

Critically Analysing different text

Example one

Hi Everyone, It's Megan here. Below is some questions and answers from the discussion on myunisa. All my notes and explanations will be in purple so that you understand what is happening as I have literally just copied and pasted what has helped me.

Dear students

As you know, we are working through Unit 1 this week. Unit 1 focuses on critically reading and writing about texts. To learn to critically read and write about texts, you need to learn to discover the 'What, How and Why' of texts. This means that you need to learn to identify the genre and form of texts, how they are written, and why they are written. Your study guide offers you an example of a text that you can analyse, and some questions that you can ask about the text to develop a critical reading of it. My last post offered an example of critical writing as well. This post, which is the second post for this week, is an exercise focussed on critical reading and writing. I want you to try to critically read and write about a text yourselves. If you struggle, try looking at my last post and reading through Unit 1 in your study guide again. Also remember to look up any words that you do not understand, or to check if I have included definitions.

Read through the excerpt of a text found on theguardian.com below, and try to answer the questions that follow. The text is titled 'In an age of robots, schools are teaching our children to be redundant'. The text was written by George Monbiot, and you can find the full text if you follow this link:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/15/robots-schools-teaching-children-redundant-testing-learn-future>

In the future, if you want a job, you must be as unlike a machine as possible: creative, critical and socially skilled. So why are children being taught to behave like machines?

[Children](#) learn best when teaching aligns with their natural exuberance, energy and curiosity. So why are they dragooned^[1] into rows and made to sit still while they are stuffed with facts?

We succeed in adulthood through collaboration. So why is collaboration in tests and exams called cheating?

Governments claim to want to reduce the number of children being excluded from school. So why are their curriculums and tests so narrow that they alienate any child whose mind does not work in a particular way?

The best teachers use their character, creativity and inspiration to trigger children's instinct to learn. So why are character, creativity and inspiration suppressed by a stifling regime^[2] of micromanagement?

Now, try to answer the following questions:

? What is the genre of the text? It is important to establish this, because this shapes our expectations and prepares us to read the text analytically: with an eye to its deeper and wider significance.

? What is the purpose of the text?

? How does it achieve this purpose?

(In order to answer this question, you should consider any modes of expression that are designed to persuade you to agree with the author. Consider the terms 'stifling regime', 'dragooned' and 'stuffed with facts'. What are the connotations of these words? What do these words aim to make you think or feel?

? Why has the writer chosen to write in this way?

[1] Dragooned means forced or coerced. Dragoon is also a term used to refer to soldiers, in particular soldiers on horseback.

[2] A regime is an authoritarian government, or a government that forces people to obey them and restricts freedom.

Below is the answers from one of the students. She gave a really good answer lecturer said and just mentioned that she should include how the writer of the article persuaded the readers to agree with his point of view.

Unit 1: Critical Reading Exercise

In an age of robots, schools are teaching our children to be redundant

1. What is the genre of the text?

This text is a column written by a columnist named George Manbiot. This is concluded as the word "Columnist" appears just above the text. It is important to note that columnists are journalists contributing regularly to newspapers, magazines or blogs. This excerpt, in particular, is taken from a column in *theguardian* which is an online British National Daily Newspaper. Columnists offer their personal comments or opinions on a particular subject being discussed. Columns are written in the form of a short essay and often appear on either a daily or a weekly basis.

2. What is the purpose of the text?

The purpose of this text is to voice the personal opinion of the columnist, George Manbiot, on the subject of today's education system and the impact it is having on future generations. He hopes to shed light on the fact that 21st Century children are being taught from a 19th Century education system which is meant to silence and break down the spirit of these children in order to conform to regulations set in the 19th Century era.

He is trying to emphasize that we are currently in an ever-increasing technological world filled with machines and robots and we are teaching children to become just like those machines and robots which will inevitably replace them. The columnist is trying to persuade individuals to look at what they are doing these children and instead of breaking them down we should be building them up and highlighting their unique abilities which, in a technological world, should and would be seen as an asset to society rather than a burden. All in all, the purpose of this text is to induce change for a better future.

