***Persuasion and Argumentation***

*Persuasion* is writing designed to create a want or to motivate an action. It relies heavily on appeals to emotion, and often uses the same linguistic resources as poetry to achieve its end:

vivid images, careful control of connotations, repetition, rhythm, even rhyme.

*Argumentation* differs from persuasion by being more rational. It is aimed at clarifying a topic rather than moving a reader. Its function is to make a reader see things in a particular way rather

than to make the reader do something.

Argument seeks to make an informed case for or against something; it tries to prove by logical connection that one view of a topic is right and another is wrong—it does not necessarily seek to motivate the reader to action. Persuasion, on the other hand, is always concerned with action and motivation: “trust me,” “fear them,” “buy this product,” “vote for this candidate.”

**—Scholes, Robert. *The Practice of Writing.* New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989.**

Where persuasion seeks to put the mind to sleep, so that its appeal to emotion will be effective, argumentation aims to awaken thought by appealing to reason.

Whatever its exact purpose, the argument essay should be composed of a clear thesis and body paragraphs that offer enough sensible reasons and persuasive evidence to convince readers to

agree with its particular view.

1. The core of the argument is an assertion or proposition, a debatable claim about the subject. Generally, this assertion is expressed as a thesis statement. It may defend or attack a position, suggest a solution to a problem, recommend a change in policy, or challenge a value or belief.
2. The central assertion is broken down into subclaims, each one supported by evidence.
3. Opposing arguments are raised, then dispensed with, again with the support of evidence.
4. The parts of the argument are organized into a clear, logical structure that pushes steadily

toward the conclusion.

*“In a coordinated English curriculum, teachers of all grade levels can help students to reason clearly and to respond effectively by teaching the skills of persuasive argumentation. Students too often use faulty reasoning, unclear about what they want to say or how they reach their conclusions. Often, they decide quickly how they ‘feel’ about an issue and then respond on a kind of visceral level. Their reasoning becomes muddled, and, when pressed, they resort to the justification ‘because that’s what I believe.’”*

*—***College Board, *A Guide for Advanced Placement English Vertical Teams***

I

n constructing and analyzing arguments, we still rely on the methods of appeal distinguished by Aristotle: ethical, emotional, and logical. All three may be used in one argument, although a writer may rely on one kind more than another.

* In an **ethical** appeal, the writer must convince his audience of his good character, of his knowledge of the issues at hand and the strength of his claims and evidence, and that he has the good of his audience in mind. Its tone is reasonable and sincere, thus establishing the writer’s credibility.
* In an **emotional** appeal, the writer offers nothing but simple responses to a complex problem; this appeal relies on stereotyping, or sets one group against another; or relies on emotion in place of facts or reason. It aims directly for readers’ hearts—for the complex of beliefs, values, and feelings deeply embedded in everyone.
* In a **logical** appeal, there is a well-structured argument with a thesis, as well as reasons that develop that thesis, including supporting evidence. This process of reasoning may be inductive or deductive:

**Inductive reasoning** moves from the particular to the general, from evidence to a generalization or conclusion about the evidence. It is a process we being learning in infancy and use daily throughout our lives: a child burns herself the three times she touches a stove, so she concludes that stoves burn; we have liked four movies directed by Oliver Stone, so we form the generalization that Oliver Stone makes good movies. Evidence for induction may be *facts* (statistics or other hard data that are verifiable), *opinions* of recognized experts based on research and observation, or *examples* illustrating the evidence.

**Deductive reasoning** works from general to the particular, starting with an inductive generalization and applying it to a new situation in order to draw a conclusion about that situation. Like induction, deduction is a process we use constantly to order our experience. The child who learns from three experiences that all stoves burn then sees a new stove and concludes this stove also will burn. The child’s thought process can be written in the form of a *syllogism*, a three-step outline of deductive reasoning:

All stoves burn me.

This is a stove.

Therefore, this stove will burn me.

The first statement, the generalization derived from induction, is called the **major premise.** The second statement, a more specific assertion about some element of the major premise, is called the **minor premise**. The third statement, an assertion of the logical connection between premises, is called the **conclusion.**

Adapted from Aaron, Jane E. *The Compact Reader: Short Essays by Method and Theme*. Bedford, St. Martins, 1999.

