

Elementary School (4-5) Persuasive/Argument Writing Prompts

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IntelliMetric® Prompts

Adopting a Zoo Animal

Zoos often have programs for families and individuals that allow them to "adopt" one of their animals. The donation collected for adopting an animal is used for its upkeep and care. What kind of zoo animal would you adopt if you were given this opportunity? Why would you choose that animal?

Write a well-developed essay to convince your family to adopt a particular animal at your local zoo. Include facts and details to support your selection.

Asking for a New Pet

A new pet can bring with it many great memories but also new challenges. Imagine that your parents are considering bringing a new pet into the family. What type of pet do you think your family should adopt? How will this pet change your family for the better and bring more fun into the household?

In a persuasive letter, write to your parents asking them to choose your idea for a new pet. Include facts and details to support your request.

Backpacks in the Classroom

The school district is deciding whether or not students should be permitted to bring backpacks into the classroom. Some individuals feel that students should be allowed to have backpacks in the classroom so that they have access to all their school materials. Others feel that carrying backpacks from classroom to classroom creates unnecessary confusion and presents a health risk to students.

Do you think that students should or should not be allowed to bring backpacks into classrooms? Write an essay to persuade the principal to agree with your position. Be sure to support your position with examples and facts from your experience and reading.

Career Day Speaker

Your principal has announced that students will choose this year's Career Day speaker by popular vote. Students will write an essay persuading classmates to vote for the person that they think has a career that will interest everyone. Who would you like to hear speak about a career? What would make this person's career interesting to your classmates?

In a detailed essay, convince your classmates to vote for the speaker of your choice. Include facts and details to support your selection.

Children Watch Too Much Television

“Young people today are watching far too much television. Some children spend hours watching TV after school and watch even more on weekends. It isn’t healthy for their bodies to sit there all day long, and many of the shows send bad messages to our children. We should agree to limit the amount of time our children watch TV to about 30 minutes a day on weekdays and 1 hour a day on weekends and during vacations. This way, young people will spend more time with their families and will be able to get more exercise.” -A Concerned Parent

Read the excerpt above from a newspaper editorial written by a local parent. The writer suggests that children are watching too much television in their spare time, and parents should agree to limit their children’s viewing time. In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss whether you agree or disagree with the position presented in the editorial. Be sure to support your discussion with facts and details from your experiences.

Choose a Class President

Two of your classmates, Brad and Linda, are running for student class president. They have prepared speeches in which they promise to make some changes to the way your school is run.

Read the following campaign speeches from the two candidates. Write an essay arguing why your classmates should vote for the candidate you support. Be sure to address the points made in the speeches that make your candidate the better choice.

Brad’s Campaign Speech

Fellow students,

My name is Brad, and I want to be your student class president. If elected, I will try to get us better tasting school lunches, less homework, and more time in the computer lab.

Aren't you tired of eating the same old foods every day? I think we need more choices during lunch time. If I’m elected, I will talk to the superintendent and the principal about getting more interesting meals like those you would see at real restaurants.

Next, I know everyone hates homework. We spend almost all day learning. Do we really need to take more work home with us? We should have more time to spend with friends and family. If I’m elected, I will fight for less homework.

Finally, I love computers. I think we should get to spend more time researching and learning on the Internet. Computers are the future, and we should get as much time with them as we can. I will work to get us more time learning on computers.

So remember, a vote for Brad is a vote for more choices, less homework and more computers! Thank you.

Linda's Campaign Speech

Hello everyone.

My name is Linda, and I think what this school needs is a little excitement! If you choose me as student class president, I will organize a spring fair for students and families to attend. I will encourage teachers to do more outdoor activities. Also, I will try to get the teachers to allow us more time in gym class.

First, I love fairs and carnivals. We should have a big event right here at the school with rides, games, and prizes. Teachers and parents could volunteer to work there.

Also, I think we need to spend more time in nature. Teachers should have the option of teaching their classes outside when the weather is good. Also we should have more local field trips to the library or the park.

Last, we spend too much time sitting at our desks these days. If I'm elected, I will try to get us a longer gym class so we can play games like kickball and get in shape.

If you want to have more fun at school, remember to vote for me, Lindsey. Thank you for your attention.

Contest Winner

You have won a contest and can go anywhere in the world on a trip with a friend or relative. You can designate both the person and the location of the trip. Where is the one place you would really like to go? Why is this such a good place?

Write a letter to your family persuading them to let you go.

Create a New School Holiday

Most students like school holidays. Think about a new school holiday that could be created. Write a letter to your principal about the new holiday you would like your school to create.

