader thinking about what was said.
  
- Following the modeling from the teacher, the students will apply the same strategies with their own paper. During this time I will walk around and offer suggestions to students who seem to need additional help thinking of ideas of what to write about.

There are some situations where this organizer doesn't work. In situation like that I provide an alternative way for students to lay out their ideas.

- After modeling how to write the introduction and conclusion the students will have a chance to partner share their graphic organizers that they have come up with and take and give suggestions with a partner.
- Any student who has not finished their graphic organizer will be pulled aside at different times through the day and I will discuss with them some possible suggestions. The plan is to have every student ready to start drafting tomorrow.

*Accountability/Assessment:* The students will have a completed graphic organizer and will be ready to start their rough draft tomorrow. This will be assessed throughout conferencing with each student for a brief moment and making note of where each student is in the process.

### **Week 1 Day 5:**

Standard 8: Students write daily to communicate effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Objective 2: Compose a written draft.

*Mini-lesson:* Review the format for the five paragraph essay and show students underneath the document camera what it means to indent, the importance of margins, double space the rough draft, center and capitalize the title, put your name and date on every piece you write, each paragraph should have at least 4-7 sentences, etc. All expectations must be taught and demonstrated. I have learned to be very explicit and NEVER assume students already know something.

*Time:* 60 minutes

- Starting with the introduction the students will start writing their rough draft. Model for them by writing your first paragraph in front of them and showing how to take your ideas from your graphic organizer and create complete sentences that flow together. Remember this is the first example of persuasive writing so it is important the teacher doesn't make it look too complicated. You want to leave students feeling like they can do this.
- Students should be reminded that today is a rough draft and their task is to get their ideas down on paper. We will worry about moving things around when we start editing and revising our rough draft.
- The last 10 minutes of writing time students will be given the opportunity to share what they have done today with a partner.

*Accountability/Assessment:* Students' rough draft will be evidence of accomplishing today's objective. Conferencing will take place with students during independent writing time. Any student who I don't conference with today I will conference with tomorrow. All discussion points of the conference with students will be documented in a conferencing journal.

### **Week 2 Day 1:**

Standard 8: Students write daily to communicate effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Objective 2: Compose a written draft

Objective 3: Revise by elaborating and clarifying a written draft

Objective 4: Edit written draft for conventions

*Mini-lesson:* Teach about how to edit our rough drafts.

*Time:* 45-60 minutes

- The teacher will model how to go about editing a rough draft. I will demonstrate how to do this with another student in front of the class. "Editing has two parts, we edit for conventions (periods, commas, spelling, etc.), but we also revise to strengthen our written draft by adding details, strengthening word choice, and improving sentence fluency." I don't expect students to be expert editors after this first persuasive essay, but I do want to see they are attempting to improve their rough draft. Point out the reason the rough draft is double spaced is so you can write the corrections in the blank lines. Tell students during this stage of the process to use a pen or a different colored pencil to make their corrections.
- After editing their own piece, students will be paired with another student. "As you are editing your writing with another peer, listen to their suggestions and YOU decide what changes you want to make. The purpose of the peer conference is to give you another point of view. It is not to have them completely change your paper. I want you to focus on how to work effectively with each other." Students need to be taught and shown from the teacher how to take and receive feedback.
- Students will finish writing their rough drafts and depending how much they had left on their rough drafts they will start editing their writing.

*Accountability/Assessment:* I will walk around, monitor, take notes, and give feedback of the editing taking place.

### **Week 2 Day 2:**

Standard 8: Students write daily to communicate effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Objective 3: Revise by elaborating and clarifying a written draft

Objective 4: Edit written draft for conventions

*Mini-lesson:* Teach how to transition from one idea to next to make the sentences flow nicely together.

- Students will finish all editing of rough drafts. Tomorrow we will be typing our final draft and making all the corrections from our revision sessions.

*Accountability/Assessment:* Students will turn in their rough draft with all of the corrections that have been made. I will read over the rough drafts and provide feedback.

