

Worksheet 1

Body Image

The Language of Argument

The various speakers in this debate are committed to their views. To try and persuade the reader of their opinions they use what are often called “loaded” (or emotive) words (or phrases). Here is an example, with the “loaded” words highlighted:

*But beauty pageants are the love of beauty **gone absolutely crazy** - a place where **impressionable children** can be **placed on show** by **stage-struck mothers**, **hyped up on celebrity and ambition**, and probably **living out their own private dreams of fame**, putting on display **little human dolls**, **painted and decorated beyond recognition** and judged to see “**who is the fairest of them all**”!*

A passage like this is meant to “fire us up”, push us to feel anger, or guilt, or fear – but essentially move us to join the writer’s “side” in the argument. Most if not all argument contains “loaded language”. Let’s analyse it more closely now.

Task 1: What do the following words and phrases make us feel and urge us to do?

1. Do we have the right to make girls “grow up” too soon, in terms of how they dress and act? Should we teach our children that the way they look naturally is not good enough? Is it right to focus so much on the body, the way one looks, on being “alluring”, rather than on qualities such as kindness, compassion and caring?
2. Do we as parents have the right to treat our children as objects or possessions?
3. Isn’t it every little girl’s fantasy to be the most beautiful girl of all?
4. They are ‘kill joys’, wanting to spoil it for others.
5. Tiny Tots in tiaras having tantrums! Kids crying on catwalks! Parents pushing prodigies to perform past the point of exhaustion! Are these images of happy, healthy families?
6. My little girl, Stephanie, is one of those pink-loving, flower-hugging, girlie girls. And I love it.
7. When I see these children, worried beyond reason by perceived imperfections in their faces, their bodies, and their “beauty” (or lack of it), I know something is horribly wrong.
8. [W]hat an appalling world - pushy parents wanting to win at all costs. What about the ones who don’t win? ... The ones who are too fat, too thin, too ugly, too poor? How do you think it makes them feel?
9. Wanting to look like a Barbie doll is no model for mental health.
10. Girls who become anxious about not being “beautiful” are on a slippery slope of self-loathing, heading towards depression, social anxiety, panic attacks, anorexia, bulimia and a host of potentially fatal disorders – all preventable. And all for the shape of their eyebrows or lips!

Task 2: Take one of the following topics and write 200 words about it, arguing for or against – and using as much “loaded language” as you can in your argument to make your point.

(A) Junk TV (B) Sexism in sport (C) Third World poverty (D) Pollution