

Argument Analysis: Appeals to common sense

In persuasive writing, an appeal to common sense is when a writer emphasises the elements of their argument that make good sense and are examples of sound judgement. Appeals to common sense characterise the writer and their solution to the issue as pragmatic and down-to-earth. In contrast, writers who appeal to common sense may point out the obvious flaws of their opponents' arguments, emphasising how they might be impractical, ill-advised or fly in the face of conventional logic.

For example, when arguing in favour of protecting the natural world, an environmentalist might point out that the pragmatic step of reducing electricity consumptions makes sense because it both reduces carbon emissions and saves consumers money.

Appeals to common sense in action

Activity: Read the following opinion piece, identify persuasive techniques, including the use of appeals to common sense, and explain the effect they may have on the intended audience.

Opinion > National > Lifestyle

OPINION

Free public transport is fare and reasonable

November 26, 2021 - 5.00 am



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A few years ago, I decided to say goodbye to the ol' gas guzzler and ride the rails to work instead.

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I don't regret it for a minute.

I've exchanged the mild, homicidal frustration that festers in traffic for something much more valuable: time. The time to burrow into a book. The time to daydream. The time to prepare myself for the day ahead. Basking in the silence of a train carriage last week, I found myself reflecting on the importance of public transport in a progressive and civilised society. Like healthcare and education, public transport is a necessity. Why should we pay for something essential?

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Melbourne has some of the highest public transport fees in the world. It's about time we took the lead of almost one hundred forward-thinking cities across the globe that have significantly reduced or abolished public transport fares.

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The most obvious advantage of making public transport free is its effect on emissions. With skyrocketing petrol prices, free public transport would become more attractive to those whose wallets continue to be plundered at the petrol pump, resulting in fewer cars on our roads. First-rate, free public transport sets the scene for our carbon-free future.

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Abolishing fares also benefits the most vulnerable people in our society. Cost of living increases mean that household budgets are stretched tighter than ever, particularly for those already struggling to make ends meet. Imagine the difference free public transport would make to low income earners, students and the unemployed. A just society looks after everyone, not only those privileged enough to afford a car. This is Australia, after all, where everyone deserves a fare go.

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Public transport is a reminder that we're all in this together. Surveying the train carriage last week, I saw a cross section of society—business people, construction workers, pensioners and school kids—sitting alongside each other in a hushed atmosphere of mutual respect. If car ownership is tied up with ideas of individual liberty and freedom, then public transport reflects the important notion that we are bound together in a society.

Free public transport is the ticket to innumerable benefits: it will invigorate the economy, drive down emissions and ensure everyone can reach their destination.

Argument Analysis: Free public transport is fare and reasonable

Read the article 'Free public transport is fare and reasonable'. Identify the issue, contention, audience and tone of the piece. Identify the persuasive techniques in the piece and explain the effect they are intended to have on the audience.

Issue: _____

Contention: _____

Audience: _____

Tone: _____

| # | Technique | Effect |
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