

2. CRITICAL ANALYSIS

An analysis breaks down something into its component parts to study them and to understand their effects. For example, a mechanic may examine the exhaust, cooling, and electrical systems of a car to discover each one's effect upon performance. Likewise, a student may examine the evidence, reasoning, and underlying beliefs in an argument to discover how well they support a thesis. Just as the cooling system of a car may be perfect or less than perfect, so might the logic of a point in an essay be sound or unsound.

Although the car analogy has its limitations, note another important similarity. A car consists of more than exhaust, cooling, and electrical systems; for example, fuel economy, handling, and reliability might be examined or interior fabrics, space, and amenities. The list can go on and on. Likewise, the three appeals or the structure of an essay might be analyzed, as might the tone, audience, and diction. Again, the lists of component parts, which could be examined, are many and varied and depend upon the scope and purpose of the analysis.

The distinction between analysis and argument is important: an analysis looks at someone else's written position on a debatable topic. As such, it is an examination of another writer's argument and how effectively or ineffectively a claim is stated and supported, not an opportunity for a writer to assert his or her opinion about the same topic.

In fact, for the analysis to feature the writer's ideas and his own support for them is to expose his or her biases and to undermine the impartiality of the analysis. Consequently, the writer's position on the issue is not wanted, whereas a clear, fair appraisal of another's thoughts is. So, to analyze effectively, one must put aside biases and opinions and approach another's argument without prejudice. Think of a judge. His role is not to attack his enemies or to support his friends, but to impartially review a case. Bias will only cloud decision-making, not support it; consequently, the judges most admired and respected are those who can put aside their prejudices and clearly weigh the pros and cons of a case. These are the qualities of a good analyst as well.

2.1. Possible Topics of Essay Analysis

The examination of an essay, a hard look at the performance of its components, may include many topics of analysis. Some of the more common include

Thesis	Purpose	Bias	Development
Organization	Persona	Tone	Diction
Audience	Appeals	Support	Rhetorical Modes

2.2. How to Analyze Depends upon Audience

Who will read an analysis determines the depth of an analysis, topics of analysis, and its organization. Purpose and audience in analysis can be broken down into two camps:

- To explain or argue something to an uninformed reader
- To explain or argue something to the informed reader

The uninformed reader is someone who might be aware of a topic or a text but has not read or studied it. A review of Disney's film *Pocahontas* or Tony Morrison's book *Beloved*, when each first came out, or a travel piece on a rain forest tour in Costa Rica would assume such a reader. Written to an audience that has no in-depth knowledge of the subject, the analysis examines most any category the author thinks important and the writer may or may not express an opinion. The essay gives a summary or description of the topic (film, book, story, essay, place, etc.), so the reader can understand or picture what is being discussed, and the writer may choose to interest or to dampen a reader's enthusiasm. For example, the analysis might conclude *Pocahontas* disappoints or sizzles, that one must read *Beloved*, or that the rain forest tour in Costa Rica offers the trip of a lifetime.

Such an analysis consists of three major sections:

- Introduction: to set up the rhetorical situation, naming the author, essay, place, or subject; and signaling the direction of the student's critical opinion;
- Overview: to give a fair-minded review, even a summary, of the text or subject;
- Examination: to review topics of analysis, which, to the writer, seem most important.

The informed reader is someone who is well aware of a topic or a text and may have his or her own opinions of it. After seeing the Oscar-winning film *American Beauty* together, a couple might discuss it over coffee, each with their own opinion of why the protagonist died. Also, two people might have very different interpretations of the role of the next-door neighbor and each can support his or her positions with facts from the movie; if so, these are mini analyses. Both have studied an issue and come to different conclusions. Of course, interpretations of Morrison's *Beloved* or of the value of a rainforest tour in Costa Rica could also differ. We run into different opinions than ours daily in academics, at work, in play, with family, at church, and in neighborhood associations. For example, at work, a peer thinks we should change the location of the office. He presents his argument, and we listen to it. Does it make sense? If Marilyn doesn't think so, she has to show its shortcomings through an analysis of the proposal.

The rhetorical challenge presented by the informed audience remains dynamic because the audience is active, not passive. The informed reader knows the issue and, whether expressed or not, may have an opinion. In Marilyn's case, she must not only analyze, but also persuade both her boss and her coworkers that it is not a good idea to move the office. This rhetorical situation occurs daily. A deacon wants to add a third service on Sunday, the politician wants a toll road down the middle of the Katy Freeway, and the neighbor wants security cameras around the pool to videotape vandals: each make proposals that will affect our lives or our pocketbooks. If the issue is important, we must determine whether or not to accept someone's position on it. This is

analysis. An understanding of an argument's content, a review of it, is the first step, but the important second step and the type of analysis developed in this text, breaks the argument apart so that we can determine if we can agree with a proposal fully, partially, or not at all, and states why in clean, clear prose.

In the analyses that follow, assume the audience to be informed.

2.3. What to Analyze Depends Upon Purpose

So how does one know which topic to analyze: should it be the thesis, persona, audience, or appeals? Or all four? But what about support and tone? Or bias? The topics and combination of topics one can examine are endless. Theoretically, one could analyze an essay using each of the topics listed in this guide, but is that necessary? Seldom. Understanding what to analyze depends upon what one wants to know, which depends upon the generality or specificity of the purpose.

General purposes of analytic essays, in order of complexity, include:

- * Identification
- * Effects
- * Strengths and Weaknesses

Identification: In the identification analysis, the writer discovers the presence of one or more topics of analysis. For example, the writer might discover the thesis and prove why it is the thesis, additionally showing its single expression in an essay or its initial statement and restatement throughout. Similarly, dominant and subordinate patterns of development and/or methods of organization might be discovered and proven to be present. In the same manner, appeals (emotional, ethical, and logical), levels of diction, figurative language, evidence, and/or any other category could be shown to exist or not.

Effects: A more complex approach is to not only identify the topic of analysis, but to show its effect or effects upon some stated objective such as unity, coherence, or development. As such, one not only identifies the presence of the extreme and shifting tones in Maya Angelou's "Graduation," but also shows how the extremities and shifts subtly support the thesis, which pertains to the resiliency and strength of African-Americans in the face of adversity.

Similarly, one not only identifies the associative logic in Joan Didion's "On Going Home," but shows how it reinforces the incoherence and tradeoffs she sees in modern family life. In the same manner, one identifies the lack of evidence in support of an inductive argument and shows how it affects the development of a particular point in support of the expansion of off-shore fishing rights or a claim that immigration should be limited to political refugees.

Strengths and Weaknesses: The next level of analysis is more evaluative, for example, first identifying, then showing the effects of the tone, a method of organization, or a lack of evidence, then comparing the effectiveness of each and declaring it a strength or weakness in the development of the claim or thesis.

For example, when analyzing A.M. Rosenthal's essay "The Case for Slavery," an essay against drug use, students readily identify the very strong emotional appeal, a consistent but simple logical thread, and a very limited use of ethical appeal strategies. Consequently, through identification, they accurately note the essay addresses a supportive audience. However, if the same essay is analyzed with the purpose of revealing whether or not its thesis is proven, one sees it in a

different light. The logic in the essay, although convincing, (for example, the essay compares drug addiction to the slavery of African Americans) when examined, is a false analogy, and many of the assumptions about drug use and abuse are equally as questionable.

Finally, little or no evidence supports his claim. This is an emotional harangue. The analysis of audience and the three appeals does not focus upon an essay's veracity. One that examines its assumptions, bias, reasoning, and evidence does.

In another essay on drug use, the assumptions may be identified, examined, and found to be acceptable and therefore strengths, a couple of isolated cases of reasoning flawed and declared a weakness, but the evidence, relevant and accurate, and thought to be a strength. Overall, the essay is evaluated to be a strong one.

2.4. Organization of an Analysis

Organization of an analysis is a very simple but important skill. After the introduction and thesis are stated, the topics of analysis, the categories and/or subcategories to be examined, must be stated in the topic sentence of each of paragraph. Throughout the paragraph, the writer should repeat the key word *logical* and any subcategories such as inductive or deductive. For example, in an analysis of the three appeals, when discussing the presence or absence of a logical appeal, the writer should plainly and forthrightly state in a topic sentence:

One of the reasons this essay addresses a wavering audience is due to a strong logical appeal. Many examples of inductive as well as deductive logic develop the thesis. Some examples of the most prominent uses of induction include...

