

Writing Body Paragraphs for Advanced Placement English Language Rhetorical Analysis Essays

This file contains sample paragraphs from papers scoring 8's or 9's on AP English Language rhetorical analysis compositions. Please refer to my webpage on "Writing the Rhetorical Analysis," under "Writing for the AP Exam," for more detailed information.

Look for patterns in the following essays.

First, note that every single paragraph will have at least one **CONCRETE** illustration. When identifying the author's choices, always, always, always illustrate with direct quotes.

Next, note that the writers nearly always talk about the audience. The author has made his choices for a reason. He has "intent." The ultimate goal, of course, is to change the minds of his readers. So, observe how these writers explain **WHY** the author made these choices and **HOW** they might affect the reading audience. The more time spent here, the higher the scores.

Lastly, note that the writers tend not to force technical words. They simply identify something the author did and explain why he did it (and, of course, how it helps make his point). Most of the time, these writers simply talk about the author's diction (or word choice) and selection of detail.

While Lippmann presents the opposing view, that rights should be protected to all ~~and~~ are equal and not suppressed, he firmly discredits this notion in such a convincing manner that the reader could seem a fool to disagree. He ~~manipulates~~ connects attributes such as "noble" and "unselfish" to less pleasant characteristics, such as "naïve", and "vaguely benevolent", thus leaving the reader predisposed to look badly on those who "defend to the death" that with which they ~~also~~ do not agree. He follows by explaining the true reason that ~~the~~ freedoms should exist ^{from agreement from} ~~with~~ the audience with words like "must" and "vital".

This simple analytical paragraph identifies the writer's intent and then shows HOW (via diction) the writer conveys this understanding. Note that the writer does not say, "The author uses diction...." Simply identify the writer's choices and explain WHY he made those choices—or HOW they contribute to his point.

One of the most overarching points made is the way both sides use highly-strung and emotional appeals rather than statistically, scientifically, or logically-based argument. This use of pathos comes bluntly across in his diction as he calls out names on both sides, calling the environmentalists "greens, enviros, environmental extremists, ~~environmental~~ wackos" and then on the opposing side calling people-first advocates "brown-lashers, wise users, and sagebrush rebels." Side-by-side ~~is~~ ~~as~~ as in his book, such name-calling is stressed as childish, insignificant, and above all—unconstructive. He moves on to claim in one place that the people-first advocates want "unrestrained capitalism with land development ^{environment} über alles" and then that the ~~wackos~~ ^{"environment"} only want "power" and to "expand the government, especially the federal government." Again, such

→

diction — especially the fascist nazi reference
 of "über alles, mein über alles" — is both
 illegitimate and juvenile — a point now clearly
 made by Wilson of the two groups. Childish discussion
 is nearly by definition unproductive.
 Besides simple diction and syntactical

Note the simple structure of this paragraph: Identification of a rhetorical strategy. Presentation of Evidence. Explanation of significance. The writer integrates an impressive amount of concrete evidence to support his analysis, clearly showing the author Wilson's intent.

The author, after presenting examples to make the anti-intellectual
 sentiment in society understood, rallies to his point: "Enough is
 enough". From here, Friedman presents his ^{strongly worded} argument against the
 prevailing feeling in society, an argument to restore the nerd,
 the geek, the ostracized academic, to their rightful positions in society.
 Taking the fight to the global level, the author references "our
 economic rivals in East Asia," where intellectualism is celebrated
 by the society as a whole. ^{a thought that many Americans currently concerned with} These sentiments carry Friedman into ^{outsourcing} ^{jobs can relate}
 his next thought — the wage gap between athletes and educators
 and researchers that is omni-present in America. Finally,
 the author makes his last point: the preeminence of the nation itself
 is at jeopardy on a global scale because of the anti-intellectualism
 in society. ^{what shocks the readers into taking another look at how they themselves} ^{a new intellectualism — like could promote anti-intellectualism if it threatens}

Extremely well done. Note how the writer seemingly integrates more than a few quotes from the original source. Alos, consider that the writer doesn't use any "fancy" literary language. He simply points out what the author does and WHY he does it. Please see the value of the small words written at the end. Here the writer talks about the effect on the audience ("shocks the readers"). Don't just say what the author does: Say WHY he does it. What response does he want from his audience? The more you talk about the audience, the better.

uncertainty as an ally rather than a foe.
 Having established the role of uncertainty,
 Barry shifts into an analogy comparing scientists
 to pioneers. A pioneer marches into chaos, making
 order with "tools... ~~do not~~ [that] do not exist."
 This analogy is used to relate his continuing
 argument back to his thesis about uncertainty —

colleagues. And then, quite bluntly, he provides the inverse result, which is equivalent to falling off a cliff, an image reminiscent of Wile E. Coyote, who himself is very methodical, persistent, and courageous in ^{the} ~~his~~ pursuit of his goal. Barry's intent with the reversal is to instill, once more, the idea of fear and uncertainty in the reader.

Barry's fifth paragraph is full of questions. Literally...

In the larger paper, most of this writer's ideas are elaborated further. The writer was asked how the author characterizes scientists. Note that, in the last line, the writer talks about the effect on the audience. Also, note language in which the writer explains WHY certain devices were used (e.g., "This analogy is used relate..."). The official graders praised this writer's daring to be humorous (e.g., Wile E. Coyote). Also, the writer was able to identify advanced techniques, such as antithesis.

The Inquisitor also uses pathos, the rhetorical appeal to emotion. He understands that the very is against all things evil, which is exactly what he portrays Joan of arc as. He explains in line 31 that if Heresy be allowed to corrupt the church, "the most tender-hearted among you ... would clamour against the mercy of the church."

