

Reading Toolkit: Grade 8 Objective 2.A.6.f

Standard 2.0 Comprehension of Informational Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Informational Text

Indicator 6. Read critically to evaluate informational text

Objective f. Analyze the effectiveness of persuasive techniques to sway the reader to a particular point of view

Assessment Limits:

Elements such as rhetorical questions, repetition, and hyperbole, etc.

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Lesson Seeds

Reading Grade 8 Objective 2.A.6.f

Activities

Place student in small groups and provide each group with a folder containing appropriate movie advertisements. Have students highlight words within the text that would make a reader wish to see the movie. Next each group should select one advertisement to share with the class. During the presentation they should identify words and phrases used by the advertiser and explain how those words appeal to people.

The teacher will model the reading of a short persuasive informational passage. During the modeling the teacher will point out words and phrases that have an emotional pull on the reader. Next, the teacher will place students in small groups and provide each group with a persuasive informational passage for which they will highlight words and phrases that appeal to a reader's emotions. Each group will then share their findings with the whole class identifying the words and explaining how they would affect a reader.

Prior to the activity, the teacher should introduce students to the persuasive techniques employed by authors: emotion-charged words, rhetorical questions, repetition, hyperbole, etc... Using that information, students will view multiple, appropriate television commercials and complete a chart like the one below.

Product	Technique/s Used	Effectiveness

Next, students should be placed in small groups where they can discuss the information on their charts. Each group should decide upon the most effective commercial and share their findings with the class detailing how well the technique matched the product and why the commercial was most effective. This activity should help students understand how persuasive techniques are used so that in the next stage, students can apply a modified procedure to print text.

Prior to the activity, the teacher should collect a variety of different informational passages like editorials, letter to the editor, magazine articles, etc... all of which should be appropriate and of interest to students. A search of the SIRS database will yield multiple articles from reliable sources. Place students with a partner or in small groups where students will read a sampling of articles and complete a chart like the one below.

Topic	Title of Article	Technique Used	Effectiveness

After the chart is complete, students should share their reactions to the techniques found in these sources and judge which techniques are most commonly used and why that might be so.

Clarification

Reading Grade 8 Indicator 2.A.6

To show proficiency of **critical evaluation of informational text**, a reader must form a number of judgments about a text. To begin this process a reader must preview the text and its features and combine that information with prior knowledge to set a purpose for reading. During and after reading, the evaluation of informational text requires a reader to **determine the content of the text, the role of text features, text elements that make that text a reliable source, the author's opinion, argument, or position, the effectiveness and purpose of the author's word choice, and the effectiveness of the author's style**. A full evaluation of an informational text requires attention to each of these elements.

To begin a critical evaluation of informational text, a reader must use prior knowledge and preview the text to establish a purpose for reading. Once a purpose is established, that is followed by a close reading of the text. Next, a reader must judge how well the text provides information for the stated purpose for reading. Then a critical reader should be able to verbalize or scribe an explanation or analysis of the text by focusing on specific sections of that text and detailing how that **information meets or does not meet a stated purpose for reading**.

If that purpose is not met, a critical reader should be able to **identify those pieces of information that are needed to fully construct meaning**. Additional information may include more details within the text, more text features, or adjustments to the organizational pattern or existing text features. To determine what is required for meaning, a critical reader should closely read the existing text and then assess the degree to which the text meets a reader's purpose. A reader should note particularly the organizational pattern of the text and see how well that pattern helps a reader construct meanings from important ideas in the text. Those gaps in information that make it difficult for a reader to construct meaning signal the types of additional information that are needed.

The **analysis of informational text for reliability** is an important aspect in the text's critical evaluation. A reader must first discern how much of the text is factual. Once the factual information is isolated, judgments about its accuracy are necessary. A reader should access information about the author and his/her credentials as a means of assessing the passage's reliability. Depending upon the subject of the text and how current the information is also a reliability factor. When available, a reader can access other texts on the same subject to see if there is a consistency in the information. Finally after looking at multiple texts on the same subject, a reader can determine if the initial text contains the same information as the subsequent texts or if the initial text presents information not contained in the others. A discrepancy in information could point to an inaccuracy in a text or to a more current source of information.

Once reliability has been established, a reader should carefully note elements of text that address the **author's argument or produce clarity of the author's position on the topic**. Additionally, a reader should be attuned to **elements of bias** in the author's presentation of material. After reading is complete, a reader must implicitly understand the stated or implied main idea of the text. From that basis of understanding, a reader should look at the construction of the author's argument, noting any evidence of bias in the argument and looking for a fair treatment of opposing views on the topic. At that juncture a reader should be able to judge the impartiality of the material or the inclination of the author to present a single view of the topic. Based on that text evidence, a reader can make a critical decision about the text's fullness or limits of use to him/herself.

