

SECTION C – Analysis of language use (Using language to persuade)

Instructions for Section C

Section C requires students to analyse the ways in which language and visual features are used to present a point of view.

Section C is worth one-third of the total assessment for the examination.

Read the opinion piece *Young People Unite* and then complete the task below.

Write your analysis as a coherently structured piece of prose.

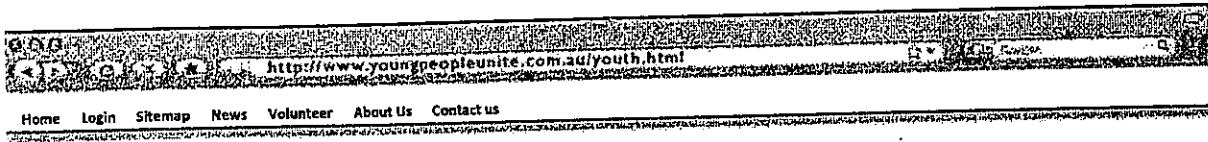
Your response will be assessed according to the criteria set out on page 9 of this book.

TASK

How is written and visual language used to attempt to persuade readers to share the point of view of the writer of *Young People Unite*?

Background information

The following opinion piece appeared on a website created as part of an Australian youth voting initiative known as *Young People Unite*. It was posted earlier this year in response to ongoing debate about whether or not the legal voting age in Australia should be lowered to 16.



May 05, 2010

Lower the voting age to 16... NOW!

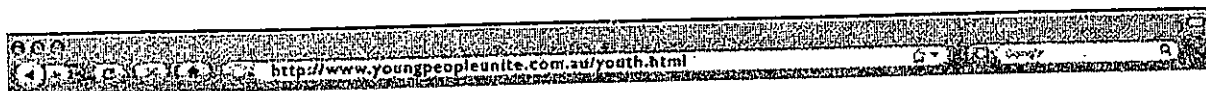
The year is 2050. A permanent haze hangs over the city of Melbourne, thanks to a dramatic increase in the numbers of cars on Victoria's roads. The price of fuel is exorbitant — up to \$25 per litre on peak days — meaning most parents have long since sacrificed their annual leave in order to work longer hours and hopefully hold on to the gas-guzzler for a little longer. But really, who wants a holiday in the 'great' outdoors anyway, when that requires a full-body sunsuit (most days it's a balmy 48°C in the shade) and, on really bad days, a facemask to filter the air before it's inhaled?

OK so maybe my doomsday scenario is a bit extreme, but don't tell me you're not even a little frustrated at the fact that in 2010, another election year, you will not be able to help Australia shape her future by means of a federal election vote? If you don't think that politics plays a significant role in your life, consider the fact that so far this year we've seen widespread debate on climate change and emissions reduction schemes; the impact of Australia's seemingly inevitable population boom and how this is likely to stretch our public transport systems; the impact of drought on our future water security; driving restrictions for L- and P-plate drivers, and whether or not the legal drinking age should be raised to ... Spot the pattern here? You guessed it — all of these issues stand to affect either the immediate or longer-term futures of every single young person in this country. Yet the irony is that despite being the very group that these issues will affect most dramatically, we are currently powerless to influence how the problems are handled by governments.

Why? Because we can't vote. Simple as that.

This is by no means a new debate. In 2004 the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) looked into the issue of whether or not sixteen- and seventeen-year-old Australians should be allowed to vote. They noted in their report that one of the criteria used in the years prior to the study to exclude certain groups from the voting process stemmed from the assumption that people in those groups were "incapable of understanding the nature and significance of enrolment and voting". The report went on to state that the case for seeing young people in this way has traditionally been made on four grounds: lack of maturity, lack of interest, not enough life experience, and ignorance ('Lowering the Voting Age', VEC, 2004). Well, tradition isn't really what I'm interested in — I'm more of a present and future kind of girl — and I'd like to explain exactly why these four reasons are just not an accurate description of twenty-first century teens.

Let's start with 'lack of maturity', shall we? Consider a survey conducted of 11–18 year olds by the U.K. Electoral Commission in 2004. It indicated that many of them did not "feel sufficiently informed and would rather not vote than vote in ignorance". Now if that's not maturity, I don't know what is. Such a statement reveals that despite not yet being technically classified as 'adults', many young people are aware enough of the responsibilities associated with voting — surely evidence of a degree of thoughtfulness and maturity.



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Which leads quite nicely to reason number two: 'lack of interest'. The fact that this website alone gets 15,000 hits per week from passionate teenagers just like yourself (thanks, everybody!) should be evidence enough that young people are politically engaged. The truth is, young people only become disengaged from the political process because they understand that they are effectively powerless to enact change. Just like an underperforming student who has 'switched off' in the absence of attention from teachers, a young person who might otherwise be vigorously engaged will naturally turn his attention away from politicians who ignore him. The solution here is blindingly obvious: give that young person the vote, and watch apathy transform into action. Consider the fact that 37,432 young people voted in the Australian Youth Climate Coalition's 'Youth Decide' poll, which asked them to nominate a percentage of emissions reductions that we should be aiming for into our future. (Unsurprisingly, 91.5% of those young people voted in favour of the maximum reduction specified: 40%.) In addition, a concert in Federation Square during voting week, featuring The Cat Empire and many other awesome local artists, was attended by close to 5,000 teens. Apathy? I think not.

Reasons three and four we can consider collectively: 'inexperience and ignorance'. Of course young people have less life experience than their elders; that goes without saying. A 65-year-old retiree has less experience than an octogenarian, too, if we want to be pedantic about it. But thanks to the internet and a plethora of new media technologies such as Facebook, Twitter and the iPhone, we are part of the most tech-savvy and switched on generation the world has ever seen. And consider this: as a seventeen-year-old I can currently get married, drive on Australian highways, work a full-time job and pay taxes. I can also have a child and receive a several thousand-dollar baby bonus from the federal government for choosing to do so. Yet I cannot vote in an election which would determine and shape the direction of policies relating to any of those things. That is neither logical nor fair; how hypocritical it is for a government to collect taxes from me when I cannot vote for it! If I am deemed experienced enough to work, drive and start a family, I am experienced enough to vote.



Picture: Young people line up in Federation Square to cast their vote in the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC) poll on emissions reductions

So guys, if you share my frustration at being shut out of the process that shapes our future, please help to make the voice of youth heard by **clicking on the link below** and **signing the attached petition**, which will be forwarded to politicians on both sides of the political divide at the end of this month. Already over 5,000 young people have signed up – if you do the same, you will be helping to make everybody's 2050 a little brighter. Young people unite!

Melissa Young

Engaged 17-year-old and Youth Spokesperson for Young People Unite (an Australian youth voting initiative)

CLICK HERE TO SIGN THE YOUNG PEOPLE UNITE PETITION – GET THE VOTING AGE LOWERED TO 16!

Links: Liked this site? Check out:

<http://www.unya.org.au/>

(United Nations Youth Association of Australia)

<http://www.youthdecide.com.au/>

(Australian Youth Climate Coalition website)