

ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

AP Language and Composition

If the rhetorical analysis, synthesis, and free-response questions could be compared to cooking-show challenges, they might go like this: With the rhetorical analysis, the challenge would be something like, "Tell me what ingredients were used to produce this flavor." With the synthesis, it's more like, "Take these ingredients and make something out of them." With the free-response, the task is harder: "Take whatever ingredients that already exist in your pantry and make dinner with them."

The free response, otherwise known and referred to as the ADQ (for the frequent command to *Agree, Disagree, or Qualify*) is an essay that typically asks students to agree, disagree, or qualify (partly agree) with a given statement or position, and to use examples from their academic or personal experiences to substantiate their claims.

This is where many students, particularly students without a strong background in history, literature, or academic subjects, find themselves most at a disadvantage, and it is also where the AP reveals itself (or reveals itself more than usual) to be a test of cultural literacy above all else. The student who can write meaningfully about Plato and Jean-Luc Godard will be at an advantage not enjoyed by students with a comparative paucity of literary or cultural influences.

KEY VOCABULARY

CLAIM

EVIDENCE

Grounds

Warrants

Counter-Argument

Concession

Refute/Rebut

SPEAKER

AUDIENCE

PURPOSE

ETHOS

PATHOS

LOGOS

QUALIFY

DEFEND

WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

Simply put, **an argument is an opinion (claim) supported by evidence.**

Something that is **argumentative** is not and does not necessarily have to attempt to **persuade**. An argument is simply an **opinion supported by evidence**; persuasion involves moving people to act.

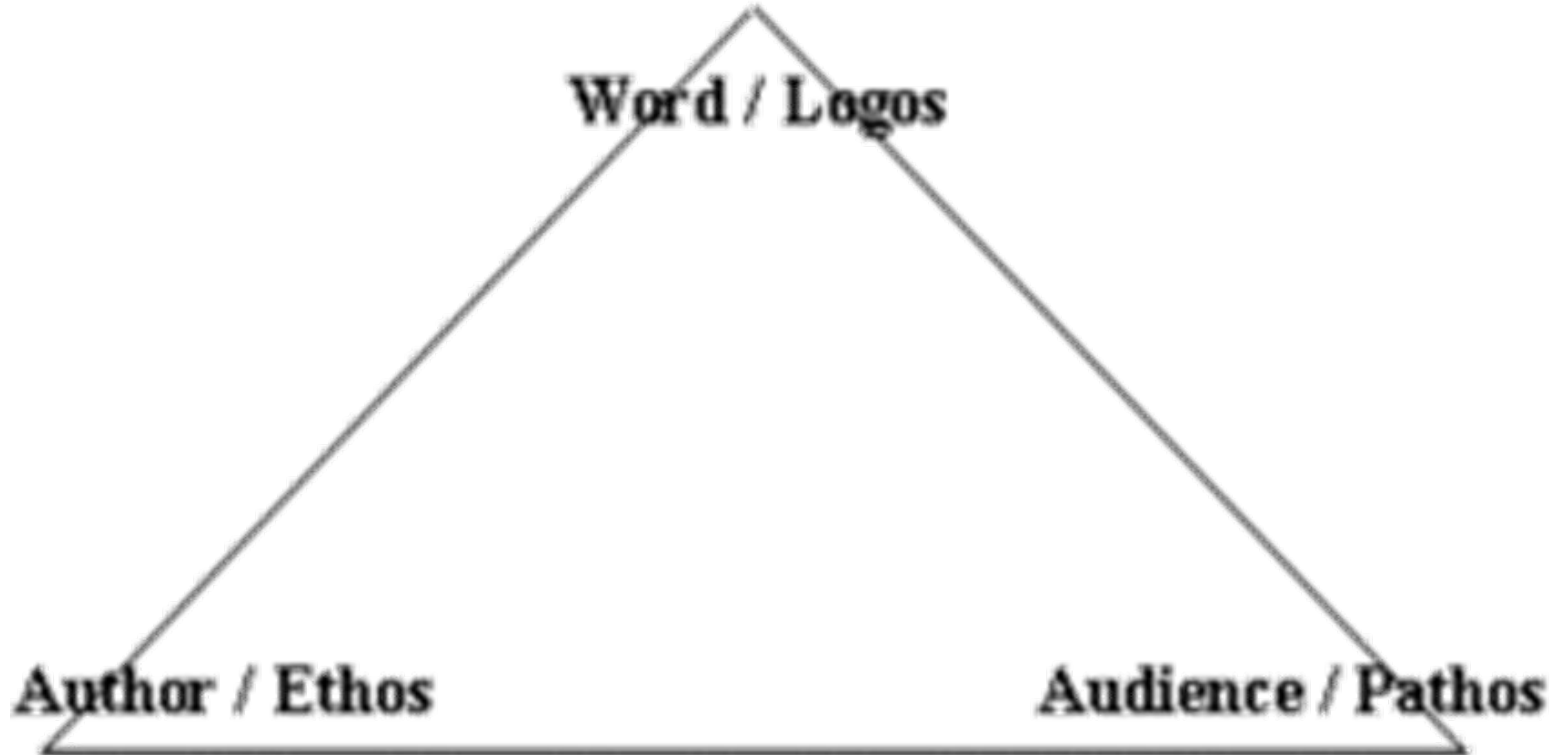
****** Although an argument doesn't have to persuade people, an argument can implicitly be persuasive.***