After a reader knows how useful a text might be, a determination can be made about what **additional information could help a reader construct meaning from the text**. Active reading skills will allow a reader to note a stated or implied main idea in the text. Then a reader can identify additional information that would add to, clarify, or strengthen their understanding of the text or the author's viewpoint. A reader's suggestions for additional information could include, but not be limited to

- Text features such as bulleted lists, captions, graphics, italicized or bold print etc.
- Information to address readers' questions that were not answered in the text
- Context clues, footnotes, or glossed words to help a reader understand unfamiliar words and phrases

A critical evaluation of a text also demands that a reader detect **words that authors use to affect a reader's feelings**. A critical reader can determine a reason for the author's word choice and the response the author wished to evoke. At the center of any persuasive text is a strong opinion, and authors use words to their advantage to create a strong emotional appeal to a reader. Repetition, rhetorical questions, hyperbole etc...all have the power to sway a reader's perceptions. A critical reader is aware of the power of words and examines this word choice to discern the author's tone. For example, a critical reader should be able to discern the difference in tone between "The hero was brave as he flew into the battle alone." from "The pilot was foolhardy flying into battle without cover." A critical reader must also note the portion of text where repetitions occur and determine why an author would wish to draw attention to that portion of text. Critical readers are aware of these elements and should be able to determine if they enhance an author's viewpoint. Finally critical readers should isolate elements that are used purely for emotional appeal and are not supported by fact.

Ultimately a critical reader should be able to **analyze an author's style** which is how an author uses language to relay ideas. An author's particular style has a direct effect upon the meaning of a text. For example, authors may use formal language to convey the seriousness of material or informal language to address the entertainment value of a topic. Or an author may use an informal style with a serious topic to evoke a particular response and cause a critical reader to consider why an author would not match style to topic. That disconnect between style and topic has a critical effect upon construction of meaning. A critical reader should also note how the author forms and uses sentences. The constant use of long, involved sentences or short, choppy sentences or a combination of both can alert a reader to a variety of emphases within a text. An author might use this stylistic formula to draw attention to a particular idea or to diminish the effect of an idea. Using sentence fragments is another way authors can achieve those same effects. Finally a critical reader should be aware that how the author uses language, makes choices about words, and constructs sentences that are planned so that a critical reader can develop insight into the author's intended meaning of a text.

Sample Item #1 Brief Constructed Response (BCR) Item with Annotated Student Responses

Question

Read these articles about a secret language, 'Codetalking' and 'The Navajo'. Then answer the following.

Explain which article more effectively uses words and phrases to persuade a reader about the value of the contributions of Native Americans during World War II. In your response, use information from the article that supports your explanation. Write your answer on your answer document.

Annotated Student Responses

Top Secret uses more effective words like unbreakable, transmit, and ultimately.

Annotation: The student answers, "Top Secret (Codetalkers) uses more effective words like unbreakable, transmit, and ultimately." The student does answer the question and uses minimal but ineffective text support. To improve this response, the student should explain how the use of certain words can persuade a reader about the value of Native American contributions to the war effort. For example, the word "unbreakable" refers to the code used by Native Americans that helped save many lives. The word "transmit" is used in connection with "secret messages" that were used to win battles. By elaborating on some good choices of words, the student could establish how they could persuade a reader about Native American contributions.

I think that The Navajo persuades the reader more effectively. For example, the author used important dates to explain when things happened. She also followed important ideas with examples. This persuaded me as a reader because I felt the material was more true, so that I could understand it more.

Annotation: The student answers that "The Navajo persuades the reader more effectively." Next the student offers examples of "important dates," "important ideas followed by examples," and that these were persuasive because the material appeared to be "more true, so that I could understand it more." The student does answer the question but uses marginal and vague text support. To improve this response, the reader should specifically explain about the dates and important ideas. To conclude the student should establish how what is true can be more understandable and persuasive. For example, the fact that on September 17, 1992, a Code Talker exhibit was unveiled at the Pentagon shows that the American military valued the efforts of Native Americans and that the author included this information in her article to persuade a reader of Native American efforts during the war.

