

3.3 Describing the line of reasoning

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 17 marks**

KEY WORDS line of reasoning 推理线索 • commentary 评述

Objective

Build the skills to describe a passage’s **line of reasoning** 推理线索.

You must be able to:

- state a line of reasoning as a sequence of claims, not topics
- explain why the order of claims matters
- identify where a passage turns or qualifies
- distinguish a line of reasoning from a summary

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Sequence of claims

A line of reasoning is the order in which claims build toward the thesis. Describe it as *first he establishes A, which lets him claim B, and only then does C become plausible* — not as *he talks about A, then B, then C*.

■ Why order matters

Some claims can only be made once another is accepted. Establishing that a problem exists must precede arguing about the remedy. Naming that dependency is the analysis.

■ The turn

Most arguments have a point where they concede, qualify or pivot — “and yet”, “of course”, “granted”. Locating it identifies the argument’s own sense of where it is weakest.

■ Not a summary

A summary says what a passage contains. A line of reasoning says how one part makes the next possible.

2 Practice

2.1 State the difference between a summary and a line of reasoning. [2]

2.2 Explain why the order of claims can matter. [2]

2.3 A passage argues that a policy is necessary, then that it is affordable, then that it is fair.

(a) State why “necessary” comes first. [1]

(b) State what a reader who rejects the first claim will do with the rest. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 “First he shows the harm is real, which allows him to argue about the cost” describes [1]

- **A** a summary
- **B** a line of reasoning
- **C** a method of development
- **D** a thesis

3.2 The word “granted” most often marks [1]

- **A** the thesis
- **B** a concession or qualification
- **C** the exigence
- **D** the first claim

3.3 A passage places its concession immediately before its strongest claim.

- (a) State the likely effect. [1]
- (b) Explain why the placement matters. [2]

3.4 Full free-response task. In a widely reprinted 1996 essay, a physician argues that hospitals should abandon visiting hours entirely. She begins with the history of the rule, moves to what the rule was designed to prevent, shows that each of those dangers has since been solved by other means, then turns to what the rule now costs patients, and closes with a single sentence about her own father.

Write an essay that analyses how the writer's line of reasoning advances her argument.

Marked on the AP 6-point rubric: **Row A** — Thesis (1), **Row B** — Evidence and Commentary (4), **Row C** — Sophistication (1).

[6]

Solutions

2.1 a summary says what the passage contains; a line of reasoning says how each part makes the next possible.

2.2 some claims can only be made once another is accepted; e.g. a remedy can only be argued after a problem is established.

2.3 (a) affordability and fairness are only worth arguing if the policy is needed. (b) they will treat the rest as irrelevant.

3.1 B. it states a dependency between claims.

3.2 B. it signals a point being granted.

3.3 (a) the concession disarms the objection just before the claim it would weaken. (b) an objection answered in advance cannot interrupt the strongest claim, so the reader meets it already satisfied.

3.4 Row A — Thesis (1). A defensible claim about **the arrangement**, not the topic. **Earns it:** “By tracing the rule’s original justifications before naming its costs, the writer makes the reader retire the rule rather than reject it — the argument is structured as a concession that runs out.” **Does not:** “The writer argues that visiting hours should be abolished” — that is her claim, not an analysis of her reasoning.

Row B — Evidence and Commentary (0–4). The evidence here is the **sequence of moves**, and the commentary must explain what each move earns. A 4-point response identifies the reasoning: history establishes that the rule was designed for reasons, not prejudice, so dismantling it is not an attack on the people who made it; the point-by-point retirement of each danger transfers the burden of proof to the defender of the rule; only then, with the ground cleared, does she introduce cost; and the closing personal sentence is placed **last** precisely so it reads as evidence of stakes rather than as the motive for the argument. Responses that list the paragraphs in order without saying what each accomplishes cap at 2.

Row C — Sophistication (1). Awarded for handling the tension in the structure — for example, that the essay’s most persuasive moment is also its least argued, and that its placement after the reasoning is what protects it from the charge of sentimentality. The point is for sustained complexity, not for one observation.