ANALYZING AN ARGUMENT

An argument is composed of three different elements:

- The Speaker: the person/persona delivering the message
- The Purpose: the topic + the reason for delivering the argument
- The Audience: both specific (the specific group that is listening to/reading the argument) and general (the more generalized group of people the speaker is trying to reach)

ANALYZING AN ARGUMENT



ANALYZING AN ARGUMENT

• **Logos (evidence based on logic, facts, and truths; the truths can be universally accepted or proven facts or can be based on ideas or concept true for a specific group of people):**

- Note the claims the author makes, the **exigence** ('a gap, a need, a lack, something that needs doing'; why the argument exists)
- Note the data (evidence) the author provides in support of the claims
- Note the conclusions an author draws

ANALYZING AN ARGUMENT

Ethos (believability of the speaker; credibility and trustworthiness, both according to the speaker himself and the qualifications to deliver the argument):

- Note how the author establishes a **persona** (the adopted perspective/character a speaker or author uses to deliver an argument)
- Note how the author establishes credibility (not only in what he/she says, but also how he/she says it, and also nonverbally)
- Note any revelation of the author's credentials or personal history

ANALYZING AN ARGUMENT

Pathos (evidence designed to stir the emotions of the audience; language or syntax designed to make the audience more receptive to or engaged in the speaker/writer's message):

- ✧ Note the primary audience of the text
- ✧ Note the emotional appeals the author makes
- ✧ Note the author's expectations of the audience

• A successful argument will use all three of the rhetorical appeals and use them appropriately for the subject/purpose of the argument and the audience.

• Consider how you could use the rhetorical appeals in the following situations:

▫ You are trying to convince your school's administration to increase funding for technology in the school.

Logos? Pathos? Ethos?

▫ You are trying to convince a group of your peers not to smoke cigarettes.

Logos? Pathos? Ethos?

▫ You are trying to convince a group of first-grade students not to smoke cigarettes.

Logos? Pathos? Ethos?

• When you are reading a nonfiction text, note the language the author uses to appeal to logos, pathos, and ethos.

• The rhetorical appeals will inform and influence every aspect of the text (organization, imagery, word choice, syntax, etc.)

PRACTICE ANALYZING ARGUMENT

The two following pictures have similar elements but used for different purposes. For each image, identify:

1. Author
2. Audience
3. Purpose
4. Logos, Pathos, Ethos

Marlboro Lights



Come to Marlboro Country.



