

English Lesson Plan

Persuasive vs. Expository Writing



Classroom:	Teachers:	Subject: English	Dates:
Grade: 6	Unit:		
State Standard(s):	<p>Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy 91 2. Determine a text’s central idea(s) and how particular details help convey the idea(s); provide a summary of a text distinct from personal opinions or judgments. 3. Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).</p> <p>Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, section, or text feature (e.g., heading) fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas. 6. Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the texts.</p>		
Objective:	<p>Students practice using a text to make an argument. This consists of three parts: Reading, Response, and Vocabulary. They are then asked to respond to the theme of the story, using the text to draw conclusions about that theme.</p>		
Key Vocabulary:	<p>intent neutral objectivity bias unbiased peer reviewed cite edited opinion omit source material demographics</p>		
<p>Lesson Outline: Students will learn 1) to identify and define vocabulary words, 2) to identify a piece of writing as persuasive or expository, and 3) to evaluate the author(s) of a given piece of writing while considering their sources, motivation, and subjectivity.</p>		<p>Student groupings:</p>	
Accommodations and Modifications:			



What's the difference between a research paper and opinion piece? What makes a piece expository as opposed to persuasive?

The two most commonly encountered types of non-fiction writings can usually be broken down into two categories: expository and persuasive. The difference is in the **intent** of the piece. Whenever you read, always ask yourself, what does this writer want to accomplish here? WHY is he or she writing and how should I react as a reader? Should I be skeptical, or should I trust the piece? It can often be difficult to know what is true and what is not trustworthy, but being able to recognize the author's intent is a great first step!

The principal goal of an **expository** piece (such as a news article or research paper) is always to inform. Well-constructed informational texts are considered "**neutral**" or "**unbiased**", meaning their only goal is to present all available information with regard to their subjects. Expository pieces nearly always **cite** sources or explain very clearly the information's origin. Encyclopedias include excellent examples of informational writing. However, it should be noted that all writers have **bias**, which frequently causes what they write to be impacted by their personal worldviews. It is very difficult for writers to make sure their opinions do not influence what they write. For this reason, expository texts should be "**peer reviewed**" and "**edited**" by more than one author to ensure the work's **objectivity**.

A **persuasive** piece (sometimes called an editorial or **opinion** essay) is a style of writing in which the author wants to convince the reader of something. While these pieces might include facts and figures to help the author make his or her point, the intent of the piece is not to inform or educate, but to persuade. While it is beneficial to read opinion pieces and take their arguments into consideration, one must be wary when reading them. Persuasive pieces often **omit** critical information that does not support their arguments. It is often a

smart idea to read opinion essays that take opposing views in order to get a fuller picture of arguments from all sides. Typically, well-written persuasive pieces get their information from other sources, which are well documented or cited in the writing. Like expository texts, they often use informational works as "**source material**" to back up their arguments.

Poorly written persuasive pieces may not state where their information comes from, and oftentimes do not cite accurate sources for that information. This is usually a sign that what you are reading is not to be trusted or believed. Even if an opinion paper cites a source however, it is useful to check out that source yourself to see if you think it is trustworthy!

Sometimes, persuasive pieces are disguised as expository pieces in order to trick the readers into believing they are being informed rather than persuaded.



Here are some tips to make sure you know what you are reading:

- Look for key phrases like “I think, I believe, I want”. These are good indicators that you are reading an opinion.
- ANY fact, figure, or number used in the piece should tell you how that information was obtained. If it is not there, you are likely reading an opinion piece.
- Emotionally charged words, such as “good”, “bad”, “evil”, “hate”, “sad”, “happy”, “wow”, “amazing”, or “awful” and so on are not objective and will not usually be seen in an informational piece.
- Pay close attention to who wrote the piece. If the author benefits from a certain point of view make sure that you are very cautious about trusting the information.

What’s the difference between a research paper and opinion piece? What makes a piece informative as opposed to persuasive? Read both excerpts and answer the questions.

