

Audience, Thesis, and Supporting Evidence

AP English Language and Composition

Understanding an Audience's Beliefs and Needs

Unit 1 established that a text has an audience. Unit 2 makes that audience the engine of every choice a writer makes.

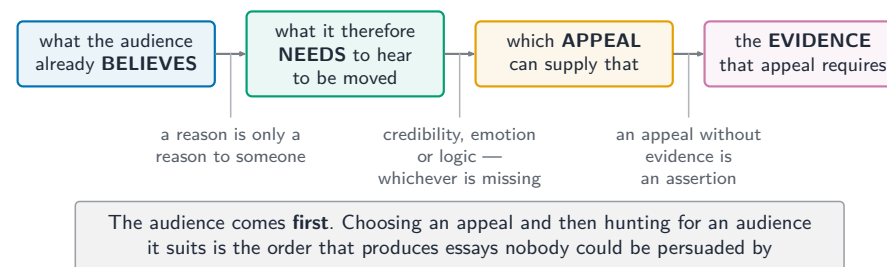
- Writers' perceptions of an audience's values, beliefs, needs, and background guide the choices they make. Note the word *perceptions*: what steers the writing is the writer's picture of the audience, which may be accurate or not.
- To achieve a purpose, writers make choices in an attempt to **relate to an intended audience's emotions and values**.
- Arguments seek to persuade or motivate action through **appeals** 诉求 - the **modes of persuasion** 说服方式.

The modes of persuasion - and what each one reaches for

ETHOS	PATHOS	LOGOS
the writer's credibility	the audience's emotions and values	reasoning and evidence
reaches for the audience's trust in who is speaking	reaches for what the audience already values	reaches for the audience's sense of what follows
fails when the credentials are claimed, not shown	fails when the feeling is not tied to the claim	fails when evidence is present but the reasoning is not

An answer that names the appeal has labelled it. An answer that names what it reaches for has analysed it.

Naming the appeal is worth nothing on its own; naming what it reaches for is the analysis



Writing for an Audience's Beliefs and Needs

The same three statements now become a writing instruction. Before drafting, decide:

- What does this audience already **believe** about the subject?
- What do they **need** - information, reassurance, a reason to act?
- What do they **value**, and which of those values can honestly be connected to my position?

An argument that ignores these produces writing addressed to nobody. And the CED's framing gives you a useful test for your own drafts: *if this paragraph would read identically to a completely different audience, it has not been shaped by one.*

Identifying Claims and Evidence

Unit 2 deepens Unit 1's treatment of evidence with three claims about **how** evidence works:

- Writers use evidence **strategically and purposefully** to illustrate, clarify, set a mood, exemplify, associate, or amplify. Evidence does a *job*, and naming that job is analysis.
- **Strategically selected evidence strengthens the validity and reasoning of the argument**, relates to an audience's **emotions and values**, and helps establish the writer's **credibility** 可信度.
- An effective argument contains **sufficient evidence** 充分的证据 - sufficient when its **quantity and quality** provide apt support for the line of reasoning.

That third point is often misread as "more is better". Sufficiency is quantity **and** quality together: three well-chosen pieces of evidence that bear directly on the claim beat six that only touch it.

TYPE	WHAT IT CAN ESTABLISH	WHAT IT CANNOT
facts and statistics	scale, and that a pattern is real	that the pattern matters to a reader
anecdotes and examples	that the thing happens, and how it feels	that it is typical
analogies	a structure the reader already accepts	anything, if the two cases differ where it counts
expert opinion	that informed people hold the view	that they are right

The third column is why writers combine them. A statistic and an anecdote are not **interchangeable** — each covers the other's gap

Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence

Applying the above to your own writing, choose each piece of evidence for a stated reason. In practice this means being able to finish the sentence: *I am using this piece because it ...*

- ... illustrates a claim that would otherwise stay abstract;
- ... establishes my credibility on a subject where readers may doubt it;
- ... connects my position to a value the audience already holds.

Evidence chosen this way produces commentary almost automatically, because you already know what the evidence is doing. Evidence chosen because it was available produces the blank space where commentary should be.

Identifying the Overarching Thesis

- A **thesis** 论点 is the **main, overarching claim** a writer seeks to defend or prove by using reasoning supported by evidence.
- A writer's thesis is **not necessarily a single sentence or an explicit statement**, and may require a thorough reading to identify.

That second point matters for the reading side of the exam. On a rhetorical-analysis passage, the thesis may be distributed across the text or implied by its structure. Do not assume the first sentence of the second paragraph is the thesis because that is where you would put yours.

Writing a Thesis Statement

The writing objective is precise: **write a thesis statement that requires proof or defence and that may preview the structure of the argument.**

Two independent requirements sit in that sentence:

- It must **require defence**. Apply the Unit 1 test again: could a reasonable person disagree? A thesis that states a fact cannot be defended, only repeated.
- It **may preview the structure** - optional, but useful, because a thesis that names the lines of reasoning it will pursue gives the essay its shape.

On the exam, the **thesis point is one of six** and it is the cheapest point on the rubric: a defensible thesis in response to the prompt earns it. A restatement of the prompt does not.

Worked example (a real AP exam task). For a Question 3 argument prompt asking you to take a position on the value of a proposed practice, compare two openings. “*There are many arguments both for and against this practice.*” - that earns nothing, because nobody could disagree with it. “*Because the practice rewards visible effort rather than actual improvement, it produces the appearance of progress while removing the incentive to seek it.*” - that earns the point: it is arguable, specific, and it previews the reasoning the essay will develop.

A TOPIC STATEMENT

This essay will discuss the author's use of humour.

announces a subject; nothing in it could be argued against

A DEFENSIBLE THESIS

The author's humour disarms an audience that would have refused the same argument made plainly.

takes a **position**, and implies the reasoning that will defend it

Both name the same subject. Only one of them can be **disagreed with**, and only that one can be defended for four paragraphs

Exam tips

- The audience drives everything. If a paragraph would read the same to any audience, it has not been shaped for one.
- Name **what evidence does** - illustrate, clarify, associate, amplify. That is analysis; listing evidence is not.

- **Sufficiency is quantity and quality**, not volume. Three apt pieces beat six loose ones.
- A thesis in a passage may be **implied or distributed**. Read the whole text before deciding.
- Your own thesis must be **arguable**. Restating the prompt earns zero of the six points.
- Previewing your line of reasoning in the thesis is optional but makes the rest of the essay easier to organise.