

Argument

Worksheet 1: Analysis of an argument

Read the following argument, and then answer the questions below.

WHY EVEN SANTA'S SAD

Do you think of Christmas as a great time? Do you remember Santa, the presents, the ornaments on the tree, the food, the holidays? Well, maybe, but let's be honest. Many people simply hate Christmas. And with good reason.

Those people who think of it as a magic time for families, obviously don't know families. You can choose your friends, but not your relatives. And at Christmas, relatives are unavoidable. You have to be nice to your horrible Uncle Jack, the one who gets drunk and tells bad jokes. You have to be sweet with Aunt Mavis, the chain smoker who insists on kissing you and calling you by your baby name. You have to hope that the two cousins who hate one another don't cause a scene. And all that on top of Mum's throwing a wobbly because the food is too cold, or too hot, or because she just had a fight with her sister.

Christmas is for many people a time of real sadness. People who just lost a loved one, look at the empty place, or the old photos, and try to fight back a tear. Dad's brother Brian just got divorced, so he makes excuses to rush away to see his children, and you can see the pain in his eyes. Poor people feel out of it, because they can't afford all the glamorous consumer items that they know others are rushing out and buying. They've seen the swarms of shoppers thrashing the plastic, and feel left out, unworthy, losers in an unfair competition.

Speaking of money, what a shocking time it is for crazy overspending. How do you get through the vast list of people who need gifts, when \$50 seems to be the minimum you can spend, and you've got 25 people to buy for. With all the glossy goodies on every shelf, everyone gets into a mad frenzy of buying. No wonder Australians owe \$16 billion on credit cards! That's \$8000 per person. A lot of this madness is caused by Christmas extravagance.

So let's not get too carried away about jingling bells and jingling cash registers. Lots of people enjoy Christmas, and that's a good thing for them. But let's spare a thought for the darker side, and those people who are just plain happy to get through to the other side, where reckless spending and overeating are not compulsory. I'm sure even Santa must say, as he tucks into bed, 'Thank goodness that's over – for another year!'

(417 words)

ANALYSE 'WHY EVEN SANTA'S SAD'

1. Which sentence in the first paragraph sums up the overall argument?

2. What is the key issue (or topic) addressed by the second paragraph?

3. What is the 'proof' offered by the mention of Uncle Jack and Aunt Mavis?

4. What is the point what the writer says about Mum?

5. What is the topic sentence in paragraph 3?

6. How does the detail about Brian make us feel, and why this anecdote?

7. Which sentence sums upon what paragraph 4 is about?

8. What is the reason for mentioning the \$16 billion debt?

9. What could we call phrases like 'swarms of shoppers', 'mad frenzy', 'reckless spending', and why are they used by the writer?

10. The mention of Santa is an attempt to suggest that even he has what attitude to Christmas?