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Designing a Toy

Imagine that a major toy company has just announced that they will take one school student's toy design and actually manufacture and sell it. The rules of the contest are that you must create a sketch of the toy and write a detailed essay stating why the company should use your idea.

In a well-written letter, persuade a toy company to develop your toy idea. Include reasons to support your argument.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grade 5

Informational Text Standard 3 – Grade 5

Do Cats Have Nine Lives?

Read the passage "Here Kitty, Kitty...." and watch the video "A Cat's Nine Lives" to learn about amazing circumstances that cats can survive.

After reading the article and viewing the video, write a multi-paragraph essay to present your opinion on why cats have the ability to survive amazing circumstances. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the article and video to support your point of view.

Passage One: Here, Kitty, Kitty. . .

You may have heard it said that cats have nine lives. More than other animals, cats get into terrible trouble and then get out of it alive. But if you doubt that cats are the luckiest animals around, these real-life stories will change your mind.

Tigger's Story

On February 26, 2002, Ceridwen Jones realized that her cat Tigger was missing. She looked all over and spoke to her neighbors in the town of Ilfracombe, England, but none of them had seen Tigger. As days turned into weeks, Ceridwen refused to give up on Tigger. Every morning she walked through the neighborhood calling his name. As it turns out, Tigger could hear Ceridwen but could not come to her. Why not? He was stuck under a pile of dirt and rocks in a neighbor's yard. On the day he went missing, wet weather had caused a landslide in the yard and buried the poor cat alive!

How long can a cat survive in such a trap? With nothing to eat and only the moisture he licked from his fur to drink, Tigger lasted for a month. In that time, the once-chubby cat slimmed down enough to squeeze through the crevices in the rubble. Once he freed himself, Tigger slipped into the neighbor's house through an open window. Tigger was terribly weak and thin, and the neighbor brought him to a veterinarian. Guessing that the cat might be the long-lost Tigger, the vet contacted Ceridwen Jones. Before long, Ceridwen and Tigger were happily reunited.

Polly's Story

One summer day in 2001, Maureen Morris's cat, Polly, wandered off from their home in Clacton, England. When Polly did not come back after several days, Maureen got busy. She made some "Lost Cat" posters and put them up all over her neighborhood. She even tacked up a few in a nearby area where new houses were being built. But when no one called with word about Polly, Maureen sadly decided her cat was gone for good.

In fact, Polly was still alive. Where was she? Under the concrete floor of one of the new houses near Maureen's neighborhood! It seems that Polly had hidden herself away there before the concrete

was poured. Six weeks later, as a couple visited the house to see if they might like to buy it, they heard scratching and meowing under their feet. The house builder cut a hole in the floor, and out popped a very skinny and worn-out Polly! But thanks to lots of pampering from Maureen, Polly is once again looking fine and feeling frisky.

Do Children Need Their Own Phones?

Read “Advice to Parents” and “Young Children Should Have Cell Phones.” Do you believe that children under the age of 12 should or should not have cell phones?

In a multi-paragraph essay, support your position on whether children under the age of 12 should or should not have cell phones. Refer to “Advice to Parents” and “Young Children Should Have Cell Phones” to support your position.

Advice to Parents

Parents, do you think your young child needs a cell phone? There are many things you should consider before making that decision. Will your child ever need the phone because he or she is not with you? Will your child be using the phone instead of sleeping at night? Will your child become a victim of bullying? Doctors and experts worry that children under the age of 12 do not need a cell phone; they want a cell phone. They are almost always with a parent or adult. Why would they need a phone? Also, texting or phoning instead of sleeping causes children to suffer poor health and problems at school. Finally, bullying has become a problem with children who text with their cell phones. Children can quickly and easily text hurtful comments. These texts many times become a form of bullying. Your child does not really need a cell phone. And it may be unhealthy for him or her to have one. Think carefully before making your decision!

Young Children Should Have Cell Phones

Both parents and children will feel better if a child has a cell phone. Parents will know that the child is safe. The child will know that he or she can call a parent quickly and easily. But cell phones should not be used as toys with no limits. Parents must make rules about cell phone use, and children must follow these rules. Parents make rules for homework, bed time, and chores around the house. Cell phone use should also have rules. The rules should be posted where everyone can see them. Parents should also go over the rules often.

Here are some simple rules:

Children must answer all calls from a parent.

Children must stay within the plan minutes for calls and texts.

Children must follow school rules on cell phone use.

Children must not agree to any offers.

Children must not answer numbers they do not know.

Children must not give personal information to anyone.

