

Writing a Letter to the Editor

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: **Graphic Organizer, Prewriting, Drafting, Self-Editing, Peer Editing, SOAPSTone, Sharing and Responding**

Assignment

Your assignment is to choose an editorial, analyze the persuasive arguments, and write a letter to the editor, agreeing or disagreeing with the writer of the editorial.


Steps

Prewriting/Planning

1. Choose a timely and relevant newspaper editorial about an issue that you are interested in and feel strongly about. You may use one of the editorials you found in your Editorial Scavenger Hunt (Activity 2.16) or one your teacher gives you.
2. Read through the editorial slowly and carefully. As you read, highlight the persuasive appeals and techniques, and identify points or comments that you would like to respond to.
3. Use the “Guidelines for Reading an Editorial” (page 167) and/or SOAPSTone (page 168) graphic organizer to develop a thorough understanding of the editorial.
4. Review the “Guidelines for Writing a Letter to the Editor” in Activity 2.20. Then use a prewriting strategy to generate ideas.

Drafting

5. Draft your letter in business-letter format.

 **TECHNOLOGY TIP** Word processing programs offer templates for several types of business documents, such as business letters, reports, and memorandums. Compare the format of the various business letters and choose one for your draft.

Revising Through Sharing and Responding

6. Share your draft in your writing group to gather suggestions for revision (format, organization, ideas, and language); revise accordingly. Consult the Scoring Guide to aid revisions. Also, refer to the Grammar Handbook and the grammar tips in this unit to revise for sentence structure and grammar.

Editing for Publication

7. Edit your draft: Check for spelling, punctuation, and usage errors. Prepare to publish your letter. If you are writing your letter by hand, use your best penmanship to make your letter readable.
8. Write a reflection on how you have incorporated your knowledge of persuasive appeals and techniques into your letter to the editor. Be sure to identify the particular appeals and techniques you used, and explain why you think these are effective choices.

Guidelines for Reading an Editorial

Title _____ Author _____ Topic _____

Process	Notes
<p>Examine the headline, sub-headline and related cartoon (if it exists). Predict what the editorial will be about.</p>	
<p>Once you have determined the author's position, stop reading for a moment or two. Reflect on the other side of the issue. Who might think differently? Which arguments might support the other side?</p>	
<p>Continue reading the editorial. Identify the strongest pieces of evidence that the writer uses to support his or her position.</p>	
<p>Determine whether the writer addresses the main objections of the other side. If so, give an example. What does he or she not address? Do you feel that the author is fair to the other side? Why or why not?</p>	
<p>Reread the text and highlight appeals (logos, pathos, ethos) as well as persuasive techniques (bandwagon, avant garde, facts/figures, transfer). How do these appeals and techniques affect your attitude toward the issue?</p>	

SOAPSTone

SOAPSTone	Analysis	Textual Support
Subject: What is the topic?		
Occasion: What are the circumstances surrounding this text?		
Audience: Who is the target audience?		
Purpose: Why did the author write this text?		
Speaker: What does the reader know about the writer?		
Tone: What is the writer's attitude toward the subject?		

SCORING GUIDE

Scoring Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging
Ideas	The writer asserts a sophisticated position that agrees or disagrees with a specific point made by the author of the editorial; the writer uses a variety of appeals and techniques to convince a particular audience to support his or her position; and the writer proposes a strong solution (if applicable).	The writer states a position that agrees or disagrees with the author of the editorial; the writer uses at least two types of appeals and one technique to convince an audience to support his or her position; and the writer proposes a solution (if applicable).	The writer shows a limited understanding of the author's ideas in the editorial. The position is unfocused or missing, persuasive appeals and techniques are not used to persuade the audience, and the writer does not offer a solution (if applicable).
Organization	The letter is written in business letter format, and the writer skillfully organizes the letter to suit the purpose and audience.	The letter is written in business letter format, and the writer organizes the letter to suit the purpose and audience	The letter is not properly formatted and/or the organization is difficult to follow. The writer shows a limited understanding of the purpose and/or audience.
Use of Language	The writer's word choice skillfully supports the opinion.	The writer's word choice effectively supports the opinion.	The writer's word choice ineffectively supports the opinion.
Conventions	Writing contains few or no errors in spelling, punctuation, or capitalization.	Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization mistakes do not detract from the letter.	Spelling, punctuation, or capitalization mistakes detract from meaning and/or readability.
Evidence of Writing Process	The texts demonstrate extensive evidence of the various stages of the writing process.	The texts demonstrate evidence of the various stages of the writing process.	The texts demonstrate little or no evidence of the stages of the writing process.
Additional Criteria			

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Comments: _____
