

Argumentative Writing

Consider using with *Voyages in English 2011*

Grade 3—Chapter 6, Lesson 6 or Writer’s Workshop

Grade 4—Chapter 5, Lesson 1 or Writer’s Workshop

Grade 5—Chapter 7, Lesson 1 or Writer’s Workshop



Teach

Explain to students that argumentative writing is a form of opinion writing in which they try to convince a reader of the merits of their claim using logic and evidence. Argumentative writing requires the writer to anticipate other claims, refute other positions, and to perform research. An argumentative essay contains the following elements:

- A clearly stated position
- A well-reasoned and researched position
- Evidence that supports the position
- Anticipates and refutes other viewpoints (counter claims)
- A balanced examination of a position

Practice

Ahead of time, obtain a copy of *Thank You, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco. Write on the board *Mr. Falker is a hero*. Read the book aloud to the class. Say: *The teacher in this book is a hero to one of his students. Listen as I read it again. Stop me when I come to a part that gives an example of Mr. Falker acting like a hero*. List the examples on chart paper or on the board. Explain that *Mr. Falker is a hero* is a position statement and that they gave examples to support the position. Say: *Some would say that Mr. Falker is not a hero; he is just doing his job*. Ask volunteers to offer their opinions about whether Mr. Falker is a hero or just doing his job. Explain that argumentative writing states a position (*Mr. Falker is a hero*) and supports it with reasons and evidence (He stops a boy from bullying Trisha. He gets her help with her reading.) It also acknowledges that some people might disagree. (Some people think that Mr. Falker was just doing his job.)

Apply

Choose one of the writing prompts or let students choose. Have students write an argumentative essay using the prompt. Explain that some research will be required so that the reasons they provide will be supported by evidence. Review appropriate and reliable resources that students should use.

Assess

Use the rubric on the following page to evaluate students on their understanding of argumentative writing.

Argumentative Writing (p. 2)

Potential Prompts and Writer's Workshop

Prompts

Substitute other words for the words in brackets [] to adapt the prompt to best suit your students.

Prompt

Grade 3

- Using a [tablet computer] is better than using a [desktop computer].
- [July] is the most fun month of the year.
- [Video games] are more fun than [board games].
- Field trips to [the museum] are the most [educational].
- Starting school two hours [later] would make students [work harder].
- Students should spend more time in [math] class than in [language arts] class.

Grade 4

- The [smartphone] is the most important invention ever.
- [Roald Dahl] is a very [descriptive] author.
- The best genre of literature is [science fiction].
- The most effective way to study for a test is to [use flash cards].
- The [piano] is my favorite instrument.
- Listening to music [through headphones] is better than [through speakers].

Grade 5

- [Checking books out of the library] is better than [buying them].
- [Cucumbers] are the best [vegetables].
- [Having a different teacher for every class] will be the best part of middle school.
- [Language arts] is the most useful subject.
- It's easier to write a [poem] than to write a [paragraph].
- [Texting] is an important skill in life.

Argumentative Writing (pg. 3)

Writer's Workshop

Prewriting

Explain that during the prewriting step, students will plan what they are going to say. Provide the students with a graphic organizer, such as a concept web, to help them plan and organize their ideas. Lead the students in brainstorming topics or use the suggested prompts for the grade level you are teaching. Argumentative writing requires conducting research in the prewriting step. Explain to students that their topic sentence (thesis) may change if the information they learn from their research does not support their thesis. Emphasize that this is OK. Consider having the students preview the Chapter 8 Study Skills activities in their textbook before beginning their research.

Drafting

Ask the students to review their completed graphic organizers and add any additional information or details. Tell them to begin their piece by stating the topic. Explain that in drafting, students should get their ideas down on paper in sentence form but shouldn't worry about perfect spelling or punctuation.

Content Editing

Direct the students to use the Content Editor's Checklist as they read their drafts. Consider having the students work in pairs as peer editors. Review student work in writer's conferences and provide feedback to students one-on-one. Reteach any characteristics of argumentative writing to individuals or the whole group as necessary.

Revising

Explain to students that in the revising step they will fix any changes marked and copy the draft onto a sheet of paper. This is the time for students to make sure that their ideas are sound and clearly stated. Students should refer to the Content Editor's Checklist again. Tell students to ask themselves, "Is my argument stronger than it was in the draft stage? Is there anything else I want to add?"

Copyediting and Proofreading

With the whole class, review the common proofreading marks shown on the inside back cover of the student and teacher editions. Direct the students to use the Copyeditor's Checklist as they read their drafts.

Publishing

Explain to students that the publishing step is when they get to share their work with an audience. Remind students that the look, or presentation, of their work will make a difference in how it is received by others. Discuss with students the many ways they can publish their work. Emphasize that when students provide feedback on any work, they should be positive and offer only constructive criticism.

Argumentative Writing (p. 4)

Checklists

Content Editor's Checklist

- Does the beginning have a clear topic sentence?
- Does the middle include at least two reasons that are well supported?
- Are the reasons clear and fully explained?
- Does the ending retell the topic sentence?
- Are opinion words used?

Writer's Checklist for Revising

- Is the position statement stated at the beginning?
- Is the evidence presented from reliable sources?
- Do you state then disprove other positions?
- Did you use a variety of sentence types?
- Is your word choice appropriate, descriptive, and precise?
- Did you include an ending that summarizes the position statement?

Copyeditor's Checklist

- Are compound sentences used correctly?
- Are words with suffixes used correctly?
- Are the sentences complete?
- Does the sentence order make sense?
- Do all the words mean what you think they mean?

Proofreader's Checklist

- Are all the words spelled correctly?
- Is the first word of each sentence capitalized?
- Are proper nouns capitalized?
- Does each sentence end with the correct punctuation mark?
- Have you checked to be sure that no new mistakes were made while editing?

Rubric - Argumentative Writing (p. 5)

CRITERIA	POINTS
Ideas	
opinion	
Organization	
a beginning that tells the opinion	
a middle that states a differing opinion	
an ending that provides a concluding statement	
Voice	
a formal voice	
Word Choice	
linking words	
descriptive words	
Sentence Fluency	
correct sentence structure	
Conventions	
correct grammar	
correct spelling	
correct punctuation and capitalization	
Presentation	
neatness	
consistent spacing and margins	