Taking a Stand on Justice

Learning Targets

• Identify the author’s purpose and analyze the argument presented.
• Analyze and evaluate the organization of ideas.
• Evaluate rhetorical appeals and their effectiveness in argument.

Preview

In this activity, you will read a speech about civil disobedience and analyze how the author builds his argument.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

• Put a star next to Gandhi’s central claim.
• Highlight the most important details that support Gandhi’s claim.
• Circle unknown words and phrases. Try to determine the meaning of the words by using context clues, word parts, or a dictionary.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in 1869, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was a great believer in the power of using civil disobedience against governments that oppressed the poor and the disenfranchised. He spent seven years in South Africa leading and defending Indians born and living there without legal rights. It was there that he began practicing satyagraha, or passive resistance. Later, he returned to his homeland of India where he helped the country gain its independence from the British in 1947. He became known there as Mahatma, or “Great Soul.” India, though free from Britain, suffered from internal turmoil as religious factions fought for power. Gandhi was assassinated by a fanatic in 1948.

Speech

Excerpt from

On Civil Disobedience

by Mohandas K. Gandhi

July 27, 1916

1 There are two ways of countering injustice. One way is to smash the head of the man who perpetrates injustice and to get your own head smashed in the process. All strong people in the world adopt this course. Everywhere wars are fought and millions of people are killed. The consequence is not the progress of a nation but its decline. … No country has ever become, or will ever become, happy through victory in war. A nation does not rise that way; it only falls further. In fact, what comes to it is defeat, not victory. And if, perchance, either our act or our purpose was ill-conceived, it brings disaster to both belligerents.

ill-conceived: poorly thought out
belligerents: participants in a war
2 But through the other method of combating injustice, we alone suffer the consequences of our mistakes, and the other side is wholly spared. This other method is satyagraha. One who resorts to it does not have to break another’s head; he may merely have his own head broken. He has to be prepared to die himself suffering all the pain. In opposing the atrocious laws of the Government of South Africa, it was this method that we adopted. We made it clear to the said Government that we would never bow to its outrageous laws. No clapping is possible without two hands to do it, and no quarrel without two persons to make it. Similarly, no State is possible without two entities, the rulers and the ruled. You are our sovereign, our Government, only so long as we consider ourselves your subjects. When we are not subjects, you are not the sovereign either. So long as it is your endeavour to control us with justice and love, we will let you to do so. But if you wish to strike at us from behind, we cannot permit it. Whatever you do in other matters, you will have to ask our opinion about the laws that concern us. If you make laws to keep us suppressed in a wrongful manner and without taking us into confidence, these laws will merely adorn the statute books. We will never obey them. Award us for it what punishment you like; we will put up with it. Send us to prison and we will live there as in a paradise. Ask us to mount the scaffold and we will do so laughing. Shower what sufferings you like upon us; we will calmly endure all and not hurt a hair of your body. We will gladly die and will not so much as touch you. But so long as there is yet life in these our bones, we will never comply with your arbitrary laws.

Second Read

• Reread the speech to answer these text-dependent questions.
• Write any additional questions you have about the text in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

1. Craft and Structure: What rhetorical devices does Gandhi use to persuade his audience?

2. Craft and Structure: What are the strongest pieces of evidence Gandhi gives to support his claim?

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1 satyagraha: (Sanskrit) insistence on truth; a term used by Gandhi to describe his policy of seeking reform by means of nonviolent resistance
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Working from the Text

3. Many writers publish stories about civil strife in their countries. Compare and contrast the portrayal of reactions to civil strife in *Persepolis* and “On Civil Disobedience.”

4. Look at how the author transitions from idea to idea. How does Gandhi use cause and effect to organize his ideas? Create a graphic organizer in your Reader/Writer Notebook that shows the cause-and-effect patterns you identify in the speech.

Language and Writer’s Craft: Organizing an Argument

**Transition words and phrases** can help an argument writer guide a reader from one idea to the next. In this sentence from “On Civil Disobedience,” Gandhi uses the transition word *similarly* to show how two ideas are alike: “No clapping is possible without two hands to do it, and no quarrel without two persons to make it. *Similarly*, no State is possible without two entities, the rulers and the ruled.” Other transitions that compare are *also, in the same way, and likewise.*

**Words that show contrast:** *but, however, on the other hand*

**Words that emphasize key points:** *clearly, in fact, of course*

**Words that introduce additional support:** *additionally, also, furthermore, in addition*

**Words that summarize an argument:** *finally, in conclusion, to summarize*

Transitions can alter a sentence’s meaning. Read the following examples, and then choose one more transition word to use and describe how it changes the meaning of the sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Implied Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the other hand, Gandhi gained respect in the West.</td>
<td>This contrast hints that elsewhere, Gandhi may not have had respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furthermore, Gandhi gained respect in the West.</td>
<td>This addition indicates that Gandhi was achieving many positive things, including gaining respect in the West.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>, Gandhi gained respect in the West.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PRACTICE** Look back at your answers to the Second Read questions. Find two places where you might use transitions to clarify and strengthen your argument. Rewrite your responses using those transitions.
Explain How an Author Builds an Argument

Write an essay in which you explain how Gandhi builds an argument to persuade his audience that civil disobedience is more effective than violence. In your essay, analyze how Gandhi uses one or more of the features listed below (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of his argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

As you reread the passage, consider how Gandhi uses:

• evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims
• reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence
• stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed