

SAMPLE FRESHMAN ENGLISH 101 ESSAYS: Analyzing an Editorial

Below are "A" freshman papers from past 101 classes taught by Dr. Wesley Britton. They show a variety of approaches and demonstrate good writing and content.

Note: To discourage dishonest students from plagiarizing these papers (not by MY students, of course), some of this material has been altered. As I compiled this collection, I didn't take time to retain the format of such things as italicizing newspaper titles. Again, my purpose is to share how these papers should be organized and constructed--some details you need to know will be covered in class.

Look over your handout packet for instructions, tips, and questions to help you with this unit. All papers posted here are by permission of the authors. They were bribed with extra credit for this privilege.

Crystal Elder

English 101

Professor Britton

9/30/03

Saving Farmland or Bust

The following is an analysis of Herb Field's editorial titled "Saving Farmland." The author's purpose was to inform the reader about Pennsylvania's program on preserving farmland. His thesis is clearly stated although it doesn't appear until the third paragraph: "Pennsylvania has the best, most ambitious farm preservation program going, a model for the country." The author is also trying to persuade the reader that Pennsylvania, even with its many problems, does rather well at preserving farmland. In fact, the author further states that, "Pennsylvania is to receive the largest annual allocation of federal farm preservation funds ever made -- \$3.9 million."

Despite this seemingly uninspiring subject, Fields communicates well with his readers in that he uses words his audience is familiar with, and he does not go over their heads with five-dollar technical words. Field's most difficult sentence, "this is a program that should not be sacrificed for short-term fiscal considerations, but rather one that, if anything, needs more dollars," is still understandable by the average reader. The author does not give background details on saving farmland, but he makes his point by stating facts that support his opinion. For example, "last year's farm bill includes a \$400 million six-year federal commitment to this effort (farmland preservation), which should prove especially helpful to the leading state in this regard." Fields gets his point across by stating many useful details such as "including the 5,339 newly protected acres, Pennsylvania now has a total of 263,000 acres preserved in 51 counties." Fields shows keen awareness of his local audience by stating, "Lancaster County ranks in the top two or three counties in the country in the amount of farmland preserved." Besides using examples of interest to Pennsylvania readers, the author also makes a hidden appeal to emotion by listing how many counties are protected nationwide. If one does the math, there is preserved farmland in one county per state/territory. Clearly, one would agree that this number is appalling especially since farming is so steeped in our nation's heritage.

The author presents one drawback to Pennsylvania's preservation efforts. He stated, "that even though Pennsylvania's preservation efforts are commendable it is still not enough." There are still 1,600 farmers on a waiting list to sell the developmental rights to their lands. The author does not list any facts or reasons as to why these farmers are selling their developmental rights, - his only opinion is that the farmers are tempted by developers or they simply need or want to get out of the farming business the quickest way possible. He does not address the issue "why are farmers selling" which makes the article unbalanced. The author could have written a more effective editorial if he listed why farmers are selling the developmental rights to their land. Field should have included a quote from American Farmland Trust (AFT) to better balance his article. AFT states, "Today, the American farmer receives less than ten cents of every food dollar and sells their commodities for 1950's prices." AFT further states, "to recover these lost profits, farmers are opting to sell parts or all of their land to developers." Had this information been included in Fields' piece, one lingering question would have been answered for curious readers.

In conclusion, Field's editorial was more informative than persuasive in stating that Pennsylvania is among the top leaders in farmland preservation. But he slaps the reader in the face with a simple dose of reality. Once farmland is developed, we forever forfeit land's use for agriculture. Field's also makes the reader think and/or wonder if all the farmland in Pennsylvania were developed, how would Pennsylvanians feed themselves? Or on a broader scale, if all of the farmland in the United States is developed, how would the United States sustain themselves? For many readers, being newly aware of this issue is alone worth the time to read Field's opinion. Credible information is persuasive, so Fields is successful in his major purpose.

Heather Matio

Abrupt Climate Changes Prove to Be of Concern

"Warming World Presents Challenges" is an opinion piece written by Richard Alley published in the Harrisburg Patriot News on September 21, 2003. In his article, Alley shared his concerns regarding abrupt climate change due to human actions. Not only did Alley express his worries, but he also tried to inform his audience of the environmental problems that we may face in the future. He attempted to persuade people to take action and help to end the problem of global warming.

