1. Focus

Introduce the Mentor Persuasive Letter

Say: In order to become an effective persuasive letter writer, it helps to read or listen to examples of other people’s persuasive writing. Today I’m going to read you a letter to the editor. Most newspapers contain a section called “Letters to the Editor.” Writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper is a common way for a member of a community to comment on articles and issues. As we read, we will pay attention to the key features of this persuasive letter. You will be using these features in your own persuasive letters. Before I read the letter, I want to read the article in a newspaper that sparked the letter to the editor.

You may want to read aloud the newspaper article on page 4 to provide background before reading the letter to the editor on page 8. You can also display the letter using the interactive whiteboard resources.

If your class includes English learners or other students who would benefit from vocabulary or oral language development to comprehend the persuasive letter, use “Make the Mentor Text Comprehensible for ELs.”

Read Aloud the Mentor Persuasive Letter

After reading the newspaper article, read aloud the letter to the editor, stopping at some or all of the places indicated (or at other points you choose) to highlight three key features of a persuasive letter:

1. Persuasive letters take a strong position on a topic.
2. Persuasive letters are written for a specific audience.
3. Persuasive letters use powerful words and phrases to influence the reader.

A Strong Position
Page 8, after third sentence. Say: The letter states its position right away. The writer says “Mayor O’Shea has the right idea,” so he agrees with the mayor. The issue is about the need for a new mall.

A Specific Audience
Page 8, after first paragraph. Say: Persuasive letters have a particular audience in mind. This author is writing to the editor of the newspaper, but he also uses words and phrases that make me think his audience is everyone in the town. He says, “Our town needs the new mall. Without it, we’re dead.” The pronouns our and we tell me his audience is all the residents of Oakdale.

Powerful Words and Phrases to Influence Reader
Page 8, after first paragraph. Say: The author uses strong words to support his position and convince the reader to agree with him. The writer says that...
without the new mall, “we’re dead.” That’s a striking image, and it tells me the writer feels strongly about this issue. Then the writer says, “No town can survive without jobs,” and points out that the new mall promises to create many jobs. He gives a reason to support his argument. Good persuasive letters include language that will make the reader pay attention.

**Powerful Words and Phrases to Influence Reader**

*After reading page 8. Say:* As the letter continues, the author gives even more evidence to support his argument. He says, “Our town has been in trouble for a decade.” This is a powerful idea that makes me stop and think. He points out that people can’t afford to live in the town anymore. He says that young people go away to college, and because of the lack of jobs, they “never come back”—this creates a powerful image in my mind of a lonely ghost town. I don’t want to live in a place like that, which makes me think he has the right idea.

### 2. Rehearse

**Respond Orally to the Mentor Persuasive Letter**

After reading, invite students to share their own ideas and reactions to the text by asking questions such as:
- Did you find the letter persuasive? Why or why not?
- Which words or phrases did you think were the most powerful?

If necessary, model the following sentence frames to support ELs and struggling students:
- The letter was persuasive because _____.
- The most powerful words were ______.

### 3. Independent Writing and Conferring

*Say:* Remember that a persuasive letter is written for a specific audience. When you write your persuasive letter, you’ll need to take a strong position on the issue. Then you should explain your thinking and give examples that will appeal to the audience, using powerful words and phrases.

Invite students to respond to the mentor persuasive letter by explaining whether or not they agree with the writer’s position and what arguments from the text either convinced or failed to convince them.

### 4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share their responses to the mentor text. Discuss what kinds of arguments are effective in a persuasive text.

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**Make the Mentor Text Comprehensible for ELs**

**Beginning**

Show students an envelope with an address and a stamp on the front. Point to the mentor text and then to the envelope to reinforce the understanding that the mentor text is a letter.

**Beginning and Intermediate**

*Say: This persuasive letter is about building a shopping mall in a town. The man who wrote the letter is in favor of building the mall. He thinks it will bring jobs to the town.*

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Display pictures of a shopping mall and of people doing the jobs in the mall mentioned in the mentor text (retail clerk, cook, waiter, maintenance worker, security guard) or use the images on the interactive whiteboard resources. *Say: Tell me what you know about malls. What kind of stores are in a mall? Who works at a mall? Encourage a background-building discussion about shopping and working at a mall.*

**All Levels**

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognates: carpenter/el carpintero/la carpintera; electrician/el/la electricista; future/el futuro; restaurant/el restaurante.