The paragraph would go on to site examples of inductive reasoning. If many, a new paragraph might be used to introduce the use of deductive logic. If few, deduction would be introduced in the same paragraph and examples of it would follow. A new paragraph might then introduce patterns of logic, fallacies, and rebuttals and examples showing their presence.

It is essential to let the reader know very directly what is being examined, both the category (for example, logic) and the subcategory (induction) so that he or she can follow what is being examined. This applies to all analyses. In an analysis, the writer essentially breaks a topic down into categories and subcategories and examines them. This is a complex task. To not alert the reader of the name of what is being examined is the gravest flaw an analyst can make. In seconds, the reader is lost. To not repeat key words to keep the reader on the logical path of one's argument, is also a grave error.

Specific purposes of different analytic essays include the examination of

- * Appeals and Audience
- * Support for a Thesis or Claim

These are by no means the only purposes that an analysis can have, but they are two of the more common approaches, focusing on one topic or a combination of analytical topics that are closely aligned.

2.5. Analysis: Examining Audience and Appeals

An analysis which focuses upon the three appeals would examine the

- * Emotional Appeal (*Pathos*)
- * Ethical Appeal (*Ethos*)
- * Logical Appeal (*Logos*)

This analysis would not only identify and substantiate, but also look at the strengths and weaknesses of each appeal and/or determine which audience (hostile, wavering, or supportive) they were collectively addressing. The thesis might declare the intended audience while the essay's body points, organized by appeal, would support the claim—that the audience is either hostile, wavering, or supportive—through induction.

2.5.1. Audience

Whom did the writer have in mind when he or she wrote the text? Although we have been looking at audience in terms of its relationship to the three appeals, audience incorporates many more factors including:

- | | | | |
|-------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| * Age | * Sex | * Bias | * Education |
| * Culture | * Sophistication | * Specialization | * Expectation |
| * Geography | * Number | * Need | * Relationship |

An analysis of audience could examine the tone and the diction used in a work to determine which if any of the above categories seem to be addressed. For example, a limited vocabulary might mean a younger or less educated audience. A use of technological terms might indicate a specialized and/or educated audience. Certain regionalisms might indicate a geographic audience such as one in New England or in Louisiana while the use of figurative language could indicate a more sophisticated and cultured audience.

An analysis of audience can also be very specific. For example, writers addressing a controversial issue know their audience's bias. Therefore, to persuade the audience, they balance the use of emotional, logical, and ethical appeals based on whether the audience is hostile to, supportive of, or wavering on their position. In analyzing an essay on a controversial issue, a student weighs whether or not each of the three appeals are fully developed or not and determines the author's perceived stance on the audience's bias based on the presence or absence of appeals.

For instance, a very strong emotional appeal accompanied by little use of logic and only a perfunctory development of credibility would indicate a supportive audience. An essay with strong logical and ethical appeals with little or no use of emotional language would indicate a hostile audience. The essay with all three appeals points to a wavering audience. See chart under Audience in the Persuasion Section of this booklet, and see the next subsection on Appeals.

2.5.2. Appeals

An analysis of the three appeals determines whether or not an appeal is made to emotion, to logic, and/ or to credibility (ethics). These categories have been described in great detail in the Persuasion Section of this text and should be reviewed before attempting an analysis.

An Emotional Appeal is present only if a critic (the student) discovers enough evidence to conclude that the writer uses emotion as a tool to persuade. A few words and examples are not enough. Good writers use emotional words and examples whether making an appeal or not. What the critic must find is a pattern. To prove an emotional appeal's presence, emotional words, ones with negative connotations (for example, *politician*), must be shown to consistently be associated with the

opposition, while positive words (*statesman*) are used consistently to support the writer's position. The lack of emotional words (*public representative*) and/or the lack of any pattern would be evidence to help prove the lack of an emotional appeal.

