

Examples of argumentative writing

1. News editors decide what to broadcast on television and what to print in newspapers. What factors do you think influence these decisions? Do we become used to bad news? Would it be better if more good news was reported?

Answer:

It has often been said that “Good news is bad news” because it does not sell newspapers. A radio station that once decided to present only good news soon found that it had gone out of business for lack of listeners. Bad news on the other hand is so common that in order to cope with it, we often simply ignore it. We have become immune to bad news and the newspapers and radio stations are aware of this.

While newspapers and TV stations may aim to report world events accurately, be they natural or human disasters, political events or the horrors of war, it is also true that their main objective is to sell newspapers and attract listeners and viewers to their stations. For this reason TV and radio stations attempt to reflect the flavor of their station by providing news broadcasts tailor-made to suit their listeners’ preferences. Programmes specializing in pop music or TV soap operas focus more on local news, home issues and up-to-date traffic reports. The more serious stations and newspapers like to provide “so called” objective news reports with editorial comment aimed at analyzing the situation.

If it is true, then, that newspapers and TV stations are tailoring their news to their readers’ and viewers’ requirements, how can they possibly be reporting real world events in an honest and objective light? Many radio and TV stations do, in fact, report items of good news but they no longer call this news. They refer to these as human interest stories and package them in programmes specializing, for instance, in consumer affairs or local issues. Good news now comes to us in the form of documentaries the fight against children’s cancer or AIDS, or the latest developments in the fight to save the planet from environmental pollution.

2. We are becoming increasingly dependent on computers. They are used in business, hospitals, crime detection and even to fly planes. What things will they be used in the future? Is this dependence on computers a good thing or should we be more suspicious of their benefits?

Answer:

Computers are a relatively new invention. The first computers were built fifty years ago and it is only in the last thirty or so years that their influence has affected our everyday life. Personal

computers were introduced as recently as the early eighties. In this short time they have made a tremendous impact on our lives. We are now so dependent on computers that it is hard to imagine what things would be like today without them. You have only got to go into a bank when their main computer is broken to appreciate the chaos that would occur if computers were suddenly removed world-wide.

In the future computers will be used to create bigger and even more sophisticated computers. The prospects for this are quite alarming. They will be so complex that no individual could hope to understand how they work. They will bring a lot of benefits but they will also increase the potential for unimaginable chaos. They will, for example, be able to fly planes and they will be able to coordinate the movements of several planes in the vicinity of an airport. Providing all the computers are working correctly nothing can go wrong. If one small program fails— disaster.

There is a certain inevitability that technology will progress and become increasingly complex. We should, however, ensure that we are still in a position where we are able to control technology. It will be all too easy to suddenly discover that technology is controlling us. By then it might be too late I believe that it is very important to be suspicious of the benefits that computers will bring and to make sure that we never become totally dependent on a completely technological world.

3. The position of women in society has changed markedly in the last twenty years. Many of the problems young people now experience, such as juvenile delinquency, arise from the fact that many married women now work and are not at home to care for their children.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Answer:

It is certainly true that the position of women in society has undergone a dramatic change in the past twenty years but I do not feel that this is a direct cause of the indisputable increase in juvenile-related problems during this period.

It is now accepted that young women should find work on leaving school; indeed to rely totally on their parents' financial support is no longer an option in many families. Likewise, once they get married, the majority of women continue working since the financial pressures of setting up a house and establishing a reasonable standard of living often require two incomes. Twenty years ago it was common for women to give up work once they had children and devote their time to caring for their children. This is no longer the general rule and the provision of professionally-run child care facilities and day nurseries have removed much of the

responsibility for child rearing that used to fall to mothers. However, these facilities come at a cost and often require two salaries coming into a family to be afforded.

I do not believe that the increase in the number of working mothers has resulted in children being brought up less well than previously. Indeed it could be argued that by giving mothers the opportunity to work and earn extra money children can be better provided for than previously. There is more money for luxuries and holidays and a more secure family life is possible. Of course there are limits as to the amount of time that ideally should be spent away from home and the ideal scenario would be for one of the parents (often the wife) to have a part-time job and thus be available for their children before and after school. It is important to establish the correct balance between family life and working life.

Exercises to be practiced (based on the given patterns)

4. There are many different types of music in the world today. Why do we need music? Is the traditional music of a country more important than the International music that is heard everywhere nowadays?

5. Should wealthy nations be required to share their wealth among poorer nations by providing such things as food and education? Or is it the responsibility of the governments of poorer nations to look after their citizens themselves?

6. The idea of having a single career is becoming an old fashioned one. The new fashion will be to have several careers or ways of earning money and further education will be something that continues throughout life.
