



GRADE

11

PSSA Finish Line

Reading plus Writing

**Sample
Lesson**

with Assessment Anchors

Continental Press

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Recognizing Bias and Propaganda

Anchor R11.B.3.2

Authors use a number of techniques to persuade readers to a particular point of view. They may appeal to a reader's needs, or create needs in the reader's mind, as most product advertising does. They may try to appeal to the reader's identification with a group or individual or use words or images that produce an emotional response. To judge the accuracy and truthfulness of what you are reading, you need be able to identify such uses of **bias**—the presentation of opinions that are not supported by facts—and **propaganda**—the systematic spreading of beliefs through a combination of facts, opinions disguised as facts, deliberate distortion of the facts, and repetition.

Bias and propaganda in political writing involve the same persuasive techniques that advertisers use when they offer products or services for sale. In fact some languages make no distinction between “advertising” and “propaganda,” using the same word for both. Here are some common techniques of persuasion that may be hiding bias or propaganda.

Bandwagon—influencing people by implying that “everyone” supports one's position or candidate. The bandwagon approach is all about peer pressure. The idea is that everyone is doing something, so you should do it, too.

Card-stacking—offering only one side of an issue to support one's position.

Diversion—focusing on trivial or side issues to divert attention from a central point. Calling tobacco smoking “a matter of personal choice,” for example, is a diversion from the issue that it is life-threatening and addictive.

Elitism—linking a candidate, concept, or product with high social standing, education, wealth, or fame.

Glittering generalities—using words that produce a positive emotional response but that may mean different things to different people. A slogan such as “peace through security” on a politician's bumper sticker, for example, carries a reassuring message to voters without offering any specifics about the candidate's program. The word “natural” on a food product conveys an image of healthfulness without describing contents.

Name-calling—also known as mud-slinging, which means to point out negative qualities of the opposing position or candidate while ignoring any positive qualities. This is the opposite of the glittering generalities approach.

Plain folk—the opposite of the elitism approach, appealing to the common point of view or using language that signals that the candidate or other product users are just like everyone else. An example is a slogan like “real food for real people.” The technique was used successfully in 1860 to portray railroad lawyer Abraham Lincoln as “Honest Abe, the rail splitter.”

Repetition—saying the same message or using the same words or phrases more than once in order to make an impression on the reader or listener.

Testimonial—using endorsements from celebrities or other people. A picture of a star athlete on a cereal box is a familiar example, as is a movie star or rock-’n’-roll band appearing in a commercial for a political candidate.

Transfer—using a symbol to carry a message. An automobile manufacturer might use a symbol of an eagle as part of its logo, for example, in order to seem both strong and all-American.

Guided Practice

Read two editorials about global warming and answer the questions that follow.

Global Warming: “No Clear Evidence”

by Sidney H. Turnbull, Ph.D.

Chicken Little is at it again. This time instead of telling us the sky is falling, he’s clucking about “global warming.” He tells us that the world is dangerously heating up, and it’s our fault. He wants us to believe that unless we radically change our lifestyles (destroying our economy in the process), our country will turn into a desert and coastal areas around the globe will be flooded.

Yes, we’ve been experiencing warmer weather than normal. Yes, the average global temperature has gone up one whole degree Fahrenheit over the past century. Chicken Little would put the blame on increased levels of “greenhouse gases” (particularly CO₂, vital for plant growth) caused by human activity. In fact there is widespread scientific disagreement whether

“global warming” is actually occurring, let alone its causes.

A 1996 study by Selfridge University atmospheric scientists carefully examined 30 years of data from around the world. The study concluded, “There is no clear evidence that human activity has contributed to the increase in average global temperature, which varies naturally over time.” In fact, the study points out, temperatures were considerably higher a thousand years ago during the “Medieval Warm Period” than they are now.

Chicken Little would tell us we need to scrap our present technology and return to a cleaner, 19th-century way of life. We, however, think that Chicken Little is a little chicken.

Global Warming: How Lucky Are You Feeling?

by Margaret Baldanza, Ph.D.

On the same day the *New York Times* quoted an Oklahoma senator as calling global warming “the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people,” that same paper reported the breaking up of an ancient Arctic ice shelf.

There is no longer the slightest doubt in the mind of any reputable scientist that global warming is real and under way. Evidence has been accumulated in almost stupefying quantities. Ninety-three percent of atmospheric scientists according to a 2004 survey agree that global climate change is occurring, accelerating, and that human activities are likely the root causes. The few remaining nay-sayers are those whose research is paid for by the oil industry or other special-interest groups with a financial stake in fossil fuels. Here are just a few facts that are not in dispute:

- **Ten of the 15 warmest years on record have occurred since 1990.** The average global temperature rose 1.8°C (1°F) over the last century. Computer models suggest that it will rise another 1.4–5.8°C (2.2–10°F) during the next. In some regions, the increase may be 18°F or more.
- **Even a slight rise in temperature can have great consequences.** The Arctic ice pack is shrinking by about nine percent every ten years. Glaciers are melting around the globe, reducing the world’s available supply of fresh water. Sea level has risen 10–20 cm (4–8 in.) since 1900. It’s expected to rise about another 0.6 meters (2 feet) along U.S. coasts by 2100.
- **Greenhouse gases are a major cause of global warming.** These heat-trapping gases such as carbon dioxide (CO₂) occur naturally in the atmosphere. But industry, farming, and the burning of coal and hydrocarbons have added to the level of greenhouse gases. Since the industrial age began, the level of atmospheric CO₂ has increased by 30 percent. It is expected to rise another 30 to 150 percent by 2100.

