

## OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 7 AND 8 WRITING/HOMEWORK 8

NAME (FIRST AND LAST): \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

### The Art of Persuasion

- 1 You want an Xbox, a computer, a raise in your allowance, or permission to attend a concert with your friends. What do you do? You might try whining, wheedling, or begging, but that conduct rarely does more than annoy people. You might employ tantrums, threats, or sarcasm, but that sorry behavior won't win you any awards either. If you use the art of persuasion, you stand the best chance of being heard, respected, and perhaps rewarded with the desired response. Surely by this stage of life you have already picked up on the persuasive argument.
- 2 Let's take what you know about the art of persuasion and apply it to the written word. Your assignment is to write a persuasive essay. We'll take it step-by-step.
- 3 First you need to choose a topic. It must be something **debatable**. It can't be a fact. If you were to choose as your topic, "Vipers are dangerous," you wouldn't have to persuade anyone of that. However, if your topic was, "Vipers should be eliminated from the animal kingdom," then you would have presented an opinion that could be debated. That's not to say that your argument would win, but you could give it your best effort!
- 4 Your persuasive essay will focus on only one side—your chosen side—of the argument. This will not be a pros-and-cons essay. Also, it won't be a personal opinion essay. You must be prepared to back up your logic with evidence collected in research that supports your position.
- 5 Students often choose topics such as school uniforms, the legal driving age, or saving endangered animals. I'd like you to move past those topics to something new and creative. Try one of these three topics: Christmas trees, *Survivor*, or our national bird. You need to decide your position on the chosen topic. Your argument regarding Christmas trees may be to persuade others to buy artificial trees, or persuade them that live trees are best, or perhaps you feel that the tradition of Christmas trees has no place in the 21st century! Your argument regarding the TV program, *Survivor*, would be about whether teens should or should not participate. If you choose our national bird as your topic, you should try to persuade your readers that a bird other than the Bald Eagle deserves to be the United States' bird of honor. Choose one of those topics listed, or come up with an argument that excites you.
- 6 Once you have a topic and have researched it thoroughly, you will write your introduction. Capture the reader's attention with a quotation or story related to the topic, or ask a leading question. If I were writing about eliminating vipers, I might begin with the sad tale of a villager whom an eyelash viper hidden in a bunch of bananas killed, and how his death affected his family.
- 7 After the attention-commanding ploy, you move directly to your argument. In the viper argument, I'd probably give a statistic about deaths per year caused by vipers, and my next sentence would clearly announce my opinion that vipers serve no useful purpose and should be exterminated. Follow your statement of persuasion with three main points that support your position on your topic. You will elaborate on those points in the following paragraphs.
- 8 The body of your essay will be made up of three paragraphs. Each paragraph will present

one argument—or point—for your position, based on the three points you gave in your introduction. Now is the time to expand your argument with facts, quotes, statistics, examples, or other evidence that supports your cause. Choose only the most powerful items that will convince the reader that your idea is the right one.

9 To continue the viper essay, my reasons for reducing the viper population might be that vipers are poisonous, too-well-camouflaged, and serve no useful purpose to humanity. I would present evidence about their toxic nature and ability to hide themselves. The teacher would probably deduct points for that third argument, because I couldn't find evidence to support that opinion. On the contrary, with very little trouble I could have found evidence that shows a very useful purpose for vipers, such as controlling the prey and predator populations and controlling the population of destructive rodents and other pests. These rodents not only destroy crops and food stores but also spread disease that could result in plagues and other health threats to humans. If I were still determined to persuade readers that vipers need to be wiped off the face of the earth, I'd need to come up with a new argument. I'd also try to disprove the opposing argument that states that vipers help control the pest population, since I know that someone might raise that issue. Just as I need to be prepared to defend my position, you'll need to be prepared to defend yours!

10 Completing the essay is simple. In the closing paragraph, you restate your position and summarize your best evidence. At this point, you cannot slip in any new information. This paragraph mainly reviews what you've already written. Don't use the exact same words as in your first paragraph; that shows laziness. This is your last chance to persuade the reader to agree with you! Choose your words carefully! You may add an emotional appeal to your otherwise logical arguments.

11 My viper viewpoint is weak, so my closing would probably include an emotional appeal. "We must protect future generations from the dangers of vipers! We must make this land safe for our children and grandchildren!"

12 It's time for you to begin your persuasive essay. Here is a brief summary to guide you. Once you are finished, you may find that your powers of persuasion have blossomed!

I. Introduction - capture the reader's attention; state your purpose; list three points/arguments supporting your position.

II. Body

A. First paragraph, first point, supporting evidence

B. Second paragraph, second point, supporting evidence

C. Third paragraph, third point, supporting evidence

III. (Optional) Address opposing viewpoints

IV. Conclusion - restate your position and the three points in a different way; insert an emotional appeal if possible; urge the reader to agree with your opinion.

