

Reading Informational Materials

Persuasive Speeches

In Part 1, you are learning about determining an author's purpose in literature. Determining an author's purpose is also important when reading persuasive texts. The persuasive speech featured here connects to two selections about baseball: "Jackie Robinson: Justice at Last" and "The Shutout."

About Persuasive Speeches

A **persuasive speech** is a public presentation that argues for or against a particular position. A powerful persuasive speech can change people's thinking about an issue. Examples of persuasive speeches include campaign speeches, fundraising speeches, and sermons. An effective persuasive speech has these characteristics:

- an issue with two sides
- a clear statement of the speaker's purpose and position
- clear organization of the text into sections
- facts, statistics, and reasons to support the position
- powerful language intended to persuade

Reading Skill

When you **evaluate an author's argument**, you look closely at the evidence that supports the author's position. An effective argument is backed up by facts and sound ideas. Look for a clear statement of the author's argument and note supporting information. Use a checklist such as the one shown to evaluate the following speech.

Checklist for Evaluating an Author's Argument

- Does the author present a clear argument?
- Is the argument supported by evidence?
- Is the evidence believable?
- Does the author use sound reasoning to develop the argument?
- Do I agree with the message? Why or why not?



Preserving a Great American Symbol

Richard Durbin

Congressman Richard Durbin gave the following humorous speech in the House of Representatives on July 26, 1989. While most speeches to Congress are serious, Durbin's is humorous yet persuasive and "drives home" the point that wooden baseball bats should not be replaced with metal ones.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to condemn the desecration of a great American symbol. No, I am not referring to flagburning; I am referring to the baseball bat. Several experts tell us that the wooden baseball bat is doomed to extinction, that major league baseball players will soon be standing at home plate with aluminum bats in their hands.

In his introduction, Durbin clearly introduces his topic and his purpose for delivering the speech.

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Baseball fans have been forced to endure countless indignities by those who just cannot leave well enough alone: designated hitters,¹ plastic grass, uniforms that look like pajamas, chicken clowns dancing on the base lines, and, of course, the most heinous sacrilege, lights in Wrigley Field.²

Are we willing to hear the crack of a bat replaced by the dinky ping? Are we ready to see the Louisville Slugger replaced by the aluminum ping dinger? Is nothing sacred?

Please do not tell me that wooden bats are too expensive, when players who cannot hit their weight are being paid more money than the President of the United States.

Please do not try to sell me on the notion that these metal clubs will make better hitters.

What will be next? Teflon baseballs? Radar-enhanced gloves? I ask you.

I do not want to hear about saving trees. Any tree in America would gladly give its life for the glory of a day at home plate.

I do not know if it will take a constitutional amendment to keep our baseball traditions alive, but if we forsake the great Americana of broken-bat singles and pine tar,³ we will have certainly lost our way as a nation.

Durbin uses humor to persuade and entertain.

Durbin closes with a dramatic statement, which serves as a final persuasive argument.

1. designated hitter player who bats in place of the pitcher and does not play any other position. The position was created in 1973 in the American League. Some fans argue that it has changed the game for the worse.

2. Wrigley Field historic baseball field in Chicago. It did not have lights for night games until 1988. Some fans regretted the change.

3. broken-bat singles . . . pine tar When a batter breaks a wooden bat while hitting the ball and makes it to first base, it is a notable event in a baseball game. Pine tar is a substance used to improve the batter's grip on a wooden bat.