



Transactional Writing: Argument

LEVEL 1i 1ii 1iii 2 3 4 5

Recycling is Essential

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

This argument was written in the context of a social studies unit on recycling. Students had done a lot of research, searching and reading internet sites and science articles. Their teacher had read “Recycled” as a serial story to the class. They recorded the facts they had researched, and used these when writing their arguments. There was considerable discussion, and a debate about the pros and cons of recycling.

The written language programme focused on argument writing. The students were introduced to persuasive language strategies and skills through a range of texts – articles in the *School Journal* and newspapers, reviews, letters to the editor, editorials, and the Literacy Sails reading series. This developed their awareness of devices used by authors to influence the reader’s point of view.

The teacher modelled strategies for writing effective arguments, and gradually introduced students to a range of persuasive language features such as emotive language, rhetorical questions, and repetition. They then practised using these strategies. The teacher stressed these points:

- the need to target an audience
- the power of persuasive language
- the weight of authority in the persuasive process.

At the end of the programme on recycling and argument writing, the title “Recycling is essential for the earth’s survival” was given to the students. They brainstormed and mind-mapped their ideas, and the teacher modelled some of the ways to include these in an argument.

The students then drafted their arguments and read them through, considering the flow, the structure, the conclusion, and the persuasiveness of the language: How would others feel when they read it? Would they be persuaded? They were expected to recraft their work as necessary, following the teacher’s model.

A peer conference followed. They used an established routine of objective questioning and noting changes. Although the buddy could query anything in the argument that did not make sense, it was up to the writer to make the changes.

The teacher’s goal was to encourage the students to “own” and respect their writing, and to leave them with the final responsibility for what and how they had written, including the choice of language. After these discussions, they made any further changes they felt were necessary. Once they decided the draft was complete, they published their argument by hand on lined refill.

Teacher-student conversations

The teacher encouraged Sarah to examine her writing objectively:

- Teacher: How do you think using “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle” repeatedly actually affects the message you are trying to get across? How effective is it to repeat these words?
- Sarah: I think it works really well. I get the message to my audience.
- Teacher: It’s interesting that you have used two exclamation marks.
- Sarah: Yes, I know, but I want to make people really take notice. I’m going to keep them like that.
- Teacher: We also talked a while ago about using the upper case in the middle of a sentence, the way you’ve done with the word “murders”. Is that the right use of the upper case? How effective would that be for the reader?
- Sarah: I’m going to leave it like that. I think it’ll have an effect on the reader.
- Teacher: Look at the places where you have used expressions like “chucked away” and “hey presto”. How do you think they fit in with the style of rest of your argument? Try using the thesaurus to see if there are other words you might like to use instead.
- Sarah: I’ll have a look.

Sarah later said that she would leave these phrases as they were.

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

The writing of arguments could be accompanied by a reading programme that includes exposition texts, particularly in guided and shared reading. Students could explore persuasive writing skills and strategies in published texts and models of writing,

Persuasive writing could take the form of published expository essays expressing a point of view, newspaper articles, editorial columns, letters to the editor, reviews, poetry, songs, and so on. Persuasive writing can be found in the *School Journal*, newspapers, brochures, comic strips, posters, fables, advertisements, library books, and sophisticated picture books.

Through the reading programme the skills and strategies of persuasive writing could be explored, processed, discussed, and evaluated, and then related to the students’ own writing.



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WHERE TO NEXT?

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

Ideas

- giving evidence to back up the initial position.

Language features

- using a wider range of persuasive language strategies, including direct appeals to the reader, using evidence, authoritative references to substantiate claims.

Structure

- linking statements to a point, both within and between paragraphs.

Vocabulary

- removing colloquialisms, e.g., “chucked away”, “gave a hoot”, “hey presto”.

Recrafting

- reworking some grammar and vocabulary for clarity and impact. Impact is occasionally lost in the string of complex sentences.

This could be done through:

- a guided reading programme to identify and explore the strategies of persuasive writing in published texts, focusing on how statements are supported by evidence
- examining published arguments to see how ideas are linked logically
- modelling of argument writing to develop an understanding of how to use the features of persuasive language
- regular individual conferencing.

