MARCO LEARNING®

AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE & COMPOSITION

STUDY GUIDE PACK

Exam Overview

TIMING:

- 3 hours 15 minutes
  - 1 hour Multiple-Choice Section
  - 2 hour 15 minute Free-Response Section
    - 15 minutes reading time (suggested use of this time is for the Synthesis Essay)
    - 40 minutes Synthesis Essay
    - 40 minutes Rhetorical Analysis Essay
    - 40 minutes Argument Essay

Let's review the new stable wording of each free-response question.

The text in italics will vary by question, while the remainder of the prompt will be consistently used in the essay questions.

CONTENT:

Multiple Choice

- Non-fiction texts on a variety of topics
- Five passages
- Two types of questions: reading (23–25 questions) and writing (20–22 questions)
- 45 total questions

Free Response

- Synthesis Essay
  - Includes 6–7 sources (a combination of documents and images) on a given topic
  - 15 minutes reading/planning time, 40 minutes writing time
  - Task is to use ideas from at least three sources to support your argument
  - Topics often relate to current events
- Rhetorical Analysis Essay
  - Includes one passage to read
  - 40 minutes to read, plan, and write
  - Task is to explain how an author's use of rhetorical choices impacted the audience to achieve a specified purpose or effect
  - Recent passages have included an article from a magazine, a eulogy, a journalist's speech in front of a convention, and a commencement address

Stable Synthesis Prompt Wording:

[*Subject Introduction*]

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source.

Write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the sources and develops your position on [*specific subject from the introduction*].

Stable Rhetorical Analysis Wording:

[*Background on the rhetorical situation*]. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices [*the writer*] makes [*to develop/achieve/convey*] [*his/her*] [*argument…/purpose…/message…*].

- Argument Essay
  - Includes a short introduction to the topic
  - 40 minutes to plan and write
  - Task is to take a position on the topic and support it with ideas from your own reading or experiences
  - Topics are usually broad and/or abstract

Stable Argument Wording:

[*Topical discussion/introduction/quotation(s) and background*].

Write an essay that argues your position on [*specific subject from the introductions*].

SCORING

- Overall scale is 1–5:
  - 5 = extremely well qualified
  - 4 = well qualified
  - 3 = qualified
  - 2 = possibly qualified
  - 1 = no recommendation
- Multiple choice is worth 45% of the score
- Essays are worth 55% of the score

Free Response Rubrics

Essays are graded on a scale of 1–6; the rubrics contain three rows:

- Row A: Thesis (0–1 pt)
- Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 pts)
- Row C: Sophistication (0–1 pt)

The Rhetorical Situation

WHAT IS RHETORIC?

Rhetoric is "the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the use of figures of speech and other compositional techniques."

Analyzing Rhetoric

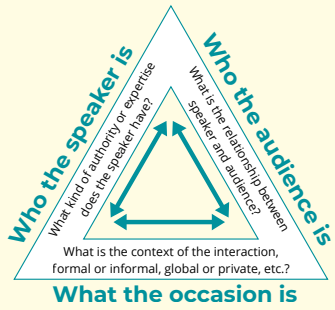
To analyze rhetoric, follow the steps below.

1. Identify the relationship between the speaker, subject, and audience—often, much of this information can be found in the prompt of a Q2 essay.
2. As you read the passage, chunk by primary points. This can be determined by asking yourself: "What is the author pointing out to the audience?"
   There may be one primary point for several paragraphs.
3. Take note of textual evidence that appeals ethically, logically, or emotionally to the audience or strengthens the speaker's credibility.
4. Examine the speaker's purpose for writing the passage. Consider which primary points best support his/her purpose.

Rhetorical Appeals

There are three main types of rhetorical appeals that speakers and writers make. These appeals are the result of rhetorical choices that an author makes within a text.

APPEAL TO AUTHORITY	APPEAL TO EMOTION	APPEAL TO LOGIC
When appealing to authority, the author can present details or evidence of any of the following to establish their own credibility: • Experience • Moral character • Credentials • Accolades	An author or speaker can effectively accomplish their goal by making their audience feel any one of a wide variety of emotions, including (but not limited to): • Sympathy • Sadness • Anger • Joy • Pride • Fear	This appeal can be accomplished by supplying any of the following: • Facts • Statistics or data • Evidence • Rational and logical argument



MAIN IDEA, PURPOSE, AND TONE

Whether analyzing a multiple-choice passage or a free-response question, there are three general characteristics that you must examine.

