



Transactional Writing: Argument

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

The Stadium

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

Over four weeks, this class focused on written argument and persuasive writing.

Every day during the first week, the teacher used the overhead projector to discuss models of written texts based on argument and persuasion. In particular, she discussed the language features, asking: What makes this piece persuasive? Why?

The class practised with the topic of playground issues. They brainstormed all the issues they could think of, and selected one that captured their imagination and would get them interested in developing argument. They then devised a simple three-frame cartoon strip with a beginning, middle, and end.

The teacher then discussed the features of an argument in the form of a letter that would appeal to the board of trustees. As a class, the students selected the topic of poor-quality chairs, but were also able to choose another issue that they felt strongly about.

Ralph chose the issue of Wellington's stadium, developing his work over three days.

After the initial draft, the teacher led conferences with groups based on reading ability.

Teacher-student conversations

Ralph got stuck and needed conferencing. On the draft copy, the teacher wrote a list of points and questions which he was to investigate.

Teacher: What did you particularly enjoy about the Basin and Athletic Park?

Ralph: The atmosphere and the price!

Teacher: I think you would find it helpful if you made a comparison.

The teacher also made the following points:

- Are there any lazy words?
- Is this sufficiently amplified to carry the argument?
- Are your ideas grouped in sequence?
- Check your facts, do some investigating.
- You have made a number of statements. You will need to back these up with research.

Ralph was encouraged to edit rigorously before publishing his work. He did this well.

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

To support the study of the argument/persuasive writing genre during the four-week period, the teacher also focused on close reading activities:

- Reading persuasive newspaper articles and snippets (such as editorials and letters to the editor) to the students.
- Linking to their work in science by getting them to read and analyse persuasive science reports, and focusing on the choice of formal and informal language.
- Linking to their work on mythology – a study of the characters Demeter and Persephone. The students developed arguments based on these two characters for their school production.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Ralph towards the next learning step, the teacher might encourage him to focus on:

Structure

- working on a stronger conclusion.

Language features

- encouragement to balance rhetorical questions and emotive language with other features.

Surface features

- encouragement to use a wide range of conventions.

This could principally be done through:

- a guided reading programme to identify these points
- modelling and conferencing
- a spelling programme that promotes proofreading.



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CURRICULUM LINKS

English in the New Zealand Curriculum

Level 5: Writing Functions

Transactional Writing: Students should write coherent, logical instructions, explanations, and factual reports and express and justify a point of view persuasively, structuring material confidently, in appropriate styles for different audiences, in a range of authentic contexts.

Levels 5 and 6: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Using appropriate terminology students should be able to describe, discuss, analyse, and apply the distinctive conventions, structures, and language features of a range of texts and explain how they suit the topic and purpose.

Thinking Critically: 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.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35-36

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](http://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: Ralph has expressed opinion and fact confidently in a direct appeal to his audience. He does this by using both logic and strong language features. He controls his ideas well. This piece was published on a computer.

Student's second draft

Deeper features

Ideas

Maintains a point of view clearly and consistently.

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

Structure

Uses structure appropriate to form and purpose – paragraphs are well linked, statements are clearly expressed and supported with opinions and researched facts.

Sentences

Varies length to maintain momentum.

Vocabulary

Selects appropriate vocabulary with increasing control, e.g., attempts adventurous language – "It is a classic case of elitism"

Language features

Uses a range of features of persuasive language – imagery, rhetorical questions, imperatives, emotive language, and colloquialisms.

Argument

Making the stadium was a bad idea. Remember the days of Athletic Park and the Basin Reserve? Remember the atmosphere the liveliness? Remember sitting on the fresh green grass at the Basin, basking in the sunlight, people cheering all around you, all so close to the action? Remember going to a game of footy at Athletic Park and standing five metres away as Jeff Wilson scored another try? Now as you sit in those uncomfortable, cheap, yellow plastic chairs at the stadium, ant-like players dart about on the field below, as you feel cold, cramped, and around you is hardly what you would call an atmosphere with the stadium a quarter full.

Why is this happening? Of course it is linked to the horrendous price of the stadium which is \$80 just to go to a normal international game, where at the Basin or Athletic Park it was about \$10 to \$25 to go to an international match. The Basin made it free to go to any provincial game, meaning more people went to the games, more young people got involved in the cricket scenario, meaning a brighter future for cricket.

It is a classic case of elitism where only the most advantaged people can actually pay to get into any of the matches and do you want just rich people going to sport? Isn't sport meant to be a family thing? Well at the moment half of New Zealand hardly have the money to feed their family let alone pay preposterous prices at the stadium just to go for a family outing.

Do you know how much it cost to build the stadium? 130 million bucks. That's amazing that we spent that much money on the stadium when we could have spent a miniscule bit tidying up Athletic Park and Basin Reserve and the rest on something the country is in desperate need for eg health and education.

I believe as responsible people you must realise that health and education are much more important than an over-priced new stadium. Have you spent all this money just to waste it?

Surface features

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



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ARGUMENT

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