

## WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

### Student/Class Goal

Students are deeply concerned personally about a variety of issues and want to participate in the democratic process where their voices are heard by voting.

### Outcome *(lesson objective)*

Students consider the three key issues most important to them in the current election, research the issues and candidates, and write a persuasive essay.

### Time Frame

3-6 hours

### Standard *Convey Ideas in Writing*

NRS EFL 4-6

Prewriting	Benchmarks	Drafting	Benchmarks	Editing and Revising	Benchmarks
Topic, purpose, & audience	4.1, 5.1, 6.1	Organize writing	4.11, 5.11, 6.10	Reread & revise	4.19, 5.17, 6.14
Writing for purpose	4.2, 5.2, 6.2	Sentences/paragraphs	4.12, 5.12	Proofread	4.20, 5.18, 6.15
Writing for various tasks	4.3, 5.3, 6.3	Descriptive language	4.13, 5.13, 6.11	Feedback from others	4.21, 5.19, 6.16
Generate ideas	4.4, 5.4, 6.4	Sentence structure	4.14, 5.14, 6.12	Checklists & rubrics	4.22
Main idea/thesis	4.5, 5.5, 6.5	Spelling	4.15, 5.15, 6.13	<b>Publishing</b>	<b>Benchmarks</b>
Research	4.6, 5.6, 6.6	Punctuation	4.16	Technology	
Plagiarism	4.7, 5.7, 6.7	Capitalization	4.17	Publication	
Sources		Parts of speech	4.18, 5.16		
Organize ideas	4.9 5.9 6.9				
Organizational pattern	4.10 5.10				

### Materials

*What are the Issues?* Wall Chart  
*Persuasive Writing Essay Guidelines*  
 Rubric, Self-Evaluation, Peer Edit Sheet

### Learner Prior Knowledge

Students will need to know and understand persuasive writing before this lesson. If this is a new concept, take time to teach about this mode of writing using the *Persuasive Writing Essay Guidelines* as an outline. The authentic example and questions can be used as a warm-up activity. Letters to the editor or editorials could be used to identify parts of a persuasive essay and the techniques addressed later in this lesson.

### Instructional Activities

Step 1 - Ask students to respond to the following prompt, written on the board prior to class: "What are the three most important issues to you in the upcoming election year? Is there any issue for which you would or would not support a candidate based on his position on that issue?" Allow students a few minutes to respond, ask them to share their issues with the class, and note each of their contributions on the board. Some possible suggestions might include: Campaign Financing, Economy (employment, social security, taxes, minimum wage, etc.), Education, Foreign Policy, Gay Rights, Gun Control, Healthcare, National Defense (war), Environment, Welfare, Immigration, etc.

After compiling the list of all issues on the board, ask students how many of them would change or re-prioritize their issues in light of a larger number of topics from which to choose. Platform issues may be selected by vote of importance or may be chosen at the teacher's discretion and charted before class.

Step 2 - Students are going to research their individual platforms, or positions on the issues. Pick the one you care the most about. Have them divide themselves evenly by issue into three groups. Now find out what the candidates think about your issues. On butcher paper posted prior to class (preferably large enough to cover a wall or another flat surface in the classroom), create a chart by listing the candidates on one side and creating a column for issues across the top, such as:

	Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 3
Candidate A			
Candidate B			

Groups are responsible for researching their candidate's position on each issue and then charting that position on the *What are the Issues?* Wall Chart. Students can make notes with citations on half-sheet sticky notes, so information can easily be reorganized, if necessary. When all categories have been filled, class should reconvene to discuss and compare candidates' platforms.

**TEACHER NOTE** Though elections in the United States usually reflect the bipartisan, or two-party, nature of American government, other parties known as "third parties" do exist. For advanced students, research the platforms and potential presidential candidates for several third parties (such as the Green, Reform, and Libertarian Parties) and compare them to the Republican and Democratic Party lines. Students may also want to visit candidates' own websites in search of propaganda and determine criteria for evaluating the information.

This activity can also be created as an activity sheet where each student is responsible for researching the candidates' positions of their top three issues. They may wish to start with [Candidates](#) which lists each of the top candidates' platforms or take a presidential election quiz at [I Side With](#) to see which candidate you most closely align to for the issues.

Step 3 - When students have completed their charts of presidential contenders and key issues, ask them to note the candidate whose platform most closely reflects their position on the issues. Next, ask students to write a persuasive essay to explain their support or vote for that candidate. If so, why? If not, why not? Under which circumstances would a candidate's position on a certain issue affect their support of that candidate? Explain and use the rubric criteria to proofread and revise their writing.

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

Comparison charts of the issues  
Persuasive essay  
Rubric  
Self-Evaluation  
Peer Edit Sheet  
Teacher Observation

**Teacher Reflection/Lesson Evaluation**

*Not yet completed.*

**Next Steps**

Conduct a school-wide poll to find out with how many potential presidential candidates students are familiar. As a side note, ask students to share what they know or have heard about each candidate. Publish your results in the school newsletter

**Technology Integration**

Candidates 2012 <http://www.cnn.com/election/2012/candidates.html>

**Purposeful/Transparent**

With all the campaigning occurring currently, students want to understand each candidate's position on issues they are concerned about. They want to make informed decisions when they vote.

**Contextual**

The topic of voting and current issues is an excellent context for students to better understand persuasive writing and the power of that writing style.

**Building Expertise**

Developing an awareness of the persuasive writing style will build students understanding of the importance of writing and how it influences others. Writing an argumentative essay will help develop the skills necessary for the GED test.

