Language analysis-

What is wrong with the youth of today?

Published in the Melbourne Weekly Times on the 25 May, 2011, Horace Brown writes an Opinion Piece in response to two tragic deaths of young Australians. Brown contends that one of the deaths, that of 25 year old Queenslander Acton Beale, occurred due the stupidity of young Australians trying to out do each other in the pursuit of fame on social media. Written in a mocking and at times sad tone, Brown manipulates his readers to think that social media is the cause of all problems in teenagers and young adults. Browns piece is accompanied by two images, the eerily similar photos of the two dead young men. Brown positions his readers through the use of card stacking, repetition of language and emotional appeals.

Brown builds up the opposing argument before knocking it down. In order to position his readers to agree with his contention that social media is to blame for Acton Beale’s death, firstly Brown builds support for social media. He tells his readers repeatedly that “he loves” social media, including Facebook and Twitter. He then blames social media for providing an avenue for young people to “out do” each other in their stupidity. The readers have been lead to believe in the power of social media, and then how it, together with modern society’s lack of correction of poor behaviour and the need to tell everyone about what you are doing contributes to the problems with today’s youth. Brown’s readers are influenced to see the power of social media and how it can corrupt.

Once an idea is planted, the author reinforces it in order to accentuate his argument. Brown employs the use of the power of three in order to repeat his key arguments. Brown firstly does this in order to highlight the heroic nature of the tragic death of an Australian soldier. He does so through the use of three powerful adjectives to describe Sgt Wood in a positive light. Brown is disgusted that there are some in Australian society who will question the government’s commitment to troops in active service. This contrasts to where he repeats the rhetorical question “where were these voices?” to attack those he labels as “bleeding hearts” when a young Australian dies from other means; through death from misadventure. The repetition of this question sways the readers to the perspective that it is Acton Beale’s death that is wrong, not that of a soldier and the cause of Beale’s death is stupidity linked to the use of social media. Browns powerful language is designed to allow him to appeal to his readers emotions.

When readers are emotionally drawn to an issue, they are more inclined to agree with the contention. Brown appeals to his readers emotions on many levels. Firstly, Brown appeals to his readers’ patriotism. He uses a sincere tone coupled with adjectives designed to paint the actions of Sgt Wood as heroic and deeply Australian. He persuades the readers to see that his death is something Australians should be proud of. However, he later on appeals to his readers common sense by highlighting the futility of Acton Beale’s death from planking. Brown is blunt in his appeal “..result of something as stupid as planking” to describe Beale’s death. The contrast between the emotions Brown is elicting in his readers leaves the readers with the impression that he must be correct is his belief that the cause of the stupid death of a young Australian comes down to the overuse of social media.

Supporting Browns contention are images from Reuters and Associated Press. Two “eerily” similar photos highlight Browns main point. The image of Queenslander Acton Beale shows a young Australian man enjoying himself. He is fit, strong and happy. His eyes are piercing and reflect a life to be lived. His death, due to misadventure through planking, influences the reader to see what an absolute waste it is and therefore agree with Brown’s contention that young Australians need to use social media responsibly. On the other hand, the image of fallen soldier, Sgt Wood, is used to convey that young Australians are still “heroic” and “loya;” and willing to put their life in jeopardy for the greater good of all. The image of sgt wood is used to accentuate Brown’s appeal to patriotism.

Social media, the need for some to transmit their entire life and the need to outdo each other is the issue explored by Horace Brown in the Opinion Piece ‘what is wrong with the youth of today?’ from the Melbourne Weekly times on the 25 May 2011. In a mocking and at times somber tone, Brown contends that some of the youth in Australia need to stop using social media in an attempt to act like celebrities, and instead be responsible. He did this through the use card stacking, repetition and emotional appeals in order to position his readers, older Australians, to agree with his contention.