3. How does it achieve this purpose?

The columnist uses a very serious tone in this text. No satire or irony is visible which highlights how serious he is when writing about this topic. The columnists desperation and plead for change can also be felt and seen in the text when speaking of how teachers, too, are bearing the brunt of this education system- "their training wasted

and their careers destroyed by overwork and a spirit-crushing regime of standardisation, testing and top-down control".

A wealth of factual information is used in this text. The use of such a wide array of factual information is effective as it shows that the columnist speaks from a point of view which has been researched, tried and tested and to prove that what he is saying may, in fact, be true. He refers to the book *Learning {Re}imagined* by Graham Brown-Martin to support his opinion on the 19th Century versus 21st Century education system. In order to add to the serious tone of this text, no exaggerations or hyperboles are used within this text.

4. Why has the writer chosen to write this way?

The columnist has written in such a serious way as he hopes to evoke thought as well as feelings of guilt in the readers. He is almost scolding society for letting this happen and this results in the reader feeling like a reprimanded child. The columnist, by writing this text, has a desire to encourage change and improvement methods within the education system. He hopes to shed light on the disastrous effects our current education system is and will have on future generations of this world. He also hopes to reveal the utter foolishness and ignorance of what we are doing to our children as we are breaking them down instead of building them up to create a generations filled with uniqueness and individuality.

Below is the lecturers answers to the same article as above:

● **What is the genre of the text? It is important to establish this, because this shapes our expectations and prepares us to read the text analytically: with an eye to its deeper and wider significance.**

The text is an extract from an article from the news site of the British newspaper *The Guardian*. We can tell this by looking at the name of the site that the text was taken from. This name is in the site's url (the url is the link to the article. It looks like this: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/15/robots-schools-teaching-children-redundant-testing-learn-future>).

Because the text comes from a news site, we can expect the text to focus on an issue that is of concern to the many people who might read *The Guardian* (in this case, the issue of modern education). Newspapers are meant to comment critically on society, to draw people's attention to societal issues, and in serious cases, to bring about positive change in society. Newspaper columns therefore often give critical commentaries and might question problematic aspects of society (in this case, the education system).

● **What is the purpose of the text?**

The text's purpose is to comment critically on modern education, and to persuade people that it should change.

● **How does it achieve this purpose?**

(In order to answer this question, you should consider any modes of expression that are designed to persuade you to agree with the author. Consider the terms 'stifling regime', 'dragooned' and 'stuffed with facts'. What are the connotations of these words? What do these words aim to make you think or feel?)

The text uses terms such as ‘stifling regime’, ‘dragooned’ and ‘stuffed with facts’. A stifling regime is a system of government that is so restrictive that it barely allows people the freedom to breathe. Through comparing current education systems to stifling regimes, the writer creates a link between schools and unpopular governments, such as those in Korea or Russia. This link aims to **persuade** people who disapprove of unfair and dictatorial governments that schools are just as unfair and just as deserving of resistance and in need of change.

The word dragooned is a word which is linked to armies. This word is used to persuade people that children are being trained and disciplined like soldiers. This further persuades people to believe that putting children through the current education system is as cruel and unfair as putting them in the army would be.

The phrase ‘stuffed with facts’ might make one think of someone being stuffed with food. Usually, when one is stuffed with food one is uncomfortable and struggles to digest. The image of children being stuffed with facts is thus used to persuade the reader that children are given such an overload of information that they cannot process it properly.

● **Why has the writer chosen to write in this way?**

The writer has chosen to write in this way to persuade the reader that current education systems are restricted, cruel and unrealistic. The writer wants the reader to believe that schools expect too much from children and do not suit their needs. The writer’s ultimate goal is to persuade readers to put pressure on schools to adapt and change so that they can become more useful to and suitable for children.