**What do students do that they should not do?**

* rail against everything
* give unsupported opinions / over generalize
* use conventional language
* supply inappropriate evidence
* cannot explain how they got from evidence to conclusion
* use non-sequiters
* are self-referential

**What should students do that they do not do?**

* take a stand and move ahead
* think – conceptualize a plan of attack
* complete a thought before moving on
* keep an open mind
* use words that mean something
* support both sides of an argument

**Thinking through an assertion:**

1. What is the issue being debated?
2. What is the speaker’s position on this issue?
3. What key terms must be defined?
4. What are the implications of these key terms?
5. What are the assertions that support the issue?
6. What evidence or illustrations does the speaker use to support the assertions?
7. What are the connections between the evidence and the thesis or speaker’s position?

**Planning a response:**

1. Summarize or paraphrase the issue.
2. Weigh the validity of the assertion.
3. List the pros and cons for an argument.
4. Assign appropriate evidence to pros and to cons.
5. Decide to agree or disagree with the argument.
6. Determine the audience.
7. Organize the evidence for developing a persuasive argument.

***In evaluating argument, the structure of the argument must be analyzed—how it works—but also what its claims are, and whether they are well supported with evidence.***

Students might insert their own arguments into one of the following rhetorical patterns:

It is true that. . . however. . . therefore

Certainly. . .but. . .in short

Admittedly. . . on the other head. . . so

Of course. . . nevertheless. . . as a result

Obviously. . . on the contrary. . . finally

Here is one paragraph that a student wrote: (see essay below)

# Banning Of Books and Movies

Admittedly many books and movies contain materials which are unsuited to all audiences that have access to them. Most parents would not want their seven-year-old to watch films that promote violence and hatred. They have the right to decide what is right or wrong for their children. On the other hand, they don't have the right to censor what I might want for my child. If a teacher wants a class to watch a certain film, then any parent may opt out for his/her child. Therefore, books and movies should not be banned, and the general public can be allowed to follow its own moral standards.

***Argumentation Practice***

*Read the following essay by Charles Krauthammer. Highlight in yellow his assertion; highlight in blue the evidence with which he supports his assertion.*

***Of Headless Mice. . .and Men***

Last year Dolly the cloned sheep was received with wonder, titters and some vague apprehension. Last week the announcement by a Chicago physicist that he is assembling a team to produce the first human clone occasioned yet another wave of Brave New World anxiety. But the scariest news of all—and largely overlooked—comes from two obscure labs, at the University of Texas and at the University of Bath. During the past four years, one group created headless mice; the other, headless tadpoles.

For sheer Frankenstien wattage, the purposeful creation of these animal monsters has no equal. Take the mice. Researchers found the gene that tells the embryo to produce the head. They deleted it. They did this in a thousand mice embryos, four of which were born. I use the term loosely. Having no way to breathe, the mice died instantly.

Why then create them? The Texas researchers want to learn how genes determine embryo development. But you don’t have to be a genius to see the true utility of manufacturing headless creatures: for their organs—full formed, perfectly useful, ripe for plundering.

Why should you be panicked? Because humans are next. “It would almost certainly be possible to produce human bodies without a forebrain,” Princeton biologist Lee Silver told the London *Sunday Times*. “These human bodies without any semblance of consciousness would not be considered persons, and thus it would be perfectly legal to keep them ‘alive’ as a future source of organs.”

“Alive.” Never have a pair of quotation marks loomed so ominously. Take the mouse-frog technology, apply it to humans, combine it with cloning, and you are become a god: with a single cell taken from , say your finger, you produce a headless replica of yourself, a mutant twin, arguably lifeless, that becomes your own personal, precisely tissue-matched organ farm.

There are, of course, technical hurdles along the way. Suppressing the equivalent “head” gene in man. Incubating tiny infant organs to grow into larger ones that adults could use. And creating artificial wombs (as per Aldous Huxley), given that it might be difficult to recruit sane women to carry headless fetuses to their birth/death.

