**Against the Grain**

Those living on the Yorke Peninsula know that it is the malt barley capital of the world, as well as a pristine agricultural environment, tourist destination and fishing mecca, but Rex Minerals is threatening to destroy this idyllic location in favour of a multi-million dollar mining project and not everyone is happy.

In July 2014, the South Australian Government granted Rex Minerals a mining lease for a 2 kilometre hillside copper mine on Yorke’s prime farming land. More than 200 members of the Yorke Peninsula Land Owners Association vehemently objected to the grant, while others, primarily those more concerned with the economic impact of the copper mine, were wholly supportive of its establishment.

The high demand for jobs in South Australia will undoubtedly be aided by this new project since, as of July 2014, the state’s unemployment rate rose to a 16 year high of 7.2 percent, surpassing the Australian average of 6.4 percent. It is predicted that throughout the mine’s operation more than 2000 jobs will be created both directly and indirectly, with a number of salaries exceeding $100,000. Jason Kuchel, Chief executive of the SA Chamber of Mines and Energy, also believes that the mine will allow struggling farming families to remain in the area, with the diversified economy providing income even in times of drought.

However, the main concern of many Yorke Peninsula residents is the environmental impacts of the mine on their idyllic farming land. After rehabilitation, 0.16 percent of the mined land will remain permanently sterilized, ultimately disadvantaging the farmers in the area. Aside from this, the heavy pollution will have detrimental effects on the water, land and air of South Australia’s seaside paradise. According to David Arney, the Chief Executive of Grain Produces SA, ‘The mine will use one gigalitre of River Murray water…that is enough to irrigate the entire Barossa wine region’, and the Murray is already under immense pressure, particularly during periods of drought. Other adverse effects of mining are AMD (acid mine drainage) and acid rain. AMD involves the production of sulphuric acid which threatens local marine life when it finds its way from the mine site to local water sources, like the River Murray or the ocean. The migration has detrimental effects on plant and animal growth while acid rain also has the potential to kill plant life and corrode man-made structures. Aside from this damage, the machinery utilized at the mine will also have a negative environmental impact. The production of greenhouse gasses will contribute to the Enhanced greenhouse Effect, increasing the earth’s temperature, resulting in devastating environmental destruction (e.g. rising sea levels, extreme weather conditions). The nutrient rich soil of the area will also be sacrificed as valuable minerals will be removed and contaminants left behind will hinder the growth and quality of barley production. The dust pollution cased by the mine will not only alter the beauty of the Yorke Peninsula but is will also affect human health. Locals were outraged to learn that the predicted 3 million kilograms of dust produced annually may include radioactive uranium, which could cause drought, physically impair plant growth, and is absorbed by crops will enter the food chain. Despite Rex Minerals’ vow to combat these effects dust has the dangerous potential to affect human respiratory and cardiovascular systems and cannot be completely avoided. Although the affected mine site will be rehabilitated, the now pristine farmland will never be fully restored to its best.

Despite this, a highly favourable impact of the mine is the total amount of revenue it would generate, ultimately justifying its$800 million creation. For its predicted 15 year life span, the mine will provide both our local and state economies with more than $700 million per annum. It would, in fact , take more than 21,000 years of grain production on this land to generate the same revenue. On average, the Yorke Peninsula’s grain grosses $96 million a year which is significantly less than that of which the mine would produce.

Locals and holiday goers alikeaffectionately describe the Yorke’s magnificent beaches, rich farmland and its clean, green environment, but how different will these testimonies be once Rex Minerals has left their footprint? The high-quality barley, synonymous with the Yorke, will no longer be so, since it is virtually impossible for mining and farming to coexist without pollution affecting the crops. The government’s Premium Food and Wine from our Clean Environment marketing strategy will undoubtedly suffer as a result of the mine, as out pristine peninsula will soon become tarnished with the largest open pit copper mine in Australia, radioactive dust pollution, three 115 meter high waste-rock piles, and an eye sore of a filtration plant. Between 2009 and 2010, the Yorke’s tourism industry generated $166 million in revenue, but little of its current tourist appeal will remain once the excavators and bulldozers have arrived.

