



Are proms the worst thing to happen to British schools in the past 20 years? Even the word itself is annoying. School prom? Why not just a good, old-fashioned school dance?

Jan Moir 11 July 2014

Perhaps because the whole thing is indeed a promenade, with the manner of arriving — glass coach, pink limo, Hummer jeep — apparently just as important as the event itself. 5

There is no doubt that cash-gobbling proms are a ghastly American import, right up there with chewing gum and the glorification of hip hop culture. However, I think we are going to have to accept that they are here to stay. 10

The school prom has become a rite of passage that has significance and value to millions of young people in the UK. A ceremony, complete with sparkly dresses and tonged hair, a ritual that marks the end of childhood. 15

And it's not always such a terrible thing. A friend's 17-year-old daughter had a lovely prom. The classmates organised a dinner and dance in a local hotel, with fireworks. There were smart boys in bow ties, girls in long frocks; young adults being all grown up, on the cusp of the great adventure of life. What could be nicer? 20

But hang on a star-spangled minute, what fresh hell is this? Proms for primary school kids?

Yes, primary proms are here and they are happening now. A West Midlands mother has just spent more than £1,000 on her 11-year-old daughter's prom, determined to give her little Beth a night she would remember forever.

Aimee Woolley took on an extra job as a cleaner to pay for the prom. It was a night she and her daughter planned for months — just what hubby and two older brothers thought of all this is anyone's guess. 25

On the day, Beth had fake tan, plastic nails, a princess dress, shoes, matching handbag, a tiara and professional hair and make-up, including false eyelashes.

In her £200 glitter-strewn frock, she was ferried about in a limousine and drank non-alcoholic cocktails with her equally thrilled pals. She looked lovely, but she didn't look like a little girl — she looked like a mini-adult. 30

And when one regards all these pre-teenies, togged out like ballroom dancers at a fiesta of acrylic, it makes for uncomfortable viewing. There is the nagging suspicion that it is really all about the mums, not the daughters. 35

It is all about grown women indulging in some princess fantasy that they never managed to fulfil themselves, but are experiencing vicariously through the medium of their spray-tanned and glossed offspring.

Every mother wants to make her little girl feel special, that is understandable and commendable. The problem begins when they scrub off the glitter, launch themselves on the big wide world and find out that they are not so exceptional after all. 40

I really admire Aimee for having the energy and drive to fund all this by getting up at 5am every day to clean offices — but how many other mums get into debt over something so ephemeral and stupid?

You have to wonder where and what it all leads to — what happens when your darling girl is 16, 18, 21, a bride? Do the dresses get bigger and bigger, and the nails get longer and longer as the costs go up and up? Especially in a world where parents seem unable to say no to their children. 45

Getting dressed up for parties is fun at all ages. It never, ever stops being fun. However, a little bit of prom propriety would not go amiss. Before it's too late. 50



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History

Founded in 2003 the Academy has developed a highly sort after range of courses and training tools to accredit wedding planners, event planners, wedding stylists and event designers in the UK. Starting off with a basic paper based wedding planning course we have undergone many course upgrades to bring the course into the 21st century. In the last decade the way training is offered has changed. It has become extremely innovative and interactive and requires so much more than what a simple paper based course can offer. 10 15

The Director of the Academy, Kylie Carlson, began her career in London nearly 20 years ago and had a successful planning and production company. Working with key clients throughout the HM Armed Forces and blue chip companies including Smithkline Beecham, British Telecom, Royal Bank of Scotland, HSBC, Vodafone and BP her experience is extremely wide and varied. Add to this a portfolio of high-end wedding and private clients working in venues such as the Dorchester and you will begin to get an insight into her professional life prior to the Academy. It was her decision to marry an Australian that saw her sell her company and relocate to a life down under. It was there that she developed her first course and launched the first Academy campus. This took off very quickly and Kylie saw an opportunity to create an English version of the course and she has never looked back. Now splitting her time between London and Melbourne to work with her team on both campuses. Kylie is also a sought after speaker and travels all over the world speaking about running a business in the special events industry. 20 25 30

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Effectively you are building yourself a portfolio as you make your way through the course, allowing you to hit the ground running upon graduation. The last five assignments in the course focus on starting your own wedding and event consultancy and marketing your services in this highly competitive marketplace. Included as part of your course material is a license to the Academy planning software and also the design software. Both licenses are unlimited and will be a great tool for you to use when you start your business. It can also be used throughout the course so you are familiar with it upon graduating. 45 50

Questions

Re-read extract 1. Answer the questions below.

1. Re-read lines 35 – 40 identify Jan Moir’s main reason against primary proms. (1)
2. Identify an example of exaggerated language from lines 10 – 25 (1)
3. Summarise Moir’s reasons against primary proms. (3)
4. Identify the tone of article, use evidence to sort your ideas. (3)
5. Analyse how the writer uses language and structure to convey her views. (8)
Support your views with detailed reference to the text.



Re-read extract 2. Answer the questions below.

6. Identify persuasive techniques from lines 15 – 30. (4)
7. Re-read lines 35 – 55 identify 4 facts about the course available. (4)
8. Analyse how the writer uses language and structure to inform to persuade readers to consider their courses. (8)
Support your views with detailed reference to the text.



9. Compare how the writers of Extract 1 and Extract 2 present views of the party industry. Support your answer with detailed references to the texts. (12)
10. Write a report outlining how to plan an year of prom party for students in your school.
 - Advice on what should be included
 - Issues and problems to consider
 - Hints and tips(25)

OR

11. Write a letter of application for a children’s party planning course.
 - Your understanding of the course requirements
 - Your skills and experience
 - Why you stand out from other applicants(25)