

THE GRADE

THE GRADE: Letter to the Editor Activity

Objectives

- Main points
 - o Mission as man of The Grade: become leaders in family, work, and community.
 - o The media takes the lead in forming public opinion. Get involved!
 - o Letters to newspaper editors are an easy way to voice your opinion.
- Cover basics of a Letter to the Editor: rhetoric, format, style.

Read Article and Response

- Hand out copy of article to students and ask them to read it.
- Ask for their opinion on the article.
- Give editorial written in response to article. Ask students for their thoughts on the response. What is good about it? What is its objective?
- Indicate the following:
 - o Does not attempt to dismantle entire article
 - o Simply indicates that article is biased and cited research is flawed
 - o Gives example of flawed research
 - o Has impressive credentials
 - o Simple but strong close.
 - o Total of 6 sentences. 129 words.
- Good defense. Little effort.

Letter to the Editor

- Have something to write about
 - o Stay on top of current events by reading the paper daily. To influence society, we must know society: read the paper. When you come across an article that aggravates you or you feel more can be said, write a response! If you don't read the paper, you won't have anything to respond to.
 - o Reasons for writing a letter to the editor
 - Take issue with what you read in an article
 - Expand on an issue presented in an article/editorial
 - Congratulate the publication for something published
- Keep it short
 - o When reading the editorial section, readers are not looking for dissertations. You have to captivate the reader and offer a persuasive argument with few words – 200 max (about a third of a page, single spaced text).
- Aristotle's 3 Rhetorical Elements
 - o Ethos – character and credibility

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- If possible, the reader should take interest in your comments because of your credential.
- Pathos – emotional appeals to win an audience over
 - Give your audience a reason to care. Why should they read your piece?
- Logos – use of reason and evidence
 - Do you have an argument? Can you explain it in a few sentences? Since you're restricted to 200 words, pick one or two points to address.
- Engage your audience
 - Readers are not looking for pure logic; they are looking for persuasion. Images, anecdotes, arguments, and tone have to appeal to your audience. Are you writing to your school newspaper or to the Wall Street Journal?
 - No need to prove what they already know. Take into account your audience's prejudices. It is not necessary to spell out an argument step by step if it is something they already agree with or know.
- Template for successful Letter to the Editor
 - Arresting Introduction
 - Captivate their attention. If you won't they won't continue reading.
 - Clear sequence of supporting arguments
 - Don't make the reader work to understand your argument. Your argument needs to be clear and concise to retain the reader's attention and to have any hope of persuading them with your message. Remember, your whole letter is less than 200 words. Keep it to the point.
 - Memorable conclusion
 - Go out with a bang.
- Other Points
 - Read and follow Editor's Guidelines
 - Format
 - Length

Read Bad Letter to Editor

- Read first sample article. Ask for comments from students. Is this a good letter? No. Review reasons why.

Read Good Letter

- Read second sample article. Ask for comments from students. What are the primary rhetorical elements used?

Plan for Next Month

- Find an article or editorial in a newspaper (school, local, or national) that you take issue with or would like to support
- Work with mentor to write a response
- Students should attempt to submit it to the paper. At the very least, have a letter to bring to class to discuss.
- May Session – bring article and your response; be ready to discuss in class