

5.1 Describing the line of reasoning

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 11 marks

Objective

Build the skills to describe a line of reasoning in a passage whose **organisation** is complex.

You must be able to:

- trace reasoning that is interrupted by a digression or a long example
- describe reasoning that runs from effect back to cause
- identify a reasoning move that is made by structure rather than by a stated claim
- separate the order of presentation from the order of dependence

1 Worked examples

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

■ Presentation against dependence

A passage may present C, then A, then B while B depends on A and A on C. The line of reasoning is the **dependence**, not the page order. Say so where they differ.

■ Reasoning backwards

Some arguments begin from a visible effect and work back: this is happening, so something must be producing it. That is a legitimate line of reasoning and should be described in its own direction.

■ Structural moves

Placing two paragraphs side by side can assert a parallel without any sentence claiming it. Naming that as a reasoning move —an implied comparison —is a strong observation.

2 Practice

2.1 State the difference between the order of presentation and the order of dependence.[2]

2.2 Explain how an argument can reason from effect to cause. [2]

2.3 Two paragraphs are placed side by side with no stated connection.

(a) State what the placement may assert. [1]

(b) State how you would describe it. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A line of reasoning is best described as the order of [1]

- **A** paragraphs on the page
- **B** dependence between claims
- **C** sentences by length
- **D** evidence by date

3.2 An argument that begins with an observed effect and infers a cause is [1]

- **A** invalid by definition
- **B** a legitimate line of reasoning
- **C** a summary
- **D** a concession

3.3 A passage interrupts its argument with a two-paragraph anecdote.

(a) State one legitimate function the interruption may serve. [1]

(b) Explain how you would show it does or does not serve the reasoning. [2]

4 Go further

- work through the **5.1 Describing the line of reasoning** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Organization, Coherence, and Style** section of the AP English Language handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 presentation is the order on the page; dependence is which claims must be accepted before others can be made.

2.2 it begins from a visible effect and infers what must be producing it.

2.3 (a) an implied comparison or parallel. (b) as a reasoning move made by structure rather than by a stated claim.

3.1 B. dependence, not sequence, defines the reasoning.

3.2 B. inference from effect to cause is a standard argumentative move.

3.3 (a) making an abstract claim concrete, or securing attention before a difficult step. (b) test whether the argument would still hold without it: if the following claim depends on it, it serves the reasoning; if not, it is a digression.