



Game-Changing Writing

Persuasive Paragraphs



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Grade Level	8th Grade	Time Frame	80 minutes
Subject	English/Language Arts	Duration	2 class periods

Essential Question

How can we use evidence and reasoning to convince others to agree with our ideas?

Summary

In this lesson students develop their writing skills to create persuasive paragraphs with a claim and supporting evidence and reasoning. Students will see the real-world application of having strong writing skills and will be able to create a clear and well-supported argument using the CER structure.

Snapshot

Engage

Students describe a given image, generate a list of adjectives, then improve their sentence using that list of adjectives.

Explore

Students informally investigate the quality of a paragraph, first focusing on the mechanics then the structure.

Explain

Students formalize their understanding of the components of a CER paragraph: claim, evidence, and reasoning.

Extend

Students demonstrate their understanding of writing a persuasive paragraph using the claim, evidence, reasoning structure.

Evaluate

Students make the connection between strong writing skills and a career as they watch an interview of a professional and then practice giving feedback and writing.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Writing (6-12)

ORG 401: A score in this range indicates that the writer is able to: -Group and sequence ideas logically - Use transitions between and within paragraphs to clarify relationships among ideas

Oklahoma Academic Standards English Language Arts Vertical Progressions, Grades 6–12 (6th-12th)

6-8.2.W.4: Students will routinely and recursively edit for correct grammar, usage, and mechanics, using various resources.

8.2.W.3: Students will routinely and recursively revise drafts for intended purpose, audience, organization, coherence, and style (e.g., word choice and sentence variety).

8.3.W.3: Students will compose argumentative essays that: 1) introduce precise claims; 2) acknowledge counterclaims; 3) organize claims, counterclaims, and evidence in a logical sequence; 4) provide relevant evidence to develop arguments, using credible sources; 5) use sentence variety and word choice to create clarity; 6) establish and maintain a formal style

Attachments

- [Deconstructed Paragraph—Game-Changing Writing.docx](#)
- [Deconstructed Paragraph—Game-Changing Writing.pdf](#)
- [Expert Editing Guide—Game-Changing Writing.docx](#)
- [Expert Editing Guide—Game-Changing Writing.pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—Game-Changing Writing.pptx](#)
- [Note Catcher—Game-Changing Writing.docx](#)
- [Note Catcher—Game-Changing Writing.pdf](#)
- [Pregame Paragraphs—Game-Changing Writing.docx](#)
- [Pregame Paragraphs—Game-Changing Writing.pdf](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Pregame Paragraphs handout (attached; one page per student; print one-sided)
- Deconstructed Paragraph handout (attached; one per pair; print one-sided)
- Note Catcher handout (attached; one per student; print one-sided)
- Expert Editing Guide handout (attached; one half page per student; print one-sided)
- Notebook paper

10 minutes

Engage

Using the attached **Lesson Slides**, display **slide 3**. Post the essential question on the board as students enter the room. Read it aloud at the beginning of class. Then, transition to **slide 4** and share the lesson's learning objectives.

Show **slide 5**. Have students take out a piece of notebook paper and write one sentence describing the given image, which is of a pair participating in the obscure sport known as "horseboarding."

Alternative Image Options

If you would prefer using an alternative image, consider searching for alternatives that have a lot of details so students can more easily generate a list of adjectives in the next steps of the activity. Consider using an [AI Image Generator](#) to create a custom image for this activity.

Display **slide 6** and ask students to take a moment to really review the image and jot down any one- or two-word adjectives about the image. You may need to take the time to review what an adjective is.

After students have written their list of adjectives, show **slide 7**. Direct students to rewrite their original sentence to include three of their adjectives. If needed, have students indicate on their paper which sentence is the original and which is the new sentence. This could be done with arrows, stars, etc. Then have students trade papers with a nearby peer.

Display **slide 8**. Have peers compare the new and original sentences. After giving students a minute or two to quietly read, have pairs discuss the differences they noticed. As time allows, ask for volunteers to share with the class.

Sample Responses

The new sentence helps me imagine the picture more; it describes the picture better.

15 minutes

Explore

Show **slide 9** and introduce the [Think-Pair-Share](#) strategy. Give each student a copy of the attached **Pregame Paragraphs** handout. Direct students to read Paragraph A and independently make at least three corrections. Then have them read Paragraph B and answer the questions that follow, identifying the main problem in the paragraph and how to fix it.

Have students find a partner, which could be the same as earlier or a new one. Display **slide 10** and direct pairs to discuss their edits. Then have volunteers share their corrections with the class.

