

Subject Area: Language Arts  
Grade Level: 8

## **You Can't Convince Me**

### **Purpose/Rationale**

The purpose of this assessment is to engage students in thinking about, discussing, and identifying the essential elements of persuasive rhetoric. In addition, students will have the opportunity to practice communicating in a clear, concise manner to a specific audience and in a specific format. Students will engage in the process of preliminary instrument design.

### **Knowledge, Skill, and Disposition Objectives**

Students will demonstrate their ability to:

- identify the elements of persuasive rhetoric.
- analyze the elements of persuasive rhetoric to choose the most “critical” elements.
- communicate appropriately to a chosen audience.
- organize ideas in a clear and concise manner.
- work collaboratively in pairs.

### **Related Standards of Learning**

The student will:

- use a variety of planning strategies to generate and organize ideas.
- select vocabulary and information to enhance the central idea.
- give and seek information in conversations and group discussions.
- identify persuasive messages in non-print media.
- apply knowledge of the characteristics of various literary forms.
- identify persuasive techniques.

### **Prerequisite Knowledge/Skills**

- Understanding of the elements of persuasive rhetoric
- Ability to compare, contrast, and analyze elements of persuasive rhetoric
- Experience working in pairs or groups
- Experience with the peer-review process and revision process
- Familiarity with rubrics for Prompt 2

### **Context**

This assessment is designed to be completed in pairs as an in-class assignment. Teachers will collect responses and provide feedback (rubric). Pairs will then engage in a peer review and revision process. Instruments may eventually be combined to form a class rubric for persuasive writing and speaking. The task and rubric are designed for eighth grade, but may be modified for any middle grade level and any readiness level.

Moon, T. R., Callahan, C. M., Brighton, C. M., Tomlinson, C. A. (2002). *Development of differentiated performance assessment tasks for middle school classrooms* (RM02160). University of Connecticut, National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. <https://nrcgt.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/953/2015/04/rm02160.pdf>

## **Rater**

Teachers will review instruments and provide feedback to student pairs. Peers may also provide feedback. Student pairs will engage in a revision process and eventually combine items to form a class rubric for persuasive rhetoric.

## **Prompts**

There are two prompts. The first prompt is designed for students functioning at grade level in their reading and writing ability as well as their understanding of the elements of persuasive rhetoric. Prompt two is designed for students functioning well above grade level in their reading, writing, and analytical abilities. The second prompt is more complex and requires students to dig deeper into the characteristics of persuasive rhetoric.

## **Rubric**

Rubrics for prompts are slightly different, but focus on the same objectives.

## Prompt 1



### **You Can't Convince Me!**

You have been hired to work on a committee to organize and direct a national speech competition for middle school students. One component of the competition is a persuasive speech component in which competitors must prepare a persuasive speech about a current issue that is important to them. The rules of the competition dictate that the speech be no longer than seven minutes.

You have been assigned to the speech committee. As a member of the speech committee, one of your duties is to develop a checklist to help the judges make decisions about the merit of the competitors' persuasive speeches. With a partner, brainstorm a list of items that focus on the elements of persuasive rhetoric. Be sure your list covers **at least six** of the significant elements of persuasive rhetoric. Remember, it may be necessary to have more than one item to appropriately cover each element, as some elements are more important and complex than others. It is up to you and your partner to decide which are the most important elements and which ones may be complex enough to require more than one item on the checklist.

The judges on the committee will be using this checklist to rate the competitors' speeches. Therefore, you may not simply list the elements of persuasive rhetoric found in your texts. You must describe how those elements of persuasive speech are carried out in reality. What are the characteristics of a good persuasive speech? What would it sound like? What components would it have?

Your checklist should be easy for judges to use (remember, they won't have a lot of time to rate the speeches), be written in clear and concise language that they can understand, and should be presented in an appealing form with no errors. Be sure to cooperate with your partner and read the rubric for this assignment before you begin!

The committee (our class) will reconvene at the end of the week to share checklists.

