

ENGLISH

Units 3 & 4 – Written examination



2011 Trial Examination

SAMPLE RESPONSE

R18+ Rating is kid's stuff

Written for publication on the TOG website, Geordie, a TOG correspondent, argues that the Australian government should introduce an R18+ rating for computer games. Being an older gamer, Geordie insists that it is the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) who are being "childish" in blocking games which exceed the MA15+ rating. Communicating to a like-minded audience of gamers over the age of 25 (although the web page is viewable by anyone surfing the internet), Geordie appeals to common sense by pointing out the ludicrous situation the government has created for themselves. Geordie also couches opinion within an informative framework in order to reason with readers, positioning them to share his/her point of view that an R18+ rating will protect children from these games better than the current system, where such games are banned.

In the second paragraph, Geordie addresses the audience as Australians, pointing out that it is the government's job to protect its people from "various threats". Irony is used to connect this traditional function of a democratic Australian government with the statement that "computer games are not harmful". By pointing out that Australia has twenty-one different agencies which "one way or another, all play their part" in protecting our country, this burgeoning bureaucracy is posited as wasting their time trying to protect us from games of "fantasy". Linked as this argument is to the stated fact that Australia is the "only westernised nation" which does not have an adult rating for games, Geordie is inferring that our government is stopping adults doing something from which they should be entitled. Supporting this is the idea presented via the cartoon at the top of the article, where viewers are being positioned to interpret the bouncer as representing our government. He, with his exaggerated, imposing physical size is blocking adults access to gaming content. His uncompromising immovability on this issue is also communicated through his crossed arms and the strong body language which such a stance represents.

Geordie also ridicules the government by naming Brendan O'Connor, Australia's Home Affairs and Justice Minister as being both responsible for, and also in support of an R18+ rating for games. The government does not act to change the rating, despite O'Connor's views, and this highlights it as being 'out of touch' and arrogant. The reference to this type of behaviour being childish is not lost on the reader, as it is repeated vehemently in the conclusion. The anecdote of a child sitting in front of a computer "right now" is designed to incite concern in the reader, many of whom will also be parents. Although Geordie is trying to use humour to play down the situation faced by parents – having to either play or sit through each game from beginning to end with their child, the

ridiculousness of this scenario is obvious. Geordie is drawing attention to the fact that the government is elected to do this work for Australians, so why aren't they? The humour which ends the penultimate paragraph is even blacker. The author emotively describes activities and vices which are killing Australians, then uses irony to convey the sense that no such harm can come from computer games (or pornography).

The cartoon, which is dominated by the stereotypical depiction of a bouncer or crowd controller, can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, the readers in support of SCAG can take comfort from the fit, connected (via headset) and competent-looking guard. If he is drawn in the foreground to represent SCAG, then the youth of Australia is being protected from harmful games by such a professional. However, this person can also be viewed as being responsible for keeping the audience out of the party which appears to be happening in the background of the cartoon. The background depicts silhouettes dancing. There is nothing shown in the background which is overtly "disgusting or violent". The Christian group cited supports the government's stance on the R18+ rating. They too welcome the Australian government functioning as a bouncer, protecting children from the harm of an adult world, but, Geordie has deliberately framed this group's objection to an R18+ rating showing that the games industry does not have the welfare of children at heart. This clever twist in logic circumvents any of the moral objections to adult content in "children's" games. This allows the author to reason that computer games are made by adults and therefore should be allowed to be made for adults. Including bald facts such as the average age of computer gamers as being 30, and that 60,000 adult gamers have petitioned the government to introduce an adult rating for games, makes the reader feel that they should not feel ostracised because they play games when, in fact, they are part of a significant lobby group.

Geordie is writing to an adult audience of like-minded gamers. Each point is deliberately shaped so that his/her position is supported throughout the article. Information about Australia's government agencies, irony and black humour is used to communicate Geordie's sarcasm for SCAG. Clever shaping and circumventing of countering opinions is also used, as well as stating that Australia's Home Affairs and Justice Minister holds the same opinion as the author. These arguments are conveyed through appropriate language choices which reinforce the author's summation that the government is being childish in relation to not introducing an adult rating for computer games.