

The Art of the Argument: Mastering Persuasive Writing

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, Sarah will embark on an inquiry-based journey to discover how words can change minds. Using the Inquiry Cycle (Tuning In, Finding Out, Sorting Out, Going Further, Making Conclusions, and Taking Action), she will move from observing persuasion in the real world to crafting her own compelling argument on a topic she is passionate about.

Learning Objectives

- **I can** identify the three main components of a persuasive argument: the Hook, the Reasons (Evidence), and the Call to Action.
- **I can** use emotive language and logical reasoning to support a specific point of view.
- **I can** draft, revise, and present a persuasive piece designed to influence a specific audience.

Materials Needed

- Collection of "Mentor Texts" (Print ads, toy commercials, or opinion articles from kids' magazines)
- "The Persuasion Toolkit" Graphic Organizer (or a blank notebook)
- Sticky notes
- Highlighters (three different colors)
- Access to a computer or tablet for research
- A "Decision Maker" (Parent, sibling, or friend to act as the target audience)

Phase 1: Tuning In (The Hook)

Activity: The Great Dessert Debate

Start with a scenario: "Sarah, imagine the local ice cream shop is planning to stop selling chocolate ice cream forever. You have three minutes to convince the owner to change their mind. What would you say?"

Let Sarah give her pitch orally. Afterward, discuss: What made your argument strong? Did you use facts, feelings, or both? This introduces the concept that persuasion is a tool we use every day.

Phase 2: Finding Out (Inquiry & Observation)

I DO: Modeling the Investigation

Show Sarah a magazine ad or a short commercial. Point out how the creator uses specific colors, words, and "big promises" to make you want something. *"See how they used the word 'ultimate' instead of*

'good'? That's a persuasive word choice."

WE DO: Collaborative Analysis

Look at a second mentor text together. Use highlighters to find:

1. **The Hook:** Something that grabs attention.
2. **The Evidence:** Why should we believe them?
3. **The Call to Action:** What do they want us to do?

Phase 3: Sorting Out (Organizing Thoughts)

Activity: Topic Brainstorming

Sarah chooses a topic she cares about. It could be "Why we should get a dog," "Why Minecraft is educational," or "Why kids should have a say in dinner menus."

Using a Graphic Organizer, Sarah will "sort" her ideas into categories:

- **Ethos (Trust):** Why should the audience listen to you?
- **Pathos (Emotion):** How can you make the audience feel something?
- **Logos (Logic):** What facts or reasons support your idea?

Phase 4: Going Further (Deep Dive Research)

YOU DO: Building the Case

Sarah will now move from ideas to evidence. If she is arguing for a later bedtime, she might look up how much sleep a 10-year-old needs or find examples of how she is responsible.

Guidance: Encourage her to find at least three "Strong Reasons." A strong reason isn't just "because I want to," but "because it will help me learn responsibility."

Phase 5: Making Conclusions (Drafting)

Activity: The First Draft

Sarah writes her persuasive piece (letter, speech, or poster).

Success Criteria:

- A catchy title or opening line.
- Clearly stated opinion.
- At least three paragraphs/sections of evidence.
- A concluding "Call to Action" (e.g., "Sign my petition" or "Let's try this for one week").

Phase 6: Taking Action (Application & Assessment)

The Final Pitch: Sarah presents her argument to her intended audience (e.g., presenting the "Later Bedtime" speech to her parents).

Reflection: After the presentation, ask Sarah:

- Which part of your argument felt the most powerful?
 - If the audience said "no," what counter-argument could you use next time?
 - How does it feel to use your voice to try and create change?
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Assessment Methods

Formative (During the Lesson): Observation of Sarah's ability to identify hooks and evidence in mentor texts during the "Sorting Out" phase.

Summative (End of Lesson): The final persuasive piece, evaluated based on the inclusion of the three core components (Hook, Evidence, Call to Action) and the use of descriptive, persuasive language.

Differentiation & Adaptations

- **Scaffolding (For Support):** Provide "Sentence Starters" (e.g., "The most important reason is...", "Have you ever considered...", "Research shows that...")
- **Extension (For Advanced Challenge):** Have Sarah identify a "Counter-Argument" (what the other side might say) and write a rebuttal to it.
- **Multi-Sensory:** Instead of a written letter, Sarah can create a video advertisement or a digital slide deck with music and images.