

VCE English

Language Analysis

Are we overprotected?

Student response 1:

On the opinion page, located in the publication The Daily News, two articles present opposed viewpoints on the topic of childhood over-protection. The article 'Overprotective parents stifle growth' is an agitated and desperate presentation of the consequences of overprotection from the perspective of a retired principal, and 'Reality Check' is a sentimental imploration for the preservation of hope and innocence from the perspective of a parent.

Each article sets out its intended audience by its distinct tone. 'Overprotective parents' begins with a series of cynical and frustrated rhetorical questions that emphasizes that society and parents are to blame for the 'mollycoddling' of our children. 'Mollycoddling' is intended along with the sarcastic emphasis on 'protect' to subvert the actions of parents and highlight their flaws. As such, the intended audience is both the frustrated onlookers of parental flaws and the parents themselves as the article aims at a rude awakening, 'unable to cope with future challenges'. 'Reality Check' aims at a sentimental audience of parents that will relate to the author's 'love of "my kids"'. Furthermore the author's sojourn into the memories of his grandad, 'the good old days' is simultaneously intended to create a feeling of reverence at the safety that was once experienced and juxtapose this with 'everywhere I turn I see danger'.

In this respect both authors draw upon their own personal rhetoric and life experience in an effort to persuade their respective audience. The retired principal perceives the problem as 'perfectly clear' (an effort to suggest her credibility as a 'professional' and to highlight her practical elicitation of the issue) and draws upon her wealth of experience as a principal. The juxtaposition of 'perfect children' and 'incidents at school' is intended to imply the rueful bias of parents and attempts to underline the parental instinct. The subversion of parent to 'taxi service', 'running little errands' and 'completing...homework' are examples of this attempt at the denigration of parental practices. On the other hand, the author of 'Reality Check' sees the importance of parental involvement, 'I say unsupervised is unsafe' and uses a variety of common examples. 'Cars are lethal weapons', the 'news at 6' (a common social information provider) merely relays 'carnage' and 'massacre'. The compact repetition of destruction seeks to instil a feeling of fear in the sentimental readers, who would relate more to the author's belief in 'love and hope'. In the comparison of the two the author attempts a persuasion on the basis of the nurturing desires of parents.

Furthermore, in their exploration of the consequences of current acts, each takes a significantly different approach in crafting their versions of the new society. To the author of 'Overprotective Parents', the result is 'clear', teenagers 'incapable of making decisions', 'followers not leaders'. In overprotecting, as the title suggests, parents are inhibiting, 'stifling' their child's capacity to grow. Obviously this is an attempt at fear and the promotion of self-reflection from the parents' view. In doing this the author aims to get parents to consider the consequences of 'wrapping up children in cotton wool'. The implication of children being treated as objects which is reflected in the central graphic is intended to subvert parental faith in

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overprotective practices. This is reflected in the principal's use of empirical research data which reflects the consequences of 'lonely and isolated' youngsters. This research by the Children's Society, compounded with the suggestion of a 'mountain of evidence' behind it is a point which aims at suggesting there are consequences which parents may not have considered in their bias. This appeal to fear and responsibility once again questions parental motive.

Conversely, the author, Jack Lee finally warns about the necessity to instil 'hope and love', because that is the only pathway to 'make them feel they can make a difference'. His sentimentality juxtaposed with the suggestion of being 'traumatized' by reality aims to affirm to his audience that the protective measures are acceptable.

Both authors assert their view to the respective audiences through differing tones. Jane Brown focuses on the consequences and harshly compounds her point of overprotection with empirical research and parental experience whereas Jack Lee, as a parent, aims at the dangers of the real world and sentimentally advocates the responsibilities of parents to 'love' and protect their children.

Assessor comments

- The student shows a perceptive understanding of the ways in which language is used by the authors.
- The response is quite specific in its exploration of language use.
- There is a clear processing of the material and a sharp focus on language use.
- The intended impact of language on the reader – in respect to its context – is lucidly presented.
- Assured, confident and appropriate language is selected by the student.
- The response shows an excellent control of language and the piece is fluent and well written.

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Student
Response 2

The need to present today's youth with the best of opportunities to live a fulfilled life and the role that parenting styles plays in this is explored by the two articles. Retired Principal Jane Brown contends that today's parents 'overprotect' their children and this has terrible consequences on the future of their children. Brown adopts a reasoned and informed manner, primarily using her credibility as a retired principal to appeal to parent readers who are ready to be frustrated by the incessant needs of their children, and also readers who are concerned with the future intellectual and emotional development of their children. Jack Lee, however, in response to the opinion pieces expostulates his viewpoint that children need increased measures of protection in today's world. He adopts a slightly enraged tone, primarily trying to appeal to readers who are willing to be confronted by the everyday cruelties of the world.

Jane Brown appears intent on appealing to the parent reader's concern for the intrinsic development of their children in the future. The fact that overprotection leads to 'defenceless young people' who do not 'learn how to cope with life', eventually never becoming 'fully functioning adults' is meant to create a sense of alarm and caution in the reader over the welfare of their children if they continue to overprotect them. The reader is led to reconsider his/her approach to parenting as Brown attempts to capitalise on parents' insecurities of their children leading 'depressed, overaggressive, antisocial' lives. The reader is hence encouraged to reject the notion of pampering their children and adopt more realistic and worldly approaches to controlling their children.

Furthermore, Brown also attempts to include common experiences in leading them to see the futility and disastrous consequences of their actions. By mentioning that overprotective parents 'blindly search for the child's lost jumper', 'provide a continuous taxi service' and 'bring lunch when it is forgotten', Brown attempts to place the reader to consider his/her past experiences and see that it fits into what is stereotypically perceived to be characteristics of the overprotective parenting role. The parent reader is thus led to see the error of their ways and encouraged to discontinue such actions which Brown directly links to the dire future consequences for their children.

Where Brown appears predominantly interested in the more intangible and intrinsic aspects of the development and parenting of a child, Jack Lee attempts to primarily conjure notions of the physical well-being of children and how this is threatened by the realities of the external world.

Lee attempts to conjure war-like imagery in the reader by commenting on the 'lethal weapons' of 'hoons' and 'scenes of carnage' and 'bloodiest massacre' being displayed on television and characteristic of the real world. As a result, the parent reader is almost led to believing in the merit of placing curfews on their children. The reader is coerced into sensing the need to protect their children from physical damage from the destructiveness and obscenities of this war-like image of the world in which they live.

It is also significant that Lee conjures the notorious notions surrounding the term 'internet'. In today's world where multimedia receives publicity for the sex-related extremities it provokes, the term 'internet' attempts to bring in the reader's pre-bias and preconceived notions regarding the use of the world-wide web into their

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decision of the type of parenting control needed. The reader is reminded of the need for them to protect their children from these exterior evils, and is hence positioned to see exerting strict, parent controls on their children as being the most obvious way of securing the welfare of their children.

Assessor comments

- The student shows a clear capacity to step away from the specific language and demonstrate a good sense of purpose for the articles.
- There is a strong sense of how specific language is being used to influence and persuade readers.
- While there is not a detailed distinction between the pieces, an understanding of the purpose of each is clear.
- The response is assured and well written.