

# Language Analysis | Sample answer

In response to the article published here:

<https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-relationships/i-can-always-tell-the-students-who-ve-had-a-gap-year-20181119-p50qxi.html>

## Gap Year

As we approach the end of another school year and the anticipation of university placements, Jenna Price outwardly articulates the need for high school graduates to take a gap year. In her opinion piece, 'Heading to uni? Take a gap year first', she reaches out to parents, students and the wider community in order to argue for the importance of starting university completely prepared. Parents might trust her knowledge due to her credentials as an academic at a university and as an Age columnist. The accompanying visual depicts a stern and well-groomed woman, adding to the image of an esteemed academic, which would further enhance her status in her audience's eyes. Hence, we may accept her authority and expertise on this matter.

Wittily, Price opens her piece with a 'content warning' for parents to ensure they do not proceed with a 'catastrophic vision of the future', which when paired with the word 'feared', she knowingly targets their propensity to fret over the behaviour of their children during schoolies.

Deemphasising the seemingly disastrous 'drunken vomiting', she directly claims that 'the worst is yet to come', leaving no room for question. By introducing her argument with an anxiety arousing phenomenon common to most parents, she immediately intends to concern them; they may be inclined to accept her advice so they can be prepared for 'the worst' and avoid any potential calamities. With the same forthrightness, Price asserts that 'the worst' 'will be' high school graduates' 'complete lack of preparation for what comes next in their lives', insinuating that school does not adequately prepare students for life afterwards. This statement targets parents' desire for their children to have the best possible life, pressuring them to consider the benefits of a gap year. Price later credits schools for preparing students 'intellectually'; however she ultimately refutes their capability of teaching students 'how to deal with real people in the real

world', sending parents into a state of panic about allowing their kids to start university straight away.

Referring to the advice given by RMIT Professor Judith Bessant who sees the need for 'a strong reality check', Price cleverly presents parents with an additional expert opinion that intends to remove any uncertainty about a gap year whilst also causing them to question their preconceived idea of an effective life path. With reference to the comment that parents involve themselves in their children's university lives, we recognise that Price is aware that parents crave the success of their beloved offspring and yearn to see them thrive. Therefore, she juxtaposes the education system in schools which tips 'content into empty heads' and teaches 'specific digital skills' and 'compliance', with the way in which a gap year provides students with the necessary skill of 'thinking hard and strong'. Parents are likely to be in favour of a gap year when they come to comprehend the high standards of universities.

Parents whose children do not take a gap year may feel personally attacked by Price's consistent use of inclusive language, such as 'your kids', 'I can promise you' and 'if you won't listen'. Consequently, her argument is geared to resonate more strongly with these parents due to its relatable nature. Her condemnation of the parents who act 'on behalf of their children' is emphasised when she bluntly expresses that their 'firmly rooted' 'vision of the future', whether it be 'law and accounting' or 'medicine and engineering', has 'got zip to do' with the next chapter in school graduates' lives. These controlling parents who invest all of their energy into ensuring their children are enrolled in courses 'identified with a job at the end' are prompted to be ashamed of such behaviour, and students are influenced to neglect the tendency to follow the 'strong linear preoccupation' of 'study, relationships, jobs'. Condescendingly, Price alerts such parents to the fact that if they continue to smother their children by asking about their university marks, or 'rescue' them from every remotely challenging situation, they will gain nothing and will be unable to develop responsibility and self-confidence. Despite the humour ingrained in her perception of the students as the 'responsible adults' and the adults as the ones simply 'paying the bills', she presents an underlying concern for those students unaccustomed to being active individuals, who may feel aggravated by the limited control they have over their own lives. The blame is put on the parents who involve themselves in every aspect of their children's life even after finishing school, in order to encourage these adults to be less controlling.

Price endeavours to outline the advantageous position students are in when they take a gap

year, by offering a stark contrast between those students and the students who commence their tertiary education immediately. She uses mankind's inherent desire for success to appeal to both parents and students when she pairs the word 'advantages' with the phrase 'those who take a gap year do better at university'. Her audience is also indirectly persuaded to believe this comment as it is supported by the phrase 'extensive academic research', which targets people's inclination to assume the truth in anything justified by erudite past experience.

Similarly, Price uses her own firsthand experience when she affirms that she 'can always tell the students who've had a gap year'. Students contemplating commencing university right after graduating are pressed to reconsider when they read that those students 'burst into tears over marks', 'get cranky' when educators 'critique their work' and lack 'resilience' borne from dealing with both people at work who 'behave deplorably' and with 'travel disasters'. Ultimately, Price maintains that anyone 'who wants to flourish in the transmogrifying world of work' cannot do so if they 'hurtle' into university without a 'break' from such institutions, intentionally emboldening the effect of these words by coupling them with an opposing term. She aims to inculcate students with the understanding that in order to succeed in a world that is fast-paced, ever-changing and full of unexpected surprises, they must first learn how to handle themselves independently.

In order to effectively cement the value of a gap year in both parents' and students' minds, Price concludes her reasoning with Professor Judith Bessant's 'call-to-action for young people', deeming it 'the best' she has read. Price's attitude resonates with Bessant's claim that 'young people can and should play a larger role in shaping their identity and futures'. They both allude to the need for parents to hold back and allow their children to explore and attain the myriad of skills that can be learned during this time. At the end of the piece, the audience can recognise that a gap year is not only beneficial for excelling in university, but for success in life beyond the foreseeable.