This article is a very effective means of communication and persuasion based on several factors. One reason that this editorial is so effective is because Alley gives examples of the problems that humans could face in the future due to abrupt climate change and global warming. For example, Alley mentioned such issues as uncomfortable conditions for humans because of extreme heat, melting of polar ice caps, and deadly heat waves. Alley did a good job of explaining how these problems are created. To do this, he described how too much carbon dioxide released by humans acts similar to a heavy blanket on a sleeping child, overheating the Earth. Although this is a good comparison, Alley could have been more effective by informing his audience on how large amounts of carbon dioxide deplete the ozone layer, which causes global warming.

Another reason that this article is such an effective one is because Alley catches the attention of his audience. The newspaper's readers are most likely drawn into reading this article

because of the subtitle which reads, "Humans' actions could increase chances of abrupt climate changes".

This catches the attention of the readers because they realize that it has something to do with a problem that they, as human beings, are creating. They may also pay close attention to the article because it is noted that Richard Alley, the author, is a Professor of Geosciences at Penn State. Alley's occupation tells his audience that the subject of his article is one that he is well-educated in. The fact that Alley is educated in the field of his article topic would probably make the editorial more effective to anyone seeking to know more about the writer's credibility. A third way that Alley does a good job of catching his audience's attention is by using the "scare tactic". Alley scares his audience by telling them possible future threats from global warming, such as the melting of polar ice caps and the flooding of the Earth. This should worry most of Alley's audience, and they may decide that it is time to help end the problem of abrupt climate change.

One factor of Alley's abrupt climate change article that makes it an enjoyable and tolerable one to read is the fact that he is very optimistic in his hopes that the global warming problem will be ended. Towards the end of the article, Alley proposed ways that we can help to control abrupt climate change. He listed ways to help end this climate problem, such as planting trees and advanced planning to prevent water problems. Alley also said that more U.S. participation in international discussion of pollution could help poor, populous countries understand the dangers of drought, floods, and other serious climate and weather conditions.

Alley could have been even more effective had he used statistics that prove that human beings are really the cause of abrupt climate change, such as how much carbon dioxide is released into the air each year due to certain actions of human beings. Alley should also inform

his readers, who might not be educated in the issue of global warming, of how humans release an excessive amount of carbon dioxide into the already damaged atmosphere. He should include examples such as the burning of fossil fuels and the large amount of fuel-powered automobiles.

Overall, Alley's editorial on abrupt climate change proved to be an effective one. He stated his opinions and concerns about the climate changes as well as proposing optimistic ways to solve this rather serious dilemma. Alley does a great job of grasping the attention of his audience and holding on to it until the end of his editorial. Because of its effectiveness, Alley's article will most likely inspire readers to think more about their own roles in our planet's environment.

Nathan Sieber

9/30/03

Exotic Pets Cause Exotic Problems

The editorial entitled, "The Problem of Exotic Pets," by an unknown author, is convincing in its argument that Americans should avoid keeping exotic pets. Although the author does not use many hard facts or statistics from research, the points are clear and make sense to the reader. He uses a number of examples to back up his stance and keep the reader interested in the material, but more concrete evidence would have solidified the author's argument. The writer does seem to care about the subject as well as possess an educated knowledge of the issue. This point is obvious in his writing.

He begins the article by stating a number of probabilities. For example, "The SARS virus probably crossed over from animals to humans in Guangdong Province in China." He adds, "Humans got monkeypox from pet prairie dogs, which probably caught it, in turn, from an imported Gambian rat." It would have been beneficial for the author to back up these statements with some fact, but the purpose of the editorial is not lost due to this oversight.

The writer then deduces that prairie dogs that are native to America do not normally catch diseases from rats native to western and central Africa. He also states that humans do not normally catch diseases from prairie dogs. The obvious answer to what made the chain of monkeypox infection possible were people who keep wild animals as pets. However, this line of reasoning is only effective if the reader takes the information that the author gave in the opening paragraph as fact.

The writer then goes into the governmental regulations on the distribution and importation of rodents from Africa. He states that the federal government has now banned the distribution of African rodents, and that a dozen states and some localities have outlawed owning dangerous or endangered animals. This serves to reinforce the author's credibility if the federal government has done the proper research to validate their actions regarding this issue.

If the reader still thinks that this is a small-scale problem that affects a very small number of people, the author uses a number of examples to change the reader's mind. One example would be that, "Monkeypox affected only a few dozen people, but those who get salmonellosis from pet reptiles number in the tens of thousands." For those readers who would downplay the seriousness of the issue, the writer adds, "Macaque monkeys carry a form of herpes B that is very dangerous to humans."

