

3 persuasive writing prompts on authentic ELA course topics

The best persuasive writing prompts for English language arts classes are those that deal with authentic ELA topics. Note, please, that the word *persuasive* has a specialized meaning in a discussion of writing prompts. [Persuasive writing prompts are writing assignments that require a response organized in the thesis+support pattern.](#)

The simplest way to use one of these prompts is to copy what you want from [the text file containing only the prompts](#) and paste it into a new file. Add whatever additional material is necessary to personalize the prompt for your class use.

For more information about writing prompts, you may wish to consult these pages:

[Good Writing Prompts Do Much More Than Say It Is Time to Write](#)
[A Good Writing Prompt Boosts Content Knowledge and Writing Skill](#)
[5 Student Writing Prompt Essential Components](#)
[A Multi-Tasking Expository Writing Prompt Saves You Work](#)
[Two Expository Writing Prompts, One Good, One Bad](#)
[Formal Writing Prompts Call for Care from Students and Teachers](#)

Prompt #1 Adapt or else

In the biological world, organisms that do not adapt to changes in their environment do not survive. Does this adapt-or-else principle hold true outside the realm of biology? Defend your response by drawing on evidence from three of the following fields:

- Literature
- Medicine
- History
- Politics
- Technology
- Business
- Media
- Fine arts

Discussion

This, like many of my persuasive writing prompts, is designed to force students to draw connections between various courses across the curriculum.

The prompt requires a fairly advanced knowledge of the subjects students choose to use as their evidence areas, but it does not require highly developed writing skills.

The prompt limits students to just two thesis options: the adapt-or-else principle holds true outside biology or it does not. Students would have little difficulty preparing a writing skeleton for a response to this prompt.

Prompt #2 Outsider's view

Few people see themselves as others see them. How important is it that people have a reasonably accurate understanding of how others view them? What are the consequences of understanding or failing to understand how others view one's behavior?

Write an essay in which you defend your opinion about the value of accurate analysis of other people's perceptions. Illustrate your points with

- Personal experience and/or observation, and
- Reference to two characters in a single literary work whose ability to appreciate others' perceptions of them were distinctly different.

Discussion

#2 is one of my persuasive writing prompts for literature. It is a difficult writing prompt for the typical student. It requires some maturity as well as a fairly extensive literary knowledge.

Also, although it gives writers a range of thesis options and defines content that must be included, it leaves the shaping of the content to the writer's discretion. This prompt will work best for students who enjoy literature and writing and who have good writing skills.

Prompt #3 Language and perceptions

Changing the language used to refer to an object or practice can change how people perceive it. For example, a "preowned vehicle" is perceived to be more valuable than a "used car" even if both are used to refer to the same automobile. Similarly, people are more willing to adopt a "custom breed" dog from an animal shelter than a "mutt."

Select one of the following fields of human endeavor and discuss three examples of how word choices are used to change public perception in that field.

- Business
- Education
- Politics
- The arts
- Technology
- The military

- Religion
- Communications media

Discussion

In ELA classes, word choices are often discussed in the context of "using vivid verbs" or in a discussion of poetic language. Most kids don't realize that word choices have a big impact on their every day lives. Using persuasive writing prompts like this one requires the writing teacher to deal with language use in nonfiction.

If you were going to use this prompt, you could change the list of fields from which students could choose their illustrations. Remember, however, to provide a sufficiently wide range so students can find at least one thing that interests them to discuss in their essays.

This prompt can be used with writers who are working toward competence. A student can produce a working thesis and writing skeleton for this prompt in a few minutes. The only difficulty is coming up with good examples to support the topic sentences of the paragraphs. In a classroom situation, you can use small groups or pairs of students to help each other come up with ideas for the supporting examples.

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