CURRICULUM LINKS

English in the New Zealand Curriculum

Level 5: Writing Functions

Transactional Writing: Students should write coherent, logical instructions, explanations, and factual accounts, and express and argue a point of view, linking main and supporting ideas, and structuring material in appropriate styles in a range of authentic contexts.

Levels 5 and 6: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: In achieving the objectives of understanding and using written language students should, using appropriate terminology, describe, discuss, analyse and apply the distinctive features of a range of texts and explain how they suit the topic and purpose.

Thinking Critically: In achieving the objectives of understanding and using written language students should be able to interpret, analyse and produce written texts, identifying and discussing their literary qualities, and explore and identify attitudes and beliefs in terms of personal experience and knowledge of other texts.

NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement)

Transactional Writing: Explanation

Achievement Standard AS90053: English 1.2 Produce Formal Writing.

www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/ach/English/AS90053.doc
New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2001).

PDF: www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/ach/English/as90053.pdf

Unit Standard 8812: Produce Transactional Written Text in Simple Forms.

www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework/explore/domain.do?frameworkId=973
New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2002)

PDF: www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/units/pdf/8812.pdf

REFERENCE

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



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WHAT THE WORK SHOWS: Sarah had assembled some well-researched, convincing material in support of a strongly held point of view. She presents it with passion and rhetoric, and effectively targets her audience by using a wide range of persuasive language features, particularly rhetorical questions, emotive language, repetition, and imperatives.

Student's second draft

Deeper features

Ideas

Maintains a point of view clearly and consistently.

Supports main ideas convincingly through elaboration, use of evidence, links to other ideas.

Structure

Uses structure that is appropriate to form and purpose.

Links main and supporting ideas within and between paragraphs, using conjunctions and linking phrases.

Sentences

Uses a variety of structures with some impact.

Vocabulary

Selects appropriate vocabulary with increasing control.

Language features

Uses a range of persuasive language features with control and intent. This includes emotive language, rhetorical questions, imperatives, repetition, and inclusive pronouns.

Recycling is essential for the earth's survival

How can we sleep at night? How can we go around doing our normal daily things? Knowing that we are MURDERERS! That's right, you and I are responsible for the earth's terrible state. We are killing off a bit of it each day, hour and second. That is why all of us make a world of difference.

Lets Reduce, Reuse, Recycle! The three R's of waste management. One great way to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle is, to use the new Glad wear containers, instead of plastic wrap. It fits easily into your lunchcontainer better though, it Reduces the waste, it can be used many times, but most importantly it... Recycles easily!!

For every 140 million aluminium cans recycled, we can save some 40 000 cubic metres of landfill space. So there you have it! This kind of thing is possible. Working together we can make it happen! The average Kiwi throws away 1kg of rubbish a day! How can we reduce that amount? How about we avoid excess packaging. There is absolutely no need to have every chocolate bar to be separately wrapped AND have a box covering it.

The title says it all. The title "Recycling is essential," sums it all up. It tells us we really need to work hard at recycling. "Recycling is essential for the earth's survival," really states that our planet earth needs this treatment for it to survive. So if you want your planet around any longer then we need to act fast and "play our part".

Think before you throw away that milk bottle! Even one milk bottle thrown into the bin can kill an innocent bird, it could be recycled and made into a drainpipe, clothing or you could even reuse one to make your dog's toy, just tie a piece of string to it and hey presto! Your dog is the proud owner of a recycled chew toy!

Our world is growing older and older or should I say newer and newer. Technology is slowly taking over our lives. There isn't time to think about recycling, let alone do it. We are not reusing things, everything is just chucked away. We need to take time to respect the environment we live in and help keep it from dying. Always relying on the Government is getting us nowhere. If they gave a hoot about our green and beautiful New Zealand, we wouldn't be in this mess. Maybe, if we start to care, they might follow our example. Please act now so our furture [sic] generations have somewhere healthy and clean to live where they're no smelly, big landfills everywhere. Remember the three R's of waste management, REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE!!

Come on everyone, lets get our rubbish sorted!

Surface features

Uses the writing conventions of grammar, spelling, and punctuation with few intrusive errors.



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