Main Idea
- Refers to the content of the passage.
- Answers the question "What is this passage about?"

Purpose
- Related to Main Idea, but not the same.
- Answers the question "What does the speaker hope to accomplish through the main idea?"

Tone
- Refers to the author's attitude about their subject.
- As you read through the passage, circle any extreme words, and look for images and associations and consider how the collection of tone words affect the audience. How would that effect help the speaker achieve their purpose?

When writing a rhetorical analysis, it is important to address how a writer's rhetorical choices affect the audience by appealing to one of these six universal topics:
- Moral
- Spiritual
- Political
- Social
- Psychological
- Historical

Writing the Analysis

Inadequate: Lincoln begins his speech by using ethos. He tells his audience that "at this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential office there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first." This makes the audience trust him.

Adequate: Lincoln begins his speech with a precise tone, informing his audience that "no prediction in regard to the [progress of arms] is ventured." This matter of fact attitude reflects how Lincoln is tired of the war and ready to move forward as he hopes the audience will be after listening to his address.

Sophisticated: To begin his speech, Lincoln apprises the audience of his executive experience and acknowledges that there is "less occasion" for long dialogue. This salutation mirrors the morale of the war-ravaged country and entices his audience to continue to listen to a "detail of a course" that hopes to repair the nation.

The preceding examples were constructed from Abraham Lincoln's "Second Inaugural Speech." You can visit the prompt and the passage on page 2 of the document found at **https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/eng_lang_frq_02_10330.pdf**

Justification: In the first example, the student states that Lincoln "uses ethos." This is a common mistake—a speaker cannot "use" ethos (or logos or pathos for that matter); however, a speaker will make a choice that establishes credibility with the audience. While the adequate paragraph is "technically correct," it lacks an explanation of how Lincoln's words would induce the audience to move forward. A sophisticated writer analyzes how a rhetorical choice creates a logical or emotional impact on an audience and examines what sort of assumptions a writer made about his audience to make such an appeal successful.

NOTES

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Diction

WHAT IS DICTION?

Understanding diction is essential to doing well in AP® English Language. Sure, diction in the literal sense may simply be the "distinctive vocabulary choices and style of expression" an author/speaker uses. But truthfully, there are layers and stages to what diction is and how good writers use it.

Diction affects the tone and complexity of a text. It can make a text formal and elevated or informal and casual, make it strong or weak, and diction can even identify the speaker—Shakespeare comes to mind. If you can learn to speak intelligently about the author's use of diction, you can own this test!

Denotation and Connotation

Every word has two kinds of meaning:

- ***Denotation*** is the dictionary definition of a word.
- ***Connotation*** is the feeling a word conveys.

Consider these two versions of another sentence:

- ***Angry*** students ***protest*** dress code policies.
- ***Outraged*** students ***riot*** against dress code policies.

The difference between these two sentences is caused largely by the *connotations* of the bolded words: "angry" and "outraged" have the same *denotation*: they both mean something like "mad." But "angry" students sound like they could be calmed down, while "outraged" students must have their concerns addressed. What about "protest" versus "riot"? Do they have the same *denotation*? What about their *connotations*?

HOW WRITERS MANIPULATE DICTION	
Qualifying Language	**Imagery**
Authors can manipulate the degree of doubt or certainty of something by using qualifying words. • The following words indicate a lack of certainty: ○ could, may, might, perhaps, hope, sometimes	Here are some words used to describe Rome in a passage from *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon: • swelled, ripened, decay

Why Diction Matters

Writers carefully consider which words to use to best accomplish their rhetorical goals.

Consider the evolution of the following sentence:

- The stone looked like it could roll down the hill.
- The rock was about to crash down the mountain.
- The boulder was destined to come crashing down the cliff.

The sentence starts out without a lot of excitement, but it gets progressively more dramatic with each version. Each sentence conveys more or less the same idea, but each one fulfills a different rhetorical purpose.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT DICTION:

In the free-response section of the test, it isn't enough to just bring diction up; you have to be specific about it. First give a description of the type of language the author uses—is it objective? Subjective? Literal? Abstract? Then be sure to explain why an author has used particular words and how those words helped achieve a specific purpose.

NOTES

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Qualifying Language	Imagery
• Using more absolute language indicates more certainty: ○ first, only, never, always, must • An author can also indicate criticism by using works like the following: ○ predictable, dubious, fantastical, unexceptional	The words describe the decline and fall of the Roman Empire in a way that makes it sound like an overripe fruit. What if those words were changed to less image-laden ones? • grew, matured, decline These words would give a less nuanced, less dramatic description.

Adjectives for Describing Diction

high or formal	low or informal	neutral
precise	exact	concrete
abstract	plain	simple
homespun	esoteric	learned
cultured	literal	figurative
connotative	symbolic	picturesque
sensuous	literary	provincial
colloquial	slang	idiomatic
neologistic	inexact	euphemistic
trite	obscure	pedantic
bombastic	grotesque	vulgar
jargon	emotional	obtuse
moralistic	ordinary	scholarly
insipid	proper	pretentious
old-fashioned		

NOTES

Write or type in this area.

The Multiple-Choice Section

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Questions about Rhetorical Situation

- Understanding diction is essential to doing well in AP® English Language. Sure, diction in the literal sense may simply be the "distinctive vocabulary choices and style of expression" an author/speaker uses. But truthfully, there are layers and stages to what diction is and how good writers use it.
- These questions require readers to:
  - Identify and describe components of the rhetorical situation: the exigence, audience, writer, purpose, context, and message.
  - Explain how an argument demonstrates understanding of an audience's believes, values, or needs.
  - Demonstrate an understanding of an audience's beliefs, values, or needs.

Questions about Claims and Evidence

- These questions require readers to:
  - Identify and explain claims and evidence within an argument.
  - Identify and describe the overarching thesis of an argument, and any indication it provides of the argument's structure.
  - Explain ways claims are qualified through modifiers, counterarguments, and alternative perspectives.
  - Develop a paragraph that includes a claim and evidence supporting the claim.
  - Write a thesis statement that requires proof or defense that may preview the structure of the argument.
  - Qualify a claim using modifiers, counterarguments, or alternative perspectives.

The multiple-choice section of the AP® English Language exam counts for 45 percent (just under half of your total AP® score). It looks a *lot* like a reading comprehension test, and can be prepared for in part by improving your reading comprehension skills. Bear in mind though, that the second half of the questions will actually be testing your writing skills—or your ability to 'read like a writer.'

Rhetorical Situation Questions may look like:

- The author's primary purpose is to...
- The author's reference/allusion to "___" serves primarily to...
- In the fourth paragraph, the author includes a quotation by Einstein primarily to?
- The primary audience of the piece could be described as...

Claims and Evidence questions may look like:

- Should the writer make this addition?
- Which of the following best describes the author's exigence in the passage?
- Which of the following best summarizes the author's thesis?

Questions about Reasoning and Organization

- These questions require readers to:
  - Describe the line of reasoning and explain whether it supports an argument's overarching thesis.
  - Explain how the organization of a text creates unity and coherence and reflects a line of reasoning.
  - Recognize and explain the use of methods of development to accomplish a purpose.
  - Develop a line of reasoning and commentary that explains it throughout an argument.
  - Use transitional elements to guide the reader through the line of reasoning of an argument.
  - Use appropriate methods of development to advance an argument.

Reasoning and Organization questions may look like:

- A central contrast in the passage is that between...
- In the fifth paragraph, the author discusses a definition of ... primarily to ...
- The author uses a series of questions in the eighth paragraph to express her ...

Questions about Style

- These questions require readers to:
  - Explain how the word choice, comparisons, and syntax contribute to the specific tone or style of a text.
  - Explain how writers create, combine, and place independent and dependent clauses to show relationships between and among ideas.
  - Explain how grammar and mechanics contribute to the clarity and effectiveness of an argument.
  - Strategically use words, comparisons, and syntax to convey a specific tone or style in an argument.
  - Write sentences that clearly convey ideas and arguments.
  - Use established conventions of grammar and mechanics to communicate clearly and effectively.

Style questions may look like:

- A central irony of the passage is that the author ...
- In the sentence in the idle of the fourth paragraph (" ..."), the author's arrangement of clauses emphasizes ...
- The author's use of the word "..." (paragraph _, sentence _) conveys her tone of ...

Types of Wrong Answers

The test writers are not terribly creative when it comes to writing wrong answers—they follow the same patterns over and over again.

