BOY A – A Project on Juvenile Crime

In the next few lessons, you will be practising your English skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) in a project on juvenile crime. Your final assignment culminates in the writing of an argumentative essay.

# Goals:

**Compose written texts using appropriate style, structure, and voice**

* Understand the goal and structure of an argumentative essay
* Express ideas with clarity and style
* Use appropriate linking words
* Employ correct grammar (e.g. tenses, adjectives and adverbs)

**Discuss several topics with relative fluency**

* Communicate effectively
* Express ideas and opinions
* Listen, ask for clarification when necessary and respond
* Use compensation strategies when necessary

# A Preparation

Make groups of three or four. Search the internet for information on James Bulger. Discuss and answer the following questions in English. Hand in the answers of your group via Teams.

**Answer in complete sentences, using at least 50 words per answer.**

1. Who was James Bulger? Describe briefly what happened to him, and when and where it happened.
2. Find as much information as you can about Robert Thompson and Jon Venables. How old where they at the time? Where did they live? Can you find additional information about their backgrounds, families etc.?
3. How were they punished?
4. What does *doli incapax* mean? What does it have to do with this case?
5. The trial was conducted as an adult trial, despite the boys’ age. Why do you think they did this? Do you agree with this? Discuss this in your group, write down which arguments were used in the discussion and whether or not your opinions differed.
6. The judge ruled their names should be released. Do you think this was fair? Discuss this in your group, write down which arguments were used in the discussion and whether or not your opinions differed.
7. a. In October 2000, the boys’ minimum sentence was reviewed. Why?
8. Lord Chief Justice recommended the tariff be reduced from ten to eight years, adding that [young offender institutions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Her_Majesty%27s_Young_Offender_Institution) were a "corrosive atmosphere" for the juveniles. Follow the link to read about these institutions. Do you think he was right? If so, what would be a better place for them?

# B After watching the film

Discuss the following questions in English in the same groups. Write down your answers individually. **Use complete sentences, paying attention to grammar and vocabulary.**

1. Having watched the film, reread your answers to the questions on James Bulger and the boys who murdered him. If Boy A (Jack) had been one of James Bulger’s murderers, would you have answered differently? If so, how and why?
2. The film gives you more information on the boys’ (Philip and Jack) background. Does this change how you feel about what they did? Does it change your ideas on how they should be punished? If so, how and why?
3. How do you feel about the way in which the film ended? Would you change the end if you could?
4. Which of the following proverbs / phrases applies to Jack according to you? Choose one and explain briefly:
5. Sow the wind, reap the whirlwind
6. A clean slate
7. Have a look at the following articles:

[Serbian court sentences parents of teenage school shooter | Euronews](https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/12/30/serbian-court-sentences-parents-of-teenage-school-shooter)

[Jennifer Crumbley: When parents get the blame for a child's mass shooting](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-67571551)

What do you think of this? Should parents be blamed when their children commit murder? Why or in what circumstances should or shouldn’t they?

# C Essay

Write an argumentative essay ( 225 – 275 words) about the following question:

**How should young offenders of heinous crimes such as murder or rape be tried (examined and judged in a court of law) and punished?**

Use the information you found on the Internet, what the film taught you and your answers to the questions. Think about: age, background, minimum or maximum sentence, adult or juvenile trial, the right to a new identity or not…

How to write an essay? You’ll find the basic steps listed below.

* [Prepare an outline or diagram of your ideas](http://lklivingston.tripod.com/essay/outline.html).
* [Write your thesis statement](http://lklivingston.tripod.com/essay/thesis.html).
* [Write the body](http://lklivingston.tripod.com/essay/body.html).
  + Write the main points.
  + Write the subpoints.
  + Elaborate on the subpoints.
* [Write the introduction](http://lklivingston.tripod.com/essay/intro.html) and title.
* [Write the conclusion](http://lklivingston.tripod.com/essay/intro.html#conclusion).
* [Add the finishing touches](http://lklivingston.tripod.com/essay/finish.html).

