Random Ideas from you all

- The inference from the examiners’ meeting was that we should focus more on the arguments than on techniques in Section C.
- The first task I will set my lot is to read a number of persuasive pieces and just pick out the contention and the arguments that support it. I will not look at techniques at all until they have mastered that skill of discernment. In the past I suspect that many of us have focused mostly on techniques and then looked at how arguments spring from them, but I will cover the Section the other way round this time.

- The tone of voice of the writer establishes the mood of the writing.

- The box here show the levels of reward. The excellent students will be interpreting and analysing for 80% of the response. The weak students will be summarising and explaining. I get students to use highlighters and highlight their work, determining what is Interpretation, what is Analysis, what is etc etc. It shows them clearly why they get the grade they get.

Remember, structure your paragraphs around these four key elements.

- What is the writer arguing?
- How does the writer try to persuade?
- Give examples using short quotations.
- What is the intended effect on the reader of this argument and this language?
Analysis of a visual

The cartoon.

With a partner, write down your dot points using the following questions as a guide:

1. What is the issue of the cartoon?
2. Who is the intended audience?
3. Describe what you see in the cartoon, both what you can actually see (the literal) and what meaning lies beneath. (the inferential).
4. What is the point of view of the cartoon?
5. What is the tone of the cartoon?
6. What arguments are used to persuade the audience to agree with the point of view?

Write a paragraph analysing the cartoon.

Suggested format:

Article 6 is a cartoon by……………..directed towards ………………….audience to contend that…………………in a …………………..tone. Knight argues ….(state the argument/s contained within the visuals) by …. (explain how he does this) in order to… (state the intended effect upon the audience.)

Aim for 150 words.
Language Analysis

Order of analysis for body paragraphs

1. The opening sentence of the paragraph MUST focus on the main/central argument being put forward by the writer/speaker. What is the broader issue that they are arguing about? What is their contention? What is their overall stance?

2. The next sentence MUST focus on the sub-argument that you are focussing on. In order to position the reader/audience to consider or accept their p.o.v, what sub-argument do they bring in to add weight to their stance?

3. In the next sentence, set up a slightly longer quote that employs language that highlights the sub-argument in order to give context to the language that you are going to focus on. Consider a quote that also includes a clear language device that can be mentioned in passing and has a particular intended effect in positioning the reader to agree with the author/speaker.

4. The next sentence should focus on a particular word or words from the longer quote that emphasise the writer/speaker’s argument. Explain HOW this word or these words do this. Connotation? Irony? Exaggeration? Metaphor? Emotional appeal? Tone? etc. Make sure that this analysis highlights the speaker/writer’s stance shown in the sub-argument and demonstrates how this sub-argument is developed further as a result.

*Steps 3 and 4 can be repeated several times, focusing on different textual detail and the analysis of this language. It is essential that you make a connection between the language and literary devices that are used in the sub-argument and how the sub-argument is developed and structured as a result. What impact is this language having on the development of the sub-argument and why? What is the intended effect?

5. Following on from your analysis of language in the sub-argument and how it shows the writer/speaker’s stance on the issue being discussed, close your paragraph by bringing your analysis back to the main/central argument and demonstrate how the main argument is shaped and furthered as a result of the detail focussed on in the sub-argument.

*Begin with a broad focus – the issue and the main line of argument

*Narrow the focus – the sub-argument and the language and literary device/s used to build the sub-argument

*Close by coming back to a broad focus – emphasise the relevance of the detail in the sub-argument to the main argument and the overall stance on the issue

* Maintain a consistent focus on the development of the argument and an analysis of the language used to do this
LANGUAGE ANALYSIS TIPS

These are what I call the ‘Super Seven’ pieces of advice for execution of a persuasive language analysis (adds a bit of flair to a pretty mundane unit):

1. **How is specific language (words and phrases) used to persuade a specific audience of a specific contention?**

   I continually emphasize to the students that they should be as specific and detailed as they can be when they are explaining the writer’s choices of language.

