

The California State University
Task Force on Expository Reading and Writing

12th GRADE EXPOSITORY READING AND WRITING COURSE
Student Version 1.1

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Based on:

“Kids are kids—until they commit crimes” by Marjie Lundstrom, *The Sacramento Bee*, March 1, 2001.

“Supreme Court to Rule on Executing Young Killers,” by Adam Liptak, *The New York Times*, January 3, 2005.

“Many kids called unfit for adult trial” by Greg Krikorian, *The Sacramento Bee*, March 3, 2003.

“Startling Finds on Teenage Brains,” by Paul Thompson, *The Sacramento Bee*, May 25, 2001.

ACTIVITY 1: *Activating Prior Knowledge and Experience*

Quick write: If you committed a crime, do you think it would be fair for you to be punished like an adult who committed the same crime?

ACTIVITY 2: *Introducing Key Concepts*

What characteristics make a person is an adult, juvenile, or child? Who is a juvenile and what qualities are different about a juvenile compared to an adult or a child? Brainstorm a list of qualities that characterize a juvenile but not an adult or a child.

Definitions of some legal terms for murder are provided below. Study them and explain the differences in your own words. After you have studied the terms and their definitions, read the scenarios and complete the empty box in the table below by filling in the legal term for the crime described.

Definitions of legal terms:

Homicide is the killing of one person of another either intentionally or unintentionally. Homicide includes accidents and murder.

Murder is the killing of someone with malice of forethought. It could be done while committing another crime. Murder is always illegal.

First degree murder is the killing of a person with malice of forethought; the crime was planned. It was done deliberately and is illegal.

Second degree murder is a killing done during a crime deemed very dangerous to a human life. The crime was most likely not committed with the intention of killing.

Voluntary manslaughter is the killing of someone intentionally but without malice of forethought. For example, if the killing was a crime of passion (killing a spouse or lover because of jealousy), the intention was to kill. However, there was no malice of forethought because it was not planned.

Involuntary manslaughter is killing someone unlawfully but without malice of forethought. It was committed without an intent to kill and without a conscious disregard for human life.

Matching activity:

Actual situation	Crime/ conviction	Punishment or sentencing
A 17 year old troubled girl has been slowly poisoning her parents each night at dinner. Three months go by and she arrives home to find them dead on the floor of the kitchen. The coroner’s report indicated their death was caused by cyanide poisoning.		Sentenced to life in prison without parole.
Three 16 year olds were hanging out at the park drinking Jack Daniels. One boy started shoving his friend. Soon the shoving escalated into punching. One boy tripped and his head hit a sharp-edged rock. He died of a concussion before help can arrive.		Sentenced to 3 years in prison after being tried as an adult.
Thinking his girlfriend is cheating, a 16-year-old boy goes to her house and finds her in bed with his brother. Impulsively, he grabs the nearest lamp and hits his brother on the head. His brother dies from a concussion two days later.		Sentenced to 6 years in prison
A 13 year old boy breaks into an auto parts business to steal hubcaps. The 17 year old security guard picks up his boss’ gun and fires 2 warning shots at the thief. The second shot hits the 13 year old and kills him on the spot.		Sentenced to 15 years to life

ACTIVITY 3: *Surveying the Texts*

Surveying the texts gives you an overview of what the articles are about and how they are put together. It will help you create a framework so you can make predictions and form questions to guide your reading. Discuss the following questions with your class:

- What do the titles of the two articles “Kids are Kids” and “Supreme Court to Rule on Executing Young Killers” tell you they will be about?
- “Kids are Kids” was published in *The Sacramento Bee*. “Supreme Court to Rule” was published in *The New York Times*. What can you predict about them based on their length and the length of their paragraphs? How do you think they will be the same? How do you think they will be different?
- What issue do you think these articles are going to discuss? What position do you think Liptak and Lundstrom will take?

ACTIVITY 4: *Making Predictions and Asking Questions*

Listen as your teacher reads the first three paragraphs of “Supreme Court to Rule on Executing Young Killers” and then discuss the following questions:

- What do you think “Supreme Court to Rule on Executing Young Killers” is going to be about?
- What do you think is the purpose of this text?
- Who do you think is the intended audience for this piece? How do you know this?
- Based on the title and other features of the text, what information and ideas might this essay present?

Now read the first six paragraphs of “Kids are kids.”

- What is Lundstrom’s opinion on that topic of juvenile crime?
- Turn the title into a question to answer as you read the essay.

ACTIVITY 5: *Introducing Key Vocabulary*

Brainstorm a list of words that relate to juvenile crime.

These words in the self-assessment chart are from the texts you will read. Predict words meanings and state how well you know the word.

