Writing a Language Analysis Essay

Planning is CRUCIAL.

1. **UNDERSTAND:** 'Sit on hands' reading. Read to understand the articles/image. Record the overall <u>issue</u> the material explores. As you finish each article you should record the <u>contention</u> and <u>tone</u> (remember the tone will most likely change during the piece – indicate this on the article).

2. **NOTICE :** <u>Annotate</u> (your observations about how the piece works to persuade – identify particular features) and <u>Circle</u> (words that have particular impact – they may be emotive, loaded or just 'jump out'). DO NOT HIGHLIGHT. YOU WILL BE USING HIGHLIGHTERS TO ORGANISE YOUR PIECE.   If there is an image, remember to annotate it too…!

3. **ORGANISE:** Group the material that you have identified. You might be grouping around **argument (what is being argued)**, around **tone (the manner in which it is being argued)** or around **persuasive strategies (how it is being argued).** The best way to organise your material will depend on what you noticed!

   Once you have decided on your categories **HIGHLIGHT. i.e. Highlight** each argument, tone or persuasive strategy you have identified in a different colour. A mocking tone, for example, might occur at the start, middle and end of the article – highlight each example of the mocking tone in the same colour.

4. **Some extra info on organising…**
   I am looking at each of the different grouping options here around an 'imaginary' article. These are purely here to illustrate the different options you have for organising your material.
   Argument – BP1: The problems with the new tax, BP2: The impact the new tax will have on society, BP3: The author's proposed alternative solution
   Tone – BP1 – Critical/mocking tone, BP 2: Despairing/concerned tone, BP3: Optimistic tone
   Persuasive Strategies – BP 1: Statistics/expert opinion, BP2 – Personal anecdotes/emotive language, BP3: Logic – outlining an alternative solution

   <u>You might also want to keep in mind some of the 'persuasive patterns' we have looked at</u>. These can help you in organising your material.

   In a language analysis essay, there is no 'set' number of body paragraphs – it will depend on how you organise your piece. Generally, there will be between 3-5 body paragraphs.

Multiple texts + image

- **Start** with introducing the issue
- **Next,** move through introducing the **biggest** article. You will go into greater detail for this article.
- **Does the image** support the **biggest article**, the **smallest article** or **both**?
  - **If the biggest article only – introduce the image now…**
  - **If the smallest article only, or both articles – introduce the image at the end of your introduction**
- **Then,** move through introducing the **smaller** article. You will do this more briefly than the first article.

Introduction
- Author and Title (who wrote it)
- Contention (what is their main argument – maybe 2-3)
- Context for the issue (background information)
- Overall approach – what is a consistent characteristic of the piece
- Tone – how does it sound
- Form – letter to the editor, opinion piece, blog post, radio interview
- Source – where is it published
- Introduces image
- Linking phrase

The recent death in Sydney following a taser incident of a Brazillian student has sparked controversy and debate across the nation. Anna Brown capitalises on her role with the Human Rights Law Centre in presenting her opinion piece for The Age (20/3/12) 'A 50,000 volt electric shock is a highly dangerous weapon' on the use of Tasers by Victorian Police. Brown argues that tasers are in fact lethal weapons and that there are growing questions about their potential misuse by law enforcement Brown goes further to suggest that more research needs to be done before tasers are widely implemented in Victoria. Brown bases her argument on a series of reports and research studies, presenting a measured and substantiated argument

in a mildly aggressive tone. Brown's piece is accompanied by a grainy photograph of a man laying contorted on the ground following the use of a taser, supporting her argument that tasers are a dangerous weapon. In contrast, Fred Smith's letter to the editor (Herald Sun, 20/3/12) 'The police need options' draws on anecdotal material to passionately argue that tasers are important tool in allowing police to effectively intervene in violent situation.

Ordering your Body Paragraphs

You should work through each of your **highlighter colours** in chronological order. **So if the first paragraph of the article is highlighted in yellow, as well as other material later on in the article –** your first body paragraph will cover the 'yellow' material.

Your second body paragraph will cover the next 'colour' to appear and so on.

Remember with Body paragraphs, WHAT is being said, HOW is it being said, WHY is it persuasive? (i.e. how does it impact the reader/listener).
Consider:
What it makes the reader/listener <u>see, think and feel.</u>

Ensure that you continuously address:
The audience
The form (speech, website, opinion piece etc)
Specific language choices – i.e. connotations
The connection between the written and visual material
READER IMPACT

For each article, ensure you have covered the beginning, middle and end of the pieces – you will not be able to cover absolutely everything.

Body Paragraph

You will need to use quotations from the article to support and identify what you are saying

- Identify the persuasive approach(es)/argument/tone
- Explain the reason why it is used.
- What is the likely impact on readers?
- How does this add to the overall argument?

Anna Brown identifies Victoria Police as being responsible for the lack of testing of Taser devices in Victoria and suggests that they "must justify" the implications for public safety. By identifying Victoria Police as being the agency charged with Taser deployment, Brown seeks to question the structure and systems within the public service that may lead to a rash Taser deployment and thus raise a question in readers minds. Readers are encouraged to question the trials to date and support further calls for trials before what Brown describes as "controversial weapons" are deployed. In suggesting further action by the Victorian Government and Police Brown is reinforcing her central cautionary message.

Jane Brown opens her opinion piece by undermining and mocking the parenting style of today's parents. She begins with the rhetorical question, 'How much longer will we continue to supposedly 'protect' our young people from the stark realities of life?' Through the term 'supposedly' and by placing 'protect' in quotation marks, Brown places doubt in the reader's mind if the behaviours they see as protecting their children are instead damaging their future. Brown further appeals to parents' desires to do the best for their children through linking 'mollycoddling' parenting behaviours to 'defenceless' children. In doing so, she not only mocks protective parenting but evokes fear in parents through representing these children as forever vulnerable to the 'stark realities of life'. The mocking tone intensifies as Brown provides anecdotal examples of overparenting. By placing 'precious' and 'incidents' in quotation marks and using colloquial terms such as 'squabbles', Brown once again suggests that parents are being over-responsive to their children's desires. When combined with the adverb choices 'blindly' and 'obediently' to

Commented [KE1]: Topic sentence – identifies what the focus of this paragraph will be – in this case tone. I look at the first two paragraphs of the article in this section, which is where I have identified that the tone is mocking and undermining.

Commented [KE2]: Explicitly addresses how the article commences

describe parents' responses Brown creates an image of parents who are completely controlled by their children and do not consider the impact of their choices for their children's future. In doing so, Brown positions the reader to see overparenting as highly undesirable, encouraging them to reject these parenting behaviours Brown deplores.

> **Commented [KE3]:** Link sentence – sums up how mocking and undermining overparenting postions readers and how this contributes to Brown's overall argument.

Quotations from article: Notice how each of these choices is carefully analysed. They are mostly single words and phrases

Analysis of why this word/phrase/technique etc. is persuasive to the target audience (in this case parents)

Providing **linkage** between examples. It's easy to link, because all of my examples in this paragraph are focusing on how Brown undermines and mocks overparenting, as identified in my topic sentence.

What do you do when you move onto the second article or image...?

Just start of the paragraph with a comparison beween the articles...

Eg. Whilst James Jones uses a mocking tone to criticise pitbull owners, Joan Smith writes warmly about them as a 'friendly' and 'nurturing' creature.

Conclusion:

We will look at conclusions next term…. For the moment, write your language analysis essays without a conclusion.