



Digital Media Virtual Learning

Grades 9-12/Writing a Good Opinion Story

April 22, 2020



9-12/Digital and Advanced Digital Media
Lesson: *April 22, 2020*

Objective/Learning Target:
Students Will Be Able to Identify and Write Good Opinion
Stories

Let's Get Started:

1. Please pull out the topics you jotted down during the starter yesterday. We will use those later.
2. Read the following article, which is one of my favorite.

One Of My Favorites - A Fun Take on Dodgeball Being Banned

THE WEAK SHALL INHERIT THE GYM

BY RICK REILLY

Not to alarm you, but America is going softer than left-out butter. Exhibit 9,137: Schools have started banning dodgeball.

I kid you not. Dodgeball has been outlawed by some school districts in New York, Texas, Utah and Virginia. Many more are thinking about it, like Cecil County, Md., where the school board wants to ban any game with "human targets." Personally, I wish all these people would go suck their Birkenstocks.

Human targets? What's tag? What's a snowball fight? What's a close play at second? Neil Williams, a physical education professor at Eastern Connecticut State, says dodgeball has to go because it "encourages the best to pick on the weak." Noooo! You mean there's weak in the world? There's strong? Of course there is, and dodgeball is one of the first opportunities in life to figure out which one you are and how you're going to deal with it.

We had a bully, Big Joe, in our seventh grade. Must have weighed 225 pounds, used to take your underwear while you were in the shower and parade around the locker room twirling it on his finger. We also had a kid named Melvin, who was so thin we could've faxed him from class to class. I'll never forget the dodgeball game in which Big Joe had a ball in each hand and one sandwiched between his knees, firing at our side like a human tennis-ball machine, when, all of a sudden, he got plunked right in his 7-Eleven-sized butt. Joe whirled around to see who'd done it and saw that it was none other than Melvin, all 83 pounds of him, most of it smile.

Some of these New Age whiners say dodgeball is inappropriate in these times of horrifying school shootings. Are you kidding? Dodgeball is one of the few times in life when you get to let out your aggressions, no questions asked. We don't need less dodgeball in schools, we need more!

One Of My Favorites - A Fun Take on Dodgeball Being Banned

I know what all these NPR-listening, Starbucks-guzzling parents want. They want their Ambers and their Alexanders to grow up in a cozy womb of noncompetition, where everybody shares tofu and Little Red Riding Hood and the big, bad wolf set up a commune. Then their kids will stumble out into the bright light of the real world and find out that, yes, there's weak and there's strong and teams and sides and winning and losing. You'll recognize those kids. They'll be the ones filling up chalupas. Very noncompetitive.

But Williams and his fellow wusses aren't stopping at dodgeball. In their Physical Education Hall of Shame they've also included duck-duck-goose and musical chairs. Seriously. So, if we give them dodgeball, you can look for these games to be banned next:

- Tag. Referring to any child as it is demeaning and hurtful. Instead of the child hollering, "You're it!" we recommend, "You're special!"
- Red Rover. Inappropriate labeling of children as animals. Also, the use of the word red evokes Communist undertones.
- Sardines. Unfairly leaves one child alone at the end as the loser--a term psychologists have deemed unacceptable.
- Hide-and-seek. No child need hide or be sought. The modern child runs free in search of himself.
- Baseball. Involves wrong-headed notions of stealing, errors and gruesome hit-and-run. Players should always be safe, never out.
- Hopscotch. Sounds vaguely alcoholic, not to mention demeaning to our friends of Scottish ancestry.
- Marbles. Winning others' marbles is overly capitalistic.
- Marco Polo. Mocks the blind.

One Of My Favorites - A Fun Take on Dodgeball Being Banned

- Capture the flag. Mimics war.
- Kick the can. Unfair to the can.

If we let these PC twinkies have their way, we'll be left with:

- Duck-duck-duck. Teacher spends the entire hour patting each child softly on the head.
- Upsy down. The entire class takes turns fluffing the gym teacher's pillow before her nap.
- Swedish baseball. Players are allowed free passage to first, second or third, where they receive a relaxing two-minute massage from opposing players.
- Smear the mirror. Students take turns using whipped cream to smear parts of their reflection they don't like, e.g., the fat they have accrued from never doing a damn thing in gym class.

Review: Writing a Good Opinion Piece

LAYING OUT YOUR ARGUMENT - Your argument needs to be persuasive and entertaining. If your writing is not entertaining, who will want to read it? So being with arguments or a stance that might be somewhat controversial or outrageous, and then, as you get deeper into the argument, you clarify your position and why it is not so outrageous.

Make sure you have a catchy title that causes someone to pause, question, or become curious. But once you've drawn the reader in, there are several things you need to focus on:

Explain your position in one sentence. This should be right at the beginning of your piece...or very near the beginning. It can be, as mentioned, outrageous, controversial, or even humorous. It should grab the reader's attention. For example:

- Teachers should break the rules more.
- Our football team is the best team in the nation.
- The new school policy violates student's free speech rights.
- The dress code isn't strict enough!

FACTS - Your argument means nothing without facts. You can't just make things up. It needs to be clear and your arguments should interpret the facts in a way that makes sense. But without facts, you are going nowhere.

Review: Writing a Good Opinion Piece

TELL THE OTHER SIDE'S VIEW - This gives you credibility. It says that you know what you are talking about, have listened, but have found fault with their perspective. However, conceding to at least one point of the opposition's view shows that you can be objective, fair, and balanced.

GIVE REALISTIC SOLUTIONS - This is important. Your credibility and influence may hinge on this. It is not enough to say someone or something is wrong. You need to offer a better alternative. If you just say why someone is wrong, but you never give a realistic solution to the problem, then your arguments will seem petty. What is your solution and why is it better than the opposition's? Is it realistic? I mean stating that the solution is replacing the School Board with Junior High Schoolers is probably not realistic, and unless you intend it to be a satire, will probably turn readers off.

DON'T GET TOO WORDY - You want to aim for 500 words or less. Make every word matter and you will be more convincing.

Some writers recommend saving your best arguments for last because what a person reads last will stick in their minds longer. But if you do that, then your other arguments need to be engaging or you may lose readers.

Conclude with a reiteration of your argument and why you hold to the particular solution you presented.

Practice - Your Turn

1. Think back to the topics you jotted down at the beginning
2. Pick one of the topics you would like to write a short opinion piece about
3. Quickly outline your story with your main opinion, your supporting facts, the opposing view, and a rebuttal to the opposing view
4. Write a short opinion piece (200 or more words)

Resources/Other Important Articles on the Subject

[10 Rules For Writing a Strong Opinion Piece](#)

[NSPA High School Journalism Awards - Stories of All Types](#)