

Argument Analysis: Appeals to fairness

An appeal to fairness is when writers or speakers play on our innate desire for fairness. Psychologists suggest our aversion to injustice is deeply ingrained, stemming from the important role that fairness and cooperation played in our social evolution, allowing us to thrive by forming communities.

By emphasising examples of unfairness, writers can undermine trust in people and organisations. This is especially the case when the audience feels that they are being disadvantaged, stoking feelings of anger or dissatisfaction. Appeals to fairness can also be effective because they align with the audience's morality and their desire for issues to be resolved in a manner that is just. Arguments that point out disadvantage, discrimination, inequality or unethical behaviour may appeal to a reader's sense of fairness.

Appeals to fairness in action

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

Opinion > National > Lifestyle

OPINION

The fabric of equality: what I learned from my uncomfortable school uniform

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When I was at school, I *hated* our school uniform: a dowdy dress, a scratchy jumper, and a tartan skirt for winter that made me look like I'd lost my bagpipes while absent-mindedly wandering away from a marching band.

As a teenager, I would have worn *literally* anything else. Double denim? Definitely. Hessian sack? Measure me up! As a teenager, I predictably rebelled: in one confrontation with a teacher, I insisted that my Dr Martens—black and polishable—met the requirements of the dress code. What's more, they matched the rebellious scowl I'd been cultivating for several years. It was all *very* punk rock.

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It wasn't until Year 12, when I looked back on high school with a vague sense of nostalgia, that I began to appreciate the importance of that uniform. The thing is, our school uniform—in all its uncomfortable and unflattering glory—was a reminder that I was part of a community. Wearing the uniform to assemblies, award ceremonies, debating and exams helped to cultivate a sense of grudging connection and pride.

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In the classroom, the uniform was a subtle and subliminal reminder that school is about learning. It's about higher order thinking not *haute couture*, curiosity not catwalks. A school uniform sets the scene for a learning environment that is free from distractions and disruptions. Schools are, after all, fundamentally about education, they're not an excuse for wannabe supermodels to strut their stuff in the schoolyard.

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Most importantly, the school uniform—which denied kids the opportunity to flaunt their family's wealth through fashion—meant we were equal. The girls who attended my school came from a range of different backgrounds, many were from working class or migrant families, and the school uniform helped to prevent the sort of callous comments all too common to teenagers. This hurt and humiliation is more than enough justification for school uniforms.

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For teenagers—who desperately want to fit in and be accepted—unkind and unfair comments can be devastating. In 2017, a UK study—which surveyed over 1,300 students, teachers and parents—revealed that 7 out of 10 students believe that wearing a school uniform helps them fit in. Almost 9 out of 10 teachers believe uniforms reduce bullying.

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As someone who detested their school uniform, it's ironic that I've whittled my wardrobe down to a few essentials and a couple of signature items. These days, instead of railing against the tyranny of my school's dress code, I'm rebelling against fast fashion. Although I've adopted another uniform, I'm sure the grungy, teen-age-me would be proud.

Embrace those ill-fitting, uncomfortable school uniforms, they have important lessons to teach you about fairness, equality and belonging. Most importantly, they're a reminder that people who judge you on your appearance—rather than the substance of your ideas—are not worth knowing.

Argument Analysis: The fabric of equality

Read the article 'The fabric of equality: what I learned from my uncomfortable school uniform'. 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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