***Using Stories, Statistics and Star Statements to Persuade***

*Crafting convincing positions on the issues that you care about depends on backing up your thinking with evidence. While opinions are never right or wrong, the best are carefully supported with proof that is emotional and difficult to ignore. This handout will introduce you to three types of convincing evidence – stories, statistics, and star statements.*

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| ***Building Background Information*** |
| During the course of this activity, we’ll be talking about the impact that poverty has on individuals living in poor countries. Specifically, we’ll be looking at the damage that a lack of clean drinking water has on women in Eastern Africa. In April of 2010, National Geographic published an article (<http://bit.ly/burdenofthirst>) and a short video (<http://bit.ly/burdenofthirstvideo>) on this issue. Check them out now to build a bit of background knowledge. |

***Exploring Different Types of Persuasive Evidence***

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| ***Using Stories to Persuade*** | |
| ***Stories share someone’s direct experiences with the topic you are studying***. They may explain the impact that your topic has had on an individual or a community, or provide examples of the consequences of your topic in action. Stories are powerful bits of evidence because they “put a face” on an issue, making difficult ideas easier to imagine. | |
| ***Examples of stories in action***: Water.org is an international organization founded by actor Matt Damon that is determined to make sure that people living in the developing world have access to clean water. To push their mission, Water.org has created a series of short videos about individual people who are struggling for access to clean water. Below are three of those stories.  ***Birhane’s Story***  <http://bit.ly/birhanestory>  ***Women of Strength***  <http://bit.ly/womenofstrength>  ***Atseda’s Story of Hope***  <http://bit.ly/atsedastory> | |
| ***Questions to Consider*** | ***Your Response*** |
| Which of these three stories is the most memorable to you? Why did that story stand out? What was it about that story that made you think – or feel – deeply about the issue of providing clean water for people in poor nations? |  |
| What do all of these stories have in common? How do those similarities influence you as a viewer? How do they make you feel about the issue of providing clean water for people in poor nations? |  |
| It’s not enough for a persuasive piece to JUST appeal to a viewer’s emotions. Emotional stories need to be supported with (1). Convincing evidence and (2). Some kind of call to action that encourages viewers to get involved.  How do the Water.org people work that information into these short stories? What is it that they want you to do now that you’ve seen their videos? Have they convinced you that change is possible? |  |

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| ***Using Statistics to Persuade*** | |
| ***Statistics are facts or pieces of information that are expressed in a number or a percentage***. Statistics are convincing because they allow you to make simple comparisons between your life and the topic you are studying. These kinds of comparisons can help to make difficult concepts more concrete and approachable. | |
| ***Example of statistics in action***: Musician Sarah McLachlan is equally passionate about drawing attention to the challenges of living in the developing world. To catch the attention of her listeners, she made a music video in 2009 that shows the impact that $150,000 – the cost of shooting a typical music video – could have if it were spent on improving lives for those living in poverty.  ***World on Fire by Sarah McLachlan***  <http://bit.ly/sarahmclachlanvideo> | |
| ***Questions to Consider*** | ***Your Response*** |
| Which of the statistics in the *World on Fire* video was the most convincing to you? What was it about that statistic that caught your attention? Why did it matter do you? |  |
| Were the statistics in the *World on Fire* video effective at making you think differently about life in poor countries? Did they help you to understand the issue better? Why? How? |  |
| Like the stories that you studied earlier, persuasive pieces built around statistics are only useful if they can convince people to take action.  Do you think people will care more about poverty after viewing the *World on Fire* video? What do you think Sarah McLachlan wants her viewers to do next? Will they do it? |  |

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| ***Using Star Statements to Persuade*** | |
| ***Star Statements*** are direct quotes from experts, eyewitnesses, world leaders, or popular celebrities. Star statements are convincing because they show readers that important ideas are recognized and respected by outside authorities. The most effective persuaders carefully select statements from the kinds of stars admired by the audiences for their pieces. While the thoughts of elected officials are likely to influence adults, statements from athletes, celebrities or musicians would be more convincing to teens. | |
| ***Examples of star statements in action***: The Canadian band Nickelback is best known for their hard-hitting songs and “rock star” approach to life. That’s why audiences were so surprised by their 2006 video for *If Everyone Cared*, which was unlike anything they’d ever recorded and shared before.  ***If Everyone Cared by Nickelback***  <http://bit.ly/nickelbackvideo> | |
| ***Questions to Consider*** | ***Your Response*** |
| What is the central message that Nickelback is trying to share with their audiences in this video? Are you left convinced that this message matters? Why? |  |
| If you were a fan of Nickelback, how would this video make you feel? Would you be impressed by their concern for improving the world? Would you be more likely to try to get involved in making change? Why? |  |
| Do the choices of YOUR favorite bands, actors or athletes have any impact on you? Do you wear your clothes differently because of them? Make purchases differently because of them? Play sports differently because of them? Can you give a tangible example of a time when the actions of a celebrity changed the way that YOU acted? |  |

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| ***Final Thoughts*** |
| *Now that you’ve studied three main types of persuasive evidence – stories, statistics and star statements – which do you think is the most convincing? Why? Which do you think is the least convincing? Would your answer change depending on the audience for your piece? Explain your thinking below.* |