

## Sample Essay - Analysis

By now, you have hopefully had a look at the sample essay I posted in this discussion and it has given you some insight into how to deal with **persuasive prose** in an **examination**. As your **Study Guide** states, when we look at **persuasive prose**, we consider two questions in addition to the normal "**How?**", "**Why?**" and "**What?**" questions. In this case, we also tend to examine "**Who?**", which refers to the *target audience* of **persuasive prose** and "**Where?**", which often refers to *where the piece of persuasive prose is published* and whether it can be found in a *newspaper, a magazine, or otherwise*.

As I have said previously, we are still most concerned with the question of "**Why**" the text has been written. Typically in the case of **persuasive prose**, however, we are asking ourselves what the **author's agenda** or **motivation** might be, as opposed to the commentary or argument that author is making, as is the case with **fiction**. This is actually a **very important distinction**, since the author of a piece of **persuasive prose** wants to *make the reader actively respond* to the text in a specific way; usually by **purchasing a product** or **service** or **changing a viewpoint, opinion** or **belief**. In this way we can say that **persuasive prose** is primarily **manipulative**.

This leads us to "**How**" the author *manipulates the reader*, which should still be the main focus of the body of your essay. In **fiction** we look for **figures of speech** and **literary devices** that the author uses to help **convey a message** to the **reader**, but when we look at **persuasive prose**, we focus heavily on **diction, tone, structure, punctuation** and **layout**, because even the **smallest things** can be used to **manipulate a reader**. Note how I discuss the location of the title and the significance of the picture in the above essay. *These sorts of "extra" details can have a big impact in convincing a reader to change their mind about a subject or to buy a specific product or service, so they need to be discussed.* Another aspect of **analysis** that is emphasised in **persuasive prose** is the use of **psychological**

**techniques** that can **manipulate** a **reader**. Again, when you look at the above essay, you can see my discussion of the **material, mental** and **verbal processes** employed in the text. These are **important tools** of **manipulation** and are discussed at great length in your **textbook**, so they are well worth **revising** and understanding.

When we examine a **persuasive text**, the question of "**Who?**" will often help us to understand "**Why**" the text was written, as the **target audience** will often give us **clues** about *what the author wants the reader to act on*. For example, an **advertisement** for *deodorant* could be aimed at *upper or middle-class people, men or women or any racial group*. By identifying these *aspects of an audience*, we gain insight into "**Why**" the author is targeting these people and "**How**" the author is likely to **manipulate** the **audience**. Obviously, a deodorant advertisement aimed at working-class men will try to persuade them to buy the product in a very different way to a deodorant advertisement aimed at upper-class women. Because this question of "**Who**" *helps us with answering other, more important, questions* about the text, you **should not focus too heavily** on it. Probably only a short paragraph or two should suffice.

The question of "**Where**" is likely **even less important** than the question of "**Who**", so *definitely do not focus on it too much*. You really shouldn't need more than a couple of sentences to tell me if the text you are analysing is a **magazine advertisement** or a **newspaper article**. The reason this question is so unimportant is because it only provides some *very general clues* about "**Why**" a text was written. For example, an advertisement is always selling something, while a newspaper article will focus more on convincing readers to change their mind about an issue. *Examine the question of "**Where**" early in your analysis* and use it to *help you answer the question of "**Why**"*, but definitely don't spend too much time on it, as it tells us very little about the text.