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A photograph of two cowboys on horseback, silhouetted against a bright orange and yellow sunset sky. They are riding away from the camera on a dirt path that leads through a wooden fence. The scene is captured in a warm, golden light, creating a nostalgic and somber atmosphere. The text "I miss my lung, Bob." is superimposed in the center of the image in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

I miss my lung, Bob.

PRACTICE ANALYZING ARGUMENT

The two following commercials have similar elements, but, again used for different purposes. For each commercial, identify:

1. Author
2. Purpose
3. Audience
4. Logos, Pathos, Ethos



WHAT IS THE FORM OF ARGUMENT?

An argument is constructed of:

A claim—the topic and the opinion about the topic

(Ex. “People shouldn’t smoke.”, “Slavery should be abolished.”)

Evidence—the reasons that support the claim in the form of a ‘because clause’

(Ex. “...because smoking can cause serious health problems for the smoker and for those around him.”, “...because it is inhumane to both the slaves and the slaveholders.”)

WHAT IS THE FORM OF AN ARGUMENT?

Grounds-specific reasons or support that backs up the claim

(“People shouldn’t smoke because smoking has been proven to cause cancer in lab rats.”, “Slavery should be abolished because it strips the humanity from the slaves, such as not allowing them to know their birthday or learn to read and write, and the slave-owners such as turning Ms. Auld from a sweet, angelic woman into a cruel monster.”)

Warrant—the underlying assumption or chain of reasoning that connects the grounds to the claim; doesn’t need to be stated outright because it is implied

(Ex. “People shouldn’t smoke because smoking can cause health problems in the smoker and in those around him.” The underlying assumption in this argument is: ‘People don’t want to cause health problems for themselves and for others.’ “You should go to college because it is advantageous to your future.” The underlying assumption in this argument is: ‘You should do things that are advantageous to your future.’)

However, ALL AP ARGUMENTS will require an extensive warrant. Think of the warrant as the part of the argument that comes after the words because or since. It is the part of the argument that explains **HOW COME or IN WHAT WAY** the evidence actually proves the claim. If I say that the Declaration guarantees equality for all citizens, that is a **claim**. If I quote, "...all men are created equal," that is **evidence**. If I say, "Because this quotation uses the phrase 'all men' not merely to refer to male American citizens or even to all males, but to humanity in general, the statement proves that the Declaration guarantees equality for all citizens," that is a **warrant**. I've explained HOW COME the data (the quotation from the Declaration) proves my claim of guaranteed equality.

WHAT IS THE FORM OF AN ARGUMENT?

Reservation/Rebuttal-counterarguments to the claim, followed by reasons those counter arguments are faulty and do not invalidate the claim

(Ex: “Although some people think you should be allowed to do whatever you want to your own body, people shouldn’t smoke because smoking can also harm other people.” Ex: “Even though some people argue that slaves are treated humanely, slavery should be abolished because first-hand accounts from slaves show how horrible their treatment really is.”)

WHAT IS THE FORM OF AN ARGUMENT?

Qualification-specification of limits to claim, warrant, and argument; the degree of conditionality asserted

(EX: “Unless smoking is only done when in the privacy of one’s own home, people shouldn’t smoke because smoking can damage the smoker and the people around him.”)

***** COMPLEX ARGUMENTS TYPICALLY SHOULD BE QUALIFIED SINCE A LACK OF A QUALIFICATION CAN LEAD TO AN OVER-GENERALIZED OR STEREOTYPED ARGUMENT!**

What is the
implied claim?

What is the
grounds?

The warrant?

EVERYTHING is
an argument.



EFFECTIVE EVIDENCE

C

H

O

R

E

S

- CURRENT EVENT
- HISTORY
- OTHER
- READING
- ENTERTAINMENT
- SCIENCE

OTHERS:

- Hypothetical
- Anecdote
- analogy

R

Reading

Evidence from literature should “zoom in” on one moment with 1-2 character(s) as the focus. The evidence should be so specific that we could point to the page in the work on which the evidence could be found..

