

Model Lesson: Analyzing Expository Essays Tool

Note: The questions below are useful when teaching students to read mentor texts like a writer. As the essay is analyzed, help students notice how the author crafts the different elements and how these elements might be used in their own writing.

TITLE: Solidarity and Support

Expository Elements	Analysis and Responses
Clear, concise, and defined thesis statement	
What is the author's main thesis or central/controlling idea?	Newman's overall thesis seems to both observe a trend and argue that the trend is positive: "That stigmatized view [of adult children living at home] has faded fast during the recession."
Which approach (make a connection, refute an accepted idea, find something new, define, evaluate, propose a change) did the author use in building this thesis? Elaborate.	Newman reveals her plan to refute an accepted idea in the second paragraph when she chooses her side in the debate. She writes: "Sure, there are potential complications and emotional minefields left over from the parenting years, but once the kinks are sorted out, the benefits for young and old are clear." So, in a sense, she is dismissing what some people expect to come out of living under one roof ("complications and emotional minefields") and arguing that, in reality, "the benefits for young and old are clear."
Is this approach effective? If so, what makes it effective? If not, why not?	I do think this approach is effective. The author takes a topic that many people feel anxiety about and gives reasons for hope.

Expository Elements	Analysis and Responses
Strong introduction	
What type of introduction does the author use?	The author jumps into the content by immediately introducing the recent shift in U.S. living arrangements.
Is the author's introduction effective? If so, what makes it effective? If not, what would improve it?	I like the way the introduction puts the topic in its historical context. I do think, however, that more specifics might have made it even stronger. The author also could have hooked the reader with an anecdote, possibly outlining one family's circumstances.
Specific supporting details	
Do all of the body paragraphs have a logical connection to the thesis? Is each one limited to the explanation of one general idea?	Yes. The author uses each paragraph to approach a different element of the larger topic of multigenerational living.
List some of the supporting details and explain whether they are effective in supporting the author's thesis. If so, what makes them effective? If not, what would improve them?	The author uses specifics as evidence to back up her points. In the second paragraph, she says, "Family of origin has become a lifeboat for roughly one in five 25- to 34-year-olds who move in with parents to wait out the economic storm." And later in the essay, she discusses the average student loan debt. These facts and figures make her argument more convincing.

Expository Elements	Analysis and Responses
Clearly organized structure	
<p>Is the essay well organized? Describe the type of organizational pattern that the author uses.</p>	<p>It is well organized. Each paragraph tackles a specific issue. In the third paragraph, for example, the author directly addresses critiques of her argument. In the fourth, she explores the financial effects of the topic. In the fifth, she presents her conclusion, summing up her argument and projecting into the future.</p>
<p>Are the transitions effective in forming connections among ideas and sections of the essay? If so, what makes them effective? If not, what could improve them?</p>	<p>While the author's organization makes the essay fairly easy to read, she doesn't rely on many transition words or phrases. Her essay's readability might be improved if she inserted more transition language between her various points.</p>
Strong conclusion	
<p>What type of conclusion does the author use?</p>	<p>She concludes with a summary and the larger context.</p>
<p>Is the author's conclusion effective? If so, what makes it effective? If not, what would improve it?</p>	<p>The conclusion is effective at summing up her argument and projecting it into the future when the author writes that "living under the same roof for the long or short haul will remain a configuration that defines American families in the foreseeable future."</p>

Expository Elements	Analysis and Responses
Purposeful and precise word choice	
Is the author's word choice effective? If so, what makes it effective? If not, what would improve it?	The author uses strong and powerful words to explain why she thinks multigenerational living arrangements are beneficial. She uses words such as <i>stigmatized</i> , <i>lifeboat</i> , <i>economic storm</i> , <i>camaraderie</i> , <i>bunking in</i> , <i>renewed values</i> , and <i>configuration</i> . These words are effective because they help convince the reader that her position has merit.
Varied sentence structure	
What types of sentences does the author use?	The author uses a majority of complex sentence structures. The sentences are rather long and rambling. She does not vary the length.
Is the author's use of sentences effective? If so, what makes them effective? If not, what would improve them?	The author's use of sentences is not that effective. Their complex structure and her overuse of dependent phrases and clauses make it difficult to read and understand. She needs to simplify the structure and provide both long and short sentences.
Author's style or craft	
Which aspects of the author's writing style do you plan to incorporate in your next essay?	I plan on incorporating the use of specific evidence into my work. I also liked how the author used counterarguments to directly address critiques of her argument.