

Ministry of Education
Secondary Engagement Programme
September 2020

WEEK TWELVE: Lesson Three

Subject: English Language

Grade: Twelve

Topic: Expository Writing

Sub-topic: Argumentative Essays

Objectives: At the end of the lesson students will identify parts of an essay and write an effective essay in 35 minutes.

Concept: An argumentative essay can be written from an objective view point or biased perspective.

Content:

Audience refers to the reader(s), eg could be an individual, in the case of a text message, or a broader group of people in the case of a magazine article or blog.

Purpose refers to the reason for the writing, eg to persuade the reader, to entertain them, to share information, to warn, to advise, to explain.

Form refers to how and where the writing will appear, eg an email, a blog, a recipe, a leaflet, an article.

Language/Register simply means the sorts of words you use, eg should your language be:

- Every day or formal?
- Poetic or straightforward?
- Descriptive or clear?
- Technical terms

Tone refers to the mood (or feel) of your writing, eg should your tone be: (See full list of words to express tone at the end of the lesson)

- Friendly and chatty, or distant and polite?
- Sarcastic, pleading, or dismissive?

- Upbeat and positive, or calm and controlled?

Structure refers to the way you present your writing, eg should you use:

- Full sentences and paragraphs?
- Subheadings and bullet points?
- A sequence of linked paragraphs that lead to a final conclusion?

Additional notes are at the end of the lesson.

Samples of an argumentative essay:

Sample 1: (has been broken to aid labeling of paragraphs)

Lynn Streeter
English 102
Prof. Paola Brown
4 February 2008

Legalize It

(INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH)

In 2000, George Bierson's "*Marijuana, the Deceptive Drug*" was published by The Massachusetts News. Bierson concludes that marijuana is harmful in many ways, including brain damage, damage to the reproductive system, and weakening of the immune system. He also attempts to convince the reader that marijuana is a "gateway drug" that leads the users to venture into much harder drugs. I believe that research to support anything can be found if one is looking hard enough, but that the fallacy of Bierson's conclusion is due to his research seeking facts to support an already-assumed conclusion. Based on my research and my own personal experience, I have found that several of his points, when looked at logically, do not reach his conclusion.

(BODY)

One of Bierson's strongest supporting claims is of the physical harms of marijuana. He argues that Heath's tests of the monkey's brain seemed to show conclusive evidence of brain damage; however, he fails to mention that the tests were later discredited: the monkeys were given extremely high doses, doses exponentially higher than that of the average recreational or medical marijuana user, and the test's sample size was too small. More current studies of people who are heavy marijuana smokers show no evidence of brain damage; in addition, the American Medical Association has officially endorsed the decriminalization of marijuana. I find this to be quite a bit more compelling than an outdated and poorly executed test. His claims of damage to both the reproductive system and the immune system are again based on invalid experiments of nearly lethal doses administered to mice and other animals, not humans. Moreover, several studies of the effects of marijuana on the human reproductive and immune systems have failed to demonstrate adverse effects.

One of the longest standing arguments against the use of marijuana is that it gives users a "gateway" to harder or more illicit drug use. Bierson states in his article that "Marijuana is the seed from which the scourge of drug abuse grows. If we stop the marijuana, we will stop the rest

of drug abuse". I have several issues with this statement: first, the simple fact that many heroin and cocaine users used marijuana first does not conclude that the latter is the result of the first. Correlation is not causality. Bierson's vehement argument against marijuana alone become suspect, as most of these heroin and cocaine abusers had also previously used alcohol and tobacco. According to government surveys, a conservative estimate of 80 million American have tried marijuana in their life, and 20 million admit to using it recently; if marijuana were truly a gateway drug, we would see a higher percentage of regular users. Instead we are seeing an even smaller percentage of abusers of cocaine or heroin. In fact, most people who use marijuana most often quit on their own before the age of 34. If anybody is still compelled to buy into the "gateway" theory, a real-life example is available for all to see: In Holland, marijuana has been partially decriminalized since the 1970's. Reports show that the use of cocaine and heroin has significantly decreased, thus contradicting the hypothesis of marijuana as a gateway drug. Instead, these statistics appear to point to the conclusion that marijuana is more likely a substitute for harder drugs rather than a launching pad.

