

Keystone Focus Topic: Evaluating Arguments

Dear Editor,

I am writing regarding the Editorial section in the newspaper. I typically enjoy reading the well thought out and well-structured opinion pieces you feature. The letters to the editor often spark discussion between my friends and me. The political cartoons don't normally make me laugh aloud, but I enjoy their social commentary, nonetheless. However, from time to time, I find I don't get the joke or the point.

I don't feel that something as serious as the housing crisis should be trivialized in a cartoon about Halloween. I also don't think Fair and Ethical Treatment for All Animals (FETAA), and other animal lovers will appreciate the latest depiction of police harming a chimpanzee, especially without any context.

The purpose of political cartoons is to take headlines and turn them into thought-provoking discussion pieces, not trivialize them into punchlines.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Reader

1. What could the author of this letter add in order to strengthen it?
 - A. stay focused on the topic of the cartoon in question
 - B. include personal information about a particular cartoonist
 - C. include examples of protests to past offensive cartoons
 - D. include the names of FETAA's president and founder
2. What is the main point the letter writer is trying to make?
 - A. There are better ways to get a point across than an editorial cartoon.
 - B. There are more important issues to address than a housing crisis.
 - C. The newspaper should publish more interesting political editorials.
 - D. The newspaper should be more considerate in its political comics.
3. By pointing out the reaction of organizations like FETAA, the author is
 - A. attempting to tell the editor who might be offended.
 - B. attempting to convince the editor to publish an apology.
 - C. suggesting that newspaper editors are unsympathetic.
 - D. trying to distract the editor from the real issue at hand.
3. Which of these phrases from the selection is an example of the author's feelings about the subject?
 - A. "not trivialize them into punchlines"
 - B. "enjoy their social commentary, nonetheless"
 - C. "spark discussion between my friends and me"
 - D. "well-structured opinion pieces you feature"

4. What method does the author of this letter use to persuade?

- A. argument by authority
- B. analogy
- C. argument by emotion
- D. compare and contrast

Electronics enthusiasts can purchase several different types of monitors today. The oldest are cathode-ray tubes, or CRTs. These are the older, traditional television monitors and computer monitors. They are heavy and have low resolution, yet they have fast refresh speeds. This means images on a CRT are almost constantly being renewed. They are also very cheap.

LCDs, or laser-crystal displays, are much more sophisticated than CRTs. They are cost affordable, and they have decent resolution. However, their refresh rates are slow. Sometimes this can create jerky movements on the screen, particularly if the action onscreen is fast-moving. LCDs use a horrendous amount of energy when compared to CRTs. Also, LCD screens suffer from a problem called "pixel burn" where images can be burned onto the screen, damaging the monitor.

Obviously, the best monitors that a person can buy today are LEDs, or light-emitting diodes. LEDs use less energy. They produce a screen picture with higher resolution. They contain no toxic or harsh chemicals like mercury or lead. Honestly, there is really very little bad to say about them. LEDs are worth the price one must pay because of their cutting edge technology.

5. Read the following sentence from the passage.

"Obviously, the best monitors that a person can buy today are LEDs, or light-emitting diodes."

How should the author rewrite this sentence to strengthen the argument?

- A. Obviously, the best monitors that a person can buy today are LEDs.
- B. The best monitors that a person can buy today are LEDs, or light-emitting diodes.
- C. Obviously. The best monitors a person can buy are LEDs, or light-emitting diodes.
- D. Light-emitting diodes make the best monitors to buy, obviously.

6. Which sentence should be cut from the passage to strengthen the author's argument?

- A. "This means images on a CRT are almost constantly being renewed."
- B. "They contain no toxic or harsh chemicals like mercury or lead."
- C. "They are cost affordable, and they have decent resolution."
- D. "Honestly, there is really very little bad to say about them."

Pass the Salt

Research has shown that people who live in busy, industrial nations spend more time at work and less time at home. Apart from the stress this lifestyle can cause, it can lead to other health risks as well. People who do not have the time to prepare healthy, home cooked meals usually eat food that has been processed, frozen, or otherwise preserved. The number one item used in food preservation is sodium. Busy, working people are consuming large amounts of sodium, which is affecting their health.

Doctors have determined that the average healthy person should consume around 1500 milligrams of sodium a day. Studies have shown that people who eat fast food or preserved food on a regular basis consume far more than this healthy number. For instance, one meal that has been processed and preserved in this method can contain as much as one and a third times the average daily recommendation. That comes to almost 2000 milligrams of sodium in one meal alone. If a person eats three of these meals in a day, that is 6000 milligrams of sodium, or four times, the average daily recommendation.

In the body, sodium controls the elasticity of cell membranes and helps the body regulate fluids. Low sodium levels mean that a person's body has trouble retaining water, which can cause a dangerous drop in blood pressure. High sodium levels means that the body retains too much water, which can cause high blood pressure. High blood pressure leads to heart failure. High sodium levels also can cause kidney and renal failure. Busy people who eat unhealthy meals that are high in sodium are slowly killing themselves.

The food packaging industry drastically needs to reduce the levels of sodium they add to foods. The time for action is now. If these companies cannot take direct action, then it is the duty of the government to demand stricter limitations on sodium additives and harsher punishments and fines for violators. The health of our society and our labor force depends upon it.

7. What evidence does the author give to support the statement that processed foods have unhealthy levels of sodium?

- A. One preserved meal can contain one and a third times the recommended daily sodium.
- B. People who live in industrial nations spend too much time at work and less at home.
- C. Low levels of sodium in the body can lead to a dangerous drop in blood pressure.
- D. A normal, healthy person should consume around 500 milligrams of sodium a day.

8. What is the controlling idea of this article?

- A. People are just irresponsible in what they choose to eat.
- B. Sodium is a poison and has no redeeming qualities.
- C. People eat too much food and should be told to eat less.
- D. High sodium levels in food are unhealthy for most people.

Large-scale Excavation Mining

Coal companies should follow regulations when they work mining excavations like mountaintop removal or pit mining. These rules exist to protect the environment, the natural beauty, and the wildlife of an area. They also protect the health and homes of the people who live near a mine. Most important is the protection of precious topsoil. According to geologists, lost topsoil takes hundreds of years to replace.

Coal companies prefer excavation mining because it lets the companies employ fewer workers while maximizing output. The miners claim that a company can mine the entire coal lode more effectively, whereas shaft mining is less efficient and requires more workers. Coal companies claim the large scale of these projects is necessary to meet the growing demands of the United States and the rest of the world.

Coal companies repair these sites when they finish a project. They call this process reclamation. The companies fill in the large holes and replace the topsoil. They plant trees and grasses. Many times, coal companies later sell this land to developers who build towns and urban centers.

Regulations include fees and fines for companies who do not follow environmental guidelines. The process of following regulations may cost the company money in terms of productivity. Companies can easily absorb these added costs because excavation mining creates huge profits.

9. Which sentence from the passage is an example of the author's bias?

- A. "Many times, coal companies later sell this land to developers who build towns and urban centers."
- B. "Regulations include fees and fines for companies who do not follow environmental guidelines."
- C. "Companies can easily absorb these added costs because excavation mining creates huge profits."
- D. "These rules exist to protect the environment, the natural beauty, and the wildlife of an area."

10. By pointing out the need to protect the environment at the end of paragraph 1, the author is

- A. appealing to readers' feelings of compassion.
- B. trying to distract readers from the real issue at hand.
- C. suggesting that coal companies are unsympathetic.
- D. stating that the environment is not so badly damaged.