TOO LITERAL	These answer choices use a very literal definition of a word that appears in the passage that is not the proper meaning of the word in the context of the passage. Avoid these answers by paying attention to the context of ideas in the passage, not just the meanings you associate with individual words.
RECYCLED LANGUAGE	These answer choices repeat words or phrases directly from the passage, but the *idea* in the answer choice does not match the idea expressed in the passage. These answer choices are tempting because they *look* like they're talking about the same thing the passage is talking about. Avoid them by matching the ideas in the answers to the ideas in the passage, instead of matching individual words or phrases.
PARTLY TRUE	These answer choices look very much like they refer to the same ideas that the passage does, but there is some detail that doesn't match. It's often the second part of the answer choice that contradicts or misrepresents the passage, so the way to avoid these is to read the *entire* answer choice carefully. One descriptive word can make an entire answer incorrect.
EXTREME LANGUAGE	Strong words in an answer choice, like *first*, *always*, *never*, *must*, and *only* should make you suspicious. They aren't always wrong, but they often are. Before choosing such an answer, make sure that there aren't any exceptions that could apply to an absolute claim. The correct answer is often vague and imprecise.

Tips for the Multiple-Choice Exam:

Before:

- Practice reading from various time periods and cultures.
- Review common grammar terms, especially sentence types.
- Review literary and rhetorical terms.

During:

- Be Confident.
- Read through the entire passage after scanning the first few questions to get a sense of what it is about.
- You will read two passage that will include rhetorical analysis questions and three passages that will include writing composition questions.
- Use the process of elimination. Eliminating even one answer will give you a better chance.
- Often, of the five answers choices, there will be:
  - One that is obviously wrong
  - Two that are partially correct
  - One that is technically correct
  - One that is the *most* correct

The Synthesis Essay

WHAT DOES "SYNTHESIZE" MEAN?

To "synthesize" means to draw ideas from multiple sources together into a single argument. The essay is College Board's attempt to evaluate a student's ability to develop an argument with a strong line of reasoning that contains support from reliable sources.

How to Synthesize

The following gives a guideline for how much time to spend on each step of the synthesizing process.

1. Read—15 minutes

Spend the 15-minute reading period carefully reading both the prompt for the essay and each source.

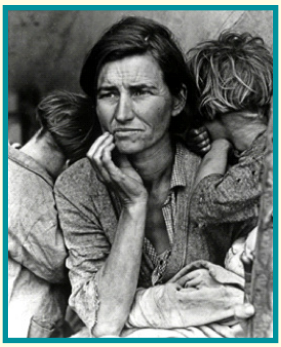
- The introduction and the prompt of the Q1 essays are extremely helpful in the brainstorming process. Often, the introduction contains information that identifies the different perspectives and/or stances of the argument.
- Be sure to correctly identify the writing prompt. Do not get distracted by the introduction. It is helpful, but it does not contain the writing task.
- Consider your initial stance on the argument. Based on your knowledge of the topic, you might be able to develop a claim and reasoning. If not, move on to your sources.
- As you read through the sources, identify the claims of each argument, data and evidence that support the arguments, and the assumptions or beliefs associated with the claims and evidence.

2. Plan—5 minutes

Before you start writing, you need to know what you're going to write. Consider the following to determine what position you will take in your essay:

- Look for nuances and complications in the issues and think about how to address some of them.
- Avoid the first instinctual "for-or-against" argument that pops into your mind. The graders are looking for complex arguments that acknowledge multiple points of view.
- Develop a basic outline with an overall thesis (as complicated and robust as the topic commands) as well as a claim for each paragraph.
- Choose which sources you will reference in each body paragraph. We recommend that you use at least two sources within each paragraph.

When Your Source is an Image



One method for analyzing an image is the OPTIC method.

O is for overview—write down a few notes on what the visual appears to be about.

P is for parts—zero in on the parts of the visual. Write down any elements or details that seem important.

T is for title—highlight the words of the title of the visual (if one is available).

I is for interrelationships—use the title as the theory and the parts of the visual as clues to detect and specify the interrelationships in the graphic.

C is for conclusion—draw a conclusion about the visual as a whole. What does the visual mean? Summarize the message of the visual in one or two sentences.

Citing Sources: When including evidence from the provided sources, it is important to place them in conversation with one another. You can use the following sentence stems for help.

Similarly, Source A states ". . ."

Although Source C may oppose this position, it is strong because ". . ."

