

Short comments

Analyze the structure (introduction, conclusion, paragraphs) of the following two short comments. Identify the thesis and the topic sentences.

1) While I appreciate that doing a work placement/teaching assistantship in America or Britain, or studying there, might be expensive, I would agree that an extended stay abroad should be a compulsory part of a degree programme.

Even if you are a conscientious bookworm who has immersed himself in English literature or grammar, without having spent a reasonable amount of time in an English-speaking country your English will never be "the finished article". You need to put your learning into practice by speaking to ordinary people (not just English teachers) in a variety of contexts and registers. At a German university, you may be surrounded by English as the lingua franca, but you should remember that most foreign students make numerous errors. To pick up authentic English you really have to spend a year abroad.

Moreover, if you plan to become an English teacher you have a responsibility to pass on an accurate image of British/American culture. You can only do this if you have experienced what it's like to live in these countries first-hand and have gained an insight into institutions such as schools and universities. Without such a stay, you are more likely to peddle lazy ideas about the British all drinking tea at 5 o'clock, for example.

Finally, a year abroad may well help you establish contacts in Britain or America which will prove invaluable for your future career.

2) While there are strong arguments for rationing the amount of TV children under 16 watch and monitoring the content closely, I think a total ban would be inappropriate.

For one thing, television is an invaluable tool for busy parents. Obviously, when the weather is fine their kids can run around in the garden (provided they have one) or park, but what about when it's wet or dark outside? Imagine having a hyperactive 5 year old hanging around you while you are trying to cook or work, and no television to put them in front of. Being a parent is hard enough without you having to find original ways to entertain your children.

For another thing, television can, when watched in moderation, actually have a positive effect on a child's mind. A number of programmes aimed at children are educational (such as simplified news broadcasts) and might even help a parent answer difficult or embarrassing questions (about the birds and the bees, for example). Besides, cartoons and dramas do not all consist of noise and unstructured nonsense; some of them have relatively complex plots and actually feed a child's imagination.

Finally, I think it's quite risky to exclude your children from a sphere their classmates are probably immersed in. They will not be able to join in conversations or understand jokes relating to certain TV shows and may be picked on by other children. This, in turn, could have a far worse effect on their brain than any TV.