
Persuasive Writing in Pioneer Songs

Intermediate (3rd - 5th grade)

Time required: 30-40 minutes

Specific recommendation: 4th grade Language Arts

Goals/Objectives:

- Define “pathos” and “logos,” or “emotions” vs. “facts”
- Identify and explain through writing persuasive language techniques in the text “A Life in the West”

Common Core Standards:

- RI.4.8: Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text

Materials:

- **Song of America links**

To print:

Song of America “A Life in the West” song page: <http://songofamerica.net/song/life-in-the-west>

To reference:

Song of America online timeline: <http://songofamerica.net/timeline/> (Expansion & Reform)

To listen to:

Song of America Places That Sing to Us radio program:

<https://songofamerica.net/program/places-that-sing-to-us/>

Instruction:

- The teacher begins by first playing the song “A Life in the West” [<https://songofamerica.net/program/places-that-sing-to-us/> at 5:05] and asking the students to write down if they believe the speaker’s purpose is to persuade, inform, or entertain his audience
- Students share their responses with the class, and the class comes to a consensus for the speaker’s purpose (persuasion)
- The teacher introduces/reviews two important persuasive techniques *logos* and *pathos* and defines the techniques
 - *Logos*: Using logic, facts, and numbers to support your argument
 - *Pathos*: Appealing to your audience’s emotions
- The teacher asks the class whether they think music makes a difference in the effectiveness of the argument? If so, is it through logos/facts or pathos/emotions?
- The teacher briefly introduces Westward Expansion in the mid-nineteenth century while referencing the *Song of America* timeline [<http://www.songofamerica.net/timeline/> (Expansion & Reform)]

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Created for the Hampsong Foundation’s *Song of America* Curriculum Initiative (<http://songofamerica.net/for-educators>)

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Please reference the creators of the handout, the Hampsong Foundation and *Song of America* when necessary.

For more information, please visit <http://songofamerica.net/> & <http://hampsongfoundation.org/>

- *Guided Practice*
 - The teacher will provide each student with the text “A Life in the West”
[\[http://songofamerica.net/song/life-in-the-west\]](http://songofamerica.net/song/life-in-the-west)
 - The teacher or a student will read aloud the first stanza of “A Life in the West”
 - The teacher will ask the students to underline one line of text that appeals to their emotions [ex.: “Here, like a monarch, I reign in my glory”] and one line of text that provides a factual detail [ex.: “The meadows and moorlands are marshes no more.”]

- *Independent Practice*
 - The class is divided in half with one half focusing on the *logos* details and the other half focusing on the *pathos* details of the chorus and last two stanzas
 - Students listen to “A Life in the West”
 - [\https://songofamerica.net/program/places-that-sing-to-us/ at 5:05] once more and will underline details of language and the musical setting that correspond with their persuasive language technique
 - Students share their responses with the class as the teacher takes note of the lines and compares how many were found for *pathos* in comparison to *logos*

Assessment:

Students write a paragraph response answering the prompt: “Would the song ‘A Life in the West’ persuade you to move westward? Why? Include details about both the logos and pathos appeals in your paragraph.”