Give each pair a set of sentence strips from the attached **Deconstructed Paragraph** handout and show **slide 11**. Direct students to arrange the sentences in order to make a good paragraph. Do not yet explain what a “good paragraph” is. Let students use prior knowledge to make their best educated guess for this task.

After approximately 2 minutes, ask for volunteers to share the order of their sentences. Then, move to **slide 12** for students to check their work. Share with students that the third and fourth sentences could be sequenced in either order.

15 minutes

Explain

Display **slide 13** and give each student a copy of the attached **Note Catcher** handout. Explain that a “good paragraph” is a group of sentences that focus on one main idea. Introduce the idea of a “persuasive/argumentative paragraph,” and that it contains a claim with evidence and reasoning.

Move to **slide 14** and give the definitions of *claim*, *evidence*, and *reasoning*. Share the [Claim, Evidence, Reasoning \(CER\)](#) strategy and that they can use “C-E-R” as an easy way to remember what to include in their persuasive paragraphs. Encourage students to make notes on their Note Catcher.

Show **slide 15** and play the [Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning](#) video on the slide. This video explains CER in more depth.

Embedded video

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=JGOxVlmgWE>

Display **slide 16** and elaborate on the meaning of *claim* in a paragraph. Pause at the end of this slide, giving students time to take notes and ask questions.

Repeat this for *evidence* and *reasoning* using **slides 17–18**.

20 minutes

Extend

Teacher's Note: Activity Preparation

During this phase of the lesson, students are going to write a CER paragraph. Determine if you want students to handwrite or type this paragraph and any other criteria prior to giving this writing assignment. Then clearly communicate these expectations with your students.

Once students understand the elements of a persuasive paragraph, they are now ready to create their own. Show **slide 19** and direct students to write their own CER paragraph using one of the following prompts:

- What activity should be taken as seriously as a professional sport?
- What activity should be made an official school sport?
- Which sport is the best?
- What activity should people follow instead of sports?

Optional Extension

Since they are an important feature of argumentative essays, consider extending the scope of this lesson to include *counterclaims*. Using the CER structure to discuss counterclaims within an argumentative essay is a great way for an author to introduce the opposing view and justify why the author's initial claim is still valid. Recognizing counterclaims is also emphasized in both the Oklahoma Academic Standards for 8th grade ELA and the 8th grade writing test.

If you chose to introduce this concept, give the description and examples in the same way that *claim* was introduced during the Explain phase of the lesson. Then have students improve upon their CER paragraph by adding a claim or consider having them practice by creating a second CER paragraph, this time with a counterclaim.

20 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 20** and play the [A Way With Words](#) video, which features an interview with Darrin Walters, a senior copy editor from the University of Oklahoma. When the video ends, facilitate a brief discussion asking students what they found interesting about his career.

Embedded video

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=QAn9e5s8AMM>

Show **slide 21** and give each student a half-page copy of the attached **Expert Editing Guide** handout. Share with students that they are now going to take on the role of a professional writer and edit their partner's CER paragraph.

Have students find a new partner and have them trade CER paragraphs. Instruct students to use this guide to peer review their partner's paragraph. Give students approximately 5 minutes to complete this task.

Once students are done marking feedback, have students return the CER paragraphs to the original authors. Direct students to review the feedback and use it to rewrite their paragraph. If time allows, consider having students continue to work with the same partner and have them write a new CER paragraph for the opposing view to their peer's paragraph.

Additional Resources

Once students understand the basics of writing a CER paragraph, they can then apply this knowledge to writing five-paragraph essays. As students practice longer pieces of writing, consider having them use the [Writer's Checklist](#) from the Oklahoma 8th Grade ELA Test by [Cognia](#). There is also a [Spanish version](#) available.

Resources

- Cogna. (n.d.). *Writer's checklist*. Oklahoma State Department of Education. Retrieved August 10, 2026, from <http://oklahoma.onlinehelp.cognia.org/testing-materials-resources/>
- Cogna. (n.d.). *Writer's checklist (Spanish version)*. Oklahoma State Department of Education. Retrieved August 10, 2026, from <http://oklahoma.onlinehelp.cognia.org/testing-materials-resources/>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). AI image generator. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/3487>
- K20 Center. (20210, February 24). *A way with words* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAn9e5s8AMM>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Claim, evidence, reasoning (CER). Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/156>
- K20 Center. (2021, August 19). *Claims, evidence, and reasoning* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGOxVlgmGWE>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Think-pair-share. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/139>