It won’t be long, however, before these technical barriers are breached. The ethical barriers are already cracking. Lewis Wolpert, professor of biology at University College, London, finds producing headless humans “personally distasteful” but, given the shortage of organs, does not think distaste is sufficient reason not to go ahead with something that would save lives. And Professor Silver not only sees “nothing wrong, philosophically or rationally,” with producing headless humans for organ harvesting, he wants to convince a skeptical public that it is perfectly O.K.

When prominent scientists are prepared to acquiesce in—or indeed encourage—the deliberate creation of deformed and dying quasi-human life, you know we are facing a bioethical abyss. Human beings are ends, not means. There is no grosser corruption of biotechnology than creating a human mutant and disemboweling it at our pleasure for spare parts.

The prospect of headless human clones should put the whole debate about “normal” cloning in a new light. Normal cloning is less a treatment for infertility than a treatment for vanity. It is a way to produce an exact genetic replica of yourself that will walk the earth years after you’re gone.

But there is a problem with a clone. It is not really you. It is but a twin, a perfect John Doe, Jr., but still a junior. With its own independent consciousness, it is, alas, just a facsimile of you.

The headless clone solves the facsimile problem. It is a gateway to the ultimate vanity: immortality. If you create a real clone, you cannot transfer your consciousness into it to truly live on. But if you create a headless clone of just your body, you have created a ready source of replacement parts to keep you—your consciousness—going indefinitely.

Which is why one form of cloning will inevitably lead to another. Cloning is the technology of narcissism, and nothing satisfies narcissism like immortality. Headlessness will be cloning’s crowning achievement.

The time to put a stop to this is now. Dolly moved President Clinton to create a commission that recommended a temporary ban on human cloning. But with physicist Richard Seed threatening to clone humans, and with headless animals already here, we are past the time for toothless commissions and meaningless bans.

Clinton banned federal funding of human-cloning research, of which there is none anyway. He then proposed a five-year ban on cloning. This is not enough. Congress should ban human cloning now. Totally. And regarding one particular form, it should be draconian: the deliberate creation of headless humans must be made a crime, indeed a capital crime. If we flinch in the face of this high-tech barbarity, we’ll deserve to live in the hell it heralds.

***Argumentation Practice***

*Read the following essay by Gore Vidal. Highlight in yellow his assertion; highlight in blue the evidence with which he supports his assertion.*

***Drugs***

It is possible to stop most drug addiction in the United States within a very short time. Simply make all drugs available and sell them at cost. Label each drug with a precise description of what effects—good and bad—the drug will have on the taker. This will require heroic honesty. Don’t say that marijuana is addictive or dangerous when it is neither, as millions of people know—unlike “speed,” which kills most unpleasantly, or heroin, which is addictive and difficult to kick.

For the record, I have tried—once—almost every drug and liked none, disproving the popular Fu Manchu theory that a single whiff of opium will enslave the mind. Nevertheless many drugs are bad for certain people to take and they should be told in a sensible way.

Along with exhortation and warning, it might be good for our citizens to recall (or learn for the first time) that the United States was the creation of men who believed that each man has the right to do what he wants with his own life as long as he does not interfere with his neighbor’s pursuit of happiness. (That his neighbor’s idea of happiness is persecuting others does confuse matters a bit.)

This is a startling notion to the current generation of Americans. They reflect a system of public education which has made the Bill of Rights, literally, unacceptable to a majority of high school graduates (see the annual Purdue reports) who now form the “silent majority”—a phrase which that underestimated Richard Nixon took from Homer who used it to describe the dead.

Now one can hear the warning rumble begin. If everyone is allowed to take drugs everyone will and the GNP will decrease, the Commies will stop us from making everyone free, and we shall end up a race of zombies, passively murmuring “groovy” to one another. Alarming thought. Yet it seems most unlikely that any reasonably sane person will become a drug addict if he knows in advance what addiction is going to be like.

Is everyone reasonably sane? No. Some people will always become drug addicts just as some people will always become alcoholics, and it is just too bad. Every man, however, has the power (and should have the legal right) to kill himself if he chooses. But since most men don’t, they won’t be mainliners either. Nevertheless, forbidding people things they like or think they might enjoy only makes them want those things all the more. This psychological insight is, for some mysterious reason, perennially denied our governors.