Source E offers a slightly different perspective, illustrating that ". . ."

Finally, Source D develops this argument further by examining how ". . ."

3. Write—35 minutes

For maximum success, follow these guidelines:

- Remember, you are making the argument here, not the sources. Your thesis and claims should be authentic.
- The reasoning and evidence within the body paragraphs should be a combination of your ideas and insight from the sources.
- Develop a conversation among your ideas and those from the chosen sources.

Basic Essay Structure:

The Introduction:

- Open with an engaging hook
- Identify/clarify the issue at hand
- Present a clear, direct thesis statement

The Body Paragraphs:

- Begin with a topic sentence (give one reason in support of your thesis)
- Explain as necessary
- Present specific supporting evidence (quotes from the provided sources; you may also bring in other evidence)
- Document all sources
- Explain the significance of the specific supporting evidence (what does the evidence show or suggest as true?)

The Concluding Paragraph:

- Draw further significance from the reasons and evidence presented
- Bring the paper to a thoughtful ending (be philosophical; show your wisdom)

Identifying Perspectives within the Topic:

In developing a nuanced position, it is important to consider the different viewpoints of the issue. Such perspectives can be:

- Cultural/Social
- Economic
- Artistic/Philosophical
- Scientific
- Ethical
- Environmental
- Political/Historical
- Futuristic

You may consider addressing a few of the applicable perspectives in the introduction of your essay. This helps develop your credibility as a writer.

Annotated Sample Student Essay

Prompt: Write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the sources and develops a position on the purpose, if any, of historic preservation.

Thesis: Although historical preservation can protect properties of symbolic value, it ultimately stagnates the progression of our country.

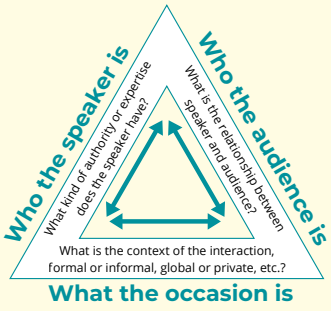
While it is an indignity that the Pennsylvania Station was replaced with a "dismal modernist urban-renewal complex" (Source F), historical preservation does more harm than good for economic progress in America. Although well-intentioned, many of the architecture protected by the laws have become blemishes on the American canvas. According to Source E, a neighborhood protected by historic preservation laws has become derelict due to the high costs of repair and upkeep. One can assume that these buildings remain in their destitute state because developers are afraid to invest due to the low property rates. In similar instances, preservation laws make it possible for building owners to "maintain monopoly rents" (Source A). Again, this unintended consequence prohibits financial development opportunities in the community, instead only benefitting the few who can afford to maintain these buildings. In these cases, the preservation laws work against the possible progression that could spark economic growth in the community.

ANNOTATED ESSAY EXPLANATION

1. This transition sentence quickly moves from the qualifying statement to the writer's next claim.
2. A clear introduction of the source leaves no confusion about where the evidence came from.
3. The student connects the evidence to the claim of this body paragraph.
4. There is a dialogue between the sources and the student's claim.

The Analysis Essay

Like the Synthesis essay, the Analysis essay has reading that you have to respond to. What makes the Analysis essay distinct is that there's only one essay, which will be about a page long, and there's no separate "reading time" for this one.



What Does "Analysis" Mean?

Read the instructions in the prompt carefully. They will say something like "write an essay in which you analyze the rhetorical strategies [the author] uses to convey his message." To *analyze* means to explain **how** or **why** the author makes particular rhetorical choices, not just to list them or summarize the passage.

How to Analyze

The following gives a guideline for how much time to spend on each of the following steps, but these are not set in stone. As you practice, you can experiment with whether you'll do better with a little more time for reading, a little more time for planning, exactly the suggested times, or something else.

1. Read—8 minutes

You have to read both the prompt (read it twice, to be sure you understand it) and the passage carefully. As you read the passage, think about the following points:

1. Identify the relationship between the speaker, subject, and audience—often, much of this information can be found in the prompt of a Q2 essay.
2. As you read the passage, chunk by primary points. This can be determined by asking yourself: "What is the author pointing out to the audience?" There may be one primary point for several paragraphs.
3. Take note of textual evidence that appeals ethically, logically, or emotionally to the audience or strengthens the speaker's credibility.
4. Examine the speaker's purpose for writing the passage. Consider which primary points best support their purpose.

