

Persuasive Writing Techniques
or, How To Get People to Think the Way You Do
Mr. Coia

1. Use rhetorical devices to support assertions

- appeal to logic through reasoning

“If cloning continues, it will affect the population by increasing numbers around the globe.”

- appeal to emotion or ethical belief

“God never created man to create man. He alone is the Creator.”

- personal anecdote

“My mother was cloned, and she was teased in junior high school. It was miserable”

- case study

“In 1998, scientists at Boston University showed that cloned humans have a weaker immune system and would introduce a weaker gene in society as a whole.”

- analogy

“Cloning is likened to the outrage of racism in the 1960s in the claims that one can be a “lesser” human being.”

2. Clarify and defend positions with evidence, including:

- facts
- expert opinions
- quotations
- logical reasoning

3. Address readers' concerns, counterclaims, biases, and/or expectations

- Show your reader/listener that you have already thought about the opposing points

“I understand that some believe that cloning offers a new way to improve health by removing impurities, but this is simply not true. It is likened to the Nazi creation of a ‘superman.’”

Letter to School Board Assignment

Huck Finn unit

English 5-6

Mr. Coia

Due: February 10th

Assignment: Let's imagine that *Huckleberry Finn* was being challenged in our school district. The board asked for letters stating opinions on the matter. Write a persuasive letter to the school board demanding that *Huck Finn* be removed from the North Clackamas School District's reading list, or, give reasons why it should remain in place. Attempt to persuade the board members with your words.

- Use rhetorical devices to plead your case. Be sure to consult of Persuasive Writing techniques handout for more information on writing persuasively.

- Focus effort on writing clear and concise paragraphs, beginning with a strong topic sentence. Notice that the example give a topic sentence, then unpacks the meaning in the paragraph.

- Include an introduction and conclusion to your work.

- Use the proper business-letter format. See our text on pages 1215-1216 for assistance.

- You are graded on use of persuasive techniques, topic sentences, interesting writing, and business-letter format

- The letter is to be typed and a minimum of 400 words. Please use standard-sized fonts and margins.

Point value: 50 points

14486 SE 122nd Ave
Clackamas, OR 97015

February 10, 2003

Ms. Carol Storum
Chair of School Board
North Clackamas School District #12
4444 SE Lake Road
Milwaukie OR 97222

Dear School Board Members,

As a teacher of Junior English at Clackamas High School, I am deeply concerned about *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*'s placement on the approved reading list. I included the novel in my class this year, and the experience showed me the problems of such material. I am aware of both the controversy and the refutations of that controversy and tried to offer both in the classroom. Students, however, failed to grasp the meaning of Mark Twain's satirical pen—whether he was intentional or not—and the “deeper” meaning of the novel passed by. Students then were left with what they saw on the written page. Because of this experience, I have three main reasons why I believe the novel should not be taught.

The novel fails to measure up to the accepted standard of good literature. I understand that we all have different measures of what makes a good book, but I find it difficult to believe that *Huck Finn* fits anyone's definition. While it may be an exciting adventure of a boy escaping from “civilization,” the novel is filled with flat characters with little development. Pap is the always-evil father without any human qualities. The King and the Duke, two men pivotal to the progress of the plot, are typical con men that we have seen countless times before. Huck Finn himself, the boy around whom controversy swells, is as distant to his readers as freedom is to him. These plain, flat characters make it difficult to see the noteworthiness of this novel.

The novel reinforces negative stereotypes of African-Americans. While I shudder to be lumped into the same category of countless others who have preceded me, I cannot sit silent on this matter. *Huck Finn* is filled with derogatory words, commentary, and characterization of blacks. I do welcome discussion of racial matters in my class, but the book does not provide for intelligent dialogue, or helpful discussions to develop ideas; rather, it encourages anger and arguments and hurt feelings. Twain's portrayal of Jim is nothing more than a minstrel buffoonery for the enjoyment of white audiences. Because of this, students cannot see past the author's comedy to feel the pain of the deeper message: that blacks were not treated as humans in the South.

Our school population does not reflect a diverse enough class to have proper discussions on racial matters. At this time, our school does not have the opportunity of a culturally-diverse population that would make discussions of race helpful. Our classes are filled with mostly white students who lack the experience and sensitivity to discuss what it is like to be the target of discrimination. Until this changes, a study of *Huck Finn* amounts to little more than simply watching an episode of "Roots" during a Civil Rights unit.

Please consider the matter that I have presented to you. I am willing to work with the District in selecting another choice to fill the void left if *Huck Finn* is removed. I believe that all students will benefit from this action.

Sincerely,

Ron Coia
Teacher, Language Arts