   That is, I discourage students writing things like: “…the writer uses the emotional appeal to the position their audience to support their contention.”

   Rather, they are encouraged to write something like: “…the writer uses this appeal to fear to position his audience of parents of school-age children that to not vaccinate their child would be to endanger their children’s health.”

2. **The contention and target audience rule all.**

   Everything the author writes, every word, is connected to the combination of the overall opinion they’re trying to convey, and the audience they are trying to convey it to.

   This concept has been referred to as ‘the inverted pyramid’, which is a great way to look at it. The metaphor I personally use is that of a tree; where the trunk is the contention and audience, and the foliage is all the pretty choices of language. The lesson is: there is no foliage without the trunk from which they emanate.

   In other words, one cannot analyze the use of a negative connotation (for example), without linking it to the overall contention and target audience that governed its use in the first place.

3. **There is no analysis without the “Y” (Why).**

   I have often found that students do not actually know what it is ‘To Analyze’. They know how ‘To Identify’ various language techniques, but not how to take it to the deeper level of analysis. So I take the time to clarify:

   a. Analysis is the art of explaining in depth.
   b. The better depth you can reach, the better result you will be awarded; simple as that.
   c. To reach depth, we must not just point out WHAT the author is doing, “Smith uses a rhetorical question to persuade his audience of his contention.” That is what EVERY RQ in the history of RQ’s has done!
   d. Instead, explain WHY this RQ has been used. How does it specifically support the contention? How does it specifically target the intended audience?
4. Always be questing for the IPI

Another way of ensuring that students don’t fall into the trap of surface level ‘labelling’ of the text is where I constantly ask them if they have explained the IPI; the Intended Persuasive Impact.

“Yes Jonny, that’s great you’ve found three uses of inclusive language, but have you explained their Intended Persuasive Impact?”

Keeping to a catchy Abbott-esque three-word slogan tends to help them remember to do this in the exam.

5. Start with emotion

A third way I teach the students to be analyzing in depth, is to get them to look for the emotion that is pregnant in each use of persuasive language they choose to analyze. Even cold hard facts in an editorial are designed to tweak the emotions of their audience.

When looking to explain why the language has been used, look for the emotion(s) that the author/artist intends their target audience to feel. Then explain how targeting that emotion will position their audience to agree with their point.

Quote the language – Explain the emotional intention of the language – link the writer’s use of that emotion to the audience and contention

If a student follows that process, rinse and repeat, throughout their essay, they will hit some regular depth.

6. Let the text do the talking for you

As we start to write practice paragraphs and essays, I encourage the students to include words and phrases from the text when explaining the author’s language use.

While they may not be directly analyzing each word they quote, using quotes will make it look like you are analyzing more of the text than time might actually allow them.

Examiners want to see lots of these little marks “...”, and have those followed with a sophisticated explanation of their use in context. This advice teaches them to keep that in mind

For example:

Hargreaves points out that while the current new laws are a good first step, more must be done in “stab city” in order “to let our police to do their job” because “Melburnians are scared.” She argues that while police “nabbed a handful of weapon carriers” in a recent “blitz”, that this only adds greater fear to residents as to what might have been found with greater police power. She asks her audience to “imagine the size of the weapons haul” if the powers of police were not being blocked by the State Governments inaction. The audience is therefore invited to feel that their leaders could be
doing more to make them feel secure in their own city. Hargreaves frustrated tone is transferred to her audience of concerned citizens as they are positioned to wonder how many dangerous weapons remain on the streets, simply because “our boys and girls in blue” are being treated as mere “PR flunkeys” rather than respected police officers.

Note that in this example, I only actually analyze the quote in red. But it looks like I’ve analyzed more.

Also note the old Quote-Emotion-IPI structure (from #5) in this little extract.

7. Be formal

It is highly annoying when students fail to follow the conventions of analytical writing, so I make a point of reminding them.

Things like:

Don’t call writers by their first names

Refer to “Article Title” formally

Use Metalanguage where they can.