It is a lucky thing for the American moralist that our country has always existed in a kind of time-vacuum. We have not public memory of anything that happened before last Tuesday. No one in Washington today recalls what happened during the years alcohol was forbidden to the people by a Congress that thought it had a divine mission to stamp out Demon Rum—launching, in the process, the greatest crime wave in the country’s history, causing thousands of deaths from bad alcohol, and creating a general (and persisting) contempt among the citizenry for the laws of the United States.

The same thing is happening today. But the government has learned nothing from past attempts at prohibition, not to mention repression.

Last year when the supply of Mexican marijuana was slightly curtailed by the Feds, the pushers got the kids hooked on heroin and deaths increased dramatically, particularly in New York. Whose fault? Evil men like the Mafiosi? Permissive Dr. Spock? Wild-eyed Leary? No.

The government of the United States was responsible for those deaths. The bureaucratic machine has a vested interest in playing cops and robbers. Both the Bureau of Narcotics and the Mafia want strong laws against the sale and use of drugs because if drugs are sold at cost there would be no money in it for anyone.

If there was no money in it for the Mafia, there would be no friendly playground pushers, and addicts would not commit crimes to pay for the next fix. Finally, if there was no money in it, the Bureau of Narcotics would wither away, something they are not about to do without a struggle.

Will anything sensible be done? Of course not. The American people are as devoted to the idea of sin and its punishment as they are to making money—and fighting drugs is nearly as big a business as pushing them. Since the combination of sin and money is irresistible (particularly to the professional politician), the situation will only grow worse.

***Analyzing Argument and Persuasion in Paragraphs***

Read carefully each of the following paragraphs. Highlight in yellow each assertion; highlight in blue the evidence with which the assertion is supported. Determine whether each writer uses inductive or deductive reasoning. If it is deductive, underline and label the major premise, the minor premise, and the conclusion.

A few nights ago, I watched the Chicago Bulls clobber the San Antonio Spurs. Michael Jordan performed one of his typically superhuman feats, an assist that suggested he had eyes in the back of his head and two sets of arms. To one citizen who called a local program, the prospect of “more Michael Jordans” made the whole “cloning thing” not only palatable but desirable. “Can you imagine a whole basketball team of Michael Jordans?” he asked giddily. Unfortunately, I can. It’s a nightmare. If there were basketball teams fielding Jordans against Jordans, we wouldn’t be able to recognize the one, the only, Michael Jordan. It’s like suggesting that forty Mozarts are better than one. There would be no Mozart if there were forty Mozarts. We know the singularity of the one, the extraordinary genius—a Jordan, a Mozart—because they stand apart from and above the rest. Absent that irreducible singularity, their gifts and glorious accomplishments would mean nothing. They would be the norm, commonplace: another dunk, another concerto.

—Jean Bethke Elshtain

One frequent claim about potential cloning of human beings is that it would reduce our individuality, making us all alike. But an important challenge to this feat already exists: identical twins, born with the same genes. Identical twins who are raised apart (for instance, in separate adoptive families) often differ significantly in IQ, temperament, sociability, adjustment, and other factors. Even when they are raised together in the same family, identical twins grow up as unique individuals. My cousins are identical twins who were raised together until they were eighteen. At age twenty-nine one is now a hot-tempered basketball coach and a loner, while the other is a shy doctoral student in linguistics, happily married with a child. Except for both being men, they could hardly be more different.

—Lianna Chu

**—A dapted from Aaron, Jane E. *The Compact Reader: Short Essays by Method and Theme. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1999.***

***Argumentation Practice***

The following essays were first published together in *USA Today* in a 1998 “Today’s Debate” column. The first essay represents the views of the newspaper’s editorial board; the second essay was written by Monty Neill, acting executive director of the National Center for Fair and Open Testing. Compare the rhetorical strategies—such as arguments, assumptions, attitudes, diction—used by the speaker in the two passages and tell which writer is more convincing.

**Free Pass Fails Kids**

Schools finally are ending an educational practice they never should have started—promoting even the students who fail.

The mistaken theory behind these “social promotions” is that children who are held back in school suffer damaging blows to their self-esteem. But this feel-good teaching practice ignores basic truths about the learning process. Chiefly, most knowledge is sequential. And a child who can’t master material one year isn’t likely to grasp more advanced lessons the next.