## You Can't Convince Me

### Scoring Rubric

Prompt 1	3	2	1
<p><i>Essential Elements</i></p> <p>Committee members address at least 6 of the essential elements of persuasive rhetoric such as purpose, audience, tone, supporting materials, etc. Members communicate to the judges that they have a clear understanding of the characteristics of a good persuasive speech and can evaluate it validly.</p> <p><b>Rating</b> ____</p>	<p>Committee members address 4 - 5 of the essential elements of persuasive rhetoric such as purpose, audience, tone, supporting materials, etc. Members communicate in a manner that lets the judges know that they understand what a persuasive speech should sound like and how to evaluate it.</p>	<p>Committee members address 3 or fewer of the essential elements of persuasive rhetoric such as purpose, audience, tone, supporting materials, etc. Judges question the members' understanding of a persuasive speech.</p>	
<p><i>Checklist</i></p> <p>The checklist is simple to use and consistent in form. The judges will need no instruction to be able to use the checklist.</p> <p><b>Rating</b> ____</p>	<p>The checklist is fairly easy to follow, although the format is unclear OR inconsistent. The judges will need some training to be able to use the checklist and may have some questions about its use.</p>	<p>The checklist is difficult to follow and lacking in structure. The judges will need a lot of instruction to be able to use the checklist, and even then, it will still be difficult for them to move quickly through it.</p>	
<p><i>Clarity of Descriptors</i></p> <p>By reading the checklist, the judges will get a clear sense of what to look for in a persuasive speech. The language is precise and the committee members describe distinctive, recognizable behaviors related to persuasive rhetoric.</p> <p><b>Rating</b> ____</p>	<p>By reading the checklist, the judges will get a general idea of what to look for in a persuasive speech. Language is inappropriate or unclear in places, but in general, the checklist describes distinct, recognizable behaviors related to persuasive rhetoric.</p>	<p>By reading the checklist, the judges are unable to understand what to look for in a persuasive speech. Behaviors are described in vague terms OR not at all.</p>	
<p><i>Presentation</i></p> <p>There are no grammatical or spelling errors. Checklist looks like a published instrument. Checklist is legible or word-processed in a readable font.</p> <p><b>Rating</b> ____</p>	<p>Checklist contains minor grammatical or spelling errors, which, though distracting, do not interfere with understanding. Checklist is neat and legible or word-processed in a readable font.</p>	<p>Checklist contains grammatical and spelling errors, which interfere with the message. Checklist is messy or word-processed in a font that is difficult to read.</p>	
<p><i>Optional Peer Evaluation</i></p> <p>Committee members participate equally and work together to get the job done. Each member is involved in the design of the checklist. Members listen to each other and incorporate each other's ideas.</p> <p><b>Rating</b> ____</p>	<p>Committee members share ideas, but work is not divided equally. Students listen to each other, but have trouble coming to a consensus. In the end, they manage to work together to get the job done.</p>	<p>Committee members divide work unequally. One person makes the majority of contributions to the discussion. Committee members require prompting to stay on task and to respect each other's ideas.</p>	

## Prompt 2



### **You Can't Convince Me!**

You have been hired to work on a committee that organizes and directs a national competition for middle school students. The competition has several components. You have been assigned to the speech committee. For this part of the competition, competitors must prepare a persuasive speech about a current issue that is important to them. The rules of the competition dictate that the speech be no longer than seven minutes.

You have been assigned to the speech committee. As a member of the speech committee, one of your duties is to develop a checklist to help the judges make decisions about the merit of the competitors' persuasive speeches. With a partner, develop a rubric that contains at least six dimensions and at least four performance levels that focus on and describe the elements of persuasive rhetoric.

Be sure to cover what you believe to be the most significant elements of persuasive rhetoric. Remember it may be necessary to have more than one item to appropriately cover each element as some elements are more important and complex than others. It is up to you and your partner to decide which are the most important elements and which ones may be complex enough to require more than one dimension on your rubric. Your top level of performance for each dimension should describe the characteristics of a polished, professional persuasive speech, even though only a few competitors may be able to deliver such a speech.

