Grade 12

English Language Arts

Student Distance Learning Opportunity - Expository Reading and Writing Curriculum

This distance learning opportunity contains two parts: the Student Version (which contains directions and assignments) and the texts used to complete the activities provided in the Student Version. We recommend that your student complete 3-4 activities each day depending on length and complexity of each activity.

Encourage your student to do they best that they can with this material. What's most important is that they continue to read and write daily.

The Classical Pattern of Persuasion

Developed by John R. Edlund

MINI-MODULE: STUDENT VERSION

Module Texts

Edlund, John R., "The Classical Pattern of Persuasion." 2018.

Reading Rhetorically

Preparing to Read

Activity 1: Exploring Key Concepts – Quickwrite

Think about the way you usually organize essays, whether it be the five-paragraph essay or some other formula, or if you just start writing and keep going until it seems finished. Describe what you usually do, then think about where you learned it, what you like about it, and what might be some disadvantages. Share your quickwrite with a partner and compare methods. What are the similarities and differences? Write those down too. Save this quickwrite for use in a subsequent activity.

Text – Edlund, "The Classical Pattern of Persuasion"

Reading Purposefully

Activity 2: Reading for Understanding

Read "The Classical Pattern of Persuasion." As you read, think of the question, "How can I use this?"

Questioning the Text

Activity 3: Summarizing and Responding

After reading the article:

- Try to write down the six key terms (the English ones) in order from memory.

- If you can't remember all of them, skim the article and try again.

- After you can do it, find a partner and test each other.

- After you both can remember the terms, write them down again and write down what goes in each section, once again from memory.

- If you can't do that, check the article once more.

The goal is to be able to remember these terms quickly in future writing situations, especially in timed writing.

Activity 4: Thinking Critically

This pattern is over 2,000 years old and it was developed by ancient Romans who spoke Latin and wrote on scrolls. Do you think it is actually useful today? Why or why not?

If you don't think it is useful as it is, how would you change it? Would some shorter version of the classical pattern work for a tweet on Twitter or for another kind of short social media post if you were trying to convince someone of something?

Write a short paragraph about your thoughts on this. Then form a small group of three or four and have a discussion about the usefulness of this pattern. Report on the conclusions of your group to the rest of the class.

Activity 5: Synthesizing Multiple Perspectives

Do real newspaper articles follow the classical pattern? You will find that some do and some not so much. The following example is from an online British publication called *The Register* that publishes technology news. You can read the whole article by following the URL: www.theregister.co.uk/2016/07/13/smartphones_arent_tiny_pcs_but_thats_how_we_use_them _in_the_west/

Smartphones Aren't Tiny PCs, but That's How We Use Them in the West

In China, they get it, QR codes are like money and mobile payments are everywhere.

By Mark Pesce

The Register, July 13, 2016

Section	Paragraphs	Comments
Introduction		
Background		

Section	Paragraphs	Comments
Possible Positions		
Support		
Counterarguments		
Conclusion		

Other examples can be seen in this blog post by John R, Edlund where he analyzes three responses in the *New York Times* about whether a candidate for high political office should have military service: textrhet.com/2016/08/11/descriptive-outlining-and-arrangement/.

> In my analysis, I find that one response follows the classical pattern, one is close to the five-paragraph essay though it has seven paragraphs, and one is similar to an exam response. (Guitarsophist)

After reading these examples, try doing your own analysis. Go to a newspaper site and find an editorial, an op-ed, or a feature article on problems with social media. (It is better to go to a traditional newspaper site such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, or the *Wall Street Journal* because other types of sites may have very short articles, blog posts, or pieces that are organized as lists with titles such as "5 Problems with Social Media and Technology." There is nothing wrong with these. You just are unlikely to find the classical pattern.) Once you have found a likely article, do a descriptive outline of it.

You have probably already done a descriptive outline as part of another module, but in case you haven't try this:

- Print out the article.

- Draw a line where you think the introduction ends.

- Read the article until you find where the conclusion begins.

- Divide the rest of the article up into sections based on what each section is talking about or doing.

- For each section write down what it is about (the topic), what it is saying about the topic, and what it is doing for the reader.

That's your descriptive outline. If you can't print out the article, draw a box on a piece of paper for each paragraph, divide up the sections and write your topic, says, and does statements next to the boxes.

Now take the sections of the classical pattern and see how they match up with the sections you have defined for the article. If it does, great! If not, analyze how it is organized and decide whether it is effective or not. Share your results with your discussion group. Try to come up with some conclusions about what effective organization looks like.

