Lesson 1: A Skatepark for Everyone

UNIT: Skatepark

TRANSCRIPT

HOOK 1

Hi, writers. It's Margaret.

Last summer, I got to visit Venice Beach in California. It was so fun exploring the city and seeing things like the colorful murals and the street musicians. But one of my favorite parts was visiting the Venice Beach skatepark—I watched some of the skateboarders do really cool tricks.

After chatting with someone from the area, I found out there wasn't always a skatepark there. People used to just skate in parking lots, but the local skaters worked hard to build a place where they could all practice on different obstacles and learn tricks.

My friend Mia wants to do something similar in her community. There's an old, abandoned community pool across the street from her neighborhood. It takes up a lot of space and no one is able to swim in it. Mia wants to convince her community to turn this abandoned pool into a new skatepark.

DISCUSSION 1

Discuss: What can Mia do to convince her community to build a skatepark?

HOOK 2

Maybe you said she could hand out flyers to her neighbors. Or mow a message into the grass. Or maybe she could hire a skywriter to get the message out to the entire city. These ideas do sound like a lot of fun, but she wants to talk to someone who can really help.

Mia found out that the mayor is the person who makes important decisions in their city. Just like a principal is in charge of your school, a mayor is in charge of the city.

Mia doesn't know the mayor, so she can't just send him a text, but it turns out the mayor's office accepts community letters. Which means Mia can write a letter to the mayor. Not like a friendly letter that you would write to your grandma or a friend. She needs to write a persuasive letter. That just means her letter needs to convince the mayor to agree with her point of view and build the skatepark.

Mia needs to clearly state what she wants, which is for the city to turn the abandoned pool into a new skatepark. This sentence can go first, and we'll let the mayor know Mia's purpose for writing the letter in the first place. Writers call this a thesis.

The mayor also needs to know why this is a good idea. So, she came up with two reasons: Skateparks create a community space where kids can hang out, and skateparks are an opportunity for kids to exercise and stay healthy.

When she put her thesis and two reasons together, this is how her letter sounded:

> *Dear Mayor Westin.*
>
> *The city should turn the abandoned pool into a new skatepark. Skateparks create a community space where kids can hang out. Skate parks are an opportunity for kids to exercise and stay healthy.*

Sincerely, Mia Fuentes

When she showed me her letter, I thought it might be missing something. I'm not sure that it has enough information to convince the mayor to agree with her idea.

What do you think?

DISCUSSION 2

Discuss: What could Mia add to her letter to get the mayor to agree with her idea to build a new skatepark?

HOOK 3

I'm not sure what ideas you had. One idea I had is maybe Mia should find examples of how skateparks have helped in other communities. When writers add examples to their writing, it makes a reason even stronger because now there's proof that it works.

So if the mayor finds out about other skateparks, and how they have helped the community, he'll see that it's possible for skateparks to help their community, too.

Examples that give proof that an idea works is called evidence. By adding examples to each of these reasons, it will give her entire idea evidence.

To find this evidence, Mia needs to do research. She started looking online for examples of other communities that have built skateparks.

She found a lot of information about Atita Verghese. She's a professional skateboarder who helps build community skatepark all over India. Look at how she spreads out wet cement to create a smooth surface to skate on. Mia also found an article about Atita in a newsletter. Here's what the first part said:

Atita Verghese is a professional skateboarder in India.

In 2013, joined a group that built India's first free skatepark.

Before the skatepark existed, there weren't many places for people to hang out, especially kids.

Many of these kids were looking for a place to go after school that was walking distance and free.

DISCUSSION 3

Discuss: How could this article about Atita help Mia in her writing?

HOOK 4

Maybe you said that Atita's story sounds a lot like Mia's situation. Or maybe you said Atita's story could be used as an example for how skateparks have helped. Or maybe you even said this article can be evidence for Mia's first reason: Skate parks create a community space where kids can hang out.

As Mia read the first part of this article, she started underlining parts of the article to use as evidence and then copied these words in her notes. Notice how she didn't write the entire sentence or that she skipped words when she was underlining. This helps Mia organize what she reads into smaller pieces of important information. That way, when she goes back to look over her notes for evidence, she can quickly find what she needs rather than rereading this entire article again.

It's your turn to help with the rest of the notes.

Today, you're going to look over Mia's research and take notes to gather evidence. That way, the mayor can be convinced and agree to build a new skatepark. I'll get you started, step by step.

STEP 1

Get your supplies.

STEP 2

In today's lesson, you'll need someone to share ideas with. This could be a partner or someone you sit near. When everyone knows who they're talk partner is, move on to the next step.

