



YEAR 12 *Trial Exam*

2020

ENGLISH

Sample responses to Section C with annotations

This book contains:

- three graded sample responses for Section C
- annotations providing assessor feedback for each response, including a mark range.

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SECTION C – Argument and persuasive language

Write an analysis of the ways in which argument and written and visual language are used in the material on pages 14 and 15 of the task book to try to persuade others to share the points of view presented.

SAMPLE RESPONSES

High-range response (Mark range: 8–10)

Principal Petrov Price’s blog sympathetically solicits support for his intention to remove physical books from the Romeo Road school library and replace them with a digital library. His position is both firm and gentle, asserting the need for change while anticipating and appreciating the distress this will cause some members of the school community. The confident yet compassionate tone positions readers to feel that the school’s future is in good hands, so they should support his plan. **(1)** With a structure that places his main contention early in the blog, Price first builds rapport with his audience, priming them to accept the argument, and then provides supporting evidence designed to cement readers’ support. The reasons, all supported with examples, include: moving the school into the 21st century; providing students with simpler and more comprehensive access to knowledge and information; reducing costs; and freeing up valuable ‘real estate’ on school premises. Price presents all these reasons as being part of his duty of care for ‘our school and, most importantly, our students’, intending to elicit feelings of group loyalty as well as respect for the principal, further inclining readers to accept his proposal. The admission that the school is ‘facing some difficult questions’ in the digital age indicates honesty and further evidences the school’s commitment to improving facilities for its students and community. **(2)**

Supporting Price’s argument, the design of the blog adds a sense of reassuring authenticity intended to make readers feel that the ideas in ‘From the Principal’s Corner’ are in their best interests. **(3)** The school logo will prompt a feeling of familiarity from the intended audience (the school community) and will remind readers that they are all part of the same, well-defined, supportive group. Additionally, the text-based navigation map leading to the blog shows that this community’s (and thus the principal’s) priority is to provide its students with clear, direct, reliable access to information. This underscores the blog’s central assertion and is likely to elicit endorsement from readers.

The principal’s tone is friendly, candid, sensible, concerned and confident throughout. It is established early in the blog with his anecdote about personal childhood feelings and memories connected with libraries, linked to his current beliefs about information access. This warm tone, the first-person voice (a common element of the blog genre) and inclusive language (‘our school’, ‘our efforts’) combine to create a caring and relatable persona. **(4)** Price’s early declaration of his love of libraries indicates to audiences that his is an unbiased opinion, showing that he is reasonable, genuine and trustworthy because he has a predisposition to identify closely with (rather than contest or dismiss) those who might object to his proposition. This will incline even those initially opposed to the idea to accept his argument. His conciliatory but firm approach is also echoed in his assertion that ‘It’s controversial, sure – but it’s not *that* controversial’, respecting yet resisting any disagreement.

Another central strategy used by Price is his appeal to being modern and up to date. The idea of a digital future is emphasised, as is the school’s record of embracing change (‘we have since led the way in adopting new technologies’), and he provides specific examples of such changes in paragraph 5. He impels his audience to recognise that digitising what was once paper-based is ‘about making information as quickly, easily and widely accessible as possible’ – the repetition of this idea throughout strengthens its impact on and influence over his audience. He urges the school to recognise that ‘the world is changing’, appealing to the

fear that Romeo Road could be left behind and, similarly, appealing to fairness and justice in making sure his students are equipped for their futures. (5) Enhancing his appeal to modernity, Price shapes his language to draw the maximum audience attention and empathy, positioning them to support his argument. His rhetorical questions encourage readers to consider the reality of the situation ('What does the library for the digital age look like?'), while his figures of speech ('close the book on Romeo Road library's dark ages'; 'turn the page on the physical book') soften the impact of his potentially unsettling proposal. Having presented his readers with a problem, Price turns to reason and logic to present his solution as the most sensible and efficient one available: 'we end up having to do it later anyway'. (6)

Price's argument strategies are reinforced by the image that concludes the blog, leaving the audience with a strong visual summation of the text in order to help ensure their support. The hand holding a phone contributes to the sense that efficiency can be successfully integrated with interest and engagement; while the image suggests businesslike practicality, it also conveys a sense of enjoyment. (7) The idea portrayed is not a dry database of texts, but rather an amiable representation of digital libraries, offering a visual experience not unlike 'real' libraries: a friendly-looking jumble of books, accessible at the touch of a finger. This image works to enrich the blog's assertion that digital libraries are not just pragmatic, but the positive way forward. Importantly, the image does not contain any caption or text, showing that the issue is broader than just books, and reflecting a more universal concern about the way we interact with the world around us as we begin to embrace a digital future. (8)