(COUNTER-ARGUMENT)

While I do feel that Bierson has failed to present conclusive evidence of the harmfulness of marijuana through the points made, it is not a proper statement to claim that marijuana is "harmless" either. Even though the properties of marijuana have shown not to be physically addictive, one can become psychologically addicted. However, this is true of just about anything that can give one pleasure, such as chocolate, gambling, or shopping. No substance will be safe for everybody, under all circumstances, or when used in excessive amounts. For example, over-the-counter medications can be deadly for those who are allergic or who overdose. On the other hand, marijuana overdose has never been a sole reported cause of death: the amount of cannabinoids required to have a lethal effect are more than 40,000 times the necessary dosage for intoxication, making it highly unlikely that a person would be able to or could be able to achieve such a concentrated amount in their bloodstream. This is a severe contrast to alcohol, where one can very easily bring about one's demise, and at only a mere four times the legal limit.

(CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH)

Marijuana continues to be a relevant controversial issue in society today, as many states included decriminalization and legalization proposals on their ballots. It can be very difficult to know which side to support, partially due to the media propaganda, some of which even contradicts itself in its fervor. This is likely the result of many wealthy and influential organizations that have a financial interest in this issue, from the pharmaceutical companies who stand to lose profits from legalization, the governments who stands to gain from taxation, or the "dealers" who will be put out of business with the elimination of the black market. It seems that those with a vested interest in the legalization or continued criminalization of marijuana will pull whatever strings necessary to sway public opinion to their side. This may include creating, supporting, or merely citing biased or invalid research to support the desired conclusion, just as Bierson has done in his article.

Audience: Legislative Body of Government and people in general
Purpose: To inform his readers of the false inform being pedaled by Mr. Bierson as well as the reasons for the misinformation.
Form: Essay
Language/Register: Formal
Tone: Objective
Structure: Sequence linked paragraphs

Sample 2:

Peck 1
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ENG 102
3 March 2008

Female circumcision is also known, more accurately, as female genital mutilation and female genital cutting (FGC.) There are three forms of FGC. The first is a clitoridectomy, the cutting and/or removal of the hood of the clitoris and all or part of the clitoris. The second is an excision which removes the clitoris, the hood, and the labia minor (the inner folds of the vulva that is responsible for producing lubrication.) The infibulation is the third and most radical which also removes everything in the excision along with the labia majora, the outer folds of the vulva. Once removed the sides of the vulva are sewn together leaving a small hole (about pencil size) for the flow of menstruation and urine. The tradition of FGC dates back more than 1000 years and is practiced in parts of Asia, the Far East, Europe, Asia, South America, and even amongst certain ethnic groups in the United States.

Aisha Abdel Majid tells of her experience in an interview with Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, an anthropologist born in Sudan, in her article: "Unmasking the Tradition of Female Circumcision." Majid describes her cutting is when she was only 6 years old. She recalls being taken by her mother and two aunts to the midwife in the neighborhood known for performing circumcisions. She is told that she is going to be purified. Upon this realization Aisha tries to break free but is forced down and ordered onto a bed of ropes with a hole in the middle. She accounts,

"They held me tight while the midwife started to cut my flesh without anesthetics. I screamed till I lost my voice. The midwife was saying to me, 'Do you want me to be taken into police custody?' After the job was done I could not eat, drink or even pass urine for three days. I remember one of my uncles who discovered what they did to me threatened to press charges against his sisters. They were afraid of him and they decided to bring me back to the midwife. In her sternest voice she ordered me to squat on the floor and urinate. It seemed like the most difficult thing to do at that point, but I did it. I urinated for a long time and was shivering with pain."(Abusharifpgs 1-2)

Aisha continues on though it took her a long time to recover looking back now over forty years later she understands the motivations of her mother wanting her to be clean, but it was a lot of anguish. Clearly, female circumcision is an inhumane practice justified with ignorant beliefs and false benefits.

