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Humanities

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MAMS Be Like...

There is one global issue that is overlooked by a majority of people; Children and even adults are not getting enough exercise to stay fit and healthy. One simple solution to this is participating in a sport. Not only are sports enjoyable to play, but there is a wide variety. From team to individual, upper body to lower body or all around, and needed level of physicality, there is a sport to everyone. However, many children are still not participating in a sport, and therefore are not getting enough exercise. There are several reasons for this, which is satirically poked at by Ankan Banerjee, an author in 2013 who realized this issue. Throughout the Horatian piece “Why Sports are not Important,” Ankan Banerjee effectively incorporates several satirical devices, mocking peoples’ view that participation in physical sports is pointless and there are no benefits, ultimately bringing the importance of physical activity to the attention of children.

Reductio ad absurdum, hyperboles, irony, repetition, and allusions effectively grab the attention of the reader by ridiculing the general population and hinting at their lack of fitness to emphasize the importance of physical wellness. Banerjee begins the piece with an illogical quote where “[One] will be nearer to Heaven through football than through study of Gita” (Banerjee 1). This quote, by Swami Vivekananda, is stressed to be influential and taken seriously by Banerjee, as he mentions Vivekananda is “one of the greatest sons of [their] country” (Banerjee 1). The usage of this quote by the author is a clear example of verbal irony because even though

the quote is comically alluding to death caused by injury from football, he is actually trying to point out the need for fitness. It is not rational to compare a sport to a deity of a religion.

Therefore, the only possible conclusion drawn from this quote is that Banerjee is trying to raise awareness of a national issue by reducing football to absurdity. The utilization of this quote at the start pulls the reader in, as one wants to know the reasoning behind the quote. Not only does the satirist irrationally compare a sport to a religion, he also mentions that people “hardly participate in any sporting activity which may improve [their] level of fitness. And for the children, sports should be banned! It’s a complete waste of time!” (Banerjee 1). This is an exaggeration of the need for sports, as Banerjee implements the use of the word ‘banned’ and ‘complete waste of time,’ which has a powerful one-sided connotation. This connotation implies sports are not essential to children and are a complete waste of time, justifying why they should be banned. However, the intended but unmistakable message comes from the initial part of the phrase, where Banerjee mentions that people seldom engage in any activity that may boost their level of fitness. Although this phrase may also be exaggerated, a greater number of people relate to the absence of exercise than the need for the banning of sports. Finally, throughout the first paragraph, Banerjee constantly alludes to studying and video games as being the cause of the lack of movement. Banerjee mentions children should “operate technology by playing video games” (Banerjee 1) and that India should “make video games the National Sport of our country” (Banerjee 1), as well as “incorporate it in Olympic Games” (Banerjee 1). The reason behind this repetition of video games is to allude to why children are not obtaining enough exercise. In addition, Banerjee also stresses that children are not participating in any physically demanding sport (not something like chess) because they “should concentrate on their study” (Banerjee 1). Banerjee references video games throughout the first paragraph, even going as far

as to declare a need for Olympic Games. The reader can infer that the only reason for video games to be incorporated in the Olympic Games is because of the level of skill of certain individuals through the hours spent every day in front of a screen. This accentuation on video games and study ultimately suggest they are the cause of the absence of physical activity and how sports are a heavily encouraged alternative on how to spend one's time. It is obvious from the start that the satirist is trying to promote exercise in the younger generation by exaggerating the worthlessness of sports and alluding to the cause of this lack of exercise- overstudying and video games.