If a child does not follow the rules, then the cell phone can be taken away. If the child does follow the rules, both parents and child will feel safer knowing that they can contact each other at all times.

Eliminating Recess

Your principal is considering eliminating recess so that there is more time for learning. Do you think that getting rid of recess is a good idea or a bad idea? Write a letter to your principal explaining your opinion on this issue and convincing him or her to agree with you.

Favorite Book

Your pen pal writes to you and asks if you can suggest a good book to read for a report he or she has to give to the class. Before you begin to write, think about what you liked best about the book. Did it have exciting adventures? What was most memorable about the characters and the setting? Remember to write about the reasons your pen pal should choose this book to read. Do not just retell the story.

Favorite Part of the Holiday Season

Each year, the fall brings with it the return to school, the changing color of the leaves, and the onset of the holiday season. We look forward to celebrating Halloween and Thanksgiving, and Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa. What is, to you, the best part of the holiday season? Is it the excitement in opening gifts, eating delectable food, or experiencing family traditions?

In a detailed essay, persuade your reader to believe your favorite part of the holiday season is the best. Provide examples of your personal experiences during the holidays to support your argument.

Going Alone

Convince your parents or guardian why you should be permitted to attend an event, or do an activity, without their supervision.

Google Glass Explorers

Your teacher just found out that Google is looking for young students to be Google Glass Explorers for free. To select students for this opportunity, your teacher wants students to write an essay stating their opinion about whether or not they would like to become a Google Glass Explorer.

After researching the Google Glass Explorer program, write a well-developed essay in which you state your opinion about whether you would like to become a Google Glass Explorer. Include the reasons for your opinion, and use details and facts from your research to support your reasons.

Loyalists vs. Patriots

Imagine you are a colonist living during the time of the American Revolution. There are two sides battling each other for power: the Patriots, who support independence for the colonies, and the Loyalists, who support the king. Which side do you plan to support?

Write a multi-paragraph letter to your neighbor that persuades him or her to take your position as a Loyalist or a Patriot. Be sure to support your position with historical facts and details.

Pick Me!

Halloween is coming! Pretend you are a pumpkin in a pumpkin patch. Today is the day that you have either been awaiting or dreading. A child is coming to the patch to pick out his or her pumpkin for October 31st. It is up to you to persuade that child to either choose you or leave you behind.

Write a well-developed essay persuading the child to either pick you or leave you behind. Be sure to include support for each of your reasons.

Robot Teacher

Some schools in South Korea are using robots as teachers. Would you want to have a robot for a teacher? What might be some advantages to having a robot for a teacher? What might be some disadvantages?

In a detailed essay, defend your position on the use of robots as teachers. Include facts, details, and examples to support your position.

Save My Favorite Show

Your local television network has just announced plans to take your favorite television show off the air. Write a persuasive letter to the network and state why your show should be kept on the air. Be sure to discuss what makes your show special for you and everyone else.

Sixth Grade: Middle School or Elementary School?

Imagine you are a fifth grade student at an elementary school that houses students in grades K-5. However, due to overcrowding in the local high school and middle school, school administrators are considering moving students in the sixth grade back to the elementary school.

As a soon-to-be sixth grader, how do you feel about this new policy? Do you feel that it is a good idea for sixth graders to be kept in the elementary school due to this overcrowding? Or, do you feel that it is crucial that sixth graders attend middle school?

Write an essay to the superintendent of your school district persuading him/her either to keep sixth graders in the middle schools or to move sixth graders to the elementary schools. Provide details and examples to support your response.

Sports Teams

Both boys and girls play sports at school. Some students feel that boys and girls should play on the same team, while other students feel it is better for boys and girls to be on different teams. Do you think it is a good idea to have boys and girls on the same team or do you think that boys and girls should play on different teams?

Write an essay that convinces your school principal that girls and boys should or should not play on the same team.

Student Leader

A national student government organization is inviting student leaders to a meeting to be held in Washington, D.C. Your school has been asked to send one student to the meeting. You have been asked to choose the student that your school will send to the meeting.

Write an essay that convinces your school principal why the person you have chosen should be sent to the meeting in Washington D.C.

The Necessity of Homework

Some parents at your school have started a campaign to limit the amount of homework that teachers can give to students. Teachers at your school have argued that all of that homework is necessary. Do you think that there should be a limit on homework? How many hours of homework per night do you think a student should have to do?

Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper stating your position on the need for homework. Support your opinion with convincing reasons, details, and examples.

Top Vacation Place

Choose a favorite place you like to visit or go to on vacation and write an essay that convinces students your age to visit that place. Remember to give reasons why your readers should travel to the place you picked.