This is one testimony similar to millions of instances that occur each year. According to 3 separate studies published in Bioethics details the severity of the type of circumcisions varied greatly by region. A study in Sierra Leone found that thirty nine percent of females had undergone the clitoridectomy, sixty percent the excision, and about 1 percent the infibulations. The same year, 1982, a study was done in Somalia eighty percent of the operations were the excision. The article also includes a study done in 1993 that found “the pervasiveness of genital mutilation in Africa ranged from 10 percent in Tanzania to 98 percent in Djibouti” (Circumcision pg1.) Regardless of how evasive the genital cutting done the low estimate found in a clinical report from The Alan Guttmacher Institute more than 100 million women have had some level of FGC. It is also estimated 2 million more girls from ages four to twelve years old will be cut annually. A motivational factor behind this testimony was for purification.

Purification is one of the traditional beliefs of why FGC is necessary. The word for circumcision in traditional Arabic is *tahara* meaning to purify. While FGC occurs in varying religions it is most strong in the Islam religion and is believed to be requirement by many Muslims. The Koran, the bible of Islam, however nowhere in it refers to female circumcision. Mohammed, the god of the Muslims, declared rights for women although they are to be considered below men. Mohammed displayed humanity toward females when he banned the old Arabic pre-Islam practice of burying undesired female babies alive. The *Koran* cites in the following verse, “Sura 2:228,” that women have rights too

“...Women shall with justice have rights similar to those exercised against them, although men have a status above women. God is mighty and wise” (qtd. in Voula pg2.) Therefore, the justification via religious beliefs is unfounded confirmed by the main offending religions messiah himself.

Another commonly held belief behind FGC is that there is some form of medical benefit to the girl. In Nigeria there are ethnic groups that believe if a baby comes into contact with the clitoris during childbirth the baby will die. Others believe the clitoris will grow to be penis like and drag on the ground. Female genitalia are believed by some to be poisonous to sperm and must be removed to maintain fertility. None of these beliefs are true; in fact FGC has quite the opposite effect on fertility and the health of the girls.

Infertility can in truth be a medical complication caused by the cutting. The death of a child does not happen due to contact with a clitoris in the birth, but the obstructed labor as a result of the cutting can cause the baby to be born with brain damage or even dead. In a clinical report done in accordance with classification designed by the World Health Organization the studies show, “Infants born to women who had undergone the moderately severe and most severe types of mutilation were more likely to have required resuscitation at deliver...and more likely to have died while their mother was an inpatient... than infants born to women who had not had genital mutilation.” (Not Just Skin pg 3.) While the clitoris is formed with similar nerve tissue that develops into the penis, this is often why the removal of the clitoris is compared to the equivalent of removal of the penis, the clitoris does not grow into a dangling penis like mass. The complications range from immediate to long term including hemorrhaging, the inability to urinate, tetanus, pelvic inflammation, cysts, scar tissue, tumors, chronic urinary tract infections, bladder and kidney stones, and death. These medical complications demonstrate the horrific effects of FGC on the health of the girl and obviously do not present a benefit as those who practice FGC believe.

A result of FGC is not only painful intercourse, but likewise decreased sexual pleasure. This lack of a sexual appetite is one reason given for justification of the procedure. If a woman does not undergo the procedure she is believed she will be loose and promiscuous. The FGC is considered a safeguard against casual and premarital sex.

The belief that a woman will be unable to control her sexual desire lest she is mutilated is unreasonable. The belief places all the responsibility of sexual promiscuity on the female and leaves the male unaccountable for his role in the sexual exchange. This belief again displays the fear and ignorance embedded around FGC.