The examples used could also be important. Ones which elicit an emotional response (for example, a sex scandal) are potentially part of an emotional appeal. If accompanied by the use of emotional words, examples are no longer presented simply to inform, but to persuade emotionally. Being able to identify and show a pattern of emotional words and examples is necessary to prove this appeal. Being able to show a paucity of emotional language and examples or an inconsistency in the use of emotional words (for example, positively connotative words associated with the opposition) proves the appeal's absence.

An Ethical Appeal is present, as above, when it can be proven that the appeal has been consistently used as a tool to persuade. On the other hand, the critic would prove the appeal does not exist when he or she could show it is not used consistently. As discussed in detail in the Persuasion Section, the criteria to be analyzed in an appeal to credibility include:

- * Common Ground
- * Knowledge of Subject Matter
- * Reasonable Tone
- * Outside Authorities

An analysis finds evidence or the lack of evidence in each category and, adding it up, determines whether or not an appeal has been used. Note that the presence or lack of common ground is not a determining factor. Some issues, such as racism or sexism, may not have common ground.

A Logical Appeal exists by the same criteria. In this case, the analysis would find the consistent presence of logic or the lack of it by examining the following:

- * Inductive Reasoning
- * Deductive Reasoning
- * The Expression of these forms of reasoning in Patterns of Logical
- * Development (cause and effect, compare and contrast, exemplification, definition, etc.)
- * Refutations of Counter-Arguments (refutation, concession, rebuttal)
- * Logical Fallacies

Analysis of the Appeals to Determine Audience: After examining the presence or absence of each of the three appeals, one can determine the position (hostile, wavering, or supportive) of the audience. To understand this further, see chart under Audience in the Persuasion Section of this booklet and see the previous subsection on Audience.

The Use of Appeals in King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

A look at King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" can be instructive. In this sample outline, the evidence is not listed and the supporting points are merely asserted, not proven.

Outline

Thesis Statement: Although one might think Martin Luther King, Jr., would perceive the white clergymen who wrote "A Call for Unity" a hostile audience, he wisely answers them as if they were, not ardent segregationists, but a wavering audience unaware of the entire argument.

- I. **Ethos:** A strong ethical appeal is mounted establishing credibility
 - A. Many Outside Authorities (examples of experts, texts, and laws; Historical figures who have been in similar positions)
 - B. Reasonable Tone throughout (examples from text)
 - C. Common Ground (examples from text)
 - D. Knowledge of Subject Matter (examples from text)
 - E. Add up evidence: King works very hard to meet every criteria of an ethical appeal
- II. **Logos:** A strong logical appeal is also present.
 - A. Many instances of Deductive Reasoning (based on truisms and laws)
 - B. Ample Inductive Reasoning (examples in text)
 - C. Patterns of Development: Every paragraph follows one (examples)
 - D. Rebuttals: Each point made in Birmingham clergymen's letter is systematically rebutted over the length of the essay (examples)
 - E. Logical fallacies: King works hard to avoid them
 - F. Add up the evidence: Use of logic is consistent and persuasive
 - G.
- III. **Pathos:** A strong emotional appeal
 - A. Emotional words often focused around particular points (examples)
 - B. Emotional examples throughout (examples)
 - C. Add up evidence: Very emotional without losing reasonable tone
- IV. Inductive conclusion: King addresses a wavering audience due to the consistent use of all three appeals; he sees clergy and their congregations as moderates.

To better understand the topics an appeals' analysis examines, read the Persuasion Section. Having read how to make an appeal and how to balance them to reach certain audiences, one shouldn't find it difficult to make the switch from writing a persuasive paper to critiquing one.

2.6. Analysis: Examining Support for a Thesis or a Claim

A revealing strength and weakness analysis is one that examines the support a writer presents to back his or her claim. When reading a particularly difficult piece or one that addresses a

controversial issue, one should examine the support in order to determine if the claim has merit. Topics of analysis that reveal an essay's strengths and weaknesses include:

- * Bias
- * Support (Assumptions, Reasoning, and / or Evidence)

Bias: Since most writers have a bias, the questions become

- * What is the bias?
- * What is the author's stake in the argument?
- * Is the writer's evidence reliable?