The author then adds another fairly obvious reason why people should not try to cage wild creatures. It is bad for the animals, individually and as a species. "Almost no one is capable of giving exotic pets, no matter how small, the conditions they would enjoy in the wild," the writer argues. He then goes on to state that the deaths in trafficking wild animals and the plundering of their populations are leading some species to extinction.

The editorial concludes by the author describing the efforts of the Senate to block the trading and ownership of wild animals. An interesting point made is that there are two veterinarians in the Senate. Senator John Ensign and Senator Wayne Allard are leading the cause to protect exotic and endangered pets. Senator Allard is presiding over a hearing for the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on the subject of zoonotic diseases.

Overall the article is very well written. It serves to inform the audience on a lesser-known issue that has a large impact on everyone's environment. The author would have benefited by using more concrete facts and elaborating on certain details, but still uses enough information to make the reader think. The most effective writing in the article would have to be the concluding sentences. The author ends the editorial by stating, "it will be worth remembering that Gambian rats and prairie dogs are not to blame for the monkeypox outbreak. No wild animal chooses to be made a pet." This serves as a reminder that the responsibility of maintaining the ecosystem belongs to everyone. The problem could continue to escalate until the proper laws can be put into place.

Eric Proctor

English Comp 101

TR 2:00 - 3:15

An analysis of the article "Peace Tax would provide war objectors with choice"

By Kerry Walters from the Patriot News September 21, 2003

The article "Peace Tax would provide war objectors with choice" by Kerry Walters discusses the funding for the war with Iraq and states that we as taxpayers do not at present time have a choice in paying for the war. Walters contends that those who have strong religious and moral objections to war should have the choice as to whether they contribute to the funding of the military. This article is effective in that he uses facts to support his opinion that there are basic First Amendment rights being infringed upon by not giving taxpayers the choice in participating in the funding of war.

The author points out that the largest expense of the U.S. government is the military. He states that 40 percent of the federal budget in 2002 was spent on the military and in 2004 that spending will jump from \$587 billion to \$804 billion. Walters suggests that by forcing religious and moral objectors to pay for these military costs through taxes is violating their conscience. He also states that by "forcing them to become economic accomplices in the research and development of weapons whose only purpose is to kill and maim people." He says these weapons are causing harm even when they are not being used because of the funding they divert away from other social programs.

Walters, a founding member of the Center for Nonviolent Living, discusses the different measures some citizens take to resist the military tax. He mentions those who intentionally live below the taxable income level because their convictions are so strong they would rather live in

poverty than pay the tax. He also mentions others who withhold the military percentage of their taxes and denote that amount to private and public charities. He sites yet another group that refuses to pay the 3% federal excise tax that appears on their phone bill which he states is almost exclusively earmarked for the military. He does, however, point out that these acts of conscience do have a price. They often lead to fines and seizure of property and imprisonment.

Walters does well in showing the extent of the convictions of those who have the courage to stand up for what they believe in. He is effective in showing that if an individual makes the choice to take a stand, they are not alone in their nonviolent protest to war. He points out to the reader there are consequences for these actions. The author states that those who are punished for living out their convictions are having their First Amendment right to freedom of religion and conscience violated. His proposal is to pass the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill which was first introduced to Congress in 1972. Walters states that this bill would allow citizens who object to war to designate their tax dollars for nonmilitary purposes. He mentions that this bill is endorsed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights as a "legitimate exercise of freedom of thought, conscience and religion." Walters also points out those peace tax incentives are under way in 20 other countries, including Australia, Canada and England. The author's mention of a resolution is effective in that he sites a bill that is currently being considered not only in this country, but in others as well.

There is one problem with this suggested resolution. As mentioned before, a large amount of the federal government's spending goes toward the military. Walters fails to mention where this funding would come from if the citizens of this country didn't pay for it. Such a drastic cut in military funding would weaken the nation as a whole. Having a strong military is important not only for overseas endeavors, but also for homeland security. The military protects

all citizens in this country. If the military faces such a cut in funding, it would hinder its ability to protect this country from those who dislike it. Walters would have been more effective if he would have made any suggestions as to where the military could supplement the funding he proposes to take away from it. Regardless of his stance on war, the military serves and protects him. One would have to ask if his opinion would change if war was brought to U.S. soil and he needed protection from those hands he is trying to financially tie.

The article "Peace Tax would provide war objectors with choice" is an effective work as a whole. Kerry Walters does an overall good job of supporting his opinions by mentioning the First Amendment rights of freedom of religion and proposes logical governmental solutions. Where he lacks in practical solutions for supplementing military funding, he makes up for in his passion for the subject. A reader of this article could easily see his point of view even if they don't agree with him.