The article from The Navajo more effectively persuades readers of the value of Native American contributions in World War II. For example, the article piece stating "the Code Talkers saved thousands of American lives" points out the life-saving quality of Native American codes. Also, the author explains the military value of Native American contributions with, "the U.S. Marines called the Code Talkers their secret weapon."

Annotation: The student answers that The Navajo is the more effective article. To support that idea the student cites the text "'the Code Talkers saved thousands of American lives'" which the student says "points out the life-saving quality of Native American codes." Next, the student refers to the United States Marines calling the Code Talkers their "secret weapon." The student does answer the question and uses specific text to support his/her answer. To improve this response, the student should draw a conclusion about the two quotes emphasizing how the saving of American lives and the use of the term "secret weapon" show a sense of value about the contributions of Native Americans.

Handouts

From Top Secret

By Paul B. Janeczko

Codetalking

Some codes work better when they are spoken. In fact, during both World Wars, the United States used Native Americans as "codetalkers."

The number of these codetalkers rose from thirty at the beginning of World War II to more than four hundred by the end of the war. They originally served in the Pacific, but before too long, Native Americans were serving as battlefield "codetalkers" in North Africa and Europe. These soldiers—from tribes like the Choctaw, Comanche, Navaho, and Hopi—used their tribal languages to transmit secret messages from field telephones.

Native American languages are well suited for this sort of secret activity. The languages are very difficult to learn and speak correctly. Like other languages they rely on vocabulary, but these Native American languages are also affected by voice inflection and space between words. This last feature made it very difficult for a nonspeaker to learn the language well enough to fool—or even communicate with—a true speaker. For this reason, Native American codetalkers usually worked in pairs. And ultimately, these Native American codes have become known as some of the few unbreakable codes in history.

From The Navajo

By Patricia Cronin Marcello

The Navajo Code Talkers were a group of Navajo volunteers who devised a dictionary of over four hundred Navajo words to represent military language. They called a captain besh-legai-nah-kih, which means "two silver bars," the insignia a captain wears on his uniform.

The Code Talkers also devised an alphabet whereby each letter in English was represented by a Navajo word. For instance, the Navajo word be-la-sana, which means "apple," stood for the English letter A. In this way, a string of Navajo words could be used to spell out one word in English.

Since Navajo is a complex language that was not written down until modern times, fewer than fifty non-Navajo people could speak it. The Japanese were never able to break the codes. For this reason, the Code Talkers were in charge of communications for every major assault in the Pacific—Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, Tarawa, and Peleliu. An Air Force Times article by William Wrigg states, "According to Marine Corps high command, the Code Talkers saved thousands of American lives." The U.S. Marines called the Code Talkers their secret weapon.

In fact, the Navajo code was so successful that the government kept the entire operation a secret until the 1960s, in case the military needed to use it again. The Code Talkers were finally recognized in 1989, when a statue was erected in Phoenix, Arizona, to honor the 420 men, 11 of whom were killed in action. Likewise, on September 17, 1992, a Code Talker exhibit was dedicated at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, outside of Washington, D.C.

Some Navaho Code Talker Words and What They Mean

English word	Navajo word pronunciation	Translation
alert	ha-ih-des-ee	alert
America	ne-he-mah	our mother
battle	da-ah-hi-dzi-tsio	battle
booby trap	dineh-ba-whoa-blehi	man trap
corps	din-neh-ih	clan
dive bomber	gini	chicken hawk
fighter plane	da-he-tih-hi	hummingbird
Germany	besh-legai-a-la-ih	iron hat
lieutenant	besh-legai-a-lah-ih	one silver bar
major	che-chil-be-tah-ola	gold oak leaf
platoon	has-cish-nih	mud
Russia	sil-a-gol-chi-ih	red army
submarine	besh-lo	iron fish

Rubric - Brief Constructed Response (BCR)

Score 3

The response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text.

- Addresses the demands of the question
- Effectively uses text-relevant¹ information to clarify or extend understanding

Score 2

The response demonstrates a general understanding of the text.

- Partially addresses the demands of the question
- Uses text-relevant¹ information to show understanding

Score 1

The response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text.

- Minimally addresses the demands of the question
- Uses minimal information to show some understanding of the text in relation to the question

Score 0

The response is completely incorrect, irrelevant to the question, or missing.²

Notes:

¹ Text-relevant: This information may or may not be an exact copy (quote) of the text but is clearly related to the text and often shows an analysis and/or interpretation of important ideas. Students may incorporate information to show connections to relevant prior experience as appropriate.

² An exact copy (quote) or paraphrase of the question that provides no new relevant information will receive a score of "0".

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