Of course, this universal concern is not answered in only one way, as LiberLover1's comment indicates. (9) Their response to the blog begins courteously (using a polite greeting and the principal's last name for formality), showing themselves to be considerate and reasonable, while understanding the seriousness of the context. However, this contrasts with the informal and slightly sarcastic tone of the cliché 'chins wagging', which signals that the commenter is seeking to undercut the principal's argument. (10) In direct contrast with Price's appeal to being modern and up to date, LiberLover1 appeals to tradition in suggesting that the move to a bookless library might be 'premature'. They cite research (although without giving hard facts or figures) in an appeal to authority, suggesting that digitising libraries could be a mistake. Despite disagreeing with Price, LiberLover1 matches his calm, rational tone, maintaining a respectful, considered style throughout, and augmenting this with some of the same persuasive strategies as Price uses. For example, both writers are honest, personal and almost vulnerable: LiberLover1 says 'I can't help but wonder' and even repeats Price's phrase 'for my part', showing an awareness of the opposing views, and in turn inviting empathy from readers. (11) In a specific criticism of Price's blog, the commenter states: 'I'd also like to note the absence of any input from the Romeo Road librarians'. This is intended to undermine Price's position, suggesting that it is not well informed, unlike the commenter's own argument which cites 'research'. The rebuttal remains gentle rather than aggressive, asking – in one of several rhetorical questions designed to create uncertainty and misgivings about Price's proposal – 'Surely the digital way isn't always the only way?'. Yet commenter LiberLover1 subtly includes the positively loaded adjectives 'deeper' and 'stronger' in relation to 'physical books', presenting an emotive response in favour of maintaining a traditional library and appealing to the reader's potential fears about what the consequences might be of such a radical change.

Although both writers have very different opinions, they use many of the same strategies to persuade their audiences. Principal Price argues in a reasonable and logical manner that it is time to replace physical books with digital ones, while acknowledging the emotional appeal of 'creaking wooden floors' and 'so many books!'. Commenter LiberLover1 also uses a blend of emotion and logic in an attempt to discredit the principal's conclusions. (12)

Annotations

- (1) Describes the tone and explains its likely impact on the reader.
- (2) Introduction identifies the writer, context, structural choices and main contention of the blog post. It also summarises some of the key reasons presented by Price and explains how these work together to persuade.
- (3) Immediately turns to a detailed discussion of visual language, analysing how this works in conjunction with the written text to influence the reader.
- (4) Identifies, in detail, various qualities of the writer's tone and specific language choices, as well as the collective effect of these. Relevant examples and short quotations are provided to substantiate the discussion.
- (5) The first half of the paragraph identifies and provides examples of a number of appeals, and explains their intended effect on the audience.
- (6) A series of short, relevant quotations supports the discussion of persuasive language.
- (7) Pays close attention to details of the visual language in the blog. This is supported in the second half of the paragraph with an in-depth interpretation of the implications of these details. The discussion of visual language also relates the main image to Price's written text.
- (8) Identifies a wider context for the writer's argument.
- (9) The repetition of the phrase 'universal concern' from the end of the previous paragraph facilitates a smooth link and transition to the discussion of the second text.
- (10) Identifies a shift in tone (with examples of specific language choices) in the second text, explaining how each tone is working to advance the argument.
- (11) Observes similarities in tone and language between the two texts, showing an understanding of how each uses language to present a point of view.
- (12) The final sentences sum up both texts' arguments and approaches, as well as the analysis in the response's body paragraphs.

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Mid-range response (Mark range: 5–7)

Principal Petrov Price, who works at Romeo Road Secondary School, wrote a blog post in order to communicate with the students and teachers of the school. (1) On his website, he proposes his idea of changing the school library to a digital one, trading physical books for a ‘bookless library’ in order to provide more knowledge and options to the students. A commenter, ‘LiberLover1’, did not like the idea and used a stern yet practical tone to voice their displeasure, asking several questions of the principal to get him to reconsider the idea of a digital library. (2)

Principal Petrov uses a nostalgic tone to begin his post, asking the audience to imagine and sympathise with his point of view. (3) He establishes himself as a lover of books and someone that has ‘fond memories’ of his school library before entering a discussion of how libraries will need to be updated for the digital age. Asking rhetorical questions such as ‘what does it do?’ and ‘who is it for?’ positions the reader to consider his argument that changes to school libraries are not for his benefit, but for the benefit of this generation and the students at Romeo Road. (4)