He scares his audience into thinking that they will not be able to judge between a pious girl and devilish convict. In line 50 he warns, "this ^{girl} is not one of those ^{whose} hard features are the sign of hard hearts, and whose brazen looks +

they are accused..." He even uses a paradox to describe Joan of Arc as a contradictory character in lines 58^{saying,} "you will see a diabolical pride and a natural humility seated side by side in the self-same soul." ^{Though} ~~not only, yet~~ she may ~~also~~ ^{seem} humble and sweet, an underlying ~~evil~~ ^{evil} consumes her.

Good paragraph. The writer quotes two lines, both of which evidence emotional appeals. The effect on the audience (fear) is clearly indicated. The recognition of the paradox adds depth to the response. Remember to talk about the audience! ("He scares the audience....") It is a pattern that we've seen so far in papers scoring 8+.

In addition to this diction, Hazlitt uses several syntactical strategies to convey his point about poverty. The most obvious of these is his one massive, extended sentence, which ~~the~~ reaches across two or three standard-sized paragraphs. This huge sentence models the massive obstacle course the impoverished must face in life because of Hazlitt's negative word choice, the life of the poor is presented as a continual, unending stream of oppression. This stream-like idea of ~~misfortune~~ misfortune is further mirrored by the asyndeton in the passage. This asyndeton mirrors the idea that there are no breaks for the poor no pauses

This referenced passage caused all sorts of trouble the year it was given. Basically, there were 800 words, of which 650 were in one long sentence. But this writer understood WHY the author wrote a single sentence that listed the problems caused by money. After reading these two paragraphs, we understand the author's unusual choice. Remember, the keys to a rhetorical analysis: (1.) Identify a choice made by the author to convey his ideas. (2.) Explain WHY this choice was made. (3.) Indicate HOW the reader is expected to respond. The writer above does all three ("is enough to convince almost anyone of...").

Even more telling that Price's selection of quotes and examples is the tone she uses selectively but effectively. Her sarcasm is quite strong in the stand-alone fragment in line 15, "But no matter." The Americans nearly wiped out ~~the~~ this bird, but that was unimportant to them. ~~the~~ this surely contrasts with both generic sentiment and especially her scholarly audience. It therefore reflects what she thinks Americans find important. Things that certainly would be defined conventional wisdom and morality were a non-issue. Later in the essay, she asks a rhetorical question (lines 46-47). Besides entertaining the reader, she uses this device to further underscore the importance of the color pink. She Price then illustrates the further absurdity of making the plastic bird unnecessarily brighter than the real one. This leads

write beyond this border.

Simply note what the writer is doing. She presents a strategy (first tone, then rhetorical questions), followed by evidence and explanation. She also performs the magic trick: Talking about the reader (“Besides entertaining the reader....”).

I hope by now that you see the pattern of success. Look for the same pattern in the following samples taken from other essays that have scored 8 or 9.

shared by African Americans.

Stewart's diction is also effective in supporting her position by making her argument for equal rights have a more ethical and emotional appeal. For example words such as "chains", "death" and "cruel" establish a bitter and at times solemn tone that helps the audience identify with her cause. However, not all of Stewart's diction is intended to employ pathos or ethos in her argument but she also uses legal jargon and concrete examples to make a logical appeal. Stewart calls for "equal rights and privileges" as well as lists the current "servile labors" such as "house domestics... as tending upon gentlemen's tables". Phrases such as "the chain of the cruel driver" has ~~advertising~~ an almost macabre element to her lecture which shocks her audience and conveys the cruel realities of slavery.

The most apparent and effective

italicizing upstream for effect.

In the third paragraph, Barry also presents the river as if it has a life of its own, using smiles to compare the scientific aspects of the river to everyday phenomena. The movement of the river "south in layers and whorls" may be difficult to envision, but Barry presents it as an "uncoiling rope made of discrete fibers". The surface of one part of the river is also sometimes higher than the surrounding surface; Barry imagines that the river is "trying to devour itself". These similes are so spontaneous; Barry does not describe how these phenomena came about but only that they did happen. The idea that a river would act like an "uncoiling rope" or a "whip" seems to lend it a life. The personification in the following paragraph furthers this image as the "actions" of the river become more vibrant and directly life-related: "snakes", "sucking", "sewing". The river has gradually come alive to Barry; ~~by the~~ by the end of the passage, it is no longer "just water", but ~~just water~~ a real being with a mind of its own. The fact that any inanimate could leave such an impression on anybody is testament to the hold with which it has enraptured that person.

Barry concludes with an implication that there is

public's gullibility and the advertising industry's power.

Through subtle, tongue-in-cheek humor, it mocks the seductive diction of real advertisements.

The article first asserts that through "no fewer than five forms of pseudoscience," the ~~newest~~ sole inserts will "stimulate and soothe." This plays on the ever-popular more-is-better mindset of the

consumer public. "Where one solution may be good, five must be even better" is the ringing cry of an almost greedy consumer. The Onion ~~makes~~ ^{being better} makes light of the post WWII "more is more" sentiment that often clouds and misguides human judgement. ~~What is it that~~

~~is it that~~ ^{something} ~~was lacking must be~~ ~~compensated~~ Also, the alliteration of the words "stimulate and soothe" promote a sense of ^{false} well-being. ~~And~~ ~~Also~~ Further

on in the article, the Onion draws attention to another common misconception: the idea that all things eastern are healthy and wise to do. By replacing "orient" with "practiced in the occident" (emphasis added), the article subtly and humorously underscores this fallacy.

The satirical tone continues as the article