VOCABULARY SELF-ASSESSMENT CHART

Word	Definition	Know It Well	Have Heard of It	Don't Know It
Vocabulary from Liptak, “Supreme Court to Rule on Executing Young Killers				
constitutionality				X
prosecutors				
demeanor				
remorse				
alienated				
nonchalant				
plummeting				
culpability				
mitigating				
Vocabulary from Lundstrom, “Kids are Kids”				
inconsistency				
quandary				
heinous				
coddling				
perpetuating				

ACTIVITY 6: *First Reading*

The first reading of an essay is intended to help you understand the text and confirm your predictions. This is sometimes called reading “with the grain” or “playing the believing game.” As you read, think about the following questions:

- Which of your predictions turned out to be true?
- What surprised you?

As you read “Supreme Court to Rule” and “Kids are kids,” you will find that the two articles discuss five recent cases in which teenagers were tried as adults for violent crimes. Fill out the following graphic organizer:

Recent Cases of Juvenile Crime			
Defendant	Age	Crime	Sentence

Now highlight the places in the text in each article where the arguments are made for and against punishing juveniles like adults.

ACTIVITY 7: *Annotation****Rereading the Text***

In the initial reading, you read “with the grain” playing the “believing game.” In the second reading, you should read “against the grain,” playing the “doubting game.” As you reread “Supreme Court to Rule on Executing Yung Killers” make marginal notations.

(1) Label what the author says in the left-hand margin:

- The introduction
- The issue or problem the author is writing about
- The author’s main arguments
- The author’s examples
- The author’s conclusion

(2) In the right hand margin, write your reactions to what the author is saying. You should ask questions, express surprise, disagree, elaborate, and/or note any moments of confusion.

(3) Now exchange your copy of “Supreme Court Rules” with a partner. Read your partner’s annotations, and then talk about what you chose to mark and how you reacted to the text. Did you agree on what the main idea was?

ACTIVITY 8: *Analyzing Stylistic Choices*

The choices writers make when they choose words and construct sentences create certain effects for their readers. Look at the choices that Paul Thompson made when he wrote “Startling Finds on Teenage Brains, and think about why he made them.

Words:

“Startling Finds on Teenage Brains” is about scientific research conducted at UCLA and the National Institutes of Health, but Thompson does not use dry, scientific language. Look at the following words and phrases, and discuss why Thompson chose them to describe teenage behavior and what happens to teenage brains.

Massive (para. #7)

Wildfire (para. #7)

Purged (para. #7)

Violent passions (para. #7)

Rash actions (para. #7)

Vastly immature (para. #7)

Erratic behavior (para. #9)

Maelstrom (para. #10)

Reckless actions (para. #10)

Startling (para. #10)

Delicate (para. #10)

Drastic (para. #10)

Sentences

Thompson’s sentences are fairly long and complex, but the last sentence in paragraph #6 is, “So far, all is well and good.” Why is this sentence so short?

ACTIVITY 9: Descriptive Outlining

Startling Finds on Teenage Brains

By Paul Thompson

The Sacramento Bee, Friday, May 25, 2001

1 Emotions ran high at the trial of Nathaniel Brazill in West Palm Beach, Fla., two weeks ago. Friends of slain teacher Barry Grunow called the death penalty, while a growing crowd of demonstrators outside the courthouse wielded hastily written placards reading, “A child is not a man.” Jurors returned with their verdict May 16: Fourteen-year-old Brazill, charged in last May’s shooting of middle-school teacher Grunow, was found guilty of second-degree murder.

2 A Florida grand jury had previously ruled that Brazill, who frequently looked dazed during the trial, would be tried as an adult, and if he had been convicted of first-degree murder he would have faced life in prison without parole. But Brazill’s immaturity was evident throughout this incident—from the act itself of Brazill’s shooting a teacher he considered one of his favorites, to his subsequent inability to give a reason for doing so, to the various quizzical looks that came across his face as the verdicts were read.

3 In terms of cognitive development, as research on the human brain has shown, Brazill—and any other young teen—is far from adulthood.

CONTENT AND PURPOSE: *Nathaniel Brazil, a fourteen-year old, was tried as an adult and found guilty of second-degree murder in the killing of his teacher. But research on the brain has shown that young teens are not adults in terms of their development. The purpose is to raise the question of whether teenagers should be tried as adults.*

4 Over the last several years, as school shootings have seemed to occur with disturbing frequency, startling discoveries have emerged about the teenage brain. The White House held a televised conference on adolescent development in May of last year, and a flurry of papers on the teen brain has appeared in top science journals. Reporters and teen advocates ask: Do the studies help explain the impulsive, erratic behavior of teens? The biggest surprise in recent teen-brain research is the finding that a massive loss of brain tissue occurs in the teen years.