Excerpt One

A study of 3,847 students in grades 7 to 9 in Denmark, which has a strong and well-developed biking culture, found that biking to school was associated with lower body mass index (BMI) and lower odds of being overweight or obese compared to sitting in a car, bus, subway, or train.

In a **randomized** study, participants in a Walking School Bus program (wherein a group of students walk to and from school on a pre-defined route, usually with adult supervision) in low-income Houston elementary schools showed large increases in active commuting and daily physical activity.

In general, physically active children tend to perform better academically, and evidence suggests that physical activity among children is related to greater mental health. A study of 1,700 students from five cities in Spain found that adolescent girls who walked or biked to school were more likely to do better on a standardized test measuring their verbal, numeric, and overall **cognitive** skills. Safe Routes to School (SRTS) has increased the number of students who walk or bike to and from school and encourages more students to join various walking and biking activities.

A study of 801 schools in the District of Columbia, Florida, Oregon, and Texas found that SRTS increased the proportion of students walking and biking to school, and that these effects accumulated over time. The outcome was significant even after adjusting for factors such as school location and **demographics**. Furthermore, the study included comparisons to schools that did not participate in the SRTS program.

Article Sourced: “*Impact of Safe Routes to School programs on walking and biking*” activelivingresearch.org, 2015.



Excerpt Two

Each day, students make choices about how they get to and from school, but many could be making better ones. For instance, many students may not realize that walking and biking to school in the morning and back home in the afternoon is much easier than they imagine. All students who decide to walk or bike to school rather than be driven in a car quickly realize the benefits of such a decision.

Other places in the United States, such as Houston, Texas, as well as around the world, including the countries of Denmark and Japan, already have large student populations that walk to school daily. These students have lower rates of obesity, perform better in school, and have greater mental health. Many also enjoy the time they spend walking with their parents and friends in walking groups.

There are also emotional benefits to getting outside which can put pedestrians and bikers in a positive **disposition** for the rest of the day. Whether you experience the bright sunny days of summer, the crisp air of autumn, the fresh smell of snow in winter, or the fragrant flowers of spring, there is always something to appreciate during your trip to school.

Students old enough to travel to school by themselves often enjoy the independence that walking and biking give them, experiencing their walking or biking route as a moment of freedom in an otherwise highly supervised and scheduled day. Why not give it a try yourself?

Article Sourced: *“Why you should walk to school”* by Mark DeSalvio, 2016.



Answer the following questions about the excerpts you just read.

1. Which of the excerpts is a persuasive piece? Which one is expository? Why do you think this?

2. Did you find the persuasive piece to be convincing? Why or why not?

3. Which piece is used as source material for the other? Why is it important to use sources in persuasive writing?



Vocabulary

All words in bold are collected on this page. Write out their definitions to use as reference while you read and answer questions.

Bias:

Cite:

Cognitive:

Demographics:

Disposition:



Edited:

Expository Writing:

Intent:

Neutral:

Objectivity:

Omit:



Opinion:

Peer Reviewed:

Persuasive Writing:

Randomized:

Source Material:

Unbiased:



Vocabulary Answer Key

Bias: the tendency to see things or present information from a single, specific viewpoint

Cite: to ensure that any information taken from a source is credited properly

Cognitive: relating to, being, or involving conscious intellectual activity (such as thinking, reasoning, or remembering)

Demographics: the gender, racial, and economic background of any populace or group of people

Disposition: prevailing mood or temperamental inclination

Edited: work that has been checked for grammatical and factual errors

Expository Writing: neutral or unbiased text written to inform

Intent: a person's eventual goal, desire, or meaning

Neutral: does not take sides, presents facts without editorial comment

Objectivity: the quality of seeing things without the lens of bias

Omit: leave out or exclude

Opinion: someone's idea about an object's quality or meaning which is subjective

Peer Reviewed: work that is seen and edited by other people, preferably knowledgeable expert

Persuasive Writing: style of writing in which the author wants to convince the reader of something

Randomized: to select, assign, or arrange in an unpredictable or unsystematic arrangement

Source Material: information which is cited within a paper or article

Unbiased: that which makes a neutral viewpoint, or presents all facts without comment