The author also understates the supposed benefits of participating in physical sports and integrates faulty logic to further demonstrate the need for physical activity. Banerjee incorporates several claims about the worth of sports, such as a "Sport also involves techniques?" (Banerjee 2). He later backs up these claims with illogical reasoning. To back up Banerjee's previous claim, he mentions that "anybody can run and kick a ball by using their toes" (Banerjee 2) and that any sport "is not a rocket science" (Banerjee 2). Although a majority of human beings are born with the capability of moving one's foot and kicking an object, it does not mean that everyone is on the same playing field. Dedication and commitment are required if one wants to progress their game. Rarely anyone is born with natural abilities. In addition, it is incorrect to compare a sport to rocket science, as they are part of different backgrounds. Therefore, although Banerjee is trying to understate the benefit of partaking in a sport by suggesting they are easy to play, the apparent intent is to bring attention to the younger generation's lack of exercise. One can also realize that because people are physically capable of kicking a ball and sports are not difficult to take up, participation is not challenging and is strongly suggested. One does not need to participate on an Olympic level as long as one is getting exercise to stay healthy and fit. This

purposeful use of improper rationale further suggests why one needs to participate in a sport. Later on, Banerjee intentionally compares sports to mathematics asserting “in mathematics, a comprehensive curriculum is required and in sports, no such curriculum is needed” (Banerjee 2). This comparison is similar to the one above with rocket science. However, mathematics is a topic everyone may relate to. Education is always stressed to children, and this use of mathematics and comparing the curriculum to sports has a clear message- students are spending unreasonable amounts of time on schoolwork because of the “comprehensive curriculum” that there is no time for sports. The integration of claims understating the importance and skill level of sports and being backed by flawed logic highlights the actual message Banerjee wants the reader to realize the importance of athletics. Through the use of understating involvement in a sport and invalid reasoning to back these understating claims, Banerjee clearly establishes a need for children to engage in a sport to improve their health and level of fitness.

Finally, the author ends the satire with evident usage of overstatements, irony, and repetition, effectively and evidently concluding the main purpose of the entire piece- drawing attention to society the need for physical wellness. Once again, Banerjee repeats the use of video games to the reader, bringing attention to one cause of the lack of exercise. He overstates the importance of video games by claiming one “disciplin[e] should be given more importance – video games” (Banerjee 3). This is a clear instance of verbal irony as Banerjee brings overplaying of video games to the reader. Banerjee undoubtedly indicates the amount of time spent on video games should be reduced and replaced with sports. The use of video games littered throughout the concluding paragraph conveys why sports must substitute gaming. In addition, Banerjee introduces a new concept, mentioning he is an “armchair critique” (Banerjee 3) throughout the end. This armchair critique may be overlooked, but there is a simple

conclusion to be drawn from this- Banerjee is accenting the term ‘chair’ to the reader. The accentuation of ‘chair’ conveys that people are spending too much time in a physically relaxing position, and they instead should include some physical activity in their day, such as being involved in a sport, an instance of effective use of verbal irony. Lastly, to conclude the satire, Banerjee overstates why sports should be dropped, because “a country of more than one billion population cannot win medals at the international level” (Banerjee 3). Furthermore, athletes that participate on an international level “cannot be replaced! That is why, we do not encourage our children to be like them” (Banerjee 3). These phrases are clear examples of overstatements and irony. Banerjee is satirizing how even with such a large population, India still cannot win any medals. Therefore, one should not join a team or sport to begin with. Most people may agree that winning is preferred, but throughout the satire, Banerjee is stressing the importance of fitness, not winning. Also, claiming children should not play a sport because athletes who compete at a significant skill level should only be idolized is preposterous. Asserting a reason to not play sports because one will never be great is not sound. The repetition of the terms video games and armchair, along with overstating and ironically alleging why sports should not be played firmly suggest Banerjee’s overall stance on the importance of sports: children need to participate more to be physically healthy.

Evidently, the author is attempting to convey the importance of participation in physical activities through the satirical characterization of sports. The use of *reductio ad absurdum*, allusions, hyperboles, overstatements, irony, and repetition helps emphasize Banerjee’s message to the reader that children and parents need to be more active to improve their overall health. All the instances of these satirical devices are direct with a purpose, making the entire piece an effective satire. Exercise is important for one’s health, which is why it is strongly recommended

by doctors. A great and easy solution to get some exercise every day is to partake in a physical sport.

Works Cited

Banerjee, Ankan. "Satire: Why Sports Are Not Important." *Sports News*, 26 Jan. 2013,
<https://www.sportskeeda.com/sports/satire-why-sports-are-not-important>.