The US Federal Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act of 1995 protects us in the US from these abusive forms of treatment however not every country holds the same belief system. While it is true the tradition of FGC has long roots in history and hold important cultural meanings it does not justify the harm inflicted on the innocent. The rationalization of justification by tradition does not take away the wrong doings in abolished practices such as slavery, hangings, the burning of people at the stake, human sacrifice, and cannibalism all of which at some point were an accepted traditional behavior by varying cultural beliefs.

Three of the main beliefs for the practicing of FGC have been dispelled including religion, health benefits, and sexual control. It is through education of the women and the cultural that may be bring about change. The higher the education of a woman the less likely she is to have her child undergo the cutting. Through education and support from the US and other countries may future daughters, children, and wives be safe from mutilation.

Activity:

1. Identify the audience, purpose, form, language/register, tone and structure used in sample two.
2. In 250-300 words, write an argumentative essay on the topic “Parents should choose their children’s careers”.

An argumentative essay is a type of essay that presents arguments about both sides of an issue. It could be that both sides are presented equally balanced, or it could be that one side is presented more forcefully than the other. It all depends on the writer, and what side he supports the most. The general structure of an argumentative essay follows this format:

- 1. Introduction: Attention Grabber / hook, Background Information, Thesis Statement**
- 2. Body: Three body paragraphs (three major arguments)**
- 3. Counterargument: An argument to refute earlier arguments and give weight to the actual position**
- 4. Conclusion: Rephrasing the thesis statement, major points, call to attention, or concluding remarks.**

Some tone words include:

POSITIVE TONE WORDS		NEUTRAL (+, -, or neutral)	NEGATIVE TONE WORDS	
admiring	hilarious	commanding	abhorring	hostile
adoring	hopeful	direct	acerbic	impatient
affectionate	humorous	impartial	ambiguous	incredulous
appreciative	interested	indirect	ambivalent	indifferent
approving	introspective	meditative	angry	indignant
bemused	joyful	objective	annoyed	inflammatory
benevolent	joyful	questioning	antagonistic	insecure
blithe	laudatory	speculative	anxious	insolent
calm	light	unambiguous	apathetic	irreverent
casual	lively	unconcerned	apprehensive	lethargic
celebratory	mirthful	understated	belligerent	melancholy
cheerful	modest		bewildered	mischievous
comforting	nostalgic		biting	miserable
comic	optimistic		bitter	mocking
compassionate	passionate		blunt	mournful
complimentary	placid		bossy	nervous
conciliatory	playful		cold	ominous
confident	poignant		conceited	outraged
contented	proud		condescending	paranoid
delightful	reassuring		confused	pathetic
earnest	reflective		contemptuous	patronizing
ebullient	relaxed		curt	pedantic
ecstatic	respectful		cynical	pensive
effusive	reverent		demanding	pessimistic
elated	romantic		depressed	pretentious
empathetic	sanguine		derisive	psychotic
encouraging	scholarly		derogatory	resigned
euphoric	self-assured		desolate	reticent
excited	sentimental		despairing	sarcastic
exhilarated	serene		desperate	sardonic
expectant	silly		detached	scornful
facetious	sprightly		diabolic	self-deprecating
fervent	straightforward		disappointed	selfish
flippant	sympathetic		disliking	serious
forthright	tender		disrespectful	severe
friendly	tranquil		doubtful	sinister
funny	whimsical		embarrassed	skeptical
gleeful	wistful		enraged	sly
gushy	worshipful		evasive	solemn
happy	zealous		fatalistic	somber
			fearful	stern
			forceful	stolid
			foreboding	stressful

frantic	strident
frightened	suspicious
frustrated	tense
furious	threatening
gloomy	tragic
grave	uncertain
greedy	uneasy
grim	unfriendly
harsh	unsympathetic
haughty	upset
holier-than-thou	violent
hopeless	wry