



Trial Examination 2023

VCE English Units 1&2

Written Examination

Suggested Solutions

ARGUMENT AND PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE

The following is an example of a mid-range response that appropriately responds to all the assessment criteria.

Southreach Bay is a tourist destination that has an issue of littering along its beaches during the summer months. Imara Dunn, a local resident and business owner, has published an opinion piece in *Southreach Bay Community News* that denounces the tourists that engage in littering and calls on Southreach Bay residents to take a stand to protect their environment. The opinion piece uses a range of persuasive language techniques to convince readers not to take part in littering. It is also accompanied by a photograph that depicts two plastic bags full of litter in front of a beach.

In the opening paragraph, Dunn clearly positions herself as a knowledgeable individual of the issue. She warmly welcomes the audience of Southreach Bay residents to the newsletter ‘as the editor’. This influential position requires Dunn to be aware of all the major issues in the town, including littering, so she establishes herself from the outset as having the expertise required to discuss the issue. She also employs a personable tone by including an anecdote about no longer having to ‘rug up in layers’ while walking along the beach, something that her audience will be able to relate to. Thus, she is trustworthy not only because of her authority, but because she has connected with her audience on a personal level.

As the editor of the newsletter and the owner of a local café, Dunn is deeply involved with Southreach Bay. As such, she is positioned to recognise the recurring issue and aims to position the readership to agree with her contention. She strongly opens the second paragraph by stating ‘for the third year in a row, I am writing about the state of our beautiful, beloved beach.’ This shows that Dunn is not new to the issue; she has been a voice that has raised awareness in the community several times, which may have contributed to the annoyed tone she employs in the title of the piece, ‘They’re at it AGAIN.’ She does not hide her opinion behind misleading or formal language. Dunn clearly states that ‘littering is bad, and we need to take a stand’, preventing her audience from misinterpreting her argument. The use of inclusive language like ‘we’ and ‘our’ also draws the audience directly into her statement, so they feel like they are already part of the plan to take action and make a change in their community.

Dunn uses negative language throughout her piece to convince her audience of the problems with littering. She states that littering is ‘one of the most annoying and avoidable issues our town faces’ and that rubbish is ‘strewn across the sand and along the footpaths.’ She highlights the extent of the issue by including an image of the ‘two whole bags worth of scrap’ she collected while walking home from her café. This shows just how much rubbish is present along Southreach Bay’s beaches, as ‘the walk is only half an hour long’. The rubbish in the picture covers a large portion of the beach behind it, visually demonstrating the effect of littering on Southreach Bay and supporting Dunn’s argument. Dunn emphasises the negative effects of the ‘epidemic’ of littering by referring to ‘videos of wildlife entangled in all kinds of plastic contraptions’ and ‘giant “islands” of trash that are floating in the middle of the ocean.’ She follows these examples with rhetorical questions that force the audience to decide if they ‘really want to see’ the ‘utter shame’ of Southreach Bay being similarly affected.

She then calls the tourists who contribute to the littering issue ‘trash dumpers’, who ‘have no awareness of their surroundings.’ There is a distinct juxtaposition between Dunn’s inclusive language when addressing her fellow locals and the way she refers to the tourists responsible for littering. Dunn uses language such as ‘our town’ and ‘us locals’ to foster a sense of community that is opposed by ‘those who don’t seem to care about the rest of us’. By creating distance between the Southreach Bay residents and those who have not ‘gotten the idea’, Dunn emphasises the need to protect the town from the actions of the selfish few who fail to ‘realise that they are the ones who will have to pay the price in the years to come’.

Dunn ends the piece with a final call to action for those who want to preserve the ‘stunning surroundings’ of Southreach Bay and their ‘right to go on a morning beach walk untainted by rubbish’. The action is simple and easy to replicate; Dunn asks her audience to respond to any acts of littering with ‘one gentle, polite reminder of [the litterer’s] responsibilities to their fellow beachgoers and environment’. She does not demand any extreme acts that may alienate her audience, who do not wish to scare away tourists entirely. Instead, Dunn asks them to ‘take the first step in defending’ Southreach Bay to encourage her audience to protect the environment while hinting that further action may be possible in the future.

In conclusion, Imara Dunn uses her position in the Southreach Bay community and her personable attitude to foster a connection with her audience of Southreach Bay residents and persuade them of her contention that littering is ruining the local environment.

Assessor’s commentary

This mid-range response demonstrates understanding of the argument presented and performs some analysis of the persuasive language used. However, some aspects of the response are too general, and language features are referred to or named without effectively unpacking the meaning behind them. In some instances, lengthy quotes have been used to summarise and were not analysed in depth. The visual material has been referred to in terms of its place in the overall argument, but the discussion lacks engagement with its specific elements. In addition, the metalanguage used to describe and analyse the author’s argument is limited in some areas.

The following is an example of a high-level response that appropriately responds to all the assessment criteria.