To discover bias, look at a writer's interests, profession, and concerns. For example, an American history professor writing about Disney's film, *Pocahontas*, would probably be using his skills as a historian to judge the film's merits. Likewise, a bat-maker conducting a fashion review might be particularly concerned with critiquing what appears on the models' heads. The Marxist would be concerned with the relationships between labor and management in Dickens' *Hard Times*, and the conservationist would focus on particular areas of a president's energy policy.

To follow up on an earlier example, an expert in nuclear waste employed by a power company may have a bias towards his industry and place of employment. After all, if he wants to stay employed, he would be foolish to write about the industry's sins: he has a stake in the industry's future. Admittedly, just because a writer is employed by a party in the debate does not mean he'll slant evidence or try to deceive. On the other hand, the history of the scientists employed by the tobacco industry to obscure information about the effects of tobacco smoking and to undermine studies that linked smoking with cancer are testimony to the fact that people employed by an industry or any other organization with a great deal of money at risk in a debate may not be an accurate source of information. Therefore, it's always a good idea to find out an author's background and to discover what his or her organization's investment is in the discussion.

2.6.1. Evidence

An efficient analysis of a claim's support examines

- * Evidence
- * Reasoning
- * Assumptions or Warrants

Evidence can be studied by using the criteria mentioned in the Evidence subsection of the Argument Section of this study guide. In this subsection a number of categories of evidence are defined and explained and the qualities evidence should have are discussed in detail. To briefly sum up this information and apply it to analysis, an examination of the evidence would include three steps:

- 1) Identifying the evidence
- 2) Categorizing the evidence
- 3) Evaluating the evidence

Identifying the evidence involves discovering it.

Categorizing the evidence involves breaking it down into classifications. These include:

- * Examples
- * Statistics and Samples
- * Known Facts and Shared Beliefs
- * Common Knowledge
- * Personal Experience
- * Observation and Experiments
- * Testimony of Experts

After completing this step, the analysis might discuss whether or not the evidence is balanced or relies solely on one or two categories. Sometimes it may be appropriate for evidence to only be in a couple categories and sometimes this may be a weakness.

For instance, an essay on forestry might develop its support based on common knowledge and personal experience. An analysis might point to the strength of the evidence as the information presented in these categories and the weakness as the lack of evidence provided in other categories. In such a public and visual industry, it might be argued that examples, statistics, known facts, and observations could have been presented to bolster support for the claim. However, in an essay on Thomas Paine's use of argumentative techniques in "Common Sense," examples and known facts might be all the information necessary or even available, and an analysis should acknowledge this.

Evaluating evidence should be based on its meeting certain criteria. All evidence should be

- * Relevant
- * Representative
- * Accurate
- * Specific and Detailed
- * Sufficient
- * Current (if a current issue)

If the evidence presented in any of the categories does not meet these standards, it should be assessed as a weakness and may undermine the credibility of the writer and/or his or her thesis. If evidence consistently meets standards, it should be acknowledged as a strength, adding to the credibility of the argument.

2.6.2. Reasoning

Reasoning can be examined by analyzing the soundness of the logical arguments presented in an essay. Reasoning and logic have been defined and explained in detail in the Persuasion Section of this guidebook and the discovery of the major categories has been discussed in the previous subsection on Appeals. The point of an analysis of reasoning is to not only point out its presence but to discern whether or not the reasoning is sound and acceptable.

An analysis of reasoning focuses on

- * Induction
- * Deduction
- * Patterns of Logical Development
- * Rebuttals
- * Logical Fallacies

Inductive Reasoning must demonstrate sufficient evidence (meeting all the criteria discussed above) to justify the inductive leap, which the audience is expected to make, resulting in an appropriate conclusion. No major evidence or inconsistencies should be omitted or avoided. Given the evidence, the conclusion should make sense, being neither too grand, nor too modest.

Deductive Reasoning must be based on true major and minor premises with a conclusion, which follows from the premises presented. The analysis should pay special attention to the truth of the major premise or truism stated as the shared belief upon which the balance of the reasoning rests. If this truism is not always applicable or lacking in any way, it should be declared a weakness and the conclusion or conclusions which follow it declared unsound. To see the many ways a syllogism may be manipulated to be less than sound, see the Logic chapter in a grammar text.