We, as South Australian’s cannot afford to lose the respect or business or our overseas consumers due deterioration in quality of our grain. For years our state has prided itsel on its superior produce, but if the Yorke Peninsula’s blessed beauty and cleanliness, but if Yorke Peninsula’s blessed beauty and cleanliness are sacrificed for less than two decades of mining what does the say about how much we value the natural beauty of our state?

Evidently, a compromise must be reached for both parties to be satisfied. While in the short-term the mine appears to be the favourable choice, in years to come the Yorker’s precious farmland will be sterile and worthless. For the long –term future of the state, the mine would not be approved for farming in the area should continue just as it has done so successfully for the past century.

As a resident of South Australia, I am proud of its beauty, cleanliness and quality agricultural produce. Our state is home to some stunning natural locations, including the Yorke Peninsula. I have spent family holidays at the pristine coastal towns and consequently I was saddened to learn of the proposed Yorke Peninsula open-pit Copper mine. Mining would certainly destroy the idyllic farming, fishing and holiday location so the editorial I have produced for creating texts has been written with the purpose of conveying this opinion in a formal, educational yet biased and persuasive manner.

My primary purposes when creating this editorial were to inform readers of the effects of the mine, both positive and negative, and then to persuade them that the detrimental effects would outweigh the benefits. The informational element of the editorial included fact checked statistics such as “0.16 percent of the mined land will remain permanently sterilized” as stated by Jason Kuchel, Chief Executive of the Chamber of Mines and Energy, to substantiate the information. I then persuaded the reader in my concluding paragraphs, by highlighting the key disadvantages of the mine, like ‘radioactive dust pollution’, and also the loss that would be sustained by the grain industry.

The text is intended for publication as an editorial in a publication such as the popular *SA Weekend* lift out of *The Advertiser*. Modelling my piece on other editorials, this piece allowed me to express my opinion while providing readers with the opposing side of the argument as well. I aimed to simulate the writing style found in *SA Weekend* to attract the typical demographic of the newspaper as a target audience using somewhat formal language, but also familiar and conversational language.

Every Saturday morning, more than 740,000 South Australian’s peruse *The Advertiser’s* pages so locating my editorial in the *SA Weekend* lift out would ensure it would reach a large part of my target audience. Many of those affected by the opening of the mine, including Yorke Peninsula residents and business investors, workers of the mining and farming industries and environmentalists, would constitute a portion or *The Advertiser* readership. These people would be interested in the hard facts of the situation, including the environmental, economic and social consequences. I also hope to persuade them to believe in the ultimately damaging effects of the mine, as this was my firm conviction. This current issue would also affect the entire South Australian population, due to the drastic economic impact of the mine, so the language and chemical terminology included was appropriate *for SA Weekend’s* readership.

The form adopted for this editorial adhered to the conventions common to this style of writing. The introductory paragraphs presented my hypothesis, that the mine would ‘destroy’ the Yorke, and despite the exceptional predicted revenue, ‘not everyone is happy’. This was followed by background information of the conditions of the mine and then by four paragraphs alternating between for and against viewpoints. These body paragraphs also followed a particular structure; each began with a topic sentence outlining the basic argument, such as the issues locals would be forced to face, which was then elaborated on with the logical development of arguments. Finally, the conclusion of the piece included a declaratives statement (that is, an informed, personal recommendation) that the mine should not be approved ‘for the long-term future of the state’ because this was my intention all along. The layout of my editorial was inspired by those seen in *SA Weekend*, and included a large title to entice the reader as well as two columns with narrow margins to mirror the editorial in the lift out.

