

Audience, Thesis, and Supporting Evidence

AP English Language ■ Unit 2

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What we will cover

- 1 Understanding an Audience's Beliefs and Needs
- 2 Writing for an Audience's Beliefs and Needs
- 3 Identifying Claims and Evidence
- 4 Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence
- 5 Identifying the Overarching Thesis
- 6 Writing a Thesis Statement

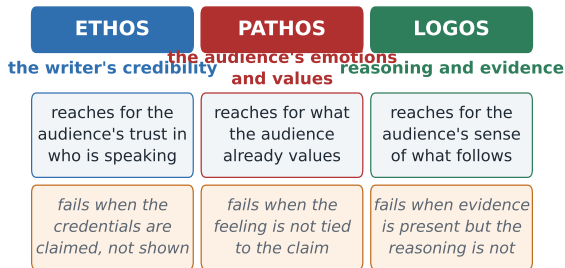


Each appeal reaches for something different in the reader

- **Writers' perceptions of an audience's values, beliefs, needs, and background guide the choices they make.** Note the word *perceptions*: what steers the writing is the writer's picture of the audience.
- To achieve a purpose, writers make choices in an attempt to **relate to an intended audience's emotions and values** .

Each appeal reaches for something different in the, in detail

The modes of persuasion - and what each one reaches for



An answer that names the appeal has labelled it. An answer that names what it reaches for has analysed it.

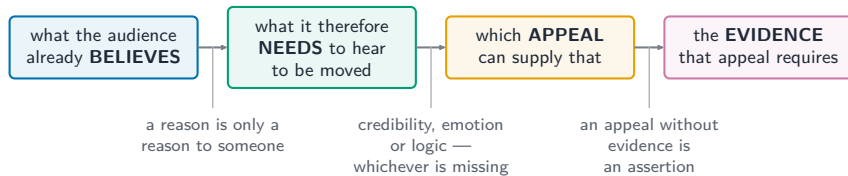
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Understanding an Audience's Beliefs and Needs

Unit 1 established that a text has an audience. Unit 2 makes that audience the engine of every choice a writer makes.

- Writers' perceptions of an audience's values, beliefs, needs, and background guide the choices they make. Note the word *perceptions*: what steers the writing is the writer's picture of the audience, which may be accurate or not.
- To achieve a purpose, writers make choices in an attempt to **relate to an intended audience's emotions and values** .
- Arguments seek to persuade or motivate action through **appeals** – the **modes of persuasion** .

From audience to appeal



The audience comes **first**. Choosing an appeal and then hunting for an audience it suits is the order that produces essays nobody could be persuaded by



Writing for an Audience's Beliefs and Needs

The same three statements now become a writing instruction. Before drafting, decide:

- What does this audience already **believe** about the subject?
- What do they **need** – information, reassurance, a reason to act?
- What do they **value**, and which of those values can honestly be connected to my position?

Writing for an Audience's Beliefs and Needs, continued

An argument that ignores these produces writing addressed to nobody.

And the CED's framing gives you a useful test for your own drafts: *if this paragraph would read identically to a completely different audience, it has not been shaped by one.*



Identifying Claims and Evidence

Unit 2 deepens Unit 1's treatment of evidence with three claims about **how** evidence works:

- Writers use evidence **strategically and purposefully** to **illustrate, clarify, set a mood, exemplify, associate, or amplify** . Evidence does a *job*, and naming that job is analysis.
- **Strategically selected evidence strengthens the validity and reasoning of the argument**, relates to an audience's **emotions and values**, and helps establish the writer's **credibility** .
- An effective argument contains **sufficient evidence** – sufficient when its **quantity and quality** provide apt support for the line of reasoning.

Identifying Claims and Evidence, continued

That third point is often misread as "more is better".

Sufficiency is quantity **and** quality together: three well-chosen pieces of evidence that bear directly on the claim beat six that only touch it.

What each kind of evidence cannot prove

Name what each kind of evidence *cannot* prove – anecdote is not a trend, and authority is not a warrant.