Patterns of Logical Development are the manifestation of inductive and deductive reasoning in simple patterns, which students can readily identify. These patterns, such as cause and effect, definition, compare and contrast, and exemplification, are described in the Logic section of this study guide and in most grammar books under the topic of paragraph development. As noted in the inductive and deductive sections above, the patterns must be complete and / or sound.

Rebuttals of opposition points in essays should be fair and sound. When analyzing a rebuttal, the opposition point should include who believes it, what is believed, and why; and it should stand alone as a sentence. A clear negation of the opposition point should follow, being the topic sentence of the rebuttal paragraph. The rebuttal itself should consist of an analysis of the evidence, reasoning, and assumptions behind the opposition's support, identifying and evaluating flaws, which discredit the opposition's position by pointing out its weaknesses. If a rebuttal merely negates the opposition and shouts back at it, repeating arguments used or unused in support of the writer's contention, it is ineffective and a weakness in the essay. If the claim of the opposition is not clearly or completely presented, the rebuttal is also flawed, just as it is if the efforts to discredit are insufficient. To understand this completely, see Rebuttal subsection in Argument Section.

Logical fallacies, mistakes in logic, are unacceptable. Often used to deceive an audience, the effects of a fallacy should be pointed out, showing how they attempt to steer an audience from the real issue and/or to trick it into following prejudices or into thinking something that is either irrelevant or untrue. Beginning writers often see more fallacies than really exist, so an analysis should be very careful to accurately name the fallacy (*post hoc*, either/or, slippery slope, bandwagon, argument to the person, etc.) and to prove that it is indeed the fallacy in question, showing how it fits the definition. Once the fallacy is proven to exist, the writer should show its attempted effects and, depending upon its seriousness, declare it a minor or major weakness in the argument. If appropriate, the writer may show how the presence of one or more fallacies undermines the credibility of the author who would use them and the argument that would be so weak as to need fallacies to develop it.

If problems in logical reasoning are not discovered and if logic is used to develop points in the essay, the analysis should proclaim logic to be one of the essay's strengths. Of course, some categories and individual instances of logic might be faultless and others suspect. In such cases, the analysis should acknowledge both the strengths and the weaknesses by point or by category.

2.6.3. Warrants

Warrants are the underlying values and beliefs that remain unstated and form the important link between a claim or an assertion and its support. For example, if someone states, "Let's have chicken for dinner," and her friend says, "We had chicken for lunch," what's the unstated belief or warrant? Apparently, the friend finds it undesirable to eat chicken twice in one day or perhaps, any food twice in one day. Then again, she may be only against eating the same food in two successive meals. We are not one hundred percent sure, but know it could be any three of these since the friend didn't think it necessary to explain herself. We speak and write this way all the time. In fact, to state warrants directly takes the fun out of communication. To say, "We had chicken for lunch" without explaining the warrant challenges the listener figure out the connection and enlivens the conversation. Conversely, to discover warrants is detective work, looking for the real motivations, the beliefs and values beneath the surface that reveal the real story.

Going back to our pizza example, if one wants pizza tonight because it is *easier* than the alternative, a number of warrants exist behind the seemingly simple and convincing reason: easier. First of all, it is assumed easier is better tonight. Why? Perhaps the unstated assumption is that everyone is tired. Or that no one wants to work on preparing something more difficult, such as chicken and rice. Or that after a hard week, all are entitled to food prepared and delivered by someone else. Or that only pizza, not chicken and rice, can be ordered out and delivered. Notice that these beliefs and assumptions may or may not be true. Someone in favor of the chicken and rice dish may say he's not that tired and is willing to cook. Someone else may know of a new Cajun restaurant that delivers chicken and rice, not the same recipe, but a good one. Suddenly, two of the warrants, the beliefs, behind *easier*, one of the strongest supporting points in favor of pizza, have been shown to be false.

We have all experienced this kind of a debate at home, but of course, we never put labels, such as warrants, on the underlying beliefs, values and assumptions behind the use of reasons.