On the following pages, you will find more information on each of these steps.

**How to write an argumentative essay**

**Planning Stage**

For an argument essay to be effective, it must contain certain elements. For this reason, you must take a few minutes to plan and prepare before you jump into writing an argument essay.

**Consider Both Sides of Your Topic and Take a Position**

Once you know what the topic is, you should make a list of points for both sides of the argument and [pick a side](http://homeworktips.about.com/od/satwritingsection/a/stance.htm). One of your first objectives in your essay will be to present both sides of your issue with an assessment of each. Of course, you will conclude that one side (your side) is the best conclusion.

In the planning stage you will need to consider strong arguments for the "other" side. Then you'll shoot them down!

**Gather Evidence**

When we think of arguments we might picture two red-faced people speaking quite loudly and making dramatic gestures. But that's because face-to-face arguments often become emotional. In fact, the act of arguing involves providing proof to support your claim, with or without emotions.

In an argument essay you will have to provide evidence without providing too much drama. You'll explore two sides of a topic (briefly) and provide proof as to why one side or position is the best one.

* Prepare an outline or diagram of your ideas.
* Think of arguments
* Decide on which arguments you will use and
  + Cluster them in pros and cons
  + Use paragraphs in your essay to make the division clear.

**Writing Stage**

Once you've given yourself a solid foundation to work with, you can begin to craft your essay. An argument essay should contain three parts: the [introduction](http://homeworktips.about.com/od/paperassignments/a/introsentence.htm), the body, and the conclusion. The length of these parts (number of paragraphs) will vary, depending on the length of your essay assignment.

**The introduction: introduce your topic and assert your side**

As in any essay, the [first paragraph](http://homeworktips.about.com/od/paperassignments/a/introsentence.htm) of your argument essay should contain a brief explanation of your topic, some background information, and a [thesis statement](http://homeworktips.about.com/od/thesissentence/a/fuss.htm)

Your thesis statement will be

* a statement of [your position](http://homeworktips.about.com/od/satwritingsection/a/stance.htm) on a particular controversial topic.
* It can only be one sentence long and
* it can’t be a question.
* The thesis statement or main claim must be debatable

An argumentative or persuasive piece of writing must begin with a debatable thesis or claim. In other words, the thesis must be something that people could reasonably have differing opinions on. If your thesis is something that is generally agreed upon or accepted as fact then there is no reason to try to persuade people.

Example of a non-debatable thesis statement: Pollution is bad for the environment.

This thesis statement is not debatable. First, the word *pollution* means that something is bad or negative in some way. Further, all studies agree that pollution is a problem; they simply disagree on the impact it will have or the scope of the problem. No one could reasonably argue that pollution is good.

Example of a debatable thesis statement:

At least 25 percent of the federal budget should be spent on limiting pollution.

**The main body: present both sides of the controversy**

The body of your essay will contain the meat of your argument. You should go into more detail about the two sides of your controversy. Describe your own viewpoint as well as the strongest points of the counter-side of your issue. Then provide evidence to show why your position is the correct one:

* Topic sentence + elaboration + example(s)
* Topic sentence + elaboration + example(s)
* Etcetera

A topic sentence is a sentence that indicates in a general way what idea the paragraph is going to deal with. Select your strongest evidence and present your points one by one. Use a mix of evidence types, from statistics, to other studies and anecdotal stories.

**The conclusion**: **summarize, then conclude, your argument**

Refer to the first paragraph/opening statement as well as the main points and re-state your position as the most sensible one in your summary paragraphs. Don’t copy sentences from your main body: repeat the main ideas, don’t repeat the words!

Check: does the conclusion

* + restate the main ideas?
  + reflect the succession and importance of the arguments ?
  + logically conclude their development?

**Check grammar, spelling and punctuation**