What each kind of evidence cannot prove, in detail

TYPE	WHAT IT CAN ESTABLISH	WHAT IT CANNOT
facts and statistics	scale, and that a pattern is real	that the pattern matters to a reader
anecdotes and examples	that the thing happens, and how it feels	that it is typical
analogies	a structure the reader already accepts	anything, if the two cases differ where it counts
expert opinion	that informed people hold the view	that they are right

Evidence types sorted by what each can and cannot establish



Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence

Applying the above to your own writing, choose each piece of evidence for a stated reason. In practice this means being able to finish the sentence: *I am using this piece because it ...*

- ... illustrates a claim that would otherwise stay abstract;
- ... establishes my credibility on a subject where readers may doubt it;
- ... connects my position to a value the audience already holds.

Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence, continued

Evidence chosen this way produces commentary almost automatically, because you already know what the evidence is doing.

Evidence chosen because it was available produces the blank space where commentary should be.



Identifying the Overarching Thesis

That second point matters for the reading side of the exam. On a rhetorical-analysis passage, the thesis may be distributed across the text or implied by its structure. Do not assume the first sentence of the second paragraph is the thesis because that is where you would put yours.

- A **thesis** is the **main, overarching claim** a writer seeks to defend or prove by using reasoning supported by evidence.
- A writer's thesis is **not necessarily a single sentence or an explicit statement**, and may require a thorough reading to identify.



Writing a Thesis Statement

The writing objective is precise: **write a thesis statement that requires proof or defence and that may preview the structure of the argument.**

- It must **require defence**. Apply the Unit 1 test again: could a reasonable person disagree? A thesis that states a fact cannot be defended, only repeated.
- It **may preview the structure** – optional, but useful, because a thesis that names the lines of reasoning it will pursue gives the essay its shape.

Writing a Thesis Statement, continued

On the exam, the **thesis point is one of six** and it is the cheapest point on the rubric: a defensible thesis in response to the prompt earns it. A restatement of the prompt does not.

Exam tips

- The audience drives everything. If a paragraph would read the same to any audience, it has not been shaped for one.
- Name **what evidence does** – illustrate, clarify, associate, amplify. That is analysis; listing evidence is not.
- **Sufficiency is quantity and quality**, not volume. Three apt pieces beat six loose ones.
- A thesis in a passage may be **implied or distributed**. Read the whole text before deciding.
- Your own thesis must be **arguable**. Restating the prompt earns zero of the six points.
- Previewing your line of reasoning in the thesis is optional but makes the rest of the essay easier to organise.

Same subject, only one arguable

A TOPIC STATEMENT

This essay will discuss the author's use of humour.

announces a subject; nothing in it could be argued against

A DEFENSIBLE THESIS

The author's humour disarms an audience that would have refused the same argument made plainly.

takes a **position**, and implies the reasoning that will defend it

Both name the same subject. Only one of them can be **disagreed with**, and only that one can be defended for four paragraphs

Worked example – a thesis that can be disagreed with

A Question 3 prompt asks you to take a position on the value of a proposed practice. Compare two openings.

- **Low-scoring:** *“There are many arguments both for and against this practice.”*
- **Scoring:** *“Because the practice rewards visible effort rather than actual improvement, it produces the appearance of progress while removing the incentive to seek it.”*

The second earns the thesis point because it is **arguable**, specific, and previews the reasoning. Nobody could disagree with the first – which is exactly why it scores nothing.



Unit 2 – key takeaways

1

Audience

if it would read the same to anyone, it is not shaped

2

Evidence job

illustrate, clarify, associate, amplify

3

Sufficiency

quantity and quality, not volume

4

Thesis

must be arguable – restating the prompt scores zero

Check yourself

- 1 What drives everything in a rhetorical situation?
- 2 Name what evidence *does*, not just that it is there.
- 3 Three apt pieces beat what?
- 4 What thesis earns zero of six?

Answers: the audience ■ illustrate/clarify/associate/amplify ■ six loose ones ■ restating the prompt