The blog begins with a banner at the top that reads ‘Romeo Road Secondary School’ so the reader is aware of the source of the post. The crest to the side includes a book, which demonstrates the dedication of the school to provide knowledge to all of their students; therefore, the Principal’s position is surprising. You would expect the leader of a school to want to preserve books, but the language he uses to open his blog post (‘knowledge looks a little different’ and ‘school libraries ... facing some difficult questions’) shows that his argument is based on the future of libraries rather than his personal beliefs. (5) The banner also indicates who his intended audience is, as the website offers a section for ‘students’ and ‘parents’ to read, which means they would have the opportunity to see this post. Price has directed his post at them because students would be the ones affected by the change, and he would also be looking to convince parents that this change is for the best. (6)

As the post continues, Petrov uses a cautious tone to systematically lay out his argument, encouraging readers to follow how he himself arrived at his point of view. Following on from his nostalgia, Price reminds the teachers and students that it was Romeo Road that first introduced computers in the classrooms, and he takes pride in the way the school has adapted with technology. He continues his use of facts and numbers to highlight that only ‘45 books’ were checked out this month. (7) Though his intention is to use this statistic in his favour, I would argue that it seems as if the library is being used well, as students would rarely need to check out a book given they could sit in the library to use them. (8)

The blog post also uses an image at the end to support Petrov’s position. By including an illustration of a person swiping through a bookshelf on their phone, Petrov hopes to demonstrate the ease of using a digital library, as well as the wide variety of texts that would be available to students. However, the image also shows a small number of books, which is different from what a real library would offer. (9)

LiberLover1 states their point of view by saying ‘for my part, I can’t help but wonder if dumping all of Romeo Road’s book collection is a little premature’, which shows that they are compassionate to Price’s argument and willing to engage in a conversation, rather than taking on a belligerent tone and opposing the idea outright. (10) They go on to reference research on how students best read and learn, as well as how physical books can benefit their engagement with texts. Even though they use italics when asking how librarians feel, which can come across as harsh, the tone is still respectful and encourages whoever reads the comment to consider their point of view and the logic they have presented. (11)

Overall, the Principal argued strongly that the Romeo Road library needed to be updated in order to offer a better experience and more learning opportunities to the students of the

school, as well as saving money in order to invest in other projects. (12) The use of structured logic and the insertion of his personal experience gives his argument credibility, despite the opposing points made in the comment at the end of the post. (13)

Annotations

- (1) Introduces the post well, but incorrectly identifies the audience: ‘parents’ should also be mentioned.
- (2) The introduction clearly contextualises and provides an overview of the two pieces, but could be strengthened by also briefly discussing the visual content.
- (3) The response uses several different ways to refer to the blog’s author. For a formal essay, the surname ‘Price’ should be used consistently.
- (4) Uses short quotations and comments in a simple way to discuss how the reader is being positioned; however, the discussion stops abruptly and does not engage closely with the writer’s language.
- (5) The inappropriate use both of second person (‘you would expect ...’) and of quotations that are awkwardly incorporated into the sentence detract from the analysis. The discussion tends towards being evaluative rather than analytical.
- (6) The response refers to a different audience from the one previously identified, and does not relate Price’s argument and language choices to this intended audience.
- (7) The discussion here is more of a recount than an analysis. Phrases like ‘as the post continues’ are best avoided for this reason. References to ‘nostalgia’ and ‘facts and numbers’ are valid, but the student fails to discuss or analyse them further.
- (8) The response offers another personal evaluation of the argument, which is not the purpose of the essay.
- (9) Analysis of this image is brief and does not examine elements of visual language, such as the stylised nature of the drawing. The point about the image suggesting ‘the ease of using a digital library’ is potentially effective but it is not linked to other parts of Price’s argument. Likewise, the comment about the number of books shown on the screen is not developed, though might have led into a discussion of ways in which this element (or other elements) of the image could be seen as undermining Price’s argument.
- (10) The discussion could be strengthened by using clear, concise sentences. This might also address the tendency to paraphrase or summarise the texts. Additionally, the use of long quotations takes up space and time that should be spent on analysing the language. The observations of the tone and approach taken by the commenter are useful ones; however, they should be followed by discussion of how these techniques are working to position and persuade the reader.
- (11) A minor detail (the use of italics on one word) is the focus of the second half of the paragraph. Although it can be useful to discuss specific techniques such as variations in typography, in this case the commenter’s more important persuasive strategy – to argue that the principal has seemingly ignored the opinions and expertise of librarians – is overlooked.

- (12) The response occasionally uses past tense to refer to the post, when present tense is expected in a formal response.
- (13) The conclusion again fails to mention any visual content and its link to the point of view presented, and could be strengthened by offering a concluding remark that summarises both points of view rather than repeating earlier points.