The debate about whether global warming is real is over. The only argument is over whether we can or should be doing something about it. Which side you fall on is a matter of risk tolerance. How lucky are you feeling?

Sidney Turnbull **mainly** tries to win people to his point of view by

- A presenting a lot of facts and data.
- B impressing readers with his knowledge.
- C ridiculing those who disagree with him.
- D making fine distinctions about unimportant points.

Turnbull uses the technique of *name-calling* when he dismisses those who disagree with him as frightened “Chicken Littles.” He emphasizes this negative characterization through *repetition* of the phrase. More subtly, he is also using *negative association*, the opposite of the positive association of elitism or plain-folks techniques: If you think global warming is real, you’re a Chicken Little too. Both these techniques are diversions from the main issue of whether you should be concerned about global warming. Turnbull presents no data or facts that would lead you to respect him as an expert. Choice C is correct.

Margaret Baldanza uses all the following techniques of persuasion, **except**

- A** making strong positive claims about her position.
- B** winning over her audience with humor.
- C** appealing to readers’ insecurity.
- D** citing scientific data.

“Wake up!” is the message of Baldanza’s editorial. She makes her point mainly through strong, positive claims that nearly all scientists agree with her. She refers to “stupefying quantities” of data that support her position, and she cites a few. She uses name-calling more subtly by asserting that those who disagree with her represent “special interests”—a term commonly used by all sides in political debate to produce a negative response; special interests are “not us.” She also appeals to readers’ feelings of insecurity by suggesting that disasters will take place if global warming continues. One technique she does not use is diverting readers with a joke. Choice B is the correct answer.

Which statement in Turnbull’s article is a fact?

- A** People who believe global warming is real want to return to a 19th-century way of life.
- B** There is widespread scientific disagreement whether “global warming” is actually occurring.
- C** Global temperature varies naturally over time.
- D** The idea of global warming is a hoax.

Turnbull shuffles facts with opinions to make his point. Global temperature does vary naturally over time and does seem to have been higher a thousand years ago than it is today. It’s not true, however, that there is “widespread scientific agreement” about global warming. Turnbull uses the technique of card-stacking in citing only one study to back up his contention. Choice C is the correct answer.

Both authors want to convince people of

- A their impartiality.
- B their credibility as scientists.
- C the dishonesty of people who disagree with them.
- D the idea that majority opinion is not relevant to this issue.

Neither of these writers wants to appear impartial; each has a point of view to advance. Baldanza questions the honesty of her opponents by suggesting that they are paid by “special interests.” Turnbull mocks the credibility of those who disagree with him. Neither writer appeals to a majority vote to decide whether or not global warming is real. Both appeal mainly to “science”—and both try to establish their own credibility by proclaiming their Ph.D. degrees. Choice B is correct.

Write your answer to the following open-ended question on a separate sheet of paper. Your answer should be no more than one page long.

What is one question that you would want to ask either author to support the accuracy and truthfulness of his or her assertion? Explain why.

You might want to get around either author’s persuasive techniques by pinning them down to facts. Here is one way you could answer the question:

I would ask Sidney Turnbull, “Who paid for the Selfridge University study, and who were the scientists that were consulted?” That’s two questions, but they are interrelated. I’d want to know whether they were among the “few remaining naysayers” that Baldanza claims are paid by people with a stake in fossil fuels. To find out who these people were would cut through the propaganda in both editorials. I’d also be curious about whether those scientists who decided in 1996 that there was no evidence that human activity was causing global warming would have the same opinion today.

Test Yourself

Now read three more selections and answer the questions that follow.

The Bonnie Blue Flag

“The Bonnie Blue Flag,” written by Harry Macarthy in 1861, was the national anthem of the Confederate States during the Civil War.

We are a band of brothers, and native to the soil,
Fighting for the property we gained by honest toil;
And when our rights were threatened, the cry rose near and far:

“Hurrah! For the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star!”

Chorus:

Hurrah! Hurrah! For Southern rights, hurrah!

Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star!

