Use Description to Frame an Issue

1. Focus

Explain Using Description to Frame an Issue in Persuasive Writing

Say: When I write a persuasive essay, I want to communicate a strong point of view about an issue or problem. However, I might begin by simply framing the issue—describing it using richly descriptive language. I might use words that help readers visualize some aspect of the problem or to connect with it personally in some other way. This can help readers understand the importance of the argument that follows. Today I’m going to show you how to use descriptions to set up an issue or problem in persuasive writing.

Model How Writers Use Description to Frame an Issue in Persuasive Writing

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for descriptive language as you read aloud.

Close your eyes. Think back in time. Where were you in the sweltering days of July and August when you were twelve, thirteen, or fourteen? Were you playing dodgeball with your friends at summer camp? Were you pushing a lawn mower across the neighbor’s grass to earn money so that someday you could go to college? Did you go somewhere far away and meet people from another culture?

Modeling Text

Say: The writer of this persuasive essay wants to convince readers that summer vacation is worthwhile and necessary. In this paragraph, she sets up the issue by describing typical summer vacation activities. I notice that she is not stating an opinion or making an argument directly in this section of text. Instead, she’s framing the issue for the argument that follows. I look at her descriptive language. Right from the start, the writer invites me to visualize myself in past summers. Then she describes a variety of summer activities I may have been doing—and that other people surely do. These include playing dodgeball at summer camp and earning money by mowing a lawn. The language is vivid, and the activities the writer describes show a range of useful things kids can do during summer vacation—from having fun and exercising to earning money, to experiencing other cultures. I think I see where this is going. After reading this paragraph, who will want to say that students shouldn’t have summer vacation? Through the use of descriptive language, the author has helped me to visualize and connect personally to the issue. She has set up to persuade me that summertime activities are valuable and that I shouldn’t deny children the possibility for rich experiences that I likely had myself.
2. Rehearse

Practice Writing Using Description to Frame an Issue in Persuasive Writing

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

School should start later.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with partners to write a description setting up the issue in the sentence. Students may choose to represent either side of the issue. Encourage them to think about telling a brief story with description or describing things that happen because school starts either too late or too early. Pairs of students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be ready to explain how their descriptions set up the issue.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their sentences and explain their word choices. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write or revise their persuasive essays.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that writers of persuasive essays can use descriptions to frame, or set up, an issue or problem. A persuasive essay tries to convince people to take action or change a point of view. Sometimes this requires connecting to the reader and helping them visualize the problem first. As you write your persuasive essay, remember to consider using description to frame the issue and set up the point you wish to make.

Ask students to identify a section of their persuasive essays in which they could add description to frame an issue or problem. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to read aloud a section of their persuasive essays in which they framed an issue with description.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Engage small groups of students in conversation about what they do in the morning before they come to school. Use gestures, words, and pictures to help them describe their activities. Use the following sentence frames to help students compose complete sentences:

First, I ______.
Then, I ______.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Supply the following sentence frames to help them rewrite the sentence:

Imagine starting school later and ______.
Imagine starting school earlier and ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: description/la descripción; persuasive/persuasivo(a); point of view/el punto de vista.