INTRODUCE THE GENRE

Analyze the Features of a Persuasive Letter

1. Focus

Explain Genre Features

Say: Each writing genre shares certain features or characteristics. For example, when you read a personal narrative, you will notice that the story focuses on an event in the author’s life, and includes the author’s thoughts and feelings. Persuasive letters have some specific features, too. Today we are going to identify and analyze the special features of a persuasive letter.

Build a Class Genre Features Anchor Chart

Say: I want you to think about persuasive letters you have read before, with the class and on your own. We’re going to build an anchor chart to summarize the features, or characteristics, of most persuasive letters.

Display a blank chart like the one shown here on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Also distribute copies of the chart to students on BLM 1. In the left column of the chart, record features of persuasive letters as students discuss them. (The right side of the chart will be completed in the next part of the lesson.) If necessary, use the following questions to help students identify the features:

• How do you know who a persuasive letter is for?
• How do you know what the author’s opinion is?
• How does the author try to persuade the audience?
• How does the author support his or her opinion?
• How does the author offer to help with the problem?

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Analyze persuasive letter genre features on a class anchor chart.
• Listen to a persuasive letter mentor text and find the features of the genre in the text.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Mentor text: “Con: Letters Against” from Old Oak Park: Build On or Save It?
• Chart paper and markers
• Persuasive Letter Features (BLM 1)
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation
If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy a blank Persuasive Letter Features chart onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persuasive Letter Features</th>
<th>Examples from the Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifies specific audience</td>
<td>page 18: Author indicates that all people of Oakdale are the audience. Uses the phrases “our little town” and “our collective history.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States a strong position</td>
<td>page 18: “As someone who cares deeply about our town’s history, I am shocked by the mayor’s decision to sell the park and cut down the tree.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses powerful words and phrases to influence the reader</td>
<td>page 18: shocked page 20: obligation, disgrace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses facts and evidence to make a case</td>
<td>page 19: The pictures of arrowheads found in Old Oak Park are evidence that the park is important. page 19: Facts about the history of the park are given to make the author’s case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggests solutions or actions</td>
<td>page 20: “Don’t destroy the town’s history for a mall. That would be a disgrace!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Persuasive Letter Features Anchor Chart (BLM 1)
Read Aloud a Persuasive Letter

Before you read, point out the right-hand column on your chart and on students’ BLMs. Explain that you are going to read aloud a persuasive letter and that students should listen carefully to the text to identify examples of the genre features in the letter. Explain that after the reading, students will work in small groups to complete the chart by recording examples of each genre feature in the text. Read aloud “Con: Letters Against.” Note: You may wish to project the text using the interactive whiteboard resources so that students can follow along.

2. Rehearse

Analyze the Mentor Text

Form small groups of students to complete the second column of the graphic organizer on BLM 1. If you are using the interactive whiteboard resources, invite students to revisit parts of the text using the interactive whiteboard as they look for the examples they need.

If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share the examples they found in the text you read aloud. Record students’ findings on the anchor chart. Post the anchor chart for students to refer to throughout the unit as they think about the persuasive letter features they need to include in their own letters.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: When you write your persuasive letters, you will address a specific audience and take a strong position on an issue. To convince readers to agree with your position, you will use powerful words and phrases along with facts and evidence to make your case. Also, you will suggest a solution or an action that can be taken. Use the class anchor chart to make sure you include all of these features.

As students continue to brainstorm persuasive letter topics, encourage them to think about how they might incorporate features of the genre.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers who have completed their brainstorming to share the topics they generated.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Pair beginning ELs with fluent English speakers during the small-group “Analyze the Mentor Text” activity. Keep in mind that they will not be able to contribute many ideas orally. You will want to work with them individually to reinforce concepts while other students write independently.

Intermediate

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the small-group activity. Write the following simple sentence frames on chart paper and model how students can use them to contribute ideas in the group. For example:

- Persuasive letters have ______.
- An author of a persuasive letter ______.
- The author includes ______.

Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the small-group activity.