### **Week 2 Day 3:**

Standard 8: Students write daily to communicate effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Objective 2: Compose a written draft

*Mini-lesson:* In the computer lab I will be teaching students how to properly space their essay and where to put the title, name, and date.

- The students will be given time today to type their rough drafts and make all the corrections they would like to make.

*Accountability/Assessment:* Students will finish typing their final draft and turn in their graphic organizer, rough draft, and final draft to be graded using a rubric of the six writing traits.

Name: Mr. Skeen

Date: April 8, 2009

Five paragraph Persuasive Graphic Organizer

INTRODUCTION

*Hook the reader:* Imagine walking down the street and having your neighbor say hello or getting caught in a bind and being able to call people in the community to help.

*Supporting reasons:* Body 1 people are friendly  
Body 2 live in a safe neighborhood  
Body 3 many things to do close by

*Concluding sentence:* My town is a wonderful place to live

BODY PARAGRAPH #1

*Reason #1:* People are friendly

Detail #1: many people smile, wave, and help each other  
Detail #2: my neighbor's basement flooded and the neighborhood helped  
Detail #3: little violence compared to bigger cities

*Concluding sentence:* wouldn't it be nice to live in a neighborhood where most people are friendly.

BODY PARAGRAPH #2

*Reason #2:* Live in a safe neighborhood

Detail#1: not many gangs  
Detail #2: streets are not so busy  
Detail #3: little violence compared to bigger cities

BODY PARAGRAPH #3

*Reason #3:* Many fun things to do close by

Detail #1: the seasons change (ski in the winter, enjoy the sun in the summer)  
Detail #2: mountains are only 30 minutes away  
Detail #3: there is a mall, movie theaters, and parks within 10 minutes

*Concluding sentence:* plenty of fun activities close by

CONCLUSION

*Restate Main Idea:* You should consider moving to my town because:

*Restate Supporting Reasons:* #1 people are friendly  
#2 live in a safe neighborhood  
#3 many fun things to do close by

*Final statement:* I hope you consider moving to my town. I know you won't regret it.

Justin Skeen  
April 8, 2009

### **Consider Moving to my Town**

Imagine walking down the street and having your neighbor saying hello or getting caught in a bind and knowing you can rely on people in your community to help you out. This is what you are likely to find in my neighborhood. It is a great place to live for people of all ages. I heard you were considering moving, you should move to my town because the people are friendly, our neighborhood is safe, and there are many fun things to do close by.

The first reason you should move to my town is people in my neighborhood are friendly. In the neighborhood it isn't uncommon to see people waving, smiling, and helping each other. For example, two months ago my neighbor's basement flooded and nearly everyone in the neighborhood offered to help the family clean it up. Also this year we had some new students from my class move into the neighborhood and it didn't take long for people to invite them over to play with everyone in the neighborhood. Wouldn't it be nice to live in a neighborhood where most people are friendly?

Next, you should move here because it is a safe neighborhood. Ogden is a relatively small city that has much less gang activity than many of the larger cities. There is also less danger walking along the streets because of the small amount of traffic there is in the city. Plus, we have many smaller town communities only 15 minutes from Ogden. Possibly one of the most important factors is the lower amount of violence in the area. I know I feel safe as I walk down the streets of my town. Many people would agree there is nothing more important about where you live than feeling safe.

Finally, you should move to my town because there are many fun things to do all year round. One of the great things about Ogden is the seasons change. It is so fun to be able to play

in the snow in the winter and enjoy the sunshine in the summer. We have beautiful mountains less than 30 minutes away with all sorts of things to do like: hike, camp, fish, or hunt. There is also a mall only minutes away with shops and movie theaters. In addition, there are incredible parks where you can spend time with family and friends.

In conclusion, if you're looking for a place where people are friendly, it's safe, and there are all sorts of fun things to do, Ogden, Utah is the place for you. What are you waiting for? I know you won't regret moving here. Hope to see you soon.