

The Cereal Box Challenge: A Feast of Persuasive Writing

Materials Needed

- An empty, flattened cereal box (or a small cardboard box that can be refolded)
- Several different, interesting cereal boxes for analysis
- Plain white or coloured paper to cover the box
- Pencils, erasers, and a notebook or paper for brainstorming and drafting
- Art supplies: coloured pencils, markers, crayons, scissors, glue stick, ruler
- Optional: old magazines for collage, stickers, glitter

Lesson Overview

Subject: English (NSW Curriculum Focus: EN3)

Target Student: Xavier (Age 11)

Time Allotment: 3 sessions (approx. 60 minutes each)

Lesson Goal: To understand, analyze, and apply persuasive language and visual design techniques by inventing and marketing a unique cereal.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, Xavier will be able to:

- **Identify and explain** persuasive techniques (e.g., powerful adjectives, slogans, hyperbole, target audience appeal) used on product packaging. (EN3-3A, EN3-5B)
- **Compose** clear, engaging, and persuasive text for a specific audience and purpose. (EN3-1A, EN3-2A)
- **Design** a visually coherent product package that integrates text and images to convey a clear message and brand identity. (EN3-2A)
- **Think creatively and critically** to develop and present an original product concept. (EN3-7C)

Lesson Procedure

Session 1: Deconstruction & Ideation (60 mins)

1. The Hook - Cereal Box Detective (15 mins):

- Lay out the collection of real cereal boxes. Ask Xavier to choose one he finds most appealing.
- Together, act as "Marketing Detectives." Ask guiding questions:
 - Who do you think this cereal is for? Kids? Adults? Athletes? How can you tell?
 - What words on the box grab your attention? (e.g., "Crunchy," "Mega," "Natural," "Limited Edition")
 - What is the mascot or main character like? Why was it chosen?
 - Look at the colours. What feeling do they create? (e.g., bright colours for fun, earthy tones for health)

2. **Introducing Persuasive Techniques (15 mins):**

- Introduce 3 key "Power Tools" of persuasion, finding examples on the boxes:
 1. **Slogan:** A short, catchy phrase. (e.g., "They're Gr-r-reat!")
 2. **Hyperbole:** Exaggeration for effect. (e.g., "The Biggest Blast of Flavour!")
 3. **Powerful Words:** Using strong adjectives and verbs. (e.g., "Irresistible," "Exploding with fruitiness.")
- Discuss the concept of a "Target Audience" and how the entire box (words, images, games) is designed to appeal to them.

3. **Brainstorm Bonanza (30 mins):**

- Now it's Xavier's turn! Open up a notebook to a clean page titled "My Cereal Invention."
- Brainstorm ideas for his very own cereal using prompts:
 - **Cereal Name:** What will it be called? (e.g., "Galaxy Crunch," "Ninja Pops," "Puzzle Bites")
 - **Target Audience:** Who is he trying to sell this to? (e.g., gamers, aspiring astronauts, animal lovers)
 - **Main Selling Point:** Is it super healthy? Does it change the colour of milk? Does it have unique shapes?
 - **Mascot Idea:** What character will represent his brand? A clever fox? A friendly robot?

Session 2: Drafting & Design (60 mins)

1. **Writing Workshop - The Words that Sell (30 mins):**

- Using the ideas from Session 1, Xavier will draft the text for his cereal box. He must include:
 - **The Front:** The cereal name and a powerful, catchy slogan.
 - **The Back:** A fun activity related to the theme. This could be a maze, a comic strip, a word search, or fun facts. This is a great place to apply creative writing skills.
 - **The Side Panel:** A short, persuasive paragraph describing why his cereal is the best. He should try to use at least two powerful adjectives and one example of hyperbole. (e.g., "Packed with an astronomical amount of cinnamon flavour, Cosmic Swirls will send your tastebuds into orbit!")
- Review the draft together, checking for clarity, spelling, and persuasive punch.

2. **Design Studio - The Blueprint (30 mins):**

- Give Xavier the flattened, empty box. Have him sketch out a blueprint for his design.
- He should plan where each element will go: the title, the mascot, the bowl of cereal, the game on the back, and the descriptive text. Encourage him to think about a colour scheme that matches his theme.

Session 3: Creation & Presentation (60 mins)

1. **Box Construction (45 mins):**

- Time to bring the vision to life! Xavier will use the paper and art supplies to cover his box and create the final design based on his blueprint.
- He'll write out the final text, draw his mascot and graphics, and assemble all the pieces. Encourage neatness and creativity.

2. **The "Supermarket Pitch" (15 mins):**

- Once the box is complete, ask Xavier to present it as if he were a marketing executive pitching it to a supermarket.
- He should explain:
 - The name of his cereal and its unique features.
 - Who his target audience is.
 - The persuasive techniques he used on the box to attract customers.
- This is a fun way to assess his understanding in a low-pressure, creative format.

Differentiation & Extension

- **Support:** Provide sentence starters for the descriptive paragraph (e.g., "You will love this cereal because..."). Offer pre-made templates for the box layout if sketching is a challenge. Work together to brainstorm a list of powerful adjectives before he starts writing.
- **Extension:** Challenge Xavier to write and perform a 30-second television commercial script for his new cereal. He could even film it on a phone. Another option is to design a prize that would come inside the box.

Assessment

Xavier's learning will be assessed through observation during the activities and by evaluating the final cereal box and presentation. Focus on effort and understanding, not just artistic talent.

- **Learning Objectives:** Does the final product show a clear understanding of a target audience? Are persuasive techniques (slogan, powerful words) used effectively?
- **Alignment with Standards:** Has he composed a well-structured text that combines visual and written elements for a specific purpose (persuasion)?
- **Creativity & Engagement:** Is the concept original? Does the design capture interest and reflect the theme? Did he engage thoughtfully in the brainstorming and creation process?
- **Clarity:** Is the information on the box easy to read and understand? Was his final "pitch" clear and confident?