Ultimately the language and stylistic features employed in my editorial were what allowed it to effectively deliver my message to its intended audience. This manipulation was initiated with the short, clever, literal yet metaphorical headline ‘Against the grain”, which captured the reader’s attention and provided a small insight into the contents of the editorial. The title highlights my point that the mine would disadvantage the grain industry and contradicts what the Yorke residents want for their land. Throughout the body of information, both inclusive and exclusive language was utilized; the inclusive terms allow the reader to feel as if they are part of the group affected by the impacts of the mine, while exclusive language ostracized the reader who would be beneficiaries of the mine. I use literary techniques such as rhetorical questioning, to prompt the readers to form their own opinions on the topic, and present tense, so the readers feel ‘closer’ to the issue. Expert opinions, statistics and stakeholder testimonials from ’struggling farming families’ were used to support my statements and also add a persona touch from those Formal language was generally used to increase my professionalism and convince readers to believe what I had to say, but colloquialisms such as “the Yorke” were also used to connect with the audience. Persuasive, descriptive and emotive terms such as ‘magnificent beaches’ and ‘rich farmland’ were also used to allow the readers to remember and imagine the Yorke; visions that they would obviously not want to tarnish with the idea of great, dirty mine site. It was difficult to gauge the level of chemical understanding the majority of my readership possessed, so I simplified my explanation of the chemical effects of the mine, like ‘Acid Mine Drainage’ to a very basic level. I wrote affectionately of the Yorke’s alliterative ‘blessed beauty’ to remind the readers how unfortunate it would be to lose this to a mine.

The creation of an editorial allowed me to express my opinion while informing readers about a current local issue. An editorial was the most effective way to express my opinion, and through the conventions and stylistic features employed my perspective was successfully expressed. “Against the Grain” is an educational and persuasive piece which has been designed to sway readers’ opinions about preserving Yorke Peninsula’s natural beauty.

983 words

**Performance Standards for Stage 2 English**

| - | **Knowledge and Understanding** | **Analysis** | **Application** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **A** | Comprehensive knowledge and understanding of ideas and perspectives in a range of texts.Thorough knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators of texts use a range of language features, stylistic features, and conventions to make meaning.Extensive knowledge and understanding of a wide range of ways in which texts are created for different purposes, audiences, and contexts. | Complex analysis of ideas, perspectives, and/or aspects of culture represented in texts.Perceptive analysis of language features, stylistic features, and conventions used in texts, and thoughtful evaluation of how these influence audiences.Critical analysis of similarities and differences when comparing texts. | Versatile and precise use of language and stylistic features to create a wide range of coherent texts that address the purpose, audience, and context.Fluently integrated use of evidence from texts to develop and support a response.Sophisticated use of accurate, clear, and fluent expression. |
| **B** | Knowledge and understanding of ideas and perspectives in a range of texts.Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators of texts use a range of language features, stylistic features, and conventions to make meaning.Knowledge and understanding of a range of ways in which texts are created for different purposes, contexts, and audiences. | Detailed analysis of ideas, perspectives, and/or aspects of culture represented in texts.Detailed analysis of language features, stylistic features, and conventions, and evaluation of how these influence audiences.Clear analysis of similarities and differences when comparing texts. | Accurate use of language and stylistic features to create a range of coherent texts that address the purpose, context, and audience.Appropriate use of evidence from texts to develop and support a response.Consistent use of accurate, clear, and fluent expression. |
| **C** | Knowledge and understanding of some ideas and perspectives in texts.Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators of texts use some language features, stylistic features, and conventions to make meaning.Knowledge and understanding ways in which everyday texts are created for different purposes, contexts, and audiences. | Analysis of some ideas and perspectives represented in texts.Description and some analysis of different language features, stylistic features, and conventions, and/or some evaluation of how these influence audiences.Analysis of some similarities and differences when comparing texts. | Generally accurate use of language and stylistic features to create texts that address the purpose, context, and audience.Selection of some evidence from texts to develop and support a response.Appropriate use of accurate, clear, and fluent expression. |
| **D** | Knowledge and understanding of some ideas in a narrow range texts.Some knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators of texts use language features and conventions to make meaning.Knowledge and understanding of ways in which some everyday texts are created for different purposes and audiences. | Description of some ideas in texts.Description of some language features, stylistic features, and/or conventions.Description of some similarities and differences in texts. | Use of some language and stylistic features to create a narrow range of texts.Partial use of basic evidence from texts to develop a response.Inconsistent use of expression. |
| **E** | Identification of an idea in a text.Identification of a limited range of ways in which creators of texts use language techniques.Recognition of one or more ways in which a familiar text is created. | Reference to an idea in a text.Recognition of language or stylistic features.Recognition of a simple connection between texts. | Restricted use of language or stylistic features to create a text.Limited use of evidence from a text in a response.Limited use of clear expression. |