2. Plan—2 minutes

Before you can start writing, you need to know *what* you're going to write. Consider the following points to determine what you'll write about in your essay:

- Be sure you know *what* the argument is.

Common Rhetorical Choices:

Rhetorical speakers will often manipulate their audience with one or more of the choices below. As you read the text, look for the evidence of the following:

Structure:

- Juxtaposition literally means to place two things side by side. Authors use juxtaposition to discuss two contrasting or opposing ideas.
- Parallelism is about expressing similar ideas in similar grammatical or syntactic structures.
- Repetition involves repeating the same words or phrases a few times to make an idea clearer.

Figurative Language:

- An allusion is a brief reference to a famous person, group, historical event, place, or work of art.
- Irony is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words.
- Imagery means to use figurative language to represent objects, actions, and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses.

- Choose the *most important* rhetorical choices you noted while you were reading. You likely won't have time to discuss all of them, so make sure the ones you choose to discuss are the most effective ones.
- Make a basic outline with a thesis and the idea for each paragraph.

3. Write—30 minutes

Monitor the time you spend writing, as the proctor won't tell you when to move on to the next essay. For maximum success, follow these guidelines:

- Write as fast as you can while still keeping your handwriting legible.
- You do want to make clear that you understand what the argument is about, but don't spend too much time summarizing or quoting the passage: the graders are familiar with it.
- Remember to focus on the *why* and the *how* of the rhetorical devices:
  - *Why* did the author make that particular choice?
  - *How* does each choice help the author accomplish a particular goal?

Diction:

Often, an author will develop a specific tone throughout a passage, and this is accomplished using specific types of diction the author chooses. Ask yourself, how would you describe the word choice? What is the impact of such word choice?

Syntax:

Additionally, an author will manipulate the sentence structure to impact the audience. If an author incorporates several long or run-on sentences, they might mirror an extended period of mistreatment that the audience has endured.

The Argument Essay

Like the synthesis essay, the argument essay requires you to take a position over a topic provided in the prompt. However, this essay is composed entirely of your own evidence. It is imperative that you develop a central claim and build an effective line of reasoning that includes specific, illustrative evidence from a variety of perspectives.

1. Read—5 minutes

- Read the prompt (read it twice to be sure you understand it).
- Look closely at the first paragraph. It's pretty normal to see a small quote or paragraph at the beginning of the prompt to explain the topic to you. Take advantage of this information to figure out the topic.
- Do not get distracted by the think piece provided in the prompt. Usually, you can find the specific writing prompt after the phrase "Take a position on...."
- Relax. If the prompt is over globalization—and you don't know anything about globalization—there is a good chance that your peers are in the same boat. Stay calm and move on to Step 2.

2. Plan—5 minutes

Before you can start writing, you need to know *what* you're going to write. Consider the following points to determine what you'll write about in your essay:

- Develop your thesis statement (central claim). A thoughtful (perhaps multi-sentence) thesis that indicates a clear position and establishes a line of reasoning should earn the maximum point.
- Think of some examples of when you have done this in your own life. These everyday examples can help you get a grip on the topic in general.
- Then think beyond the easy, superficial examples from everyday life to better ones from "your reading, experience, or observations."
- Include a variety of examples. Set out with a plan to include one historical example, one example from current events, and one personal example. This is a goal, but if you cannot come up with three specific examples, do not panic.

ARGUMENT TERMS:

Central Claim— the thesis or the main argument within an essay.

Supporting Claim—the reasons behind the central claim.

Line of Reasoning—the organization of the central claim, supporting claims, and evidence within an argument.

Evidence—the specific, illustrative examples that a writer employs to strengthen a supporting or central claim.

Finding Evidence:

Use the acronym RELISH to help you consider and further develop your "body of knowledge" aka the stuff you know!

R—Religion

E—Entertainment

L—Literature

I—Imaginary (or anecdotal)

S—School (anything you've learned)

H—History

Qualifying the Argument:

An academic argument is typically about probability and possibility, not certainty, and therefore uses a lot of qualifiers such as many, some, few, possibly.

Why would you want to qualify your argument? You can qualify an argument in order to get ahead of any potential objections to your argument.

