

## Persuade Me, Please! Reading a Persuasive Essay and Liking It!

### Student/Class Goal

The main purpose of persuasive texts is to present an argument or an opinion in an attempt to convince the reader to accept the writer's point of view. Reading and reacting to the opinions of others helps shape readers' beliefs about important issues, events, people, places, and things.

### Outcome *(lesson objective)*

Students will read and examine a model persuasive essay; considering the point of view of the writer.

### Time Frame

Up to 3 class sessions

### Standard *Read with Understanding*

### NRS EFL 6

Purpose	Benchmarks	Word Knowledge	Benchmarks	Comprehension	Benchmarks
Purpose for reading	6.1	Decoding skills	6.3	Strategy use	
Select text		Word parts	6.4	Text structural elements	
		Context clues		Genres	
		Reference materials		Literary analysis	6.14
		Word relationships		Drawing conclusions	6.15
		Content vocabulary	6.8	Making connections	6.16
		Figurative language			
		Fluency			

### Materials

Notebook paper (draft/notes)  
computer (final paper)  
*Gettysburg Address* Speech  
*Should Marine Mammals Be in Captivity?* Sample Essay/Examining a Model Persuasive Essay  
*Persuasive Essay* Student Resource  
*Reading a Persuasive Essay* Graphic Organizer

### Learner Prior Knowledge

Familiar with persuasion from everyday life. Some experience reading other texts critically. Previous experience writing essays with an introduction, supporting points and conclusion.

### Instructional Activities

Step 1 – Begin the class by asking, “What makes a good argument?” Have students share their ideas about making a good argument. Read and examine one of the most famous speeches in American history and an example of persuasive argument. Notice how Lincoln uses carefully chosen words to communicate important ideas about war. He made his listeners feel how important the men's contribution was. Students can reread the *Gettysburg Address* and underline all the words and phrases that create an emotional response for the reader. Discuss the following questions as a large group:

How do words like *consecrate*, *hallow*, and *nobly* make you feel about the men who died on the battlefield? How does Lincoln's choice of words reveal how he wants his listeners to react? What is he trying to persuade his listeners to believe or do?

When you write to persuade, your goal is to convince your audience to agree with you. You attempt, with your essay, to influence a reader's point of view and actions. To do this, you will need to:

1. offer the reader clear and logical **reasons** for thinking as you do.
2. appeal to the reader's **emotions** through compelling examples and careful word choice.
3. convince the reader of your sincerity and expertise about the issue by appealing to **good character**.

**Teacher Note** For an in-depth explanation of these three points, check out [The Basic Principles of Persuasive Writing](#). Create a PowerPoint from this resource to use with students.

Step 2 - Introduce the genre of persuasive essays by reading aloud the sample persuasive essay *Should Marine Mammals Be in Captivity?* printed from the Internet. Prior to reading, engage students in a brief discussion about whether they think marine mammals should be kept in captivity. Students should respond by stating their opinions on the topic and providing a few reasons to support their opinions. (This step could also be done as a journal writing activity with time for sharing responses with the whole class.)

Students pair up and do a Think-Pair-Share strategy and then come together for a group discussion in response to the essay. Do students agree or disagree with the author of the essay? Were any students swayed from their previous thoughts on this topic? Students should use information presented in the essay and/or background knowledge to support their opinions.

Using the essay and the section called *Examining a Model Persuasive Essay*, answer the following questions:

1. What is the writer attempting to persuade you of concerning the captivity of marine animals?
2. What evidence does the writer offer to support her claims?
3. How does the writer draw you in and make you care about the issue?

Now that you have read through the essay once, reread it, paying attention to how the author accomplishes her purpose.

1. Underline the thesis statement. Where in the essay does the author state what she is attempting to persuade readers to think and believe? Is the thesis restated toward the end of the piece? Underline this sentence as well.
2. Circle words or phrases that the writer assumes readers will understand without explanation.
3. Draw a wavy line under stylistic techniques that draw the reader into the argument. What effect do these techniques have on you, the reader?
4. Use two different colors to identify appeals to both logic and emotion within the essay. Notice how both are used to create a balanced persuasive approach.
5. Identify important supporting evidence in the article. List below the examples used to defend the essay's thesis.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  - e.

Step 3 - Think of an issue you care deeply about. If you have trouble with an idea, check out a newspaper or online source such as *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The New York Times*, etc. You could also watch the nightly news. Write freely for five minutes about this issue. Now write a clear and coherent sentence or two that express your opinion about the topic. This is your **thesis**. Your thesis has two goals - to make readers aware of the issue you will be discussing and it should tell readers how you feel about it.

A thesis statement example: *High school graduates should be required to take a year off to pursue community service projects before entering college in order to increase their maturity and global awareness.*

Read your thesis statement and consider these questions: Does my thesis state the issue clearly? Does my thesis convey how I feel about the issue? Is my thesis clearly phrased? Should I state the problem more or less dramatically? Is my choice of words persuasive? Rewrite if necessary. The success of your persuasive essay will depend heavily upon your careful construction of this key statement. Share with the group.

