



Advanced | Exemplar Essay

Big Data

A Balanced Approach



Claim and Focus

Engaging and relevant context in the introduction leads to an effective claim about the strategies the authors use to accomplish their purpose (“both authors effectively use a variety of rhetorical devices in an attempt to persuade their readers”). Focus on developing this claim is maintained throughout the whole essay.



Analysis and Evidence

A balance of evidence from each text is provided alongside a thorough analysis of how each example helps the author accomplish his purpose. Insightful reasoning is demonstrated (“he establishes a tone of concern and protection...thus allowing him to connect with the audience” and “the weakness of article one is the credibility of its sources”) as is a full understanding of the strategies of each text.



Organization

The organizational structure enhances the analysis, with each paragraph analyzing both authors’ use of a particular rhetorical device. Transitions are varied (“Another rhetorical device,” “on the other hand,” “Furthermore,” “For instance,” “In comparison”) and effectively show the relationships between and among ideas.



Language and Style

Consistent use of domain-specific terminology is employed (“rhetorical devices,” “ethos, pathos, and logos,” “tone,” “biased”) as is advanced vocabulary (“divulging,” “inherent,” “extrinsic”). A formal style and objective tone are maintained throughout.



Using Exemplars in Your Lessons

Exemplar essays are tools to take abstract descriptions and make them more concrete for students. One way to use them is to print the clean copies of the essays and allow students to use the rubric to make notes or even find examples of important elements of an essay - thesis statements, introductions, evidence, conclusions, transitions, etc. Teachers can also use exemplars to illustrate what each score point within a trait ‘looks like’ in an authentic student essay. For additional ideas, please see “25 Ways to Use Exemplar Essays” by visiting the Curriculum Resources page in Help.



A Balanced Approach

In this modern age, technology continues to expand and as a result, personal data has become a growing mass of numbers and digits. Many people wonder how to protect this intangible yet precious component of their lives. Because the citizens of this country care deeply about their privacy, many questions arise around who ultimately has access to this information. What if it was discovered that corporations were taking advantage of loopholes in data privacy in order to benefit their own financial interests? Two articles address this concept of divulging private information, "Private License Plate Scanners Amassing Vast Databases Open to Highest Bidders" (RT, 2014) and "Who Has The Right to Track You?" (David Sirota, 2014). While revealing that certain businesses are profiting from license-plate scanning and collecting of citizens' private data, both authors effectively use a variety of rhetorical devices in an attempt to persuade their readers.

Pathos is a rhetorical device that appeals to readers' emotions. In the second article, "Who Has The Right to Track You?", David Sirota effectively uses pathos to connect to his readers. From the title of the article to questions like: "Do corporations have a legal right to track your car?", he is striking a note of fear within the reader. Sirota uses words like "mass surveillance" and "mass photography", and repeatedly reminds the reader that "millions of license plate images" are being collected in order to make the reader feel unsafe. Throughout the article, he establishes a tone of concern and protection on his part (speaking in the second person, ensuring the reader he is advocating "individuals' privacy rights"), thus allowing him to connect with the audience as they feel he is looking out for them.

The author of the second article, RT, uses pathos to appeal to his readers from an opposing perspective. He writes phrases like "inhibiting scanners would...create a safe haven...for criminals" and "reduce the safety of our officers, and it could ultimately result in lives lost". He says this to scare the audience into thinking that they need to sacrifice their privacy so the police can keep them safe. RT never mentions the phrase "mass surveillance", instead using light-hearted phrases like the scanners "scoop up 1,800 plates a minute". Using a non-threatening phrase like "scoop up" is meant to put the reader's mind at ease with this practice.

Another rhetorical device used by both authors is logos, using logic and reason to persuade the audience. Sirota mentions that the cameras in question "capture data on over 50 million vehicles each month" and are "used in every major metropolitan area". Because his data contains such a frighteningly high number, it creates an uneasy feeling in the reader, even one of inherent distrust in these machines. Sirota further creates a sense of fear in the readers by adding that "household income and other valuable information" is being collected "so companies can pinpoint consumers more effectively". He is using this logic and reason to emphasize that companies are in the wrong for the way they distribute information to clients willing to buy it. RT, on the other hand, uses logos in an attempt to calm the reader's fears of data collection. He says that the main companies using this data collection are "major banks to track down those who default on loans" or the police to catch criminals. Essentially RT is telling the reader if you don't do anything wrong, you have nothing to worry about. Furthermore, he assures the reader that unlawful use of scanning procedures is a rarity, and quotes an owner of a target environment as saying: "If we saw scanning like this being done, we would throw them out".

Both authors use ethos in their attempts to persuade readers, though Sirota is more effective here. One reason for the weakness of article one is the credibility of its sources. The sources in the RT article often appear as if they are coming from heavily biased places, such as the big corporations themselves. For instance, the

person quoted as saying "I fear that the proposed legislation would essentially create a safe haven in the Commonwealth for certain types of criminals, it would reduce the safety of our officers, and it could ultimately result in lives lost," is not a police officer, lawyer, or legislator; it is Brian Shockley, vice president of marketing at Vigilant, the corporate parent of Digital Recognition. The reader should not be scared into giving up his privacy by the corporation getting paid to take it. In comparison, Sirota cites sources high in credibility, or extrinsic ethos, throughout the article. He quotes ACLU attorney Catherine Crump as saying: "One could argue that the privacy implications of a private individual taking a picture of a public place is sufficiently less than a company collecting millions of license plate images...there may be justification for regulation". The reader is given a relatable source that represents the public's interest from a legal perspective, not one with the interest of the corporation that stands to profit.

The balance between the interests of corporations and national security and the interests of privacy and individual rights remains an important topic in an increasingly technological society. The authors of the articles discussed here effectively used ethos, pathos, and logos to construct their arguments on the use of private license scanners. Many journalists and news sites have provided their own input on the issue, intending to inform the populace of each side of the argument. Although journalists and writers may present a specific argument, it is ultimately up to the reader to consider all implications of the debate.