Using RAVEN to Evaluate an Argument

Module 3, Source Evaluation

Review – Identifying the Author's Argument, Main Idea, or Thesis

From an AP Reader:

The response to this question should be 1-2 sentences and identify ALL parts of the argument (usually multi-pronged). It is strongly suggested that students save this question for last, as they will more concisely and effectively identify the argument after completing Q2.

Review — Explain the Author's Line of Reasoning

Identify the Claims Used to Build the Argument & The Connections Between Them

From an AP Reader:

'Line of Reasoning' involves more than 'what' the article is about; it involves "why" and "how" the author is crafting the argument. Readers suggest students move through the argument chronologically, marking claims with "C" and evidence with "E," being careful not to conflate those terms on the exam. Students should focus the response around the significant claims (there will be several) and how those are working to achieve the author's goals of persuading readers to buy into the overall argument or thesis (which will become the answer to #1).

Language to Use in Explaining Line of Reasoning

- ✓ The author presents the scenario that...

- ✓ The author contrasts this with...

- ✓ The author supports this claim by...

- ✓ The author follows this with an explanation of why...

- ✓ The author outlines multiple examples of...

- ✓ The author applies his claim to...

- ✓ The author addresses the counterargument by...

Evaluating an Argument: Rhetoric and Persuasion

Effectiveness can be measured in a variety of ways and considers many layers, but the use of logic and persuasive techniques have been the bulk of our current focus.

Now we'll look at a couple of other techniques for evaluation, but we'll also look at the issues of fallacies that might LOOK like proper logic but are not.

And while these might effectively persuade an audience... we wouldn't consider this a good thing.

Considerations

- What kind of work is this? (identify and think about what makes that kind of work credible and relevant, what kind of purpose it serves, and what kind of evidence is sufficient... then only judge it by THAT standard)

- Who is the author and what are his/her general motivations? (read up a bit on the author, the work, and the context of the time)

- Who is the intended audience here? (cannot judge effectiveness unless you're thinking about WHO this is effective FOR--again, context and historicity)

- Now, how does it stand up for you as the unintended audience?

Adding Question #3

Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Evidence the Author Uses to Support the Claims Made in the Argument

From an AP Reader:

For this question, students need to sit in the judge's seat. Their job is to evaluate (discuss credibility AND relevance) EXPLICIT pieces of evidence, not just the evidence in general or as a whole. Typically, the types of arguments students see on this portion of the exam aren't perfectly sourced, nor do they completely lack credible sourcing. So, students are potentially looking for what works well with the evidence and what possibly falls short in supporting the author's claims

Language to Use in Argument Evaluation

✓ The most effective use of evidence occurs when the author…

✓ The author successfully drives the point that…by…

✓ The argument could be strengthened had the author included…

✓ By incorporating…the author effectively italicizes the idea that…

✓ The argument could also benefit from…

✓ First, the author establishes his/her own credibility by…

Why Evaluation?

⭐ **End-goal (in real-world academia):** to provide the basis for current research in order to situate your own inquiry; would be found in the literature review section of a research project

⭐ **For thinking:** helps us to be able to discern the overall position of the document, the structure for supporting the position, the effectiveness of the structure, and the credibility of the piece as a whole

⭐ **What it requires:** good understanding of written organization (i.e., the logic), recognizing all the tangential things that lead to effective research, and situatedness of inquiry

this is the foundational skill—it leads to all the rest of the skills of good research. Eventually, being able to recognize good research and writing will help you to produce good research and writing yourself.

RAVEN — Assessing Source Validity

R Reputation

A Ability to See

V Vested Interest

E Evidence

N Neutrality

R = Reputation

Does the source's history or status suggest reliability or unreliability?

- Who is the author?

- What is their academic history/background?

- Previous publications and academic reputation?

- Writer's cultural/religious/geographical/political background? How does it relate to the content of the document?

- Where was the piece published? What about the publication's history? How might that influence the content of the piece, and your expectations of it?

A = Ability to See

Is the source in a position to know what they're talking about?
Can their observations be trusted?

- What is the context in which the author wrote this piece?

- Does this (context) change what the author may have 'been able' to see?

- Are you able to recognize the differences between your values, attitudes, and cultural values and those represented?

V = Vested Interest

Does the source of information have anything personally at stake?

- What are the author's personal motivations for saying something?
- Is this article in response to something?
- What are your motivations for reading the text?
- Were your motivations satisfied, challenged, or not addressed?

E = Evidence

Does the source have specialized knowledge and does the situation demand it?

- What is the main argument?
- What evidence is presented to support the argument?
- What kind of evidence does the author present? (quantitative or qualitative?)
- What are the strengths & limitations of this evidence? Is it convincing?
- Can it be validated or proven (in other words, does it follow a replicable model?)

N = Neutrality

Is the source predisposed to support a particular point of view for reasons other than vested interest?

- Is the article well-rounded?

- Does it account for multiple perspectives?

- Are any perspectives glaringly missing?

Evaluating the Message — Considering the Type

Type of Work	Function	Process for Publication	What to Judge
Academic/Professional Research Publication	Methodological study, informative, academic conclusions and perspectives to a specific, learned, and professional audience	rigorous review, multiple steps	Authorial prominence, mitigation of bias, objective standards, rigorous and replicable process, consideration of perspectives and limitations and applicable scope, ethical considerations
Journalistic Publication	Bias-free and objective information on a given event or issue for a public audience; some opinion pieces	Internal review, with consideration for journalistic integrity (ethics)	Authorial prominence, mitigation of bias, objective standards, knowledge of the issue, publisher reputation, ethical considerations, fair representation of perspectives
Public Speeches	Information and persuasion of public perception or a particular audience	Invitation, or process for public standing (reputation); internal review, or not	Speaker reputation, education, relevance on the issue; methods of persuasion, representation of perspectives; use of figurative language
Artistic Representation	Informative, persuasive, self-fulfilling, aesthetic, etc.	Multiple reviews, often multiple submissions to various publishers, at the publisher's subjective discretion	Figurative language, reputation, and education, connection to the events/issues; personal and public personality and ethicality; honest representation; aesthetic value; emotional appeal to audience, etc.

A Quick Note on Bias...

Bias isn't necessarily ALWAYS an issue--things to think about:

o   Where does the bias become problematic in their ability to give you evidence? or are they willfully ignoring something? Do they address counters?

o   If the answer to the above is no: then it isn't problematic and thus commenting on the author's 'bias' is unwarranted and full of YOUR bias, as it's coming from a reader who is advancing his or her own emotional feelings about the argument...

o   If you're going to make claims about its merit, you TOO need to provide justification from the text (you MUST do this for ANY critiques)