Underground Railroad

Think about the stories you read in the “Civil War” unit and the challenges people faced during that time. Imagine your friend has asked you to help (him or her) make a decision whether or not to escape to the North using the Underground Railroad.

Write a multiple-paragraph position paper to help persuade your friend and influence the decision that will be made. Decide on a clear position regarding whether or not your friend should go. Support your position with arguments and with relevant and logical evidence and details for each argument. Remember to address your friend's concerns.

Windmills on Drear Bay

The community around Drear Bay is in disagreement over whether or not windmills should be built off the coast. Read “Letter A” and “Letter B” to find out more about the opinions of some Drear Bay community members.

After reading Letters A and B, state your position on building windmills off the coast of Drear Bay. Include facts and details from the letters to support your position.

Letter A

To the Editor:

As your readers know, some people hope to build a number of 400-foot windmill towers to produce electricity from the wind on Drear Bay. This plan is unnecessary. It will make our shoreline the object of jokes across the country. Cape Drear is a lot of hot air, they will say.

The windmills won't just destroy the view from homes facing the bay. It will bring down the value of this costly shore property as well.

Also, the windmills will be dangerous to birds. The height of the windmills means that they need lights so that airplanes won't hit them. These lights will attract birds. Many birds will be harmed by the blades of the windmills.

Another problem with the windmills is that fishermen depend on this area to earn a living. Even though there is a wide space between the windmills, fishermen could run into them in fog or stormy weather.

Let's put a stop to this project before it gets too far off the ground.

Pete Petersen
Cape Drear

Letter B

To the Editor:

I am writing to invite readers to a meeting on May 14 to talk about windmills. New windmills are planned for Drear Bay, off the Cape Drear shore.

Those who know the history of our area know that windmills have played an important role here in the past. Windmills were used to grind grain so that people could live here and build our local towns.

Today windmills are still a source of cheap energy. Using windmills will lower the cost of electricity. It will also lessen the need to drill for oil in beautiful wilderness areas. Unneeded drilling can cause great harm to our environment.

We spend a huge amount of money on foreign oil to meet our energy needs. It's time we stood on our own. We must shift to using more energy sources that don't use up the earth's resources.

Some will argue that windmills on our shores are an eyesore. Some say they are a danger to birds. These are problems that can be solved if we work as a team. Come to the meeting next Tuesday to hear what experts have to say. We need windmills today more than ever.

Amelia Bassett
Cape Drear

Your Favorite Early American Colony

Each colony in the New World had unique characteristics. The colony's culture and way of life were affected by such things as geography, the background of the people establishing the colony, and the climate. If you lived in 1700s America, which colony would you have chosen to live in?

In a well-developed essay, convince your family to move to one of the thirteen colonies. Include facts and examples to support your argument.

Pilot Prompts

A Letter to Thorin (pilot)

In the story, *The Hobbit*, the great dragon Smaug acquired many riches that he has no need for, yet he protects them with jealousy and anger. After Smaug's death, the dwarf king, Thorin, acquires Smaug's wealth and becomes like him, refusing to share his newfound riches with his neighbors. His selfishness leads to the Battle of Five Armies and the eventual death of Thorin himself. Imagine that you could write a letter to Thorin, before the battle, persuading him to share his wealth. What are some of the reasons he should share his treasures?

Write a persuasive letter to Thorin convincing him to share his wealth with his neighbors. Include facts to support your argument.

Chefs Use Math (pilot)

Imagine that a friend suggests to you that chefs never use math during their work day. Although a chef would not need to study math to prepare for his or her job, you know that he or she uses math every day.

In a well-developed essay, convince your friend that math is used by all successful chefs. Include facts and examples to support your position.

Defending the Constitution (pilot)

Think about the stories you read in the "Making a New Nation" unit and imagine you are a young person working with Benjamin Franklin to prepare his speech to the Congress. He is aware that not everyone will agree with him. You have been asked to develop a position paper to help the members of Congress take a stand on signing the document.

Write a multiple-paragraph position paper, taking a stand (pro or con) on signing the document. Support your position with arguments and with relevant and logical evidence and details for each argument. Remember to address reader concerns.

Estimating the Number of Jelly Beans (pilot)

A popular feature of school fairs is the jar containing hundreds of jelly beans just waiting to be counted. There are many different ways that contestants can estimate the number of jelly beans in the jar. If you were entering the contest with a guess of 2,510 jelly beans, and your friend was entering with a guess of 599, how would you persuade your friend that your guess is more accurate?