As long as the Union was faithful to her trust,
Like friends and like brothers, kind were we and just;
But now, when Northern treachery attempts our rights to mar,
We hoist on high the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star.
(Chorus)

First gallant South Carolina nobly made the stand,
Then came Alabama, who took her by the hand;
Next quickly Mississippi, Georgia and Florida,
All raised on high the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star.
(Chorus)

Ye men of valor, gather round the banner of the right,
Texas and fair Louisiana join us in the fight;?
Davis, our loved president, and Stephens statesman are,
Now rally round the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star.
(Chorus)

And here’s to old Virginia, the Old Dominion State,
Who with the young Confederacy at length has linked her fate;
Impelled by her example, now other states prepare,
To hoist on high the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star.
(Chorus)



Then cheer, boys, cheer, raise the joyous shout,
For Arkansas and North Carolina now have both gone out;
And let another rousing cheer for Tennessee be given,
The single star of the Bonnie Blue Flag has grown to be eleven.
(Chorus)

Then here's to our Confederacy—strong we are and brave,
Like patriots of old, we'll fight our heritage to save;
And rather than submit to shame, to die we would prefer—
So cheer for the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star.
(Chorus)

Kamiloloa because...

You've been there, done that. Tropical beaches, sun and surf are nothing new to you. You want something special in an island resort—something more than sand, sea, and a round of golf. Seclusion, exclusivity, and exceptional service are important to you. Next time you want to get away from it all, we hope you consider Kamiloloa Resort. Call 1-888-555-8392 for our brochure, or visit our Web site at www.kamiloloasuites.com



This selection discusses another flag, one that all Americans know. The selection was posted on the World Wide Web for release to the media in 2002. At issue was the decision by two Federal judges that the words “under God” be dropped from the Pledge of Allegiance, on the basis of the First Amendment clause against “respecting an establishment of religion.” The decision remains under appeal.

Stop the Insanity: Impeach the Judges Now

Boulder, CO—At the fourth meeting of the America First National Committee, held by teleconference on June 26, 2002, the following resolution was authorized unanimously by its members:

Whereas, brave patriots fought and died to bequeath to all Americans a noble heritage of freedom; and,

Whereas, those Founders of our Nation pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their

sacred honor, declaring that they did so with “a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence”; and,

Whereas, the America First Party seeks to encourage Faith as one of our Nation's traditional values through the recognition of our Judeo-Christian heritage; and,

Whereas, the Flag of the United States of America is precious in the sight of all those who love our country; and,

Whereas, our Pledge to that Flag is a solemn affirmation of allegiance to the noblest, sweetest, and most precious ideals of the Country we love;

Now therefore be it resolved by the America First National Committee:

That we hereby condemn Federal Appeals Court Judges Alfred T. Goodwin and Stephen Reinhardt for their unprovoked and dastardly attack upon that Flag and its Pledge; and,

That we hereby deplore this latest attack by the Ninth Circuit Federal Court of Appeals as yet another act of judicial tyranny, following in a long line of usurpations of the United States Constitution and of the rights of the people; and,

That we hereby denounce the members of the United States Senate, hypocrites,

cowards, Republicans, and Democrats all, who have replaced the performance of what is now their required and sacred Constitutional duty with meaningless condemnations of the men they themselves put on the federal bench; and,

That we hereby demand that Congress uphold its sacred duty to protect and defend the Constitution by the immediate adoption of Articles of Impeachment by the House, and Conviction and Removal by the Senate of Judges Goodwin and Reinhardt, so that the Judges of this Country may know that their place and their duty is to uphold and defend the Constitution, and not to trample upon the rights of the people and help destroy America.

- 1** “The Bonnie Blue Flag” uses glittering generalities in its reference to
 - A** “brothers” and “natives.”
 - B** “honest toil” and “rights.”
 - C** “Northern treachery.”
 - D** the “flag that bears a single star.”

- 2** In its last stanza, “The Bonnie Blue Flag” rallies the support of Southerners by indentifying them with
 - A** heroic figures of legend.
 - B** the South’s leading landowners.
 - C** ordinary, hard-working farmers.
 - D** heroes of earlier American wars.

- 3** The use of repetition in the song serves **mainly** to
- A** inspire Confederate soldiers to courage.
 - B** portray the North in unrelentingly negative terms.
 - C** convince Southerners that the war is the North’s fault.
 - D** persuade Southerners to think of the flag as a symbol of their rights.
- 4** Which of these techniques of persuasion is used in the Kamiloloa Resort advertisement?
- A** elitism
 - B** transfer
 - C** diversion
 - D** bandwagon
- 5** Which of these words or phrases in the advertisement **best** supports your answer to question 4?
- A** seclusion
 - B** exclusivity
 - C** tropical beaches
 - D** exceptional service
- 6** The authors of the “Stop the Insanity...” document make their case **mainly** by
- A** asserting that they represent ordinary Americans.
 - B** using negative words to describe their opponents.
 - C** using the flag as a symbol to advance a hidden agenda.
 - D** portraying themselves as defenders of religious freedom.

Write your answer to open-ended question 7 on a separate sheet of paper. Your answer should be no more than one page long.

- 7** Analyze the effectiveness of the techniques of persuasion used by the authors of the “Stop the Insanity...” document. Use examples from the selection to support your answer.