



What Persuasion Is

Persuasion & Influence · Tier 1: How Persuasion Works · Component 1

Grades: 6–8 **Time:** 30–40 min (standard) **Format:** individual or pairs

Students learn to see a message as a *made thing* — built by someone, for a purpose, aimed at an audience — instead of a neutral fact that simply arrived. That shift is the foundation the whole tier stands on.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Before you can spot *how* a message persuades, you have to notice *that* it is persuading. Young people swim in messages that feel like plain information. Naming the maker, the purpose, and the target audience turns an invisible current into something you can see and steer.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- One copy of the **Student pages** (Student pp. 1–3) per student or pair.
- Optional: two or three real messages you bring in — a headline, an ad, a post.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. **Read the explainer together (8–10 min).** Student p. 1 introduces the four questions.
2. **Work the activity (15–20 min).** Students run the four questions on sample messages (Student p. 2), then compare an informing message with a persuading one (Student p. 3).
3. **Debrief (10–15 min).** Run the Discussion Guide (Instructor p. 3).

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- Students distinguishing the *maker* from the *messenger* (who wrote it vs. who is showing it to me).
- Naming a purpose beyond "to inform" — to sell, to recruit, to reassure, to alarm.
- Recognizing that even true information is *selected and arranged* by someone.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT (COMMON CORE)

Codes reflect the grade 6 band; grade 7–8 equivalents address the same skills and apply equally.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.6** — Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.8** — Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.3** — Delineate a speaker's argument and claims, distinguishing those supported by reasons and evidence from those that are not.

Printing: Hand students the 3 Student pages. The 3 Instructor pages are for you.



What Persuasion Is

In depth: message, maker, purpose, and audience

Persuasion is communication meant to shape what someone believes, feels, or does. It sits between two neighbors students often confuse it with: **information** (which aims to inform, though it is still selected and framed) and **coercion** (which removes choice by force or threat). Persuasion works *through* the audience's own judgment — which is exactly why noticing it is a skill, not a defense.

THE RHETORICAL TRIANGLE

Maker · Message · Audience

MAKER. Every message has an author with a purpose. The author isn't always the messenger — the person sharing a post may not be who made it. Ask who benefits if you believe it.

MESSAGE. What is claimed, shown, and left out. Even a true fact is *chosen* from many and arranged for effect (framing effect).

AUDIENCE. Messages are aimed. Something built for you uses your language, your worries, your group. "Who is this for?" often reveals the purpose.

WHY "CONSTRUCTED" MATTERS

Selection is persuasion

Nothing reaches you raw. What gets said first sticks hardest (primacy bias), and what is easy to recall feels more true and common than it is (availability bias). A feed of real facts, chosen and ordered by someone, can still push a conclusion no single fact states.

TWO THINGS TO KEEP REPEATING

Persuasion isn't a dirty word. Instructors, doctors, and friends persuade for good reasons. The goal is to *see* it, not to distrust everyone. **Seeing the maker is the move.** Once a student asks "who made this and what do they want," the message stops being weather and becomes a choice they can weigh.



What Persuasion Is

Debrief prompts & a sample answer key

DISCUSSION ANCHOR

- What's the difference between the person who **made** a message and the person who **showed it to you**?
- Can a message be **all true facts** and still be trying to persuade you? How?
- When is being persuaded a **good thing**?
- Pick a message from your week. Who made it, and what did they want you to do?

ONE-LINE TAKEAWAY

Every message is made by someone, for a reason. Ask who, and why.

SAMPLE READS FOR PART A

MESSAGE	MAKER · PURPOSE · AUDIENCE
1. "New study: teens who sleep more get better grades."	<i>Could be a news site (purpose: clicks) or a mattress brand (purpose: sell). Same fact, different maker and aim.</i>
2. A friend reposts "This charity saves animals — donate today."	<i>Maker = the charity; messenger = the friend. Purpose: donations. Audience: animal lovers.</i>
3. School flyer: "Join Robotics Club — build, compete, belong."	<i>Maker = the club; purpose: recruit; audience: students who want to belong. Persuasion for a good reason — still persuasion.</i>



What Persuasion Is

Every message is made by someone

A message never just appears. Someone made it, on purpose, and pointed it at somebody. Persuasion is any message trying to change what you believe, feel, or do. Learn to see the hand behind it.

ASK FOUR QUESTIONS

Who · Why · Who for · How

WHO MADE IT? Not who shared it — who *created* it. A friend can pass along something a company made.

WHY? What do they want to happen — buy, click, join, agree, worry?

WHO IS IT FOR? Messages are aimed. If it uses your slang and your worries, it was built for you.

HOW IS IT TRYING TO MOVE ME? What does it show, say, and leave out?

A TWIST WORTH KNOWING

Even true facts are chosen

A message can be 100% true and still be persuading you — because someone *picked* those facts, put them in that order, and left others out. True isn't the same as complete, and complete isn't the same as neutral.

Persuasion isn't bad. Coaches, instructors, and friends persuade all the time, often for good reasons. The skill isn't distrusting everyone — it's *noticing* when a message is trying to move you, so *you* decide.



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Name: _____ Date: _____

Quick recap: Who made it? · Why? · Who is it for? · How is it trying to move me?

PART A — READ THE MAKER

For each message, write who probably **made** it, what they **want**, and who it's **for**.

MESSAGE	MAKER · WANT · AUDIENCE
1. "New study: teens who sleep more get better grades."	
2. A friend reposts: "This charity saves animals — donate today."	
3. School flyer: "Join Robotics Club — build, compete, belong."	
4. "Everyone's switching to the Nova phone. Don't get left behind."	

PART B — MADE VS. SHOWN

Pick one message above. Who **made** it, and who **showed it to you**? Why does the difference matter?

**PART C — INFORM OR PERSUADE?**

Read the pair. Which one is mostly **informing**, and which is mostly **persuading**? Underline the words that tipped you off.

A. "The bus route 12 schedule changes Monday. New times are posted at the stop."

B. "Route 12 is a disaster again — this city never listens to riders. Show up Monday and demand better."

PART D — IN THE WILD

Find one real message from your week. Write it down, then answer: who made it, and what did they want you to do?