Preparing to Respond

Discovering What You Think

Activity 6: Considering Your Task and Your Rhetorical Situation

Think about a problem on social media you have noticed or experienced. You may have encountered one or more of these issues in doing the descriptive outlining exercise in Activity 5. Some common ones that people are talking about are "fake" news, cyberbullying, sexting, harassment, trolls, bots, loneliness, anxiety, privacy, and many others. Of course there are many positive aspects of social media too, but for this assignment, think mainly about a problem you think is important and what advice you would give for individuals or what you think that social media companies should do.

- Write an essay about this problem organizing it according to the classical pattern.

The object of this activity is to try the classical pattern at least once to see if it works for you.

(A side note: A teacher I know who teaches ninth grade taught the classical pattern to his students. Later in the semester, the school had an essay test and his ninth graders got higher scores than any of the twelfth graders.)

Activity 7: Gathering Ideas and Materials

You could write this essay relying entirely on your own experience of social media, whatever platform you use. After all, this is a problem that you have noticed or experienced yourself. However, even if we have experienced a problem, we may not understand the causes and we may not have the best solution. You have already done a bit of research about problems in social media, and done a descriptive outline of an article. You may want to do a bit more research on causes and solutions.

Writing Rhetorically

Composing a Draft

Activity 8: Making Choices as You Write

For this first time using the classical pattern, you may want to try composing section by section.

Introduction

- What problem are you discussing?

- How can you establish your ethos?

Background

- How did this problem come to be?

- When does it happen?

- What kinds of users does it happen to?

- Why is it important now?

Possible Positions

- What is the core issue?

- What position does the company that runs the social media platform take on this problem?

- Do you agree?

- What are some other positions that people take?

- What position do you take?

- What is your solution to the problem? (This is your thesis.)

Support

- What are the arguments in favor of your position?

- How can you support them?

Counterarguments

- What do people you disagree with argue?

- Why do you disagree with them?

- How can you refute their arguments?

Conclusion

- What action should people take to solve this problem?

After you have made notes for each section using the above pattern and questions, write a draft of your essay.

Revising Rhetorically

Activity 9: Gathering and Responding to Feedback

Because your classmates probably include a lot of social media users, they can probably give you good feedback on whether your solution to the problem will work. However, part of your audience may be older people, such as your teacher, who may not understand social media as well as you do. Share your essay with a partner asking these questions:

- Will my solution work? Why or why not?

- What have I not taken into consideration?

- What background do I need to explain so that older readers will understand my points?

Revise your draft accordingly.

Editing

Activity 10: Editing Your Draft

Proofread your draft for typical errors. Then submit it to your teacher.

Activity 11: Reflecting on Your Writing Process

Return to the quick write you wrote in Activity 1. How have your ideas about organizing essays changed? Will you organize future essays differently? In what ways?

Write another quickwrite explaining your current ideas about organization.

Works Cited

Pesce, Mark. "Smartphones Aren't Tiny PCs, but That's How We Use Them in the West." *The Register*, 13 July 2016, www.theregister.co.uk/2016/07/13/smartphones_arent_tiny_pcs_but_thats_how_we_use_them_in_the_west/.

Guitarsophist. "Descriptive Outlining and Arrangement." *Teaching Text Rhetorically*, 16 Aug. 2016, textrhet.com/2016/08/11/descriptive-outlining-and-arrangement/.

The Classical Pattern of Persuasion

MODULE TEXTS

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The Classical Pattern of Persuasion

By John R. Edlund

2018

1   Once a writer has a topic and some idea of what he or she wants to say, an important question is "How do I organize it?" Some writers just start writing and let the organization grow out of the material. This is the "organic" style of organization. At the other extreme, a lot of students rely on a formula such as the five-paragraph essay. However, that formula, with a thesis and three reasons, a body paragraph about each "reason," and a summary conclusion, has many critics. The "reasons" often turn out to be examples rather than arguments, the essay may seem repetitive and formulaic, and the pattern doesn't allow for counter-arguments or much critical thinking. It is also pretty much a school format that doesn't often appear in real-world writing.

2   What we want is an organization that is effective in explaining our ideas, supporting our arguments, and persuading our audience. To be persuasive, we also have to deal with the counterarguments of people who disagree with us. We also want to give the audience a clear idea of what action we want them to take. Ideally, we want a flexible structure that can expand and contract to fit the material, the occasion, and the needs of the audience. And it should be simple enough that we can remember how to use it, even under time pressure.

