



Transactional Writing: Argument

LEVEL 1i 1ii 1iii 2 3 **4** 5

Child Slavery

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

The teacher led a four-week focus on persuasive writing. This particular piece was developed over two weeks.

Students listened to a variety of *School Journal* stories and examples of written texts based on argument and persuasion. After each session the teacher would ask: What did you think of that? Was it convincing? Why/ why not? What language features did you notice?

With the teacher's help, the students devised a list of criteria for their writing, including:

- a snappy introduction
- four or five statements backed up with evidence
- a convincing conclusion.

They recorded this in their draft books.

The teacher began each writing session by writing up topics that were of interest to them. This led to a discussion designed to capture their imagination and motivate them to write. Points for and against a topic were always discussed and debated.

Harriet researched her material independently. She used this information, along with her notes on the structure of an argument, to write the initial draft. After this, she produced a second draft and finally a published copy.

Teacher-student conversations

During individual conferencing they discussed the requirements of writing an argument.

Teacher: What can you tell me about writing an argument?
 Harriet: I have to persuade my audience.
 Teacher: And how can you do that?
 Harriet: A good introduction evidence to back up what you're saying
 Teacher: Right. Have you provided plenty of evidence here?
 Harriet: I used the information I found out.
 Teacher: Good. These specifics really make the argument credible and authentic.

The teacher also discussed the effectiveness of rhetorical questions in this type of writing.

Harriet used these conversations to help her edit the second draft of her writing, where she identified one or two spelling errors and possible scope for emotive language.

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

Opportunities should be sought in close reading of persuasive texts, particularly in guided reading, to explore:

- How the writer maintains readers' interest.
- The language features and how they could be applied to the student's own writing. Focus could be on formal and informal vocabulary, and on the use of "absolutes" – are they convincing?
- Further articles and even novels – both contemporary and historical – about child labour or slavery.
- Opportunities for skim reading, note-taking and summarising.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Harriet towards the next learning step, the teacher might encourage her to focus on:

Ideas

- encouraging greater consistency and linking to other ideas. They tend to be a little scattered.

Vocabulary

- demonstrating greater control and consistency. The writer is taking risks, e.g., "unjustification", but this can lose the reader.

Language features

- taking care not to overdo certain persuasive language features (e.g., rhetorical questions, and emotive words such as "vile", "disgusting").

There is an overall need to maintain honesty in the writing.

These points could be developed through:

- a guided reading programme, especially to identify the language features of arguments and persuasive writing
- teacher modelling
- regular individual conferencing.



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CURRICULUM LINKS

English in the New Zealand Curriculum

Level 4: Writing Functions

Transactional Writing: Students should write instructions, explanations and factual accounts, and express and explain a point of view in a range of authentic contexts, organising and linking ideas logically and making language choices appropriate to the audience.

Level 3 and 4: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Students should be able to identify, discuss, and use the conventions, structures, and language features of different texts, and discuss how they relate to the topic.

Thinking Critically: Students should be able to discuss and convey meanings in written texts, exploring relevant experiences and other points of view

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35-36

REFERENCE

Ministry of Education. (1994). *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.



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WHAT THE WORK SHOWS: Harriet has argued logically, comprehensively, and strongly to persuade the reader of her point of view. She has given a variety of factual examples to demonstrate and substantiate each point.

Student's final draft

Deeper features

Ideas

Presents relevant ideas which support and extend argument.

Structure

Organises ideas into linked paragraphs.

Attempts a conclusion.

Sentences

Uses a variety of structures for effect – some short and direct, others longer or more complex.

Vocabulary

Uses a range of persuasive vocabulary.

Uses emotive, powerful language. Takes risks with vocabulary.

Language features

Uses a range of features of persuasive language: rhetorical questions, appeals to audience and authority, repetition.

Child Slavery Argument

I believe that child slavery should be banned! This exploitation of vicious labour is doing nothing for the children of India, Bangladesh and Nepal except making them ache from head to toe, giving them diseases and sometimes it can cause death.

The first point I will mention is about the danger! It is extremely hazardous for children as young as four through to the age of fifteen to be working with items such as tobacco and fireworks. In Bangladesh, 1998 (three years ago) there was a vile accident. Some fireworks exploded in a factory, ripping the lives out of many children, and leaving many others scarred for life. They received no compensation or medical expenses. What do you say to that?

The next point I will examine is this: did the children create the debt in the first place? No, they didn't, it was their parents. You see, parents borrow money off money lenders, called Mudalai, to support their family, or various other reasons like medical expenses, when somebody falls ill, or traditional family celebrations such as a woman's wedding, where the parents have to give a dowry to the bridegroom's parents if they can not afford they either do not marry or the woman will be shamed.; Most of the families don't have the money to pay back, so they offer their child's labour instead! So the poor child has to work day after day, week after week, year after year, to pay off a debt they didn't even create! Where is the justification in that?

Another point I will examine is they actually end up working a lot longer and harder than you would expect, as some lousy employers (well, they're not really employers are they?) charge a huge 300% interest! So, if they had to pay \$100, they'd really have to pay back \$400! I strongly disagree with this.

But think about this, what about their beloved childhood? Birthdays, parties, friends, playing, school? POOF! Gone, in a puff of smoke, and there is nothing they can do! Most of us had a normal childhood, didn't we? Toys, friends, we took it for granted. But imagine some little child halfway across the world, five years old, should be at school, maybe about to have a birthday? Yeah right. These poor young children are forced to work hours on end, never having a decent start to life. That, I think, is unacceptable,

My next point: what about the vile, disgusting [diseases] these children can get? Some children get types of cancer, especially lung cancer, from rolling up cigarettes and inhaling all the foul smoke. For some just pains, from doing things like chipping rocks, and getting sore fingers from rolling cigarettes, but you can hardly say 'just'. Some children, such as Vali, an eleven-year-old girl from India, receives sore hands, legs, feet and shoulders and even the nerves in her neck hurt. But she is only one of the many, many slaves forced into a life of misery, hurt and unjustification.

I have endeavoured to explain that all this cruelty just has to stop! The danger, the interest they have to pay, their non-childhood and the diseases, it's hard to argue for child slavery, so it all comes down to one thing, **child slavery should be banned!**

Surface features

Punctuation

Uses appropriate punctuation independently.

Attempts to use semi-colons, parentheses, and underlining for emphasis.

Spelling

Spells most high-frequency words and content words correctly.



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Student's final draft

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