ARGUMENTATION

REFUTING / CONCEDED

OVERVIEW

Counterargument - at least one paragraph which explains the opposite point of view

Concession - a sentence or two acknowledging that there could be some truth to the opposing point of view

Rebuttal - sentences which explain why the opposing argument is not as strong as your argument

Refutation and concession are important parts of argumentation. Both allow you to show an understanding of the issue at hand. In addition, concession allows you present yourself as a reasonable person and create ethos.

Steps to Refuting an Argument:

1. Introduce your opponent's argument.
2. Acknowledge parts of the opposition
3. Provide counter-argument and counter-evidence/rebuttal.
4. Introduce the conclusion

Example:

People who think life was better before industrialization argue that pollution has caused more cancer and other diseases. It is true, that pollution has caused more health problems, but the truth is that over the past two hundred years, the infant mortality rate has declined; people live longer now, and doctors can cure more diseases. Thus, life after the industrial revolution is significantly better than before.

BUILDING A REBUTTAL/ REFUTE...

1. Introduce the Opposing Argument

The writer **summarizes the opposition's** viewpoint openly and honestly. Ignoring the opposition is futile in that the audience is aware of the opposing arguments and will doubt the credibility of a presentation that chooses to ignore the opposition rather than deal with it.

The phrases below are not the only ways to introduce a refutation. Be specific when you can by referring to a specific opponent or argument (i.e.— **Tom Adkins claims that...but...**). But the phrases below are good ones to use IF you don't have a specific argument to argue against.

Ways writers can begin:

It is often argued that...

It is true that...

Opposing views claim...

Some claim that . . .

Opponents suggest that...

Some people would argue that...

2. Acknowledge parts of the opposition that are valid

The writer acknowledges that **some of the opposition's claims** may be valid, but the writer still shows that his **own claims are stronger**. The strength of the writer's claims are more convincing than the opposing viewpoints. A writer might explain the opposition's weakest points, contrasting them with his argument's strongest points.

- This will be the longest part where you present their WEAK evidence and follow it up with YOUR STRONG evidence.

Ways writers can begin:

Admittedly,

Certainly,

Of course,

One cannot deny that...

At the same time...

I will admit that...

While it is true that...

It may be true that ...

Even if it's true that ...

There is some truth to the argument that ...

3. Counter the Argument

Introduce the **rebuttal** of the concession argument. The writer **refutes the opposition's claims** showing they are incorrect or inconsequential--not a real problem.

Ways writers can begin:

Nevertheless,

However,

On the other hand,

But...

4. Introduce the Conclusion

The conclusion should **summarize** why the counter argument is not a sufficient solution.

Ways writers can begin

Thus,

Therefore,

As a result,

Sometimes writers might just want to restate his/her position simply.

REBUTTAL PRACTICE

1. You will be assigned someone else's opinion article.
2. Create a rebuttal challenging the author of the article.
Use the 4 Steps for creating a rebuttal.
3. Use specific evidence from your own experiences and knowledge to support your response!
4. Share out

HOW TO ORGANIZE ESSAY

IN GENERAL

1. Open with an introduction that presents the basis for argument AND states your position.
2. Present and refute (or concede) obvious opposition. (This can go in your introduction or throughout your body paragraphs or in a paragraph of its own.)
3. Support your position with specific evidence. (This will be multiple paragraphs.)
4. Restate your position in the conclusion, and, if possible, create a frame referring back to your introduction.

INTRODUCTION

To write a good introduction for an argumentative essay you have to identify the controversy surrounding the issue and state the thesis (your position).

Some creative ways to begin a paper:

A quote (from the selection or otherwise)

An anecdote (I once knew a man who...One day as I was...My mother always told me...etc. etc. etc.)

Description (“A black and white photograph is taped to a mirror. The edges are worn and the photograph is ...”)