In an opinion piece in *Southreach Bay Community News*, a newsletter for residents of and visitors to Southreach Bay, Imara Dunn laments the amount of littering that is occurring in the area in the lead-up to summer and the onset of the tourist season. By articulating her disgust for discarded rubbish and imploring her community to defend the sanctity of their surroundings, Dunn seeks to rally local support and minimise the occurrence of littering.

Dunn continually positions herself as an authority on local matters by highlighting her position in the community. In the opening of the piece, she welcomes her readers ‘as the editor’ and signs off as ‘Imara Dunn, Owner of Dunn’s Coffee Hut and editor of *Southreach Bay Community News*’. By bookending with her credentials as a business owner and active member of the community, Dunn demonstrates her deep involvement with and, hence, dedication to Southreach Bay. Throughout the piece, she connects directly to her readers by using inclusive language such as ‘us locals’ and ‘our town’. She rarely refers to herself as a singular individual; her observations about the state of ‘our beautiful, beloved beach’ are communal and refer to the effects ‘we all’ see and experience. As such, Dunn cements herself as a member of the community who has the audience’s best interests at heart, and thus compels them to support her anti-littering stance for their own sakes. Furthermore, her use of plain, informal language and colloquialisms like ‘yep’ strengthens her position as a relatable member of the community aligned with her readers. This increases the effectiveness of rhetorical questions, such as ‘Is anyone else disappointed, but not surprised, that this issue continues to keep cropping up every year?’ The audience is inclined to agree because Dunn has presented herself as a relatable figure who is deeply in tune with the community of Southreach Bay.

Dunn also depicts the necessity of taking action to prevent littering by highlighting the cyclical but easily avoidable nature of the problem. This is immediately apparent from the title of the piece, where Dunn’s use of capital letters to emphasise ‘AGAIN’ indicates that this has been an issue plaguing her, and thus the rest of Southreach Bay, for some time. Later, she reinforces that she is writing about the littering issue ‘for the third year in a row’. Not only is Dunn a local who is directly affected by the issue, but she has been directly involved in raising awareness for a significant period of time. This hints at her exasperation with the issue, as she still has to raise awareness, even after three years. Her frustrations are compounded by the environmental implications of littering, as she forces readers to question ‘where we’ll end up’ if no one takes action. She paints a picture of ‘wildlife entangled in all kinds of plastic contraptions’ and ‘giant “islands” of trash’, utilising both heart-wrenching and viscerally disgusting imagery to highlight the bleak future she hopes to avoid by raising awareness about littering. Thus, Dunn seeks to galvanise the community to prevent littering from jeopardising their future.

Dunn includes a self-taken image to further emphasise her point about the environmental effects of littering. The image depicts two plastic bags filled with various kinds of rubbish in the foreground, which are juxtaposed against the classic beach scene in the background. The inclusion of boats, swimmers and beachfront buildings conveys the idyllic experience of life by the beach. However, the bags of rubbish dominate the image, obstructing an otherwise picturesque scene, and force readers to confront the realities of tourists littering. Dunn’s ‘two whole bags worth of scrap’ show that not all of this waste gets disposed of properly. By stating that she collected this rubbish herself, Dunn shows that she is committed to the kind of real action she advocates for in her piece, thereby encouraging readers to follow her example.

To effectively position both locals and tourists alongside her anti-littering stance, Dunn creates a dichotomy between those she deems respectful and those who are ‘trash dumpers’. In the former group, she welcomes the ‘vast majority’ of ‘lovely’ tourists who do not litter, bestowing upon them the honour of being ‘part-time locals’ and praising them for their righteous actions. She even anecdotally recounts how such tourists ‘have mentioned the rubbish more and more’, suggesting that even visitors to Southreach Bay have noticed the proliferation of littering. By contrast, she demonises the minority of tourists who litter with the pejorative ‘trash dumpers’ and chastises them for acting ‘without a care in the world’, underscoring their selfish cluelessness. Thus, Dunn compels any tourists amongst her readership to view themselves as belonging to the former category of ‘lovely’ non-litterers as opposed to the undesirable group of ‘trash dumpers’. This strengthens Dunn’s final call to action as she inclusively incites readers to ‘stand up to these litterers in our midst’ through ‘gentle, polite reminder[s]’ – a simple and socially acceptable response that she implies to be rational and necessary.

Dunn’s opinion piece targets the local community of Southreach Bay and encourages them to take action against beach littering. By establishing her authority in the community and using inclusive language, Dunn appeals to the desires of both residents and tourists to maintain Southreach Bay’s environment for the future.

Assessor’s commentary

This high-level response effectively analyses Dunn’s argument and refers to a variety of visual and written language. Each paragraph maintains a clear focus that ensures the analysis builds on its close discussion of select techniques and quotes to comment on the overall persuasiveness of Dunn’s arguments. The response demonstrates a sound engagement with the visual material and draws strong connections between the visual elements and Dunn’s argument. The response is precise in its use of metalanguage and in its commentary on the effects on readers, taking opportunities to analyse the significance of specific language and considering how it contributes to the overarching contention.