About the Genre: A Persuasive Letter

What is it?
A persuasive letter presents a writer’s opinion on a topic. The topic is usually one that people have different opinions about. A persuasive letter is written to be published in a newspaper, magazine, or online. Examples of topics for a persuasive letter include the need to change a local law, a problem with a new policy at school, or a request to support a local charity organization. The persuasive letter explains why the author’s ideas will make the town or city a better place. A persuasive letter often includes a call for action. A call for action asks readers to do something, such as a vote for a new law.

What is the purpose?
The purpose of a persuasive letter is to cause the reader to agree with the author’s opinion. The goal may also be to ask the reader to do something, such as call a local government official. Or, on the other hand, the purpose may be to ask the reader not to do something, such as not to buy a certain product or not to drive quickly in a certain area.

What is the structure?
A persuasive letter is usually quite short, less than one page. A persuasive letter that is written to a newspaper is sometimes called a letter to the editor. Because it is a letter, the author includes a greeting, such as Dear Sir or Madam or To Whom It May Concern. It also includes a signature; the author gives his or her name at the end of the letter. The signature may also mention the author’s job, if the job is related to the topic of the letter.

A persuasive letter begins by describing the issue or topic of the letter. The author may explain why the issue is important or interesting.

Here are some other types of information that may be included:
- background information on the issue
- information about the author
- an opinion on the topic
- reasons for the opinion
- support for the reasons such as facts and examples
- reasons why the other side’s opinion is weak
- a call to action

Comprehension Questions
1. Which of the following could be a topic of a persuasive letter?
   a. a request to support a local charity
   b. a request to vote for a new law
   c. both a and b above
2. Which of the following is NOT a purpose of a persuasive letter?
   a. to ask readers to do something
   b. to ask readers their opinions
   c. to ask readers not to do something
3. Because the structure is a letter, what does a persuasive letter include?