

The Art of Persuasion

This unit reinforces the skills of selecting and communicating information and introduces the idea of analysing language.

Exercise 1: Understanding language

The leaflets you have looked at in the previous unit have been encouraging you to visit a holiday attraction. Brochures advertising holidays try even harder to persuade you. Here is an extract from a brochure featuring holidays in the Italian city of Florence:

Florence – A Jewel of a City

Fabulous Florence awaits your visit – always friendly, always fascinating, always fun. Stroll around the historic centre, see the greatest art treasures in the world or gaze into the wonderful shop windows. Choose from three charming hotels:

- *The Hotel Bonnino is very conveniently situated opposite the railway station and close to the bustling market. Bedrooms are comfortable and there is a small lounge and bar. Breakfast is served in the restaurant next door.*
- *The Hotel Rizzi Palace is right in the centre of the city. Many of its bedrooms look out onto the famous cathedral which is only about 100 metres away. As its name suggests, the hotel occupies part of a fifteenth century palace and all rooms have marble bathrooms.*
- *The Grand Plaza Hotel is situated a short distance from the heart of Florence and offers luxurious accommodation. All rooms are elegantly furnished and boast fine paintings and chandeliers. The hotel's spectacular rooftop restaurant serves specialities from around the world.*

Question

Look carefully at the language used in the brochure above. Try to identify all the favourable or positive words. Can you find any particular techniques that are used to make an impact on the reader?

Exercise 2: Comparing information

This is an extract from a letter written by someone who lives in Florence, giving advice on the best way to enjoy a visit to the city:

'...and I am delighted you are coming to Florence at last. Allow me to give you a few words of advice. This is the most wonderful city but avoid the summer months. The weather is too hot for pleasant sightseeing and the crowds of tourists make it impossible to move around the centre or to see anything. There are queues waiting to get into every famous building and tempers become frayed. Make your visit between October and March and you will see the real Florence.

Choose your hotel with care. The cheapest hotels are mainly around the railway station and you will be kept awake all night by the roar of traffic right under your window. Avoid staying too close to the cathedral; the bells ring every 15 minutes day and night and they are deafening from close quarters. The really grand modern hotels are usually a long way from the centre and involve a tedious bus journey in and out. They do not have a real 'Italian' atmosphere and serve the sort of boring food you can get at any international airport!

Do let me know when you are hoping to come and whether you would like me to recommend a good hotel. I look forward to seeing you and ...'

Question

Make a detailed comparison of the information in the travel brochure (in Exercise 1) and the letter and list the the key differences.

Exercise 3: Analysing language

The final extract in this unit (see page 10) is from another type of persuasive leaflet, this time from the environmental campaigning group Greenpeace.

Leaflets like this mix information about what **is** happening and what they think **should** happen in order to persuade people to agree.

Question

Examine the technique in the following extract. List the sentences about what **is** happening under one heading (a) and the sentences about what **should** be happening under another (b).

Sarajevo

Sometimes in an examination you will find material from magazines and newspapers that assumes you know something about the background to the story. If you don't, your first response may be to panic. This unit shows you ways round the problem. Although you can't be expected to know about everything, it would be wise to get into the habit of watching and listening to the news and reading broadsheet (ie quality) newspapers at least once a week.

This unit assumes you will know something about the war in Bosnia. If you don't, we will show you how to work round the gaps in your knowledge in order to respond intelligently and sensitively to the material. The main purpose of the unit is to practise different ways of approaching a difficult text.

The extracts come from an article in a film magazine which usually features stories about Hollywood films and interviews with actors.

Exercise 1: Responding to language

A young soldier sits uncomfortably in a brightly lit interview room, his piercing eyes darting nervously from the camera to his interrogator. His head is shaved and he is chain-smoking. He speaks in a quiet, almost dazed, monotone. The questions from the unseen interviewer continue gently, but relentlessly.

"What did you do to her after you raped her?" asks the voice, off camera. The young man answers slowly, without emotion, in the same tone that he has just used to describe his favourite radio station or his affection for his young niece.

"We took her into the forest and shot her in the head, like the others," he whispers.

The questioning goes on. "Tell us how you raped her... Tell us how you cut his throat... Show us how you killed the children... Tell us your nightmares... Tell us ... Show us..."

"I was told to do it ... Other people did much worse things..."

Welcome to Sarajevo Hyper-Reality.

An introduction like this is intended to make you **feel** something. The words listed below suggest possible reactions to the extract:

Quiet	Fear	Rationality
Horror	Serene	Peaceful
Anger	Calmness	Fright
Shock	Confusion	Torment
Frustration	Tiredness	Sensible
Callous	Sadness	Dull

Write down two headings:

- a The tone and atmosphere of the writing.
- b The feelings it tries to invoke in you.

Sort the words into two columns under these headings. Then find three direct quotations from the extract to support the group of words under each heading, eg Calmness 'The questions from the interviewer continue gently'.

Exercise 2: Sorting information

The young man is Borislav Herak, a 21-year-old Bosnian Serb soldier, born and raised in Sarajevo, currently awaiting execution for war crimes. The film is *Confessions of a Monster*, and was made by SAGA, the Sarajevo Group of Auteurs, whose members have lived, and continue to live, through the nightmare of the besieged Bosnian capital of Sarajevo, filming often under fire, on recycled tapes, editing with the power of a clapped-out generator, recording the agony of the city's 300,000 besieged inhabitants who have sat defenceless for more than two-and-a-half years, waiting, more or less, to die. Over 10,000 civilians have already been killed in the conflict, another 50,000 wounded; it is estimated that, since the siege began in April 1992, over two million shells and rocket-propelled grenades have rained down on this once-beautiful city – Europe's very own Beirut – during the course of the siege.

There are two clear themes running through this extract:

- a The siege of Sarajevo itself.
- b The conditions that SAGA have to endure.

List the points made in this extract under these two headings.