Think of questions you have about your subject and places where you might find answers to these questions. As you conduct your **research**, record information and quotations that could be used to support your thesis. Remember to include the author's name, the source, page numbers, date of publication in your notes, and copy the entire URL. You must be careful not to represent someone else's ideas or words as your own. You will discover **evidence** that supports an opposing viewpoint, keep notes on this information as well. Find evidence - quotations, statistics, facts - to support the argument in your thesis statement. You might record your information like this:

<b>Note/Quotation</b>
<b>Source</b>

**Teacher Note** You might want to create a template for students to use to collect their evidence.

Time to begin your rough **draft** - often the hardest part of writing. Start with your thesis statement, then present the evidence gathered to build your persuasive argument. This would be a good time to present the *Persuasive Essay* Student Resource to students, focusing on the 'structure your essay' section or use other models you have presented previously to students. Provide students with the *Reading a Persuasive Essay* Graphic Organizer to plan their essay.

Develop your introduction, supporting paragraphs and conclusion. Consider how you will appeal to the readers' logic and emotions. Pick a place away from distractions and begin the draft of your persuasive essay. Let the act of writing help your ideas evolve.

**Teacher Note** Revision is an important step for writing. You will need to decide how polished you want this essay to be at this point as this lesson focuses on reading essays critically. The important concepts of thesis, evidence and draft were introduced by students actually creating their own essay to reinforce the process. The teacher could also model this as a group activity, rather than students working individually.

Step 4 - Students can trade their essays and read each others, providing feedback using the graphic organizer as a tool to find the writer's thesis and supporting points/evidence

**Assessment/Evidence** *(based on outcome)*

*Persuasive Essay* Student Resource  
*Persuasive Essay* Graphic Organizer  
Discussion and observation

**Teacher Reflection/Lesson Evaluation**

*This lesson has not yet been field tested.*

**Next Steps**

Complete the writing lesson *To Persuade or Not to Persuade*.

**Technology Integration**

Think-Pair-Share Teaching Strategy [http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/think\\_pair\\_share09.pdf](http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/think_pair_share09.pdf)  
The Basic Principles of Persuasive Writing <http://www.writingcentre.ubc.ca/workshop/tools/argument.htm>  
The Gettysburg Address <http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>  
Should Marine Mammals Be in Captivity? <http://teacher.scholastic.com/dolphin/conwin1.htm>  
*Persuasive Essay* Student Resource [http://essayinfo.com/essays/persuasive\\_essay.php](http://essayinfo.com/essays/persuasive_essay.php)

**Purposeful/Transparent**

Students are introduced to persuasive texts by examining a model persuasive essay to consider the point of view of the writer.

**Contextual**

Often in postsecondary courses, students must present an argument or opinion in their writing to influence the readers' beliefs about important issues, events, or topics.

**Building Expertise**

Students are given guidance in reading essays critically, focusing on thesis, evidence and creating a draft.

# The Gettysburg Address

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

November 19, 1863

*On June 1, 1865, Senator Charles Sumner commented on what is now considered the most famous speech by President Abraham Lincoln. In his eulogy on the slain president, he called it a "monumental act." He said Lincoln was mistaken that "the world will little note, nor long remember what we say here." Rather, the Bostonian remarked, "The world noted at once what he said, and will never cease to remember it. The battle itself was less important than the speech."*

<http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>

**Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.**

**Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.**

**But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate -- we cannot consecrate -- we cannot hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us - - that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.**

## **Should Marine Mammals Be in Captivity?**

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/dolphin/conwin1.htm>

Sharon Banta

In my opinion there is no doubt that marine mammals should NOT be held in captivity. Marine mammals are a part of nature and should not be bought, sold or thrown in an aquarium. I believe that they have the right to be kept in their natural environment.

I have many convincing reasons to support my opinion. Captivity causes many health problems in marine mammals. Many tanks have water full of chemicals and bacteria; this results in blindness and many skin problems in dolphins and other marine mammals. Marine mammals in captivity die from pneumonia, ulcers and other stress-related diseases. Most of these helpless creatures suffer from boredom. Dolphins in the wild can swim up to 40–100 miles per day but in pools they go around swimming in repetitive patterns. Due to boredom and limited space many dolphins abuse themselves; they often bang their heads against tank and aquarium walls. Some of these poor innocent creatures face abusive treatment by their caretakers, thus shortening their life span. In fact Keiko, the killer whale, the star of *Free Willy*, was a victim of this type of abuse. It was known to be said that he was 1,000 pounds underweight and developed a wart-like disease. His teeth were ground down from chewing the sides of the pool due to boredom and he had a problem with his dorsal fin. Marine mammals breed very poorly in captivity with very high infant death rates. For this reason, when a baby dolphin is born into captivity its birth is usually kept a secret from its mother until it shows signs of survival. Marine mammals do breed in captivity, but the birth rate in captivity is not as successful as in the wild.