Embarrassed by high school graduates who can’t read or write, several school systems are questioning policies allowing the mass promotion of failing students. And governors from California to Texas this month joined President Clinton in calls to abolish the social promotion of students who aren’t making the grade. Their doubts make sense. Ignoring academic problems won’t make them disappear. And giving students a free pass maintains schools’ mediocrity by absolving students and teachers of their failings.

Yet bans on social promotions alone won’t help the nation’s troubled schools or their students. Turning academic failures into success stories is more complicated than telling kids, “Sorry. Try again.”

There is scant research supporting the notion that students who repeat classes will improve their academic achievement. What’s more, dropout rates balloon 20-30% among students who are held back.

The debate over dealing with lagging learners requires more than a pass-fail choice. Instead, school systems need better ways of identifying struggling students early on and providing them with intensive tutoring and customized learning plans.

That the solution adapted in Long Beach, CA, where educators have set up academic “checkpoints” in grades 3 and 8. Students missing needed skills are sent to summer school. Similarly, 42,000 Chicago students were required to take summer “bridge” classes last year because of their low test scores. By September, 15,000 had improved enough to be promoted.

Weekend classes, tutoring and summer school are costly. But targeted help is no more expensive than the average $5,500 per pupil states pay when students repeat a grade.

Replacing the social promotion of failing students with early, effective help teaches kids an important life lesson: Competence counts. And for students, personally, it is more rewarding than a free pass.

**Retaining Kids No Answer**

Opposition to “social promotion” is another “magic bullet” which offers a false solution to the real problems of students who are not learning.

Yes, students who need help should get it. They should not be passed along automatically. But grade retention does not improve learning.

Basing promotion decisions on test scores is unfair to many students and undermines educational quality. In Chicago, for example, students who score low on a multiple-choice test are held back. This violates the measurement profession’s standards for proper test use, which say schools should not make important decisions based solely on test scores.

This is because every test has measurement error. For example, on the SAT, used for college admissions, to know if two students really are different, their scores need to be about 140 points apart on a 1,200-point scale. This imprecision means that some students who should be promoted will be retained (or not graduate), while others who really need help will not get it.

What happens to students who are retained? Educational research clearly shows that retention is not helpful. A student who is not doing well in third grade and is held back will, when finally promoted, usually still be at the bottom of the class in fifth grade. However, students who are retained are far more likely to drop out, and repeating grades wastes a lot of taxpayers’ money.

Meanwhile, to try to raise test scores, many schools reduce the curriculum to test coaching. As a result, many important things are not taught, depriving students of a good education. The “drill and kill” instruction fostered by teaching to the test also causes many young people to dislike school. Summer schools set up to help students pass the test often focus on students who are close to passing, while ignoring students with even greater need.

No one wins from grade retention. There needs to be a better solution to real educational problems, starting with providing each student a powerful, engaging education. The nation does not need another misfired magic bullet.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **“Free Pass…”** | | **“Retaining Kids…”** | |
| What issue is being debated? | | | |
|  | |  | |
| What is the speaker’s position on the issue? | | | |
|  | |  | |
| What key terms must be defined? | | | |
|  | |  | |
| What are the implications of these key terms? (What can the reader infer about the speaker and his attitudes toward retaining children in school?) | | | |
|  | |  | |
| What assertions does each speaker use to support his position on the issue of retention? | | | |
|  | |  | |
| **“Free Pass…”** | | **“Retaining Kids…”** | |
| What evidence or illustrations does the speaker use to support his assertions? (Use direct quotes and paraphrase from each text.) | | | |
|  | |  | |
| What examples of diction support the speaker’s assumptions? | | | |
|  | |  | |
| Summarize in no more than three sentences the speaker’s attitude toward retention. | | | |
|  | |  | |
| **“Free Pass…”** | | **“Retaining Kids…”** | |
| How valid are each speaker’s reasons for supporting/opposing retention? | | | |
| Pro | Con | Pro | Con |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Write a one-sentence thesis for the prompt you were given. | | | |
|  | | | |
| Write an introductory paragraph for your essay. | | | |
|  | | | |

***Argumentation Practice***

The following is a letter written by Langston Hughes, under the pen name of Jesse B. Semple, in response to an article in *The New York Times*. Read the letter, and then write an essay discussing the effectiveness of Hughes’ argument and his use of rhetorical strategies.