In a well-developed essay, defend your estimate of the number of jelly beans in the jar. Use facts and examples to support your estimate.

Neil Diamond's "America": A View on Immigration (pilot)

The song "America" by Neil Diamond describes the feelings of people who have worked hard to come to America. According to the song, what are some of the feelings those people have about the United States? Do you feel that way about America? Explain why you agree or don't agree with the speaker's opinions about coming to America.

No Sports During Recess (pilot)

“Dear Students, Over the last few days, several students have been injured while playing sports during recess. There were several instances where our school nurse needed to treat scrapes, and this past Friday, one student’s wrist may have even broken while playing kickball. The blacktop that covers most of the field is too hard for students to run and play on safely. Also, the school cannot afford the cost of safety equipment for every student. Since our highest priority is to ensure your safety, I have decided that the school will no longer allow sports to be played at recess. There are still many other activities available to students during recess.” —Principal Herman Smith

After reading Principal Smith’s letter, decide whether you agree or disagree with his decision and reasoning. In a multi-paragraph essay, present your position on Principal Smith’s decision to ban sports on the blacktop at recess. Use facts and personal experiences to support your position.

Opposing the Stamp Act (pilot)

The Boston Tea Party is one of the most famous events in American history. This act of defiance was a response to the British Parliament’s Stamp Act, which heavily taxed many items commonly used by the colonists. This law is one of the major reasons for the start of The War of Independence. Imagine that you are a colonist during this time and you have just heard of the Stamp Act. Write a persuasive letter to your fellow citizens stating why you disagree with this new law and taxation without representation, and how you would change it. Include facts and examples to support your position.

Review of your Favorite Video Game (pilot)

Imagine that your school paper is having a contest asking students to write a review of their favorite video game. The student who writes the most convincing essay will have their favorite game declared the best video game of all-time, and their review will appear in the school paper.

In a detailed essay, write a review of your favorite video game and explain why it should be voted the best game ever created. Include facts and details to support your review.

Spending Fifty Dollars (pilot)

Your friend has fifty dollars and plans to spend it on a pair of shoes. Are there better things on which to spend the money?

Write a persuasive letter asking your friend to use your idea on how best to spend the fifty dollars.

Sponsoring a Charity (pilot)

Imagine that your school is sponsoring a large fundraising event for a major charity. Your principal has asked for ideas on which charity will receive the money raised. Write a persuasive letter to the principal stating which charity your school should sponsor and why.

Talking a Parent into a Purchase (pilot)

Shopping trips with a parent can be frustrating when you don't agree about a purchase. Sometimes parents believe an item is too expensive or inappropriate for someone your age. Have you ever had to talk a parent into allowing you to make a certain purchase? Did you use facts or emotions to support your argument?

In a well-developed essay, convince your parent to allow you to make a certain purchase. Include facts and details to support your argument.

Talking Big Sister into a Game of Four Square (pilot)

It's Saturday afternoon and you are bored out of your mind! All you want to do is play a game of "Four Square" outside with your big sister- but she is on the phone as usual, talking to her friends. How can you persuade her that she should play a game with you instead of talking to her friends on the phone? Reprinted from *Write to Know* with kind permission of The Leadership and Learning Center, © 2008. Copy only with permission.

The Greatest American President (pilot)

The United States of America has had many presidents, all with strengths and weaknesses. In a detailed essay, defend your position on who you think was the best American president. Make sure to include specific examples and details to support why you think that person was the best president.

Trading Corn for Milk (pilot)

America grew lots of corn last year, but its cows did not produce enough milk for ice cream. You are the president of the United States. You heard that Mexican cows produced lots of milk last year but Mexican farmers couldn't grow enough corn for tamales. You came up with the idea of trading corn

for milk so everyone will be happy. Write a letter to the Mexican president persuading him to trade with you.

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Vacation at a National Park (pilot)

Your class has been studying the many beautiful national parks our country has to offer. You have decided that a visit to one of these parks would be a good way for you to apply your new knowledge and share it with your family.

After gathering information on a particular national park, write an essay persuading your family to vacation in the national park you researched.

Why Do You Want Music Lessons? (pilot)

Write a persuasive letter to an adult convincing him or her to allow you to take music lessons and learn to play an instrument. Your letter should include at least three reasons why you want to study this instrument, and examples demonstrating that you are ready to learn.

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Your Favorite "Stop" Signal (pilot)

Your teacher has three different stop signals to get your attention. First is the whistle; next is to say "freeze"; and last is the music (music on means go and music off means stop). Compare the three signals and convince me of why I should use only your favorite signal.

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