Many people think that marine mammals should remain in captivity. I realize that some people may believe that captivity increases the life span of certain animals, but the truth is if these creatures are so happy in captivity, why do they die so fast? Captivity shortens animal life spans, not increases them. Wild dolphins can live 40 years in the wild and orcas can live 90 years, but when held in captivity they rarely survive their teens. Twenty-three out of 25 orcas have died in captivity. Some people think that holding animals in captivity helps with study and research. But the truth is scientists prefer to learn about animals in their natural environment so they get firsthand knowledge.

In conclusion, I think marine mammals should definitely not be held in captivity. I think Ghandi said it best when he mentioned, "The greatness of a nation and its moral process can be measured by the way its animals are treated." In a world where much of nature and the wild has already been lost to us, it is up to us to let these beautiful marine mammals free.

### **Examining a Model Persuasive Essay**

Using the essay, examine the model of a persuasive essay and answer the following questions:

1. What is the writer attempting to persuade you of concerning the captivity of marine animals?
2. What evidence does the writer offer to support her claims?

3. How does the writer draw you in and make you care about the issue?

Now that you have read through the essay once, reread it, paying attention to how the author accomplishes her purpose.

4. Underline the thesis statement. Where in the essay does the author state what she is attempting to persuade readers to think and believe? Is the thesis restated toward the end of the piece? Underline this sentence as well.
5. Circle words or phrases that the writer assumes readers will understand without explanation.
6. Draw a wavy line under stylistic techniques that draw the reader into the argument. What effect do these techniques have on you, the reader?
7. Use two different colors to identify appeals to both logic and emotion within the essay. Notice how both are used to create a balanced persuasive approach.
8. Identify important supporting evidence in the article. List below the examples used to defend the essay's thesis.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  - e.

Examining model essays is one way to learn what the best persuasive practices are and to see them in effect. Analyzing where and how the thesis is stated and how the writer develops his or her argument through the use of supporting details, stylistic techniques, appeals to logic and emotion, and concessions to the opposition will make it easier for you to use them in your own writing.

## **Persuasive Essay Student Resource**

[http://essayinfo.com/essays/persuasive\\_essay.php](http://essayinfo.com/essays/persuasive_essay.php)

When planning a persuasive essay, follow these steps:

- **Think of a problem.** The problem can be something in your school, community, city, state, country, etc. Decide what you want to persuade your reader to think and do about the problem. Choose your position. Which side of the issue or problem are you going to write about, and what solution will you offer? Know the purpose of your essay.
- **Analyze your audience.** Decide if your audience agrees with you, is neutral, or disagrees with your position. Take notes on the different viewpoints surrounding your topic using an idea organizer.
- **Research your topic.** A persuasive essay must provide specific and convincing evidence. Often it is necessary to go beyond your own knowledge and experience. You might need to go to the library or interview people who are experts on your topic.
- **Structure your essay.** Figure out what evidence you will include and in what order you will present the evidence. Remember to consider your purpose, your audience, and your topic. Test your thesis. Your thesis, i.e., argument, must have two sides. It must be debatable. If you can write down a thesis statement directly opposing your own, you will ensure that your own argument is debatable.
  - **Write a title.** Consider putting your title in the form of a question. Your paper should answer the question.
  - **Write an introduction.** Briefly inform your reader about your topic and the differing opinions on it.
  - **Summarize the opinions of those who disagree with you.** Disprove the opposing argument. Understand the opposite viewpoint of your position and then counter it by providing contrasting evidence or by finding mistakes and inconsistencies in the logic of the opposing argument.
  - **Summarize your own opinions about the topic.** Be sure to give reasons that support your opinion. Use statistics, facts, quotations from experts and examples.
    - **Facts** - A powerful means of convincing, facts can come from your reading, observation, or personal experience. Note: Do not confuse facts with truths. A "truth" is an idea believed by many people, but it cannot be proven.
    - **Statistics** - These can provide excellent support. Be sure your statistics come from responsible sources. Always cite your sources.
    - **Quotes** - Direct quotes from leading experts that support your position are invaluable.
    - **Examples** - Examples enhance your meaning and make your ideas concrete. They are the proof.
  - **Write a strong conclusion.** In a persuasive essay, this can take the form of a call to action. Let your reader know what can be done to solve the problem.
  - **Once you have finished your essay, be sure to review your writing.**

## Reading a Persuasive Essay Graphic Organizer

Thesis statement: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Supporting Point #1: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Supporting Point #2: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Supporting Point #3: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Supporting Point #4: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Concession to the opposition: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Conclusion/Call to action: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_