Harlem, U.S.A.

One Cold February Day

Dear Dr. Butts,

I seen last week in the colored papers where you have written an article for *The New York Times* in which you say America is the greatest country in the world for the Negro race and Democracy the greatest kind of government for all, but it would be better if there was equal education for colored folks in the South, and if everybody could vote, and if there were not Jim Crow in the army, also if churches was not divided up into white churches and colored churches, and if Negroes did not have to ride on the back seats of busses South of Washington.

Now, all this later part of your article is hanging onto your but. You start off talking about how great American democracy is, then you but it all over the place. In fact, the but end of your see-saw is so far down on the ground I do not believe the other end can ever pull it up.

So me, myself, I would not write no article for no New York Times if I had to put in so many buts. I rekon maybe you come by it naturally, though, that being your name, dear Dr. Butts.

I hear tell that you are a race leader, but I do not know who you lead because I have not heard tell of you before and I have not laid eyes on you. But if you are leading me, make me know it, because I do not read *The New York* *Times* very often, less I happen to pick up a copy blowing around in the subway, so I did not know you were my leader. But since you are my leader, lead on, and see if I will follow behind your but — because there is more behind that but than there is in front of it.

Dr. Butts, I am glad to read that you writ an article in the New York Times, but also sometime I wish you would write one in the colored papers and let me know how to get out from behind all these buts that are staring me in the face. I know American is a great country but — and it is that but that has been keeping me where I is all these years. I can’t get over it, I can’t get under it, and I can’t get around it, so what am I supposed to do? If you are leading me, lemme see. Because we have too many colored leaders now that nobody knows until they get from the white papers to the colored papers and from the colored papers to me who has never seen hide nor hair of you. Dear Dr. Butts, are you hiding from me — and leading me too?

From the way you write, a man would think my race problem was made of nothing but buts. But this, but that, and yes, there is Jim Crow in Georgia but — America admits they bomb folks in Florida — but Hitler gassed the Jews. Mississippi is bad — but Russia is worse. Detroit slums are awful – but compared to slums in India, Detroit’s Paradise Valley is Paradise.

Dear Dr. Butts. Hitler is dead. I don’t live in Russia. India is across the Pacific Ocean. And I

do not hope to see Paradise no time soon. I am nowhere near some of them foreign countries you are talking about being so bad. I am here! But when they put a bomb under you like in Florida, you don’t have time to say your prayers. As for Detroit, there is as much difference between Paradise Valley and Paradise as there is between heaven and Harlem. I don’t know nothing about India, but I been in Washington, D.C. If you think there ain’t slums there, just take your but up Seventh Street late some night, and see if you still got it by the time you get to Howard University.

I should not have to be telling you these things. You are colored just like me. To put a but after all this Jim Crow fly-papering around our feet is just like telling a hungry man, “But Mr. Rockefeller has got plenty to eat.” It’s just like telling a joker with no overcoat in the

winter time, “But you will be hot next summer.” The fellow is liable to haul off and say, “I am hot now!” and bop you over your head.

Are you in your right mind, dear Dr. Butts? Or are you just writing? Do you really think a new day is dawning? Do you really think Christians are having a change of heart? I can see you now taking your pen in hand to write, “But just last year the Southern Denominations of

Hell-Fire Salvation resolved to work toward Brotherhood.” In fact, that is what you already

writ. Do you think Brotherhood means colored to them Southerners?

Do you rekon they will recognize you for a brother, Dr. Butts, since you done had your picture

taken in the Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria shaking hands at some kind of meeting with five hundred white big-shots and five Negroes, all five of them Negro leaders, so it said underneath the picture? I did not know any of them Negro leaders by sight, neither by name,

but since it says in the white papers that they are leaders, I rekon they are. Anyhow, I take my pen in hand to write you this letter to ask you to make yourself clear to me. When you answer me, do not write “so-and-so-and-so but —.” I will not take but for an answer. Negroes have been looking at Democracy’s but too long. What we want to know is how to get rid of that but.