STEP 3

Get your Build Your Reasons worksheet. Point to the box labeled "Thesis" at the top. Remember, this is the overall purpose for writing this letter: The city should turn the abandoned pool into a new skate park.

Now look at "Reason 1" on your worksheet. We'll need to gather evidence to support this reason. Whisper-read this sentence to yourself.

STEP 4

Now it's time to find evidence to help try to convince the mayor. The Skate Weekly Newsletter has the whole article on Atita. Take a look at the screen as we review this information together.

As you watch, think about what things in the article could be used as evidence for her first reason: Skateparks create a community space where kids can hang out.

> *Atita Voorhees is a professional skateboarder in India.*
>
> *In 2013, she joined a group that built India's first free skatepark.*

Before the skatepark existed, there weren't many places for people to hang out, especially kids.

Many of these kids were looking for a place to go after school that was walking distance and free.

When Atita and her group finished the first skatepark, the kids in the area were so excited to be a part of a place that was accepting regardless of age, background, or ability.

Over the past few years, Atita and her group have built over ten skateparks.

Each of these skateparks has provided kids with a new place to make friends and learn skateboarding.

She hopes to continue creating these skateparks for people of all ages to have fun and get to know each other.

STEP 5

As Mia read the article, she found a sentence that would make really great evidence for her first reason. So, she underlined the important parts.

Find the part of the second sentence that Mia underlined in the newsletter. She thinks this really helps to support her reason, so she wants to use it in her notes for evidence.

Use what Mia underlined to write the next note on your Build Your Reasons worksheet.

Give a silent thumbs up when you are done.

STEP 6

Now look at the next sentence in your article. Underline the important parts and write your note on your Build Your Reasons worksheet.

STEP 7

Here's what Mia wrote. You may have written something different, and that's okay.

Read the rest of this article silently. As you read, think about what parts of this article can be used as evidence for this reason. Underline the important parts of the sentences as you go.

STEP 8

Discuss with your partner: What other evidence did you find in the article to support Mia's first reason?

If you find more important parts, underline them.

STEP 9

Now you can add to your notes on your Build Your Reasons worksheet. Remember to write down the important parts that you underline.

When you're done, give a silent thumbs up.

STEP 10

Point to "Reason 2" on your worksheet. We'll need to gather evidence to support this reason. Whisper-read this sentence to yourself.

STEP 11

Now it's time to find evidence for Mia's second reason: Skateparks are an opportunity for kids to exercise and stay healthy.

This part of the Skate Weekly Newsletter has an interview with a doctor who specializes in sports medicine, named Dr. Lou Ikenna. Take a look at the screen as we review this information together.

Is skateboarding good for your health?

Dr. Ikenna says, "Skateboarding has several benefits for kids! First of all" it's a great form of exercise. When you skateboard, you're using your muscles to push, balance, and even do tricks. It's a fun way to stay active and also strengthen your heart, lungs, and muscles.

Are there any other ways that skateboarding can help kids?

According to Dr. Ikenna, "Yes! Skateboarding is great for improving your balance. It teaches you how to control your body movements and keep your balance while moving on a board. That's an awesome skill that involves lots of different muscle groups."

Are skateparks good for the community?

Dr. Ikenna says,

"Skateparks are great because they encourage people to be active.

Even if you don't know how to skateboard, lots of different people can find a way to exercise at a skatepark. You can ride bikes, roller skate, or even do other activities that are healthy and keep you moving."

STEP 12

Discuss with your partner: What parts of this first answer can be used as evidence for this reason. This time, you might not underline something from every sentence.

Look at Dr. Ikenna's entire answer to the question, then underline the important parts as you go.

STEP 13

Here's what Mia underlined.

Under "Reason 2" use what's underlined to write your note here.

STEP 14

Reread this interview silently. As you read, think what parts of this interview would make really great evidence for this reason. Remember to first underline the important parts and then fill out your notes, just like Mia did.

STEP 15

This Build Your Reason's Worksheet and the Skate Weekly Newsletter are V.I.P.s—very important papers. Your teacher will tell you where to put them, so you'll have them for the next lesson.

WRAP UP

Great job writers! You now have notes on two sources, Atita's story and Dr. Ikenna's interview.

Now you have a thesis, two reasons, and notes that can be used as evidence. This is now a plan for what information you can use in your persuasive letter.

Your letter is going to make a big impact on Mia's effort. In the next lesson, you'll start drafting your letter.

That's all for now. I'll see you next time.