

**TRIAL SAMPLE****English Unit 4: Analysing Argument****Outcome 2 – Print text****Instructions**

Students are required to write an analysis of the ways in which argument and language are used to persuade others to share a point(s) of view in a persuasive text.

- Read the background information on this page and then read the material on pages 2, 3 and 4.
- Write an analytical response to the task below.
- For the purposes of this task, the term 'language' refers to written and visual language.

**Task**

Write an analysis of the ways in which argument and written and visual language are used in the material on pages 2, 3 and 4 to try to persuade others to share the points of view presented.

**Background information**

*The Mail & Guardian* is a print and online daily newspaper published in South Africa. The print newspaper has a daily circulation of approximately 33,000 readers and the online newspaper has a monthly readership of at least 1,000,000 with an average daily online readership of 50,600. Over half of its readers have tertiary qualifications and 90% are over 21.

On February 1, 2023, *The Mail & Guardian* published an opinion piece written by two academics, Rainer Ebert and Jackson Juma Coy, presenting their view on whether children should be physically punished within the home. The piece is titled 'Hitting children is never okay!'

In South Africa, a 2017 High Court ruling removed 'reasonable chastisement' as a justification for physically punishing children in the home. Despite this, the practice persists.

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## Hitting children is never okay!

*By Rainer Ebert and Jackson Juma Coy*

**OPINION** / 1 FEBRUARY 2023

Unless you are defending yourself or someone else, hitting a stranger is assault, and assault is illegal. There is no question about it, and there are very good reasons why that is so.

People have the right to be treated with respect.

Hitting someone not only causes physical pain — it is degrading. That's also why only a few countries still use the infliction of physical pain as punishment.

When reading news articles about countries caning people for vandalism or stealing, most of us react with indignation: "How barbaric and backward!" We are sick and tired of violence.

Humanity has seen too much of it, and hardly ever has it done any good. Violence should be the last resort, only to be used when absolutely necessary.

Curiously, there's a group of people with regard to whom this peaceful attitude is widely suspended. Children worldwide get "spanked," "smacked" and "whipped" by parents and teachers who face little opposition due to the pervasive social acceptance of the practice. Globally, around a billion children — that is, six in 10 — between the ages of two

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and 14 are subjected to physical punishment by their caregivers on a regular basis, which makes physical punishment the most common form of violence against children.

### **Don't children deserve more protection than adults?**

Isn't it hypocritical to condemn an adult for hitting another adult, and governments for inflicting pain on criminals as punishment, yet condone the "spanking," "smacking" and "whupping" of children at home and in school? Those words are euphemisms, of course. Spanking is hitting, and children are people (not the property of adults), so to spank a child is to hit a person.

If we think that it should be illegal to hit even those adults who have committed crimes, why do so many people deem it okay to use physical violence against children? Being the most powerless members of society, don't children deserve more protection than adults — rather than less?

Physical punishment of children comes in many forms. There are the most egregious cases, such as the drunk father beating his child over persistent crying, where the child is just a toddler and too young to even understand.

But there are also cases in which parents or teachers hit children with the best intentions. Whenever the topic comes up, someone inevitably will bring up a familiar argument: "I used to get my ass whipped growing up and I turned out just fine!" It is true, not all children who experience physical punishment will grow up to be damaged adults. That doesn't make it a good argument though.

Some pregnant women drink alcohol and give birth to perfectly healthy children. Does it follow that it's a good idea for pregnant women to drink a bottle of wine once in a while? Hardly. In fact, anecdotes rarely make for reliable evidence.

Good decisions are based on science, and we have decades of research that shows that children who are being spanked are more likely to experience mental health problems and difficulties learning and are more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour as adults, including criminal behaviour. If you turned out just fine, it's not because your parents or teachers hit you, but despite it!

### **Children learn at home that violence is acceptable**

A healthy relationship between parent and child is based on love and trust. When parents hit their children, they elicit emotions such as fear and shame, which are not only toxic to the

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relationships with their children, but which also poison their children's future relationships with others.

Children who learn at home that violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflict are more likely to become victims or perpetrators of violence themselves when they grow up. Importantly, that includes intimate partner violence, which is terrifyingly common and a serious public health problem in itself.

Words, when chosen wisely, are just as effective in countering unwanted behaviour in children, with none of the devastating long-term effects of physical punishment.

If you read this from one of the many places where hitting children is still a widespread — and widely accepted — social reality, it may be tempting to adopt a fatalistic attitude: “Parents here have always spanked their kids, and they always will. It's part of our culture and traditional values.”

Cultures and values, however, are not set in stone. They are constantly changing. That change is usually slow, which is why we tend not to notice it, but just go talk to people who are a few decades older than you, and they will tell you how much society has changed since they were young.

In 1979, Sweden was the first country to prohibit all corporal punishment of children, including in the home. Back then, 90% of parents in Sweden hit their children. In 2000, that number had gone down to below 10%, and it is even lower today.

Sometimes, it takes just one generation to change a culture! But change doesn't happen by itself. We need to put things on the right track now, toward a future where children grow up without violence.

**Rainer Ebert holds a PhD in philosophy from Rice University in Texas. His academic career spans four continents and includes work at universities in the United States, South Africa, Tanzania, and Canada. From 2017 to 2019, he was a lecturer of philosophy at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, East Africa.**

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*The above text was published on the Mail & Guardian website. It can be accessed at <https://mg.co.za/thought-leader/opinion/2023-02-01-hitting-children-is-never-okay/>*