Do you dig me, dear Dr. Butts?

Sincerely very truly,

JESSE B. SEMPLE

*Thanks to PamelaSue5@aol.com*

# *AP English III – Argumentation Practice*

Read carefully the following essay by E. B. White, written in July 1969, shortly after the first landing on the moon by U. S. astronauts.

“Moon Landing”

The moon, it turns out, is a great place for men. One-sixth gravity must be a lot of fun, and when Armstrong and Aldrin went into their bouncy little dance, like two happy children, it was a moment not only of triumph but of gaiety. The moon, on the other hand, is a poor place for flags. Ours looked stiff and awkward, trying to float on the breeze that does not blow. (There must be a lesson here somewhere.) It is traditional, of course, for explorers to plant the flag, but it struck us, as we watched with awe and admiration and pride, that our two fellows were universal men, not national men, and should have been equipped accordingly. Like every great river and every great sea, the moon belongs to none and belongs to all. It still holds the key to madness, still controls the tides that lap on shores everywhere, still guards the lovers who kiss in every land under no banner but the sky. What a pity that in our moment of triumph we did not forswear the familiar Iwo Jima scene and plant instead a device acceptable to all: a limp white handkerchief, perhaps, symbol of the common cold, which, like the moon, affects us all, unites us all.

Answer these questions as completely as possible:

1. What is the **subject** of this essay?

2. What is the **occasion** of this essay?

3. What is the speaker’s **attitude** toward his subject?

4. What is the speaker’s **purpose** in this essay?

5. List the reasons given by the author to **support** his position on this subject.

6. Give one or two **additional reasons** that the author did not include in his essay.

7. Think about the reasons someone else might give that **disagree** with this author’s position.

List at least three.

8. After reviewing the reasons you have listed, state **your** position on this subject. Your position

must be stated in one complete sentence.

9. Give at least two reasons to **support** your position.

10. What **evidence** can you provide from your own reading, observation, and/or experience to support your position?

## *AP English III: Writing a Brief Argument*

Your purpose is to convince your reader of the truth of your idea. Make all aspects of your essay focus on this idea. The following outline will help you to organize the paper:

**Introduction**

1. Establish your thesis. State it clearly in one sentence. In this essay, phrase the sentence in a dependent clause-independent clause structure:

*Although* (state the opposite side of your argument as an assertion or a proposition) *it is actually true that* (state your side of the argument as an assertion or a proposition of fact or desirable action). *While it may seem to some that . . . ., it is actually true that. . . .*

Spend time refining this sentence; it is the basis for your entire essay.

2. Having stated your thesis, write the introduction in such a way as to end with your thesis. This introduction must clearly explain the grounds for your thesis. Do not discuss the thesis itself, but clarify the circumstances that gave rise to the thesis. Shape your introduction in such a way as to lead naturally into the thesis.

**Body (second paragraph)**

1. Sum up and dismiss the idea contained in the subordinate clause of your thesis (the argument with which you disagree). Here you must show that the idea is not true, or that it is not important, or that it is not logical. Give the argument full and fair presentation.

2. Explain and discuss this position. Your paper will not be convincing unless you explain fully the idea contained in the subordinate clause of your thesis.

3. You will find these words or phrases good beginnings:

*It is true that. . .; To be sure. . .; One cannot disregard that. . .; Certainly; Sure*

**Body (third paragraph)**

1. Present the less important ideas of the main clause of your thesis. Explain and discuss. Give examples and use quotations.

2. These are good beginnings: *Nevertheless, But, However* (the most powerful turning word)

**Body (fourth paragraph)**

1. Present the most important point in defense of the point stated in the main clause of the thesis. Develop the idea fully and be sure to give examples and use quotations.

2. Use these words: *In addition; Even more important; Moreover; Certainly; Furthermore*

**Conclusion**

1. You have presented your ideas in support of the thesis you stated. In the conclusion you will show why it matters that you be believed. Do not summarize. Do not end with a cliché. Generalize to some universally important idea.

2. Use the most powerful concluding word: *Therefore*

*Contributed to the AP English listserve.*