

Evaluating and Comparing Texts

More about comparing texts

In the previous lesson we examined various texts about driver's licences. In this lesson we analyse the style, attitude and purpose of an editorial on this topic.

Lesson Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- analyse texts according to their style, attitude and purpose
- compare texts about the same incident

Curriculum Links

LO 2: Reading and Viewing

- explore and explain key features of texts and how they contribute to meaning
- identify and explain the purpose, structure and language use in texts
- recognise the writer's and/or the character's viewpoint and give supporting evidence from the text (linked to task)

Lesson notes

An editorial is written by the editors of the newspaper in order to give their opinion on some item in the news.

Here is an analysis of an editorial written about the process of converting driver's licenses. Note how the analysis uses the terminology we have learnt about, as well as examples, to analyse the text.

Editorial	Analysis
<p>Gimme, Gimme, Gimme <i>There's nothing like a good long queue in the baking sun to stir up emotions. Take this week for example, when thousands had to queue for hours to get their driver's licences converted from the identity document format to the new card system.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the opening paragraph, we get the sense that the editor is going to take a serious view on the situation. • By using the word 'Gimme' in the title, he is suggesting that the drivers are behaving like irrational, uncontrolled toddlers, when in fact they have had adequate time to convert their licences. • The first sentence gives us a clue as to what is going to be discussed in this editorial and "a good long queue" suggests that the drivers are complaining without justification.
<p><i>By Friday, there was outrage and mayhem. Some people were threatening to storm buildings because they dared to close their doors at midnight. Others were seeking court action to invalidate the switchover to the new licences.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The words outrage, mayhem, threatening, dared, storm are all strong words implying extreme action. • The diction of the first sentence indicates that the writer is expressing an opinion that the drivers' reactions were excessive. In comparison, the tone and diction of the second sentence are more neutral as facts are being stated. • There is irony in the people who have not got their licences objecting to the traffic department who "dared to close their doors". The people who are behaving in such a violent manner are in fact the ones who are being irrational, and it could be argued that wanting to leave work at midnight is quite an acceptable action.
<p><i>Most – the 76% of drivers who made the change during the last five years – were enjoying a quiet moment of gloating at the expense of the queuing hordes.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This sentence combines fact and opinion. • The statistic of 76% of drivers converting their licences in the previous five years could be verified and it helps to show that people who haven't converted their licences are in the minority. • It is not factual, however, to say that most people who had got their licences earlier would be gloating, or taking delight in other people's misery. By juxtaposing 'gloating' with 'hordes' the writer implies that the people who have driver's licences have a power and superiority over the more common, less refined people who haven't.
<p><i>Instead of hanging their heads in shame at their failure to use the 5 years (extended to 5 years when the deadline was moved to accommodate the tardy) to undertake this simple, harmless and inexpensive procedure, many of those in the queues have taken up political activism.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's attitude comes through strongly in the words "hanging their heads in shame", "failure" and "tardy". Although his style is still formal, in this paragraph the tone has a lecture-like quality. He is unsympathetic to people who are now complaining about having to queue. • The words that have been used to describe getting a credit card license – "simple", "harmless", "inexpensive" are also not neutral – many other people may not agree with this description of the conversion process. • The writer is comparing the difficulties and dangers and hot-headedness of 'political activism' with the ease - 'simple, harmless ...inexpensive ...' of applying for the licence in time, to emphasise how irrational the drivers' behaviour is.

TASK

Take an article from a newspaper and see if you can work out the writer's attitude to what is being written about. Use the same method that we have used in these lessons to analyse your article.