CONTENT AND PURPOSE:

5 Specifically, my own research group at the University of California, Los Angeles, and our colleagues at the National Institutes of Health have developed technology to map the patterns of brain growth in individual children and teenagers. With repeated brain scans of kids from 3 to 20, we pieced together “movies” showing how brains grow and change.

6 Some changes make perfect sense: Language systems grow furiously until age 12 and then stop, coinciding with the time when children learn foreign languages fastest. Mathematical brain systems grow little until puberty, corresponding with the observation that kids have difficulty with abstract concepts before then. Basically, the brain is like a puzzle, and growth is fastest in the exact parts the kids need to learn skills at different times. So far, all well and good.

7 But what really caught our eye was a massive loss of brain tissue that occurs in the teenage years. The loss was like a wildfire, and you could see it in every teenager. Gray matter, which brain researchers believe supports all our thinking and emotions, is purged at a rate of 1 percent to 2 percent a year during this period. Stranger still, brain cells and connections are only being lost in the areas controlling impulses, risk-taking and self-control. These frontal lobes, which inhibit our violent passions, rash actions, and regulate our emotions, are vastly immature throughout the teenage years.

CONTENT AND PURPOSE:

8 The implications are tantalizing. Brazill was only 13 when he committed his crime. He said he made a “stupid mistake,” but prosecutors argued that by bringing a gun to school he planned the crime.

9 Does “planning” mean the same thing for a 13-year-old, with his diminished capacity for controlling erratic behavior, as it means for an adult? The verdict, in this case, seems to line up with the research. The jurors, by returning a verdict of second-degree murder instead of first, indicated that they believe Brazill’s actions, while not accidental, were not fully thought-out, either.

CONTENT AND PURPOSE:

ACTIVITY 10: *Summary*

Write a summary of “Many kids called unfit for adult trial” by Greg Krikorian.

ACTIVITY 11: *Webwork*

Have students do a web search for Proposition 21, the California proposition that gave prosecutors the power to decide whether juveniles should be charged as adults for certain crimes. Have them read the arguments for and against the proposition before they consider the questions about Krikorian and Thompson’s articles so they can see a range of possible arguments. The website they should find is <http://primary2000.ss.ca.gov/VoterGuide/Propositions/>.

ACTIVITY 12: *Discussing Ideas (Critical Thinking)*

Directions: In your group, answer the following questions about the traditional rhetorical appeals that Greg Krikorian makes in “Many kids called unfit for adult trial.” Write down your group’s answers so you can share them with your classmates.

Group 1***Questions about Logic (Logos)***

- What are Krikorian’s major claims and assertions? Do you agree with his claims?
- Are any of his claims weak or unsupported? Which one and why?”
- Can you think of counter-arguments that Krikorian doesn’t consider?

Questions about the Writer (Ethos)

- Krikorian is reporting on a study by Thomas Grisso.

- What is Grisso’s background? Do you think he is trustworthy?
- Krikorian also quotes Laurence Steinberg. Who is he? Is he a reliable person to interpret what the study means?
- Krikorian is a staff writer for the *Los Angeles Times* who frequently writes about legal issues. Does he seem trustworthy to write about this topic? Why or why not?
- Can you tell what Krikorian’s point of view is, or can you only tell the point of view of the author of the study?

Questions about Emotions (Pathos)

- Does “Many kids” affect you emotionally? What parts?
- Do you think Krikorian is trying to manipulate your emotions? In what ways? At what point?
- Do your emotions conflict with the logical interpretation of the arguments?

Group 2

Questions about Logic (Logos)

- What are Thompson’s major claims and assertions? Do you agree with his claims?
- Are any of his claims weak or unsupported? Which ones and why?

- Can you think of counter-arguments that Thompson doesn't consider?

Questions about the Writer (Ethos)

- What is Thompson's background? Do you think he is trustworthy?
- Does Thompson seem deceptive? Why or why not?
- Can you tell what Thompson's point of view is?

Questions about Emotions (Pathos)

- Does "Startling Finds" affect you emotionally? What parts?
- Do you think Thompson is trying to manipulate your emotions? In what ways? At what point?
- Do your emotions conflict with the logical interpretation of the arguments?

ACTIVITY 13: *Writing Assignment*

Essay Assignment

Should teenagers accused of violent crimes be tried and sentenced as adults? Why or why not?

Be sure to refer to and cite the readings and your web-based research. You may also use examples from your personal experience or observations.