3   Fortunately, such a pattern exists. It happens to have been developed by the ancient Romans, more than 2,000 years ago, but it is still used by speech writers today and can easily be adapted to essay writing. In fact, many of today's editorials and op-ed pieces follow a similar pattern. If the five-paragraph essay seems too constraining, this pattern, because it is more flexible and is organized by rhetorical purpose, is a good alternative. It is often called "the Roman six-part speech," but in this article I will call it "the classical pattern." Here it is:

The Classical Pattern

	Latin	English Equivalent	Rhetorical Function
1	*exordium*	Introduction	Introduces the topic and purpose of the speech or document and tries to establish the writers *ethos*. This may also include some kind of "hook" to engage the audiences attention. What are you writing about? Why are you writing about it?
2	*narratio*	Background	States the known facts of the case, describing what has happened so far and the nature of the problem. This provides a narrative context for the arguments that will come. What happened? Why did it happen? What might happen next? How did things get this way?

	Latin	English Equivalent	Rhetorical Function
3	*divisio*	Possible Positions	Identifies the point at issue, what position the writer will take, and how the issue will be developed. This is equivalent to the "thesis" of the writing. It is often called "division" because this section often divides the issue into possible positions and perspectives.
4	*confirmatio*	Support	Presents the arguments in favor of the writers position, including both statements of the arguments and support in the form of facts and examples. This section will probably be the longest in the paper and may include several paragraphs. This section is strong in logos.
5	*refutatio*	Counter-Arguments	Analyzes the likely arguments of the opposition and refutes them with facts, examples, and counterarguments. This section is also strong in logos. Dont be tempted to offer simplistic "straw man" versions of your opponents arguments that are easy to knock down.
6	*peroratio*	Conclusion	Traditionally, this section engages the emotions of the audience, so this might be strong in pathos. The writer also might offer a summary of the arguments so far and encourage the audience to be persuaded or take action.

Source for basic concepts see Crowley 258-272.

4 Don't worry about the Latin names for these sections. I included them only for historical context. The English names are much easier to remember. In fact, you might remember them by their first letters: IBPSCC. That acronym doesn't mean anything, but it sort of rhymes if you say the letters out loud.

Questions for a Writer

5 You can also think of this pattern as a series of questions:

1. **Introduction**: What is my paper about? How can a make my reader interested in it?

2. **Background**: What background information does the reader need to know to understand the issue I am writing about? What is the story behind the issue? How did things get this way?

3. **Possible Positions**: What are the possible positions someone could take on this issue? What position will I take and why?

4. **Support**: What are the arguments in favor of my position? How can I support them?

5. **Counterarguments**: What will people who disagree with me say? What are the arguments against my position? How can I refute them?

6. **Conclusion**: What do I want my reader to believe or do after they finish reading my essay? How do I want them to feel?

6   In a short paper, the first three categories might be combined into a one-paragraph introduction, but if the issue is complicated, the "background" section might take two or more paragraphs. Note that in this pattern, the thesis may not be in the first paragraph. In fact, it may come in the third or fourth paragraph, depending on how long the "background" section is. The "support" and "counterarguments" form the "body" of the paper. Each of these sections might be one or more paragraphs.

Questions for a Critical Reader

7   You can also use the classical pattern to analyze published editorials and op-ed pieces. You can ask:

1. **Introduction**: What is this piece about? Why is the issue or topic important, according to the writer? What kind of impression does the writer create?

2. **Background**: What background information does the author give us? What is the story behind the issue? Does the writer do a good job of putting the issue in context?

3. **Possible Positions**: What are the possible positions on this issue? Does the writer do a good job of laying them out? What position does the writer take? Is it clear and well-defined, or a little vague?

4. **Support**: What arguments does the writer make in favor of his or her position? How are they supported? Do they make sense?

5. **Counter-arguments**: What arguments against the position does the writer describe? Does he or she do a good job of refuting them? Can you think of other arguments against the position that the writer does not deal with?

6. **Conclusion**: How do you feel at the end of the piece? Are you persuaded? Why or why not?

8   These questions, and the Roman pattern from which they derive, are useful for analyzing a wide range of persuasive texts. They can help you think about the pros and cons of multiple positions rather than simply taking one position and supporting it with one-sided arguments and cherry-picked examples. They might also help you see gaps or problems with a published writers position or arguments. It is a versatile pattern for organizing effective essays and speeches. It is amazing how useful something 2,000 years old can be.

Works Cited

Crowley, Sharon, and Deborah Hawhee. *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*.
    3rd ed, Pearson, 2004.