

## ENGLISH

### Single LA – Confused? Aren't we all?

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Adolescents and young people often lead busy lives, facing demands from the people around them and being exposed to divergent perspectives. Paul Evans alerts young people to the extent their lives are being dictated by others in his opinion piece “Confused? Aren't we all?” published in a weekly Metropolitan student magazine and posted on its website. Evans' provocative piece also serves to encourage teenagers to take action for themselves and regain control of their own lives. The daily confusion and plethora of contradictions which Evans highlights is comically depicted in the accompanying cartoon of a male student staring at a sign “You are NOT here!”

The humorous cartoon positioned directly underneath the title of the article highlights and ridicules the contradictions which are claimed to be omnipresent in young people's lives. The paradoxical and inherent contradictory nature of the statement “You are not here!” emphasises the confusion which teenagers must contend with. The mere impossibility that the statement is true is satirical and makes teenagers feel that there are others who understand the extent to which they are confounded by the world around them. This satire is encapsulated in the young student's reaction to the sign, with his eyes enlarged and popping out, his arms spread out and his posture of leaning backwards. This exaggeration paints the picture that the statement presented on the sign is ridiculous because it is so confronting. Moreover, the absence of the student's brain alludes to the fact that the sign has made him lose his mind. Young people viewing this may feel comforted by the fact that the cartoonist understands that they have been pushed to their limit and are losing their mind. Others may feel alarmed as the cartoon draws to their attention the contradictions present in their everyday world.

The focus on the lives of young people continues to be the focus in Evans' opinion piece. This is achieved by the direct and personal register used which creates a dichotomy between the reader and the rest of the world. Throughout the entire opinion piece, Evans addresses the reader as “you” which personalises the experience of reading the piece by inviting the reader to relate the examples used to their own life. Even if the examples used do not match perfectly with the reader's situation, the reader is likely to align their life with that described in the article. This effect is created by the “we all” in the headline which implies that all young people are facing the same issue in one way or another. Despite this sense of solidarity, Evans forges a chasm between the reader and the people in their life. By contrasting the “agenda” that “suit[s] their interests” with the reader's needs and desires, Evans implies that the interests are complete opposites. This makes young people feel isolated and misunderstood by those around them. The bolded and italicised “their” and “yours” in close proximity to each other exaggerate the differences in the priorities of the reader and those of their community. The bolded “yours” also places importance on the reader's desires as it serves to remind them that it is their life which is being discussed. This is accented throughout the opinion piece with repetition of “your life”, “your way” and “you”. The constant use of this register may also infuriate the readers as Evans shows that the interests and wants of the teenager is being ignored and dismissed.

The injustice of the lack of control which young people have over their lives is highlighted by Evan's detailed and descriptive portrayal of a typical day in the life of an adolescent. Evans depicts the “ordeal” of homework and demands placed on adolescents while sympathising with the reader. Describing the homework that the young person has to do as an “ordeal” creates the impression that study and homework is a harrowing task and that the teenagers has suffered immensely. The reader may feel that others should take pity on them. Furthermore, the victimisation of young people may elicit fury from the reader towards their parents who are depicted as deliberately making their lives difficult. This indignation is further compounded by Evans' demonstration of the injustice infiltrating the student's relaxation and entertainment time. Evans asserts that following the “ordeal”, “it's time for just chilling” or “time for a movie”. The idea that “it's time” indicates that the break from studying is very much deserved by the student and this contributes to the unfairness when the

student's downtime is dictated by their parents or when they are bombarded by contradictions on television. The assertion that Evans makes that teenagers do not even have control over their relaxation time may anger the young people in the readership and may also alarm them as they may not have realised how little control they have over their lives.

After Evans elicits strong emotions of indignation and belligerence in the reader, he proposes that the reader do something to regain control of their life. With a provocative "Who's living your life anyway?", Evans underlines that it is the reader's responsibility to correct the injustice and take control. Following the perusal of this article, the young reader may feel empowered to make changes in their life. Altogether, Evans ignites a sense of injustice and panic in young people which may give rise to determination to be more assertive and autonomous in their daily lives.