

Anatomy of Persuasion

LAST MONTH, **LC** SHOWED YOU HOW TO WRITE THE PERFECT INTRO TO A PERSUASIVE ESSAY. NOW, YOU'RE READY TO FOLLOW IT UP WITH A WELL-CRAFTED ARGUMENT. *By Sarah Montante*

As the name suggests, the purpose of a persuasive essay is to convince the reader of your point of view. By the end of your introduction, your thesis should be clear. This is the point you are going to prove. Your task in the body of the essay is to prove it.

How can you convince your reader? You'll need to develop a logical argument based on factual evidence and present it in a structured manner.

> TEST THE TECHNIQUE

Let's say that you have been asked to account for the origins of the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and '70s. There are many reasons why American women came together to demand equality. For years, they had been second-class citizens—denied access to higher education, prevented from holding most jobs, and expected to tend to their husbands and children regardless of their own abilities. Based on all of the complex factors that gave rise to this movement, let's assume that you choose to make an economic argument for the development of women's liberation.

Your thesis might be: The economic prosperity of the 1950s combined with social circumstances and women's weak earning power gave rise to the women's liberation movement. The attendant argument would have three parts that you would need to prove separately: 1) The 1950s were a period of economic prosperity; 2) Social conditions were ripe for a political movement; and 3) Women's economic earning power was less than that of

men. Your conclusion would supply the fourth part of the argument where you would show how all of these factors together accounted for the beginning of the movement.

Notice the order of the points in the paragraph above. It is not haphazard. This argument is a logical one, which means that each point flows from the one before it. If you were to write a convincing essay using this argument, you would need to prove each point in the proper order. This logical progression of ideas is the overarching structure of your essay.

> STRUCTURE YOUR ARGUMENT

Each separate point in your argument requires its own paragraph. Just as the purpose of your overall essay is to prove your thesis, the purpose of each body paragraph should be to prove a part of your argument. This point should be articulated in the topic sentence of the paragraph, and the rest of the paragraph should present evidence that supports the point.

If you want to show that the 1950s were a time of great economic prosperity in the United States, you would make this your topic sentence and then present data to back it up. You might mention that the average U.S. household income during this time was 50 percent higher than a decade previous; that 85 percent of Americans had at least six months' income in savings; and that disposable income was at an all-time high. You might also note that the industrial boom had led to the invention of many labor-saving machines like dishwashers and vacuums. As a result, you might conclude, women had more



free time to devote to interests outside the home and more of them began to pursue higher education and part-time employment. From here, you could begin a new paragraph that showed how the social conditions of the time prevented women from taking advantage of their economic freedom, citing statistics about discrimination against women.

Note how this argument builds. Each piece of evidence combined with the next leads to a logical conclusion that then leads to the next topic sentence. When your argument is sound and you have gathered appropriate evidence to support it, your whole essay will flow.

> SEAL THE ARGUMENT

The culmination of your essay is the conclusion. This is the last paragraph of in which you tie all of the threads of your argument together to prove your thesis. You will need to reiterate the points that you made previously and then connect them to your thesis. In our example, you might tie the argument together by saying that the unprecedented prosperity of the 1950s gave women unexpected freedoms that they found they were unable to exercise because of social convention and institutional sexism. After a decade of frustration, they finally came together to claim their equality and economic independence in the women's liberation movement.

Don't feel compelled to recap your whole essay in the last paragraph; it's

both unnecessary and ineffective. The best conclusions sum up the essay's argument succinctly and drive toward the thesis.



ABOUT EVIDENCE

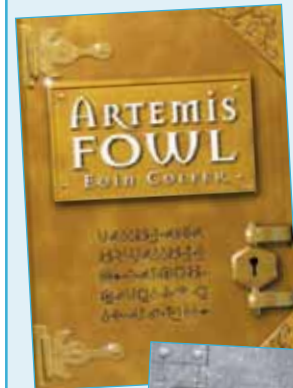
NO MATTER WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO PROVE, YOU WILL ALWAYS NEED EVIDENCE, BUT WHAT WORKS FOR A HISTORY PAPER IS DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOU WILL USE IN AN ENGLISH PAPER. HERE, **LC** GIVES YOU SOME QUICK TIPS ON WHAT TO LOOK FOR.

For a literary argument, you will draw your evidence from the text:

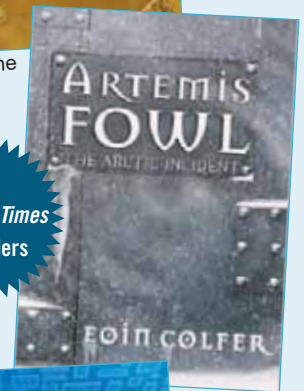
- > quotations
- > plot points
- > narrative structure

RULE OF THUMB: You need at least 2 to 3 pieces of evidence to prove a point. You can't draw a conclusion from a single piece of evidence.

MEET ARTEMIS FOWL.
HE STEALS GOLD.
HE FIGHTS SECRET POLICE.
HE'S TWELVE YEARS OLD.

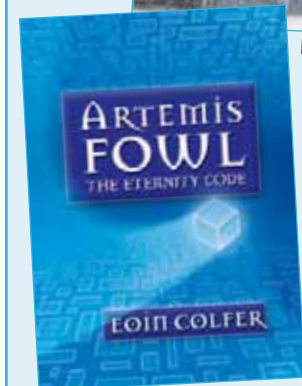


Book One



Book Two

The
New York Times
Bestsellers



Book Three

AND YOU THOUGHT
YOU KNEW HOW TO
GET IN TROUBLE!

Join the world's most ingenious—and youngest—criminal mastermind, as he sets off on a series of racy adventures to make his fortune, save his family, and outwit a wild, dangerous and totally hilarious cast of characters.

www.artemisfowl.com

miramax books

HYPERION
BOOKS FOR CHILDREN