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Low-range response (Mark range: 2–4)

Petrov Price, the principal of Rome Road Secondary School, wrote a persuasive piece to convince people that the school library should become digitalised, with no books in it. His article is then rebutted by an annoyed parent, who disagrees with his contention. (1) Price aims his article at anyone who reads his blog. (2)

Price begins his article with an anecdote about his own childhood school library, because as ‘looking back on my childhood, I have fond memories of my school library’, emphasising that he liked library books when he was growing up. (3) He then makes it clear, however, that times have changed, making use of rhetorical questions. He asks readers to ask themselves ‘What does the library for the digital age look like? What does it do? And who is it for?’

These rhetorical questions bring up the idea for the reader that school libraries are not the same as they were when they were young. (4) This makes the reader think about whether or not libraries should be changing, or staying the same. (5)

Price continues on to say ‘despite our efforts to bring this school into the 21st century, our library remains firmly stuck in the 19th’. He says that ‘it continues to function as a place to house physical books – a notion that is now as outdated as the atlas (remember those?) and just about as useful to our students’. This makes the reader think that libraries are now outdated, like the atlas. Price also uses statistics, saying ‘students checked out just 45 books this month’ to demonstrate that books are not being used very much in the modern era. (6)

Price then describes how ‘around the world, libraries are reading the writing on the screen and phasing out physical books in favour of digitised collections and electronic subscription’. This makes the reader feel peer pressured to change the library because all of the other libraries around the world are changing too, and the reader will want their library to also be up-to-date. (7) Price ends his argument by acknowledging that the idea may be upsetting to some people, but we need to change anyway because the world has already changed, and libraries need to change with it. (8)

Price’s post is accompanied by an image of a hand holding a smartphone with a picture of library books in it – clearly someone is on some kind of library app. This demonstrates alternative ways of looking at books through the use of digital technology, proving to the reader that real life libraries are no longer needed now that we can access everything from our phones. (9) However, the top of the page features an image of the school’s logo with a picture of a building and a book on it, which contradicts Price’s argument. (10)

Price’s blog post is rebutted by an unhappy parent, who does not like the idea of a ‘bookless library’. (11) LibbyLover1 uses facts and rhetorical questions to say that ‘While students might have access to more resources and more texts through the digital catalog, whether they will use them is another matter’. (12) LibbyLover appears to think that books are better than computers, but unlike Price, she doesn’t seem to realise that digital technology such as phones can be much easier to access than physical books can.

Overall, Price is more persuasive than LibbyLover, because he considers every side of the argument and understands that young people are better with technology than older people, who only had books. (13)

Annotations

- (1) This introduction largely repeats material in the background information box, though the school name is misspelled. The response should give a more precise sense of the writers' contentions, tones, purposes and intended audiences.
- (2) The target audience should be more precisely described.
- (3) This quote does not flow well within the sentence. Responses should try to incorporate quotes in ways that flow grammatically with the surrounding text.
- (4) The double use of 'they' in this sentence to mean 'libraries' and 'readers' makes this sentence difficult to understand.
- (5) This sentence does go some way to considering the possible effect of these rhetorical questions on the reader; more comments like this would have improved the analysis. However, as the student is continuing their discussion of rhetorical questions, the two sentences in this paragraph should belong to the previous paragraph.
- (6) This paragraph is almost entirely descriptive. The quotes used are long and not analysed; consequently, the student simply paraphrases Price's argument without carefully considering his use of language or its likely impact on the reader.
- (7) Another long quote is used without being analysed in much detail. Phrases like 'reading the writing on the screen' can be omitted if they are not going to be discussed, but this phrase – taking into account the fact that it is a play on the cliché 'the writing on the wall' – actually warrants further comment. Also, expressions such as 'makes the reader feel' and 'the reader will want' are too definite – phrases such as 'positions the reader' or 'encourages the reader' are more appropriate.
- (8) The response slips into the first person 'we', making it seem as though the student is advocating for Price's argument. Expressing a view on the issue is not part of the task of analysing the use of argument and persuasive language.
- (9) The analysis of the image is very brief, and the student has subtly misrepresented Price's argument. Price is arguing for the removal of physical books from the school library, not the abolition of 'real life libraries'.
- (10) The student has not considered the logo image in its context.
- (11) The student has assumed that the commenter is a parent, which is not stated in the text. The name used by the commenter is subsequently misspelled.
- (12) The student mentions that facts and rhetorical questions are used, but does not provide any examples of either, nor do they analyse how these persuasive techniques support LiberLover1's argument.
- (13) The student has chosen a side. The task is to analyse how each writer uses language and visual features to persuade; responses should not evaluate the persuasiveness of the texts nor demonstrate support for a particular point of view. A comment on the overall approaches of the two writers is a good way to finish the analysis, but it must focus on *how* the writers are trying to persuade the reader to agree with them.