
Snake Oil: Buying into Argumentative Writing

Chelsey Porter
English Teacher, WHS

Our Goals:

Examine the use of the card game Snake Oil to teach aspects of argumentative Writing

Helping students support claims in detail

Helping students consider audience

Helping students consider and refute counter arguments

Think like a student - play a round of Snake Oil

Discuss and Debrief other uses of the card game in the classroom for literacy and writing instruction

Supporting Claims

Using clear reasons, relevant evidence, and credible sources

The Standard

Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence

The problem: Students become too passionate about their topic and use faulty logic or think too broadly in their reasoning

The solution: Strategies to help generate clear, specific reasons by having them consider their audience and opposing claim(s)

Using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text

The problem: Students only seek and examine sources that say the *SAME THING* as their claim

The solution: Strategies to use conflicting information to enhance one's own argument

Snake Oil



Purpose: Sell a made up product to the Customer using two of your provided Word Cards

Similar in concept to Apples to Apples in that the “Customer” determines who created and sold the best product

In the classroom: Marketing is not the same as argumentative writing; however, this game is a great way to engage students in using specific reasoning by considering their audience and opposing arguments

Snake Oil Application

*Not how the game is technically played

- 1) Divide students into teams (for us - pairs)
 - 2) Provide students with 6 Word Cards to choose from
 - 3) Announce your identity as the customer
 - 4) Allow one minute to brainstorm the product and pitch
 - 5) Each team is given 30 seconds to pitch their product
 - 6) Afterward - debate and rebuttal time is flexible (for us - each team gets 15 more seconds)
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Examples



Let's Play!

Pause for Reflection:

1. What was your product? Write down the name and description.
 2. What other products did your group come up with before this one? Why did you choose this one (consider your customer)?
 3. What was the central focus of your pitch? How did it change after hearing other products?
 4. Write down one other product that stood out to you and why.
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Debriefing and Discussion

- 1) In your opinion as a class, who sold their product the best? How? What did they do or say?
 - 2) How did you come up with your product and your reasons for why the customer should buy your product?
 - 3) What happened when you had to defend your product? Did you come up with more reasons, better reasons, or did you see flaws in your pitch and previous reasons?
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Other uses for snake oil

Imagery

Require students to include imagery in their pitch, discuss how the pitch improved through imagery

Character Studies

Instead of using “customer” cards - have the customers be characters in novels or stories you are reading

To extend this - historical figures, etc.
