

EXPOSITORY VS. PERSUASIVE WRITING

When we are writing in the social studies, especially when writing for a test, almost everything we do will be one of two types of writing, *Expository or Persuasive*. What are they?

EXPOSITORY WRITING:

The purpose of expository writing is to share information with the audience. In social studies this usually means explaining something—How did something happen? How did something work? What caused something? Expository prompts usually include some of the following words or phrases: *explain, discuss, list, what caused. . . , trace, how did. . . , what were the effects of. . . , analyze, etc.*

PERSUASIVE WRITING:

The purpose of persuasive writing is to convince the reader to accept a certain position or point of view. This could mean actually getting them to DO something or it might just be to try to get them to THINK a certain way about an issue. In a persuasive question, you will often see the word *should*. Even if the word doesn't appear directly, it is often implied. (as in what should we do or think about this issue).

Persuasive writing is much more emotional, but it still relies on facts. Think of it like a tent. The tent is the emotional connection to the action you want the reader to take, but without the stakes and poles (the facts) to support it, it will collapse. Without facts to support it, your argument will fail.

ALSO, in persuasive writing it is a good idea to refute an opposing point view, also known as a counter argument. There is rarely a right or wrong answer in a persuasive prompt. If we ask which makes a better sandwich, grape or strawberry jam, there is no right or wrong answer, just varying opinions. Therefore, it isn't wise to just pretend that there is no other side to the issue. Instead, you should try to take an opposing viewpoint and explain to your reader why that viewpoint is not valid. When you do this in a way that makes your position clear, refuting an opposing position really strengthens your argument.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

Although expository and persuasive writing have different purposes and different “feels,” both still rely on the tried and true principles of good writing—a good thesis, solid organization, well-constructed paragraphs and *good support* with details and examples.