

TODAY  
YOU  
WILL......DEVELOP YOUR  
VOCABULARYANALYSE HOW SPEAKERS  
USE LANGUAGE AND  
DIFFERENT TYPES OF  
EVIDENCE TO PERSUADECREATE A PIECE OF  
PERSUASIVE WRITING

## YEAH BUT...

Is it really a good idea to invite Vicky Pollard into your classroom to help students get to grips with persuasive writing? **Steve Duffy** thinks he can convince you...

As English teachers, our job is to help create free thinking, creative individuals – yet all too often we end up telling students what to think and write rather than encouraging them to explore their own ideas and develop thinking skills. Teaching the art of persuasive writing allows us really to challenge, and be challenged by, our students; this lesson combines a variety of individual and group tasks designed to get students to explore difficult moral issues whilst at the same time developing their understanding of how writers manipulate language and why it is essential to support opinions with evidence. Each task can be tailored to different age groups and ability ranges, and the source material can be as provocative or topical as you like – making it perfect for cross curricular links with a range of subjects, notably PHSE, RE and science.



## STARTER ACTIVITY +

If students can't express themselves verbally, the chances of them being able to do so in writing are fairly remote – the 'Yeah-But-No-But' game allows every pupil to participate in a fun starter that requires them to support their points with a (hopefully) reasoned argument. Start off with a brief video clip of Little Britain's Vicky Pollard (see 'Additional Resources' for my favourite) and inform students of the rules of the game. A controversial statement is then

shown on the whiteboard; a pupil stands/up raises her hand and responds 'Yeah but...' and gives a counter-argument. Then another student counters with 'No but...' and offers a response, and so on. The game continues until arguments are exhausted, and you can use as many controversial statements as you like. I limit rules to the following: every

student must offer at least one argument; no-one may give more than five responses; and each response must counter the previous one – irrespective of the student's personal beliefs. This last point is vital, as it provides protection for pupils being

castigated for having unpopular opinions. Statements I have found particularly effective include: 'All religions should be banned'; 'Teachers should be paid more than professional footballers'; 'Homosexuality should be criminalised'; and 'All drugs should be legalised.'

TURN OVER  
TO CONTINUE >>

## MAIN ACTIVITIES

### 1 PIMP MY SENTENCE

At its most basic, this exercise gets students thinking about using adjectives and adverbs; for more advanced students I tend to focus on verb choices, sentence structure and using a range of rhetorical devices. To model the task, put a simple persuasive sentence on the whiteboard, for example 'Drug dealers should go to jail for life', then pimp it with a focus on the word class/rhetorical devices you want students to experiment with (e.g. 'Drug dealers are evil, avaricious and violent individuals who have no place in civilised society', or 'And why should these purveyors of pain walk free when their victims' lives are destroyed?'). Students then create their own 'pimped' sentences in their exercise books, which can then be shared with the class or peer-assessed.



## HOME LEARNING

Pupils could be asked to:

- + *Film themselves giving a persuasive speech on a topic of their choice.*
- + *Write a speech to be given in assembly persuading all students to sign up to an anti-bullying charter.*
- + *Analyse a Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech to see which persuasive techniques he uses..*

### 2 WRITE-ROUND-ROBIN

This group task takes the 'Yeah-But-No-But' game into a written format and is ideal preparation for a piece of extended writing. Quarter a piece of A3 paper, and in each corner write a controversial

statement as in the starter; then place the paper in the middle of a table of four. Each student has two minutes to think about and write something (a reason why they agree/disagree with the statement; a piece of evidence

supporting or attacking the statement) in the box in front of them. After two minutes the students move the paper 90 degrees clockwise, and they repeat the process in the next box, and so on.

## INFO BAR

### + ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?v=ZEXC6SK4KPA  
YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?v=ENSLPFTZBE

### + STRETCH THEM FURTHER

> STUDY AN ARTICLE ON A TOPICAL ISSUE FROM THE GUARDIAN AND ONE ON THE SAME TOPIC FROM THE SUN: HOW DO THESE TWO PUBLICATIONS USE PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES? WHAT IS SIMILAR IN THEIR APPROACH, AND WHAT IS DIFFERENT? WHAT MIGHT THAT TELL US ABOUT THE AUDIENCE, THE PAPER'S AGENDA ETC.?

> CHOOSE A CHARACTER FROM A LITERATURE TEXT YOU ARE STUDYING AND WRITE A PERSUASIVE SPEECH ON A RELEVANT TOPIC FROM THE CHARACTER'S POINT OF VIEW.

### + ABOUT THE EXPERT



Steve Duffy is a Quality Assessor and English teacher at a large comprehensive school in Essex.

## 3 LOOKING AT DISTRIBUTION

This activity allows students to analyse how speakers use persuasive techniques and evidence to support their points. Find a video clip of a two-person debate (again, my favourite is listed in 'Additional Resources') and ask students to draw a T-bar chart in their books with the name of each speaker at the top of the two columns. Then play the video and ask students to make a note of

every piece of effective persuasive speaking (i.e. rhetorical questions, lists of three, emotive language) or supporting evidence (i.e. facts, statistics, case studies) they hear. These skills are obviously transferable to literature texts, and this activity works equally well with written stimuli ('How does Juliet persuade the nurse to help her in Act II, Scene III?', for example).



## 4 THINK-WRITE-SHARE

The focus in this task is on students developing their arguments and using evidence to back them up. Each pair is split into As and Bs: the teacher sets the topic and asks As to spend two minutes thinking about possible arguments for the topic and Bs to do the same for arguments against. After two minutes silent thinking, they note

down their arguments. Then A reads his list out to B and vice versa. From here, swap lists and repeat the process so that each adds extra points to the other's list, giving us two 'masterlists' per pair. Then swap lists again, and ask students to provide a piece of evidence (i.e. expert opinion, statistics etc.) to support each point.

## SUMMARY

To ensure that students have grasped the underlying fundamentals of persuasive writing, inform the class that if they can write an effective speech persuading you not to set them homework this week, you won't. A selection of these can then be read out by students to allow you to assess their progress. Like all the other tasks in this lesson, this also gives you a great opportunity to develop students' speaking and listening skills.