## Critical thinking

*Critical thinking* is a skill that students develop as they progress. This skill becomes more important in higher grades, and it is a skill students must learn to sharpen. But some students find it difficult to understand the concept of critical thinking.

The concept can be difficult to grasp because it requires students to set aside assumptions and beliefs to think *without bias or judgment*. That is difficult to do!

Critical thinking involves suspending your beliefs to explore and question topics from a "blank page" point of view. It also involves the ability to know fact from opinion when exploring a topic.

These exercises are designed to help you develop critical thinking skills.

### Critical Thinking Exercise 1: Tour Guide for an Alien

Pretend that you have been assigned the task of conducting a tour for aliens who are visiting earth and observing human life. You're riding along in a blimp, and you float over a professional baseball stadium. One of your aliens looks down and becomes very confused, so you tell him that there is a game going on.

Try to answer the following questions for him.

What is a game?

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Why are there no female players?

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Why do people get so passionate watching other people play games?

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What is a team?

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Why can't the people in the seats just go down on the field and join in?

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READ EACH OF THE FOLLOWING WRITING PIECES AND DECIDE  
WHETHER THE AUTHOR'S PURPOSE IS TO:

- **persuade**
- **inform**
- **entertain**

1. It was a glorious morning in Alabama. The sun was shining through the trees. Alan couldn't wait to find his fishing pole and call his friend Sam to go fishing. They had a great time on these early morning fishing trips. They took their dogs with them and the dogs would swim in the lake while they fished. It was so funny to watch those dogs paddle around the lake.

What is the author's purpose of this writing? \_\_\_\_\_

2. The Slim-O-Matic will cause you to loose pounds and inches from your body in one month. This amazing machine helps you to exercise correctly and provides an easy video to show you the proper way to exercise. Send \$75.99 and begin exercising today.

What is the author's purpose of this writing? \_\_\_\_\_

3. The Underground Railroad was a secret organization which helped slaves escape to freedom. Many slaves were able to escape because of the conductors and station masters. The northern states were free states and slaves were free once they arrived in the north. Secret codes and signals were used to identify the conductors and station masters.

What is the author's purpose of this writing? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Judy Glen's amazing Wrinkle Remover cream will make you look younger in thirty days or less. This remarkable cream has special ingredients to make your wrinkles disappear. The cost for a thirty day supply is \$ 25.99. Send your check to P.O.Box 00002, Shelton, CA 74836

What is the author's purpose of this writing? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Thomas was not happy one little bit. His sister, Susan was making honor roll again. His parents would allow her to do anything she wanted to do. Thomas was not making honor roll this time and he was not going to be allowed to do all the things he wanted to do. Poor Thomas! He would just have to study harder and get back on the honor roll.

What is the author's purpose of this writing? \_\_\_\_\_

## **The Complex Sentence**

A complex sentence is made up of a simple sentence (a complete statement) and a statement that begins with a dependent word. Here is a list of common dependent words. The bold words can be used to begin a sentence when used correctly.

### **Dependent Words**

after - if - even if - when - whenever - although - though - in order that - where - wherever - as - since - whether - because - that - so that - which - whichever - before - unless - while - even though - until - who - how - what - whatever - whose

A complex sentence is used when you want to emphasize one idea over another in a sentence. Look at the following complex sentence:

Because I forgot the time, I missed the final exam.

The idea that the writer wants to emphasize here: I missed the final exam - is expressed as a complete thought. The less important idea, - Because I forgot the time - is subordinated (dependent) to the complete thought. The technique of giving one idea less emphasis than another is called subordination and this makes a sentence complex.

Following are other examples of complex sentences. In each case, the part starting with the dependent word is less emphasized part of the sentence.

While Aisha was eating breakfast, she began to feel sick.  
I checked my money before I invited Pedro for lunch.

Use logical dependent words to combine the following pairs of simple sentences into two complex sentences, and circle the subordinating conjunction. Place a comma after a dependent statement when it starts the sentence.

Example:

- I obtained a credit card.
- I began spending money recklessly.

Different answers:

- a. When I obtained a credit card, I began spending money recklessly.
- b. After I obtained a credit card, I began spending money recklessly.

1. - The instructor announced the quiz.  
- The class groaned.

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2. - Gene could not fit any more groceries into his cart.  
- He decided to go to the checkout counter.

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3. - Your car is out of commission.  
- You should take it to Otto's Repair Shop.

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4. - I finished typing the paper.  
- I proofread it carefully.

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5. - Alan dressed the turkey.  
- His brother greased the roasting pan.

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**THE END**