

Topic: Persuasive written texts

Examining persuasive text structures

Today you will:

- understand how text structures can be manipulated for specific purposes and effects in a persuasive media text.

Resources

Find and prepare

Sheet 7 — Individuality
(from previous lesson)

Exercise book

Key terms

abstract noun, cohesion, grammatical theme, lexical cohesion, nominalisation, repetition, text connectives

For definitions and explanations of terms, please see the [Glossary](#).

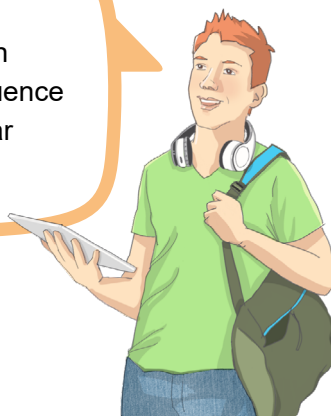
Lesson

Examine text structures of a persuasive media text



Think about what it means to be persuasive. If authors want their audiences to accept a point of view, they need to present their ideas in a way that will convince readers to accept and agree with the ideas. By making appropriate text structure choices, the author will engage the audience and influence them to accept the point of view presented.

In this lesson, you will focus on understanding how an author can manipulate text structures to influence an audience to accept a particular point of view about an issue.



The text structures used in constructing persuasive written media texts include:

- **organisation** and **sequencing** of ideas
- creative/deliberate **use of sentence structures** for persuasive purposes and effects
- **cohesive devices** within and across the text to link ideas, construct meaning clearly and reinforce ideas.

1. Open **Sheet 7** — [Individuality](#) and re-read the media article.

As you read, focus your attention on how the author uses text structures to influence and persuade the audience to accept the point of view presented about the issue of individuality.

We will now spend time analysing and evaluating how these structural features of the text are used in the article on **Sheet 7**.

Organisation and **sequencing** refers to:

- how the text is structured or put together using certain expected features (such as paragraphs, headlines, images)
- use and manipulation of the conventions of that text type for persuasive purposes and effects.

2. Examine the organisation and sequencing of ideas in the article on **Sheet 7**. What is the purpose of the:
 - a. headline? (1–2 sentences)

b. introduction? (1–2 sentences)

c. body paragraphs? (1–2 sentences)

d. conclusion? (1–2 sentences)

A logically sequenced article allows the author to present ideas clearly and the reader to follow the ideas, so they are more likely to be influenced to accept and believe the point of view presented.

Think of sentence structures as tools to use in shaping the text. Writers creatively and deliberately use **sentence structures** for persuasive purposes and effects by using:

- **grammatical theme** to give prominence to main ideas
- **nominalisation** to condense meaning
- **abstract nouns** to summarise preceding or subsequent ideas.

grammatical theme: the first part of the sentence, including every word up to the first verb. It indicates what message is given prominence in a sentence.

A topic sentence serves as a structural device to signpost points raised in a paragraph, but the text that comes in the grammatical theme position of a sentence shows what is most important. This text is used to influence the audience response.

3. Examine the first sentence of the article on **Sheet 7** below.

‘To preserve one’s individuality throughout life is a very desirable thing.’

In this example, the author has manipulated the sentence structure so that the verb group ‘to preserve’ is given prominence at the beginning of the sentence.

- a. Rewrite the first sentence of the article so that the words ‘a very desirable thing ...’ are in the theme position.

- b. Which sentence structure is more effective in giving prominence to the message about individuality? (1–2 sentences)

Nominalisation and abstract nouns can also be used when constructing sentence structures for specific meaning and persuasive effect.

nominalisation: a way of making a text more compact; often a feature of texts that contain abstract ideas and concepts. Nominalisation is:

- a process that involves forming nouns from verbs (for example: ‘reaction’ from ‘react’ or ‘departure’ from ‘depart’) or adjectives (for example: ‘length’ from ‘long’ or ‘eagerness’ from ‘eager’)
- a process for forming noun phrases from clauses (for example: ‘their destruction of the city’ from ‘they destroyed the city’).



abstract noun: a name for an idea, feeling, concept or quality that does not physically exist and therefore cannot be identified with any of the five senses, for example: courage, democracy and friendship.

Abstract nouns can be used to summarise preceding (previous) or subsequent (following) stretches of text.

4. Identify three examples of nominalisation in the article on **Sheet 7**.

5. Consider the following abstract nouns used in the media text on **Sheet 7**. They have been used to construct concise meaning by condensing or summarising ideas in preceding or subsequent stretches of text.

List the ideas (specific to the text) that each abstract noun expresses. The first noun has been done for you, as an example.

Abstract noun	Ideas
individuality	It expresses ideas about personal qualities that make us unique, including: 'thoughts and feelings', 'force and passion', 'courage', 'skill' and 'resource'.
pressure	
circumstances	
aspirations	



Okay, I see how this works ... nominalisation and abstract nouns are used as a text structure when the writer makes deliberate use of them in writing sentences. When used for the purpose of persuasion, they condense ideas, making writing more concise.

It also makes the author sound more 'expert' and credible, by increasing the degree of formality of language. Readers tend to be persuaded more readily when the author sounds like they know what they are writing about.

Cohesive devices used within and across the text are very important in a persuasive text. Writers use them to link ideas, construct meaning clearly and reinforce ideas through:

- use of **repetition** as a word association technique to make links across a text
- **lexical cohesion** created through referring words (pronouns and pointing words like 'the', 'this' and 'that') and word associations (synonyms, antonyms, collocation and word sets)
- use of linking words, such as **conjunctions** and **text connectives** to signpost ideas. Conjunctions make connections within and between sentences and text connectives make connections between paragraphs and across the whole text.

Repetition is very persuasive when used as a text structure to reinforce key ideas.

repetition: words or ideas deliberately repeated for effect. You know from everyday life that this device is effective because when something is repeated it is easier to remember and makes a deeper impact. Repetition also links ideas in a text together and acts as a cohesive device. If the main idea or message is repeated throughout the text, the audience receives one clear, cohesive message. This is a persuasive text structure

6. Examine the following sentence from paragraph 3 of the article on **Sheet 7**:

*If we give way to circumstances it means that **our** passions are **too** weak or **too** easily allayed, **our** thoughts **too** shallow to prevail, **our** feelings **too** superficial to suffer in their own cause, and in such cases **our** individuality of which these are the constituents was never robust enough to live out of its swaddling clothes.*

- Explain how the author has used repetition in the example above for persuasive effect. (1–2 sentences)

Lexical cohesion is also a cohesive device that works to make connections and build word associations in a text, which helps persuade an audience to accept a point of view.

lexical cohesion: the use of word associations to create links in texts. Links can be made through the use of repetition of words, synonyms, antonyms and words that are related, that is, by topic.

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Reflect on text structures of a persuasive media text

An author can manipulate a variety of persuasive text structures to create particular effects and influence an audience to accept a point of view on an issue.

8. Write a reflective paragraph about how the writer of 'Individuality' has manipulated text structures to position the audience in a particular way towards the issue of individuality.



Hot tip

Note: Your paragraph should include:

- a clear **topic sentence** that outlines the central idea of your paragraph
- **supporting sentences** that:
 - provide *examples* and/or *evidence* from the text
 - *explain* your ideas, elaborating on the topic sentence
- a **concluding sentence** that sums up the ideas in your paragraph and links back to the topic sentence.