3. Write—30 minutes

Make sure that you have managed your time well so that you have plenty of time left to write this essay. For maximum success, follow these guidelines:

- The Introduction:
  - Most graders report that the best argument essays begin with a solid introduction. It's important that you step into the existing conversation. In fact, this paragraph could possibly be the longest paragraph of your Q3 essay because you must prove to your reader that you understand the opposing perspectives of the topic or issue. By doing so, you will increase your own credibility—setting the tone for the rest of your argument.
- The Body Paragraphs:
  - Remember, you are not required to follow the elementary five-paragraph essay. As you develop your body paragraphs, be sure to use claims that will support the central claim of your argument. Some students might have three claims, but you might have two claims. Both are acceptable!
  - Include specific, illustrative evidence and explain how the evidence supports your argument. Draw those connections for your grader.
- The Conclusion: To wrap up your argument essay, think about what the best rhetoricians do. They do NOT simply restate their claim and reasons. Instead, they leave the reader with new information. It could be a short anecdote, a powerful call to action, or a last logical appeal that reinforces your thesis statement.

Addressing the Counter-Argument:

While you are often taught to include a counter-argument within argument essays, remember that your main focus should be your own line of reasoning and support. You may want to include a counter-argument as a transition into one of the supporting claims of your argument.

By limiting the amount of time you spend addressing the counter-argument, you would have more time to draw connections between your claim, reasons, and evidence, strengthening your own line of reasoning.

Thematic Topics for Argument Essay

Overview

Through this activity you will cultivate a list of examples that you will be able to apply to any of the essays on the exam regardless of the topic. The more familiar and prepared you are with this knowledge, the less time you will need to spend brainstorming ideas and the more time you will be able to put toward planning and writing. The examples may come from the categories listed below. If you would like to select an example from a different category, it must be approved in advance.

- Religion
- Entertainment
- Literature (non-fiction recommended)
- Imaginary (or anecdotal)
- School (anything you learn in school)
- History

Directions

Choose at least **ten** of the thematic topics listed below and provide an example that **illustrates universal purpose** as well as **an explanation of correlation. You may defend, challenge, or qualify the topic** with your evidence (at least 150–200 words per entry). You should conduct research to ensure that your insight is relevant and accurate. **Any** information that does not come **solely from your prior knowledge** (i.e., any information you glean from an outside source) **MUST be credited with a proper MLA citation.**

Thematic Topics

1. All life is connected.
2. Each life, no matter how small or insignificant, matters.
3. Disappointment is inevitable.
4. Society corrupts innocence.
5. People do not appreciate the value of relationships until they are gone.
6. Pride blinds people to the truth/reality.
7. Small acts of kindness/ generosity have tremendous effects.
8. Courage can reward those who push themselves.
9. Sometimes knowledge is acquired too late.
10. Social status, beauty, wealth/ materialism lack relevance.
11. People learn and grow the most through hardship, trial, and pain.

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EXAMPLE

Thematic Topic: Social status, beauty, and wealth lack relevance in contemporary society.

Evidence: In 1988, at the age of 16, Mark Wahlberg, a now famous American actor, was tried as an adult and convicted of violently assaulting two Vietnamese immigrants. His racially motivated attack, which was perpetrated with rocks and a five-foot stick, left his victims unconscious. Now, many years after his crime, Wahlberg has petitioned to be pardoned for his actions. His pardon request has sparked outrage among civilians, who claim that granting him legal forgiveness would send the message that different standards apply to those who are white, rich, and famous. The fact that Wahlberg's pardon request, which has thus far been denied, has sparked such outrage locally and nationally, proves that social status, beauty, and wealth lack relevance in contemporary society. Neither the legal system nor the general public believe that Wahlberg's status as a motion picture icon should excuse his reprehensible past behavior. Despite his status, he is treated no different under the law.

Citation: Izadi, Elahe. "Should Mark Wahlberg Be Pardoned? The Attorney Who Prosecuted Him Says No." *The Washington Post*, 14 Jan. 2015. Web. 26 Jan. 2015.

12. The individual is often in conflict with society. Alienation and isolation are common problems in today's society.
13. Self-determination is a fierce inner force, but is often thwarted or delayed by outside forces.
14. Adversity builds character.
15. Death is inevitable.
16. Human beings are sometimes too weak (or too blind, stubborn, prideful) to do what is right.
17. People often want what others have or what they cannot have.
18. Fear, jealousy, and greed are destructive emotions.
19. People (of all cultures and of all times) are more alike than they are different.
20. Nature is a source for reflection and contemplation.
21. People are born inherently good, and society corrupts them.

