



LEVEL 1 2 3 4 5

Feral Cats

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

The students in this class furthered their understanding of persuasive language and the structure of argument writing through reading a variety of persuasive texts. The teacher modelled argument writing to enhance their understanding of the use of persuasive language features. They practised using these strategies as they wrote arguments about a range of topics.

The teacher took a guided reading lesson using "What's Dead, Pussy Cat?" by Jane Clifton. She modelled her own argument about feral cats, deciding on a stance and planning her arguments, identifying three to four supporting points, and concluding with a recommendation. The students decided on their positions and planned their arguments in the same way. The teacher then modelled writing and recrafting her draft. She used a new paragraph to introduce and elaborate on each new point and concluded with a final paragraph for the recommendations. Finally, she proofread her writing.

The students followed the modelled process to write their own arguments, referring to and using a range of persuasive language strategies and editing, recrafting, and proofreading their drafts.

In pairs, they checked spelling, grammar, and other surface features and questioned each other on aspects of the deeper features. They were expected to focus on how persuasive language features were used in each other's writing and to make suggestions as to how the language could be recrafted to make it more effective.

The teacher conferenced with the students individually on their ability to sustain an argument and persuade an audience. She gave no direct instructions to them but discussed the language features and made some general suggestions. She oriented their attention towards the language choices that they had made.

The students decided at which stage their arguments should be published. Wiremu has prepared his piece for publication.

Teacher-student conversations

After the first draft

Teacher: In your second paragraph, how could you reinforce that cats are killing machines?

Wiremu: I could use the word "kill" a couple of times in other sentences.

Teacher: Why have you used so many short, punchy sentences?

Wiremu: I wanted to make the cats sound dangerous and harmful. The short sentences get the idea across quickly.

Teacher: What made you use Māori words where you did?

Wiremu: Because they are ones I know and they are important ones.

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

A reading programme that incorporates the features of exposition texts, particularly in guided and shared reading, could accompany the writing of arguments. Using published texts and models of writing, students could evaluate persuasive writing strategies and establish links to their own writing. They could be asked to:

- identify and discuss how authors introduce their position and conclude their arguments;
- examine which persuasive language features are used in argument texts;
- consider how authors link ideas within paragraphs.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Wiremu towards the next learning step, the teacher could help him to focus on:

- structure: developing the final paragraph for a satisfactory conclusion;
- language features: employing a larger range of persuasive language techniques;
- grammar: checking sentence constructions to ensure that grammatical conventions are used correctly.

Contexts for such learning could include:

- a guided reading programme that identifies and explores persuasive language features in published texts;
- continued teacher modelling of argument writing;
- regular individual conferencing.

CURRICULUM LINKS

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.

Levels 3 and 4: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Students should 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 discuss and convey meanings in written texts, exploring relevant experiences and other points of view.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35–36

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Feral Cats

STUDENT'S SECOND DRAFT

Dear Editor
I think all cats in New Zealand should be exterminated
Feral cats should be neutered and when they all die..
We can have a hakiri not a tangi.

Cats are killing machines. They should not have been brought to Aotearoa by the Pakeha settlers. Cats kill over 16.24 million creatures a year in Aotearoa. They kill for fun. They can kill with or without claws or fangs and they stalk and silently pounce on their prey.

Cats threaten the balance of nature. If cats are allowed to munch up Manu our forests will die because many seeds need to pass through a birds digestive system before it can germinate. So no manu no forest.

People think they look after their cats but that is not true. Cats are violent bullies. They need a cuffer, they need to be well feed. They need to be neutered. However, even if all this is done they will still kill. So we have no choice but to wipe the cats out. ^{Cats} long toothed bullies

So Everyone is aware that cats have the instinct to prey on anything little that moves or flies. They are killing machines and they have us fooled into thinking we look after them... It is not so.

Because of all this, I think all cats should be exterminated from Aotearoa.



Transactional Writing: Argument

LEVEL 1 2 3 4 5

What the Work Shows

Wiremu argues his position through the use of points that are mostly well developed. The exposition draws on well-researched material and personal knowledge and experiences, expressed effectively by generally appropriate vocabulary and stylistic choices. The conclusion, however, does not retain the momentum and style of the previous paragraphs.

STUDENT'S SECOND DRAFT

DEEPER FEATURES

Ideas

Clearly states, develops, and elaborates ideas.
Includes relevant ideas and supporting evidence.

Structure

Organises and links ideas logically (position taken, evidence, restatement).
Uses conjunctions for showing results.
Organises ideas into paragraphs.

Sentences

Uses a variety of sentence structures for effect.

Vocabulary

Uses persuasive vocabulary appropriately.

Language features

Uses a range of persuasive language features, often effectively. This includes the use of emotive language, repetition, pronouns to denote inclusion, and the passive voice and some use of data and researched evidence.

Dear Editor

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People think they look after their Cats but that is not true. Cat are violent bullies. They need a curfew, they need to be well feed! They need to be neutered. However, even if all this is done cats will still kill. So we have no choice but to wipe the long toothed bullies out.

Everyone is aware that cats have the instinct to prey on anything little that moves or flies. They are killing machines and they have us fooled into thinking we look after them ... It is not so.

Because of all this, I think all cats should be exterminated from Aotearoa.

(Hākari: feast, celebration. Tangi: ritual mourning. Manu: birds.)

SURFACE FEATURES

Grammar

Uses most grammatical conventions accurately.

Punctuation

Uses appropriate punctuation independently, for example, parentheses, dashes, colons.

Spelling

Spells most high-frequency words correctly.

REFERENCES

Clifton, Jane (2001). "What's Dead, Pussy Cat?" *New Zealand Listener*, July 28.

The first page of this exemplar has been slightly shortened to fit. To see the fuller version, go to www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/exemplars/eng/