Simile or metaphor (“A photograph is like a time capsule...”)

IN YOUR INTRODUCTION, YOU CAN ALSO...

You can also begin to address the opposing argument in your introduction.

Example

Although many people think that grades are a good means of differentiating more able students from less able students, not all students are good at test taking. Schools should provide multiple forms of assessing student knowledge so that all students have every opportunity to succeed.

INTRODUCTION CONTINUED...

Besides presenting a counter-argument in your introduction, you can also concede in your introduction.

Look at the following example of concession:

There is no question that tests will always be a part of the educational process. Some sort of testing is absolutely necessary (conceding a point). But some students do not do well on traditional tests. This does not mean that students who do poorly on tests are less capable.

BODY PARAGRAPHS

Use your notes on types of evidence...

Personal Anecdotes - A story about yourself or someone you know that illustrates your point.

Facts, Details, and Examples—Including as much specific detail as possible.

Quotes From Provided Passages (if available)

Hypothetical Illustrations

Refuting The Opposition - address a point from the other side of the argument and explain why that point is incorrect.

Conceding A Point— Sometimes a valid opposing point is so obviously true that you can't NOT mention it. When this is the case, go ahead and make a concession. Your argument will be better developed, and you'll win some good will from your audience who will see how fair-minded you are.

Historical Or Pop Culture References

BODY PARAGRAPHS

Some points may require extensive development and support, perhaps in a series of closely related paragraphs. Most often you'll state the paragraph's main point in a topic sentence and go on to explain or define key terms, then give specific details that support the topic sentence. Paragraphs refuting the opposition, however, are usually concerned with exploring another person's thinking, especially with pointing out errors of logic and failures of insight. If you can show that your case is strong and the opposition's is weak, chances are excellent that the reader will be on your side at the end--and that's the goal.

BODY PARAGRAPHS

WITHIN the techniques above, develop your unique voice through the use of...

- ❑ Logical, emotion, and ethical appeals (logos, pathos, ethos)
- ❑ Conscious choices in your own diction and syntax (vary long and short sentences, complex and simple, for example)
- ❑ Syntactical patterns like parallelism

USING APPEALS...

Reason/Logic

Much of the clear thinking we do in our everyday lives follows logical principles, but in a less formal and systematic way than the thinking of a research scientist. And for most occasions this informal reasoning is adequate. That's not to say your argument can be illogical, only that you shouldn't confuse formal logic with clear thinking or good sense, the essential qualities your argument should display. Briefly, informal reasoning requires clearly linking your general claims with concrete, specific data.

USING APPEALS...

Ethics/Ethos

No matter how solid your reasoning, readers may not accept your argument unless they're also convinced that you're a person of wisdom, honesty, and good will. If you misrepresent the evidence, display narrow-mindedness in your own value structure, or seek to hurt some individual or group, you can expect to alienate your readers.

(This is where counter-argument is useful!)

USING APPEALS...

Emotion/Pathos

One way to build pathos is to illustrate or dramatize an idea. This may involve little more than folding short descriptive and narrative examples into the argument.

Are you arguing that there should be stiffer penalties against drunk drivers? You might want to tell the story of a driver who caused several accidents and hurt a number of people because the individual's license was never revoked. Including such narrative and descriptive passages can help readers feel the urgency of your proposition so that it gets beyond the level of abstract intellectual speculation and becomes a matter of immediate human concern.

CONCLUSION

Finish with conviction. After all, if you aren't convinced, why should your reader be? You might end with an amplification (ringing conclusion), a review of your main points, or a **reference to something in your introduction.**

If you have the time and inclination to do something extra with your conclusion, try creating a sense of closure by connecting it to your introduction.

For example, a paper that begins with the simile above (The complexity of nature is like a woven tapestry...) could end include something like this in the conclusion:

Mary Oliver conveys the complexity of the woven tapestry that is nature through her use of...

HOW TO BREAKDOWN THE PROMPT