You will be evaluated on your rubric's inclusion of the essential elements of persuasive rhetoric, its ease of use, clarity of language, presentation, and your cooperation with your partner. Read over the rubric for this assignment before you begin! Rubrics without at least five dimensions and four performance levels will not be accepted.

The committee (our class) will reconvene at the end of the week to share rubrics.

## You Can't Convince Me Scoring Rubric

Prompt 2	3	2	1
<p><i>Essential Elements</i></p> <p>Committee members address at least 6 of the essential elements of persuasive rhetoric such as purpose, audience, tone, supporting materials, etc. Members communicate to the judges that they have a clear understanding of the characteristics of a good persuasive speech and can evaluate it validly.</p> <p><b>Rating</b> ____</p>	<p>Committee members address 4 – 5 of the essential elements of persuasive rhetoric such as purpose, audience, tone, supporting materials, etc. Members communicate in a manner that lets the judges know that they understand what a persuasive speech should sound like and how to evaluate it.</p>	<p>Committee members address 3 or fewer of the essential elements of persuasive rhetoric such as purpose, audience, tone, supporting materials, etc. Judges question the members' understanding of a persuasive speech.</p>	
<p><i>Ease of Use</i></p> <p>The rubric is simple to use and consistent in form. The judges will need no instruction to be able to use the checklist.</p> <p><b>Rating</b> ____</p>	<p>The rubric is fairly easy to follow, although the format is unclear OR inconsistent. The judges will need some training to be able to use the checklist and may have some questions about its use.</p>	<p>The rubric is difficult to follow and lacking in structure. The judges will need a lot of instruction to be able to use the checklist, and even then, it will still be difficult for them to move quickly through it.</p>	
<p><i>Clarity of Descriptors</i></p> <p>By reading the rubric, the judges will get a clear sense of what to look for in a persuasive speech. The language is precise and the committee members describe distinctive, recognizable behaviors related to persuasive rhetoric.</p> <p><b>Rating</b> ____</p>	<p>By reading the rubric, the judges will get a general idea of what to look for in a persuasive speech. Language is inappropriate or unclear in places, but in general, the checklist describes distinct, recognizable behaviors related to persuasive rhetoric.</p>	<p>By reading the rubric, the judges are unable to understand what to look for in a persuasive speech. Behaviors are described in vague terms OR not at all.</p>	
<p><i>Range of Performance Levels</i></p> <p>The range of levels allow for competitors to be rated by the judges. Descriptors at all levels of performance reflect the standards of excellence set by professionals in the discipline. The highest level describes in detail the characteristics of a polished and professional persuasive speech.</p> <p><b>Rating</b> ____</p>	<p>The range of levels is appropriate for most competitors, but the categories are not clearly delineated. The descriptors at the highest end of the rubric fail to push for the highest standards of excellence that would be displayed in a polished and professional persuasive speech.</p>	<p>The range of levels is too narrow or illogical in its progression from easy to difficult. Competitors will perform outside of the boundaries you have set for both minimum and maximum levels.</p>	
<p><i>Presentation</i></p> <p>There are no grammatical or spelling errors. Rubric looks like a published instrument. Checklist is legible or word-processed in a readable font.</p> <p><b>Rating</b> ____</p>	<p>Checklist contains minor grammatical or spelling errors, which, though distracting, do not interfere with understanding. Rubric is neat and legible or word-processed in a readable font.</p>	<p>Checklist contains grammatical and spelling errors, which interfere with the message. Rubric is messy or word-processed in a font that is difficult to read.</p>	

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Prompt 2	3	2	1
<p><i>Optional Peer Evaluation</i></p> <p><b>Rating</b> ____</p>	<p>Committee members participate equally and work together to get the job done. Both are involved in the design of the rubric. They listen to each other and incorporate each other's ideas.</p>	<p>Committee members share ideas, but work is not divided equally. Students listen to each other, but have trouble coming to a consensus. In the end, they manage to work together to get the job done.</p>	<p>Committee members divide work unequally. One person makes the majority of contributions to the discussion. Committee members require prompting to stay on task and to respect each other's ideas.</p>