

The Academic Essay: Argument

Overview: Persuade the reader to agree, follow, or take action according to a position that you claim and use evidence to defend. Show the reader your ability to make a reasoned choice, responsibly defend that choice, and gather others to your cause.

Mode: Arguing, Persuading

~

Problem: Every argumentative topic sheds light on some kind of **problem**, usually an **obstacle** that society must overcome, or a **flaw** holding society back from greatness. You will likely need to take a position on how to solve this problem.

Goal: Story-wise, the **goal** is for society to overcome the **obstacle** or **flaw**. However, you, as the writer, have the specific **goal** of presenting an airtight case for your position. This means supporting your claim and reasons with multiple pieces of evidence, citations, and a refutation to a counterclaim that summarizes the opposing side's best argument.

Choice: As with goal, the **choice**, story-wise, is one that individuals in society must make to improve themselves and each other. Essay-wise, you want the reader to make the **choice** to give up his or her old position and adopt yours. This will require **sacrifice** on the part of the reader.

Sacrifice: In order to solve the **problem**, society and its individual members will have to make specific, tangible **sacrifices** that you will argue for with sound evidence – usually examples or scientific facts and theories. Also, to agree with you, the reader will have to **sacrifice** some or all of his/her old beliefs. Out of compassion for your reader, keep this in mind. It's easy to believe that others who disagree with us are just doing it to be annoying, and that changing their minds won't require significant **sacrifice**. It will. And if you want your reader to respect you, phrase your arguments with gentle boldness. Give credit to the opposing side for its merits, but hold firm with your refutations in Paragraph #3: Climax. It is possible to hold firm to your beliefs while showing respect. This essay is the place to do it and win your readers' respect!

Growth: As you finish your arguments, you must show the **growth** of society as it turns to make **sacrificial choices** rather than selfish ones. However, you should also trust that the reader should **grow** too, and with this in mind, return to the values and mission of the scholarship sponsor and affirm why your position is in alignment with them (don't say it bluntly – be subtle). The whole **goal** of your essay, after all, is to convince your reader, whoever he or she is, that making the **sacrificial choices** you argue for is the best way for society to **grow** from a place with significant **obstacles** and **flaws** into a much better place for all.

Academic Essay Vocabulary: Every topic involves people who care about it. For the purpose of these placemats, planning sheets, and rubrics, those individuals will be called "users." Voters are "users," as are buyers, drivers, parents, students – anyone directly affected by or involved in the topic given by the scholarship essay prompt.

