• Identify the hook, claim, evidence/support, concessions and refutations, and a call to action.
• Underline the persuasive appeals and look for clues that indicate the author’s intended audience.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Anna Quindlen is a novelist and an award-winning and popular newspaper columnist who has written for some of the nation’s most prestigious newspapers, including the New York Times, where she was a reporter, editor, and contributor for many years. Critics suggest that her appeal as a columnist lies in her personal approach and her insights into problems experienced by ordinary readers. She won the Pulitzer Prize for commentary in 1992.

ESSAY

School’s Out for Summer

by Anna Quindlen

WHEN THE AD COUNCIL CONVENED focus groups not long ago to help prepare a series of public service announcements on child hunger, there was a fairly unanimous response from the participants about the subject. Not here. Not in America. If there was, we would know about it. We would read about it in the paper, we would see it on the news. And of course we would stop it. In America.

Is it any wonder that the slogan the advertising people came up with was “The Sooner You Believe It, the Sooner We Can End It”?

It’s the beginning of summer in America’s cement cities, in the deep hidden valleys of the country and the loop-de-loop sidewalkless streets of the suburbs. For many adults who are really closet kids, this means that their blood hums with a hint of freedom, the old beloved promise of long aimless days of dirt and sweat and sunshine, T-shirts stained with Kool-Aid and flip-flops gray with street grit or backyard dust.

But that sort of summer has given way to something more difficult, even darker, that makes you wonder whether year-round school is not a notion whose time has come. With so many households in which both parents are working, summer is often a scramble of scheduling: day camps, school programs, the Y, the community center. Some parents who can’t afford or find those kinds of services park their vacationing children in front of the television, lock the door, and go to work hoping for the best, calling home on the hour. Some kids just wander in a wilder world than the one that existed when their parents had summers free.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS
How does the author use the hook and claim to set up her argument about hunger in America?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS
Why is childhood hunger an issue of justice?
And some kids don’t get enough to eat, no matter what people want to tell themselves. Do the math: During the rest of the year fifteen million students get free or cut-rate lunches at school, and many of them get breakfast, too. But only three million children are getting lunches through the federal summer lunch program. And hunger in the United States, particularly since the institution of so-called welfare reform, is epidemic. The numbers are astonishing in the land of the all-you-can-eat buffet. The Agriculture Department estimated in 1999 that twelve million children were hungry or at risk of going hungry. A group of big-city mayors released a study showing that in 2000, requests for food assistance from families increased almost 20 percent, more than at any time in the last decade. And last Thanksgiving a food bank in Connecticut gave away four thousand more turkeys than the year before—and still ran out of birds.

But while the Christmas holidays make for heartrending copy, summer is really ground zero in the battle to keep kids fed. The school lunch program, begun in the 1970s as a result of bipartisan federal legislation, has been by most measures an enormous success. For lots of poor families it’s become a way to count on getting at least one decent meal into their children, and when it disappears it’s catastrophic. Those who work at America’s Second Harvest, the biggest nonprofit supply source for food banks, talk of parents who go hungry themselves so their kids can eat, who put off paying utility and phone bills, who insist their children attend remedial summer school programs simply so they can get a meal. The parents themselves are loath to talk: Of all the humiliations attached to being poor in a prosperous nation, not being able to feed your kids is at the top of the list.

In most cases these are not parents who are homeless or out of work. The people who run food banks report that most of their clients are minimum-wage workers who can’t afford enough to eat on their salaries. “Families are struggling in a way they haven’t done for a long time,” says Brian Loring, the executive director of Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County, Iowa, which provides lunches to more than two hundred kids at five locations during the summer months. For a significant number of Americans, the cost of an additional meal for two school-age children for the eight weeks of summer vacation seems like a small fortune. Some don’t want or seek government help because of the perceived stigma; some are denied food stamps because of new welfare policies. Others don’t know they’re eligible, and none could be blamed if they despaired of the exercise. The average length of a food stamp application is twelve often impenetrable pages; a permit to sell weapons is just two.

The success of the school lunch program has been, of course, that the food goes where the children are. That’s the key to success for summer programs, too. Washington, D.C., has done better than any other city in the country in feeding hungry kids, sending fire trucks into housing projects to distribute leaflets about lunch locations, running a referral hotline and radio announcements. One food bank in

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1 bipartisan: supported by both major political parties
2 stigma: a sign of shame or disgrace
Nevada decided to send trucks to the parks for tailgate lunches. “That’s where the kids are,” its director told the people at Second Harvest.

We Americans like need that takes place far from home, so we can feel simultaneously self-congratulatory and safe from the possibility that hard times could be lurking around the corner. Maybe that’s why our mothers told us to think of the children in Africa when we wouldn’t clean our plates. I stopped believing in that when I found myself in a bodega with a distraught woman after New York City had declared a snow day; she had three kids who ate breakfast and lunch at school, her food stamps had been held up because of some bureaucratic snafu, and she was considering whether to pilfer food from the senior center where she worked as an aide. Surely there should be ways for a civilized society to see that such a thing would never happen, from providing a simpler application for food stamps to setting a decent minimum wage. But wishing don’t make it so, as they say in policy meetings, and proposals aren’t peanut butter and jelly. Find a food bank and then go grocery shopping by proxy. Somewhere nearby there is a mother who covets a couple of boxes of spaghetti, and you could make her dream come true. That’s right. In America.

After Reading

7. In a small group, critique the effect of the author’s argument. Share examples of the author’s arguments (logical, empirical, anecdotal) and discuss the effectiveness of the arguments presented. Can you identify whether the author uses fallacious reasoning, and, if so, where?

8. Research: Do you support the author’s arguments, or would you take a different position? Conduct research on the issue of hunger in your community.
   - First, create a question you would like to answer through your research. Then, use available resources to find answers to your question, creating new questions or revising your question as needed based on your findings.
   - Organize your evidence by form (empirical, logical, anecdotal). Provide at least one example of each form of evidence.
   - Finally, synthesize your findings into a brief, informal presentation, and present your information to a small group of your peers.

Argumentative Writing Prompt: After researching the issue of hunger in your community, write an essay that identifies the problem of hunger and argues for a solution. Support your position with evidence from your research. Be sure to:
   - Establish focus with a hook and claim.
   - Demonstrate valid reasoning and sufficient evidence to support your argument.
   - Cites sources using an appropriate format.
   - Write a strong conclusion that follows from your claim and supports the argument you presented.

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3 bodega: a small grocery shop
4 snafu: a confusing situation
5 proxy: to act in the place of someone else