

Sample Essay

Sample essay is as follows:

Write an essay in which you explain how Peter S. Goodman builds an argument to persuade his audience that news organizations should increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage provided to people in the United States. In your essay, analyze how Goodman uses one or more of the features listed in the box above (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of his argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Here's the essay. Read it first, and we'll have annotations below.

In the article “Foreign News at a Crisis Point,” Peter S. Goodman eloquently argues the ‘point’ that news organizations should increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage provided to people in the United States. Goodman builds his argument by using facts and evidence, addressing the counterarguments, and couching it all in persuasive and compelling language.

Goodman begins the article by bombarding the reader with facts and statistics. He states that, according to a census conducted by the American Journalism Review, the number of full-time foreign news correspondents in the United States dropped from 307 in 2003 to 234 in 2011. In addition, the AJR survey also discovered that “the space devoted to foreign news [in American papers] had shrunk by 53 percent” in the last 25 years.

Beginning the article with all of these facts and figures has a couple of strengthening effects on Goodman’s argument. First, by starting out with hard evidence, Goodman lays the groundwork of his own credibility. He’s not just writing an opinion piece – his opinion is backed by the truth. This will bring the readers onboard and make them more likely to trust everything else he says. Second, because Goodman presents these facts without much explaining/interpreting, the reader is forced to do the math herself. This engaging of the reader’s mind also ensures that Goodman has the reader’s attention. When the reader does the math to find a drop of 73 full-time foreign news correspondents employed by US papers in just 8 short years, she will find herself predisposed to agree with Goodman’s call for more professional foreign news reporting.

In addition to employing facts to his argument’s advantage, Goodman also cunningly discusses the counterargument to his position. By writing about how social media and man-on-the-ground reporting has had some positive impact on the state of foreign news reporting, Goodman heads off naysayers at the pass. It would have been very easy for Goodman to elide over the whole issue

of citizen reporting, but the resultant one-sided argument would have been much less convincing. Instead, Goodman acknowledges things like “the force of social media during the Arab Spring, as activists convened and reacted to changing circumstances.” As a result, when he partially refutes this counterargument, stating the “unease” many longtime profession correspondents feel over the trend of ‘citizen journalism’ feel, the reader is much more likely to believe him. After all, Goodman acknowledges that social media does have some power. Knowing that Goodman takes the power of social media seriously will make the reader more inclined, in turn, to take Goodman’s concern about the limits of social media seriously.

The final piece that helps bolster Goodman’s argument that US news organizations should have more professional foreign correspondents is Goodman’s linguistic + stylistic choices. Goodman uses contrasts to draw the reader deeper into his mindset. By setting up the contrast between professional reporters as “informational filters” that discriminate good from bad and amateur, man-on-the-spot reporters as indiscriminating “funnels,” Goodman forces the reader to view the two in opposition and admit that professional filters are to be preferred over funnels that add “speculatio, propaganda, and other white noise” to their reporting. In addition, Goodman drives the reader along toward agreeing with his conclusion in the penultimate paragraph of the article with the repetition of the phrase “We need.” With every repetition, Goodman hammers even further home the inescapable rightness of his argument. The use of “We” more generally through the article serves to make the readers feel sympathetic towards Goodman and identify with him.

By employing the rhetorical techniques of presenting facts, acknowledging the other side, and using persuasive language, Goodman convinces the reader of his claim.

Here are our notes on what stands out in this essay (general comments are in purple, spelling/grammar errors are highlighted in yellow):

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Introduction paragraph
clearly leads into and
includes thesis

In the article "Foreign News at a Crisis Point," Peter S. Goodman eloquently argues the 'point' that news organizations should increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage provided to people in the United States. Goodman builds his argument by using facts and evidence, addressing the counterarguments, and couching it all in persuasive and compelling language.

"Advanced"
vocabulary
is written in blue

Transition from thesis
to first example

Goodman begins the article by bombarding the reader with facts and statistics. He states that, according to a census conducted by the American Journalism Review, the number of full-time foreign news correspondents in the United States dropped from 307 in 2003 to 234 in 2011. In addition, the AJR survey also discovered that "the space devoted to foreign news [in American papers] had shrunk by 53 percent" in the last 25 years.

The author quotes
from the article to
provide examples
of "facts and statistics"

A few spelling and
grammar errors are OK
as long as they don't
make it too hard
to understand your
meaning

Beginning the article with all of these facts and figures has a couple of strengthening effects on Goodman's argument. First, by starting out with hard evidence, Goodman lays the groundwork of his own credibility. He's not just writing an opinion piece – his opinion is backed by the truth. This will bring the readers onboard and make them more likely to trust everything else he says. Second, because Goodman presents these facts without much explaining/interpreting, the reader is forced to do the math herself. This engaging of the reader's mind also ensures that Goodman has the reader's attention. When the reader does the math to find a drop of 73 full-time foreign news correspondents employed by US papers in just 8 short years, she will find herself predisposed to agree with Goodman's call for more professional foreign news reporting.

Here the author
describes the effect
that "all of these facts
and figures" have on
the reader

Transition from
example 1 to
example 2

Paraphrasing
information from
the article shows
the author has read
and understands
the passage

In addition to employing facts to his argument's advantage, Goodman also cunningly discusses the counterargument to his position. By writing about how social media and man-on-the-ground reporting has had some positive impact on the state of foreign news reporting, Goodman heads off naysayers at the pass. It would have been very easy for Goodman to **elide** over the whole issue of citizen reporting, but the resultant one-sided argument would have been much less convincing. Instead, Goodman acknowledges things like "the force of social media during the Arab Spring, as activists convened and reacted to changing circumstances." As a result, when he partially **refutes** this counterargument, stating the "unease" many longtime profession correspondents feel over the trend of 'citizen journalism' **feel**, the reader is much more likely to believe him. After all, Goodman acknowledges that social media does have some power. Knowing that Goodman takes the power of social media seriously will make the reader more **inclined**, in turn, to take Goodman's concern about the limits of social media seriously.

The author goes into detail not only describing the way Goodman builds his argument (by presenting a counterargument and refuting it), but the effect this has on the reader.

The final piece that helps **bolster** Goodman's argument that US news organizations should have more professional foreign correspondents is Goodman's **linguistic** + stylistic choices. Goodman uses contrasts to draw the reader deeper into his mindset. By setting up the contrast between professional reporters as "informational filters" that **discriminate** good from bad and amateur, man-on-the-spot reporters as indiscriminating "funnels," Goodman forces the reader to view the two in opposition and admit that professional filters are to be preferred over funnels that add "**speculatio**, propaganda, and other white noise" to their reporting. In addition, Goodman drives the reader along toward agreeing with his conclusion in the **penultimate** paragraph of the article with the repetition of the phrase "We need." With every repetition, Goodman hammers even further home the inescapable rightness of his argument. The use of "We" more generally through the article serves to make the readers feel sympathetic towards Goodman and identify with him.

Transition from
example 2 to
example 3

Conclusion is short but still present and refers back to the thesis, creating a smooth progression of argument from start to finish

By employing the rhetorical techniques of presenting facts, acknowledging the other side, and using persuasive language, Goodman convinces the reader of his claim.