How could the *easier* point have been more successfully developed? The person in favor of it should have checked his warrants to make sure what seemed obvious was really the case. Canvassing others to see if they really were too tired to cook and knowing all the delivery possibilities in the neighborhood were important to know before concluding *easier* would be an acceptable supporting point.

Warrants cannot be avoided. They are embedded in every point in support of a claim, and to be persuasive, one must be sure that one's warrants are acceptable; and to be a critical thinker, one must make sure that others warrants are acceptable, also.

In the argument on gun control, the National Rifle Association acknowledges that rifles kill, but it claims they are not a threat to most citizens. One of the NRA's underlying beliefs or warrants is that rifles are acceptable firearms because they are used primary to kill game, such as deer, not people. Advocates of gun control might find such a warrant naive or suspect in light of mass killing incidents using rifles, such as the one at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Consequently they would declare the warrant that rifles are not a threat to citizens into question.

An analysis of warrants closely examines the unexpressed but implicit beliefs and values behind the use of evidence. After isolating these warrants, the analysis would study their appropriateness and, if wanting, declare them weaknesses. If they were acceptable, it

would declare them strengths. When writing synonyms for the word *warrants*, students might refer to them as “unstated beliefs” or “unexpressed values” or hidden assumptions”: combinations of words that alert the reader to the fact that these are not in the text, but buried within it.

2.6.4. Organization

The support analysis can be organized either of two ways: point-by-point or topic-by-topic. In very short essays, it is often easier and more effective for students to identify each of an essay’s major points and to examine the bias, assumptions, reasoning, and evidence in each. In a longer essay, the subject-by-subject approach is more effective.

Support in King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

Outline

Thesis Statement: Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” consistently supports its thesis and major points, such that the reader leaves the essay well informed and satisfied that he or she understands the issues.

- I. **Bias: Direct and obvious**—he’s an African-American leader
 - A. His leadership does not seem to be at stake as much as his position as a man battling the restrictions of a segregated society (evidence)
 - B. Since most evidence is based on general knowledge or events that can be readily verified, it does not appear to be distorted. (examples)
 - C. Strength: racial bias gives credibility rather than discrediting it
- II. **Warrants:** Beyond obvious ones such as all men are created equal and segregation is wrong, King’s arguments and their support are based on a number of hidden beliefs and values.
 - A. On waiting (examples)
 - B. On role of white moderates and churches and their leaders (examples)
 - C. On unjust laws (examples)
 - D. Truisms that begin deductive arguments (examples)
 - E. Strength: His unstated values and beliefs are safe and would be commonly accepted by all but the avowed racist
- III. **Reasoning:** Present in every paragraph and a unifying factor throughout essay
 - A. Deduction: Major and minor premises true. Conclusions sound. (examples)
 - B. Induction: No hasty generalizations. Sufficient evidence. (examples) C Rebuttals: fair (examples)
 - D. Patterns of logical development: effectively executed (examples) E. Logical fallacies: none apparent (examples)
 - F. Strength: No noticeable faults in logic
- IV. **Evidence: Varied and Complete**
 - A. Types: examples, known facts, common knowledge, personal experience
 - B. Qualities: relevant, representative, accurate, sufficient, detailed
 - C. Strength: knows sensitive issues need more support than others

Not all essays are as well-written as King's; although we might have quibbled with a few of King's premises or with the sufficiency of evidence, this essay is extremely detailed, supported, developed, and complete.

In some essays, the bias of the author may interfere with the accurate or representative reporting of information or an assumption in support of a claim may be no more valid than an opposing one. Sometimes the reasoning may be flawed or the evidence may be insufficient or not representative. In such cases, the analysis points out the specific deficiency and weighs whether or not the problem undermines or just damages the credibility of

- (1) a particular point
- (2) the thesis
- (3) the purpose of the essay.

Most flaws only undermine the overall effectiveness of an essay. Some, however, may discredit the argument so that it is not acceptable. In writing the conclusion of a support analysis, the writer weighs the strengths and weaknesses discovered and determines their overall effect.

As in the appeals analysis, an analysis of support can be understood by knowing how to write a good argument. The writer who knows how to make a contention based on correct assumptions, reasoning, and evidence finds it relatively easy to make the switch from using them in writing to analyzing them.