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Unacceptable Thesis Statements

This document contains sample thesis statements that would fail to earn the point on the exam. The rhetorical analysis prompt for all of these questions is:

> Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Green uses to persuade his fellow African Americans to join the Union forces.

Examples that DO NOT earn the thesis point:

1. Merely restates the prompt

Green makes a number of rhetorical choices that are designed to convince his audience to join the Union army.

In his speech to his fellow African Americans, Green challenges his listeners to join the Union army.

2. Makes a claim, but does not address rhetorical choices

Green uses rhetoric in order to make his plea to join the Union army more compelling.

3. Merely summarizes the passage

Green tells his audience that they've been mistreated in the past, but they must hope for the future.

Example that DOES earn the thesis point:

1. Present a defensible position that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices

In his speech, Green draws his listeners in by presenting himself as one of them and provoking a sense of hope to convince them that the only way they can better their present situation is to join the Union army.

In a speech to his fellow African American brethren, Alfred Green elicits a desire to fight against the Confederacy by recognizing the impacts African Americans had on previous wars, illustrating and conceding to his audience's counterarguments, and relying heavily on Revolutionary rhetoric to inspire his brothers to join the Union army when permitted

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Developing Commentary

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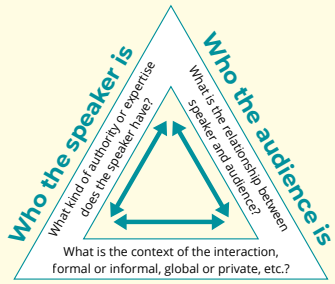
One of the most difficult processes in the Rhetorical Analysis Essay is developing commentary, which is the articulation of HOW the author writes, rather than WHAT she actually wrote. To do this, you will need to identify the relationship between the rhetorical situation and the strategies the author uses to achieve her goal or purpose of writing the piece.



The "Commentary Checklist"

After you have identified the author's purpose and primary points, your next step is to identify what rhetorical choices the speaker makes to develop the claims. When choosing the evidence to illustrate the choice, read closely to ensure that what you've chosen supports one of the primary points.

Next, you will need to create your commentary that includes small snippets of evidence and an analysis of how the evidence supports the primary point, ultimately helping the writer achieve her purpose.

Use the following questions to help you evaluate your commentary:

Meaning	**-Have you explained the actual meaning of the evidence?** **-Why did the author choose this specific evidence for her purpose, for the intended audience?** **-How does the evidence connect to what the author is actually saying in the strategy?** For example, a metaphor should be explained. Parallelism is often used to emphasize that two or more ideas have the same level of importance or to highlight the similarities and differences between two or more things.

Universal Ideas:

Often, a speaker will make assumptions about the audience's beliefs, values, or needs. These assumptions could be based on the exigence, subject, setting, purpose, or additional information provided in the actual prompt. As an analyst, it is your job to identify and examine those assumptions and explain the significance behind them in connection to the impact of the rhetorical choices.

When writing a rhetorical analysis, it is important to address how a writer's rhetorical choices affect the audience by appealing to one of these six universal topics:

- Moral
- Spiritual
- Political
- Social
- Psychological
- Historical

When discussing the universalities, it is not necessary to specifically state that "the author addresses a moral universality." Instead, you can discuss how the speaker's use of rhetorical questions serves "to prompt the audience to question their own moral behavior."

Impact	**-How does the evidence impact the audience?** **-How does the choice make the audience more amenable to the speaker's persuasion?** When discussing impact, you will likely refer to a logical, emotional, or credible appeal. However, avoid the terms ethos, logos, pathos. Instead, when discussing an appeal to credibility, you can explain how "the author endears herself to the audience by . . ." or explaining how a choice "elicits a sense of shame within the audience" instead of simply calling the evidence "pathos." Psychologically, repetition can have a positive effect on an audience's reception of and agreement with an argument, and create a greater familiarity with the message and often leads to gradual agreement.
Purpose	**-How does the rhetorical choice help the speaker achieve her purpose?** **-What does it reveal about human nature or a universal idea in order to help the speaker achieve her purpose?** Be sure to proofread your commentary. You may have embedded this within the discussion of the meaning or impact of the choice/evidence. If not, you may need to discuss how "a sense of fear often spurs humans into action, thus convincing his audience to join the war."

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