## Persuasive Writing Essay Guidelines

Persuasive writing, also known as the argument essay, attempts to convince the reader a point of view is valid or persuades the reader to agree with our facts, share our values, accept our argument and conclusions, and adopt our way of thinking. Persuasive essays should include documentation which will require research. By investigating your topic and including supporting comments from authorities, you give credibility to your argument.

Considerations	Authentic Reading Example <i>On the Benefits of Reading</i>	Questions for the Reading Example														
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Developed around a limited topic that is debatable, meaningful or important</li> <li>○ Makes a clear thesis statement with summary of arguments to follow</li> <li>○ Use specific evidence, examples and statistics and not broad generalizations or personal opinions to persuade</li> <li>○ Detailed support with examples and specific vocabulary</li> <li>○ Consider your purpose, audience and topic.</li> <li>○ Forming and stating conclusions that deal with opposing views</li> <li>○ Logically organized with relevant information included</li> <li>○ Different than expository in that it does more than explain, the writer takes a stand and endeavors to persuade the reader to take that same stand</li> </ul>	<p>"Reading gives us many benefits. When we read, we can go places we have never been. We can learn about anything that interests us and see the world in new ways. Finally, we can get to know other people and understand more about ourselves.</p> <p>The places to which we travel to in our reading may be different from our own environment and yet they may also be similar. We can read books about the past. Some of these are from hundreds of years ago. From these books we can learn about what people ate and how they lived. We can find out how they worked, what challenges they faced, and what tools they used.</p> <p>Other books take us to faraway places where people speak languages different from our own. Through books, we can also travel to imaginary realms. We can visit the places where dragons and knights battle or where space travelers try to arrange intergalactic peace.</p> <p>There is a book to help us know and understand any subject in which we are interested. We may want to learn about sunspots, polar bears, volcanoes, or glaciers. We may want to know how the human brain, computers, television, or satellites work. We may want to find out how people make things such as automobiles, French fries, or violins. There are books on all of these subjects.</p> <p>In all of these books, we are learning about ourselves and about our world. No matter where we go in our stories, no matter which we meet, reading helps us to know our own world better than we did before."</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is the writer's opinion that reading brings us many benefits. List four arguments that the writer uses to try to persuade you to agree.</li> <li>2. Write a sentence or two describing the evidence the author uses to support each of the four arguments you have listed for #1.</li> <li>3. Use the chart below to help show the structure of the writer's argument in <i>On the Benefits of Reading</i>.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is the main idea of the essay? This idea will become the main focus of your chart.</li> <li>○ What is the main topic for each of the five paragraphs of this essay? Consider how these topics relate to the writer's main idea.</li> <li>○ What evidence does the writer use to support the main idea and to convince you of the validity of each of the arguments?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>														
		<table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 70%;"></th> <th style="width: 30%; text-align: center;">EVIDENCE WRITER USES TO SUPPORT THE ARGUMENT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">MAIN IDEA OF THE ESSAY</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">TOPIC OF PARAGRAPH 1</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">TOPIC OF PARAGRAPH 2</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">TOPIC OF PARAGRAPH 3</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">TOPIC OF PARAGRAPH 4</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">TOPIC OF PARAGRAPH 5</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		EVIDENCE WRITER USES TO SUPPORT THE ARGUMENT	MAIN IDEA OF THE ESSAY		TOPIC OF PARAGRAPH 1		TOPIC OF PARAGRAPH 2		TOPIC OF PARAGRAPH 3		TOPIC OF PARAGRAPH 4		TOPIC OF PARAGRAPH 5	
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TOPIC OF PARAGRAPH 5																

## Rubric for a Persuasive Essay

Score each of the following aspects of the essay from 1 to 5 with 5 very strong and 1 very weak.

- \_\_\_ Introduction is intriguing and relevant to the reader.
- \_\_\_ The appropriate audience and purpose is addressed.
- \_\_\_ Provides a clearly identifiable thesis statement.
- \_\_\_ Thesis demonstrates writer's attitude and commitment to the subject.
- \_\_\_ Details are specific and develop the main points.
- \_\_\_ Information is accurate and easily understood.
- \_\_\_ Very well organized and focused writing with effective leads and conclusions.
- \_\_\_ A variety of sentence structures is used.
- \_\_\_ The spelling, punctuation, and grammar are accurate.
- \_\_\_ Each middle paragraph addresses a separate point clearly and convincingly.
- \_\_\_ Essay provides closure and ends with a call to action.

The most important thing to work on to improve this essay would be...

**Name**

**Date**

## Self-Evaluation for a Persuasive Essay

1. Copy your topic sentence (main idea or thesis statement) in the space below.
2. What is the best part of your paper? Be specific!
3. What part are you not quite satisfied with? Be specific!
4. What vivid verbs and sensory details did you use in your paper? List at least 5.
5. How did you begin your paper? (Quote, Anecdote, Presenting the problem, etc.)
6. How did you end your paper?
7. What do you want to remember about writing persuasive essays?
8. Did you include complex sentences? Write 2 here.
9. What type of supportive and relevant information did you include? (Examples, opinions of others, statistics, etc.)
10. Does each body paragraph begin address a single point?
11. Should this paper be part of your portfolio? Convince me!

**Name**

**Date**

## Peer Edit Sheet for a Persuasive Essay

1. What did you like about the paper?
2. What questions did you have about the paper?
3. Circle all spelling errors, run-on sentences, fragments, and any other grammar errors.
4. What are the main reasons the writer has used to support his/her position?
5. Which reason(s), if any, do not offer good support?
6. Suggestions

**Name**

**Date**