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AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE · FREE RESOURCE

Thesis, Commentary, Transitions, and Quote Integration **Templates**

A toolkit of fill-in-the-blank templates and model sentences for all three AP Lang free-response questions: thesis statements (10+ per question), commentary starters (30+), They Say / I Say moves, transitions sorted by function, quote-integration methods, introductions and conclusions that do not waste time, body-paragraph formulas, and sophistication moves. Templates are scaffolds. Use them to get moving, then rewrite them in your own voice so the sentences sound like you and fit your passage.

Before You Use Any Template

Two rules from the Chief Reader Reports govern everything in this document.

1. **Templates must carry content.** A frame like "X uses Y to Z" earns nothing until Y is a concrete choice from the text and Z is a specific effect on a specific audience. The 2025 report notes that prompt-echoing theses earn the point but set up weak essays.
2. **Commentary is where scores are won.** The rubric's Row B turns on whether your explanation tells the reader something the evidence alone did not. The 2023 and 2024 reports describe the recurring failure: a quotation followed by a restatement ("This shows that...").

The scoring rubric, in brief, from the official document:

ROW	POINTS	WHAT EARNS IT
A: Thesis	0-1	A defensible position responding to the prompt (FRQ 2: a claim about the writer's rhetorical choices)
B: Evidence and commentary	0-4	Specific evidence supporting all claims in a line of reasoning, with commentary that consistently explains how it does so
C: Sophistication	0-1	Nuance, tension, broader context, or consistently vivid and persuasive style, as part of the argument

Timing reminder (Section II): 2 hours 15 minutes including a 15-minute reading period; about 40 minutes per essay.

Part 1: Thesis Templates

What a thesis must do

ESSAY	THE THESIS MUST...	A ZERO LOOKS LIKE
FRQ 1 Synthesis	Take a defensible position on the issue	Restating the prompt; listing pros and cons; "There are many views"
FRQ 2 Rhetorical analysis	Make a claim about the writer's rhetorical choices	Describing the passage; restating the prompt's stated purpose; naming devices with no claim
FRQ 3 Argument	Take a defensible position on the claim's validity	"It depends"; restating; undeveloped "The claim is very valid"

Thesis test (ask each question; answer yes to all)

1. Could a reasonable person disagree? (Defensible)
2. Does it respond to the *whole* prompt, including its qualifiers? (A 2024 thesis about preservation in general missed the prompt's focus on preservation *laws*.)
3. Does it contain a "because" or an "in order to," stated or implied?
4. For FRQ 2: does it name choices in plain language, not just "ethos, pathos, logos"?
5. Could it be proven wrong by the evidence available?

FRQ 1 (Synthesis): 12 thesis templates

Use the sample prompt "the value, if any, of napping" (original wording modeled on a recent topic) for every example.

#	TEMPLATE	EXAMPLE
1	"Although [concession], [claim] because [reason 1] and [reason 2]."	"Although naps cost employers scheduling time, brief napping is valuable because it restores alertness and reduces errors."
2	"[Issue] is less a question of ___ than of ___."	"The value of napping is less a question of laziness than of how institutions schedule rest."
3	"[Position], provided that [condition]."	"Napping benefits students, provided that schools protect it from becoming a punishment for late bedtimes."

#	TEMPLATE	EXAMPLE
4	"The strongest case for [position] rests on [factor], not on [commonly cited factor]."	"The strongest case for napping rests on safety, not productivity."
5	"Policymakers should [action] because [reason], despite [objection]."	"Employers should allow short naps because the safety gains outweigh a twenty-minute cost."
6	"[Position] in [context A] but [different position] in [context B]."	"Napping helps shift workers and teenagers but offers little to those who already sleep enough."
7	"Evidence from [kind of source] and [kind of source] suggests [claim], which complicates [popular view]."	"Research and a workplace survey suggest napping helps most when it is brief, complicating the assumption that more rest is always better."
8	"The most important factors to consider are [A] and [B], because [reason they outrank others]."	"The most important factors are safety and equity, because they determine who benefits."
9	"While [stakeholder 1] values , [stakeholder 2] values ; the best policy balances them by ____."	"While employers value uninterrupted hours, workers value alertness; a short, scheduled nap period balances both."
10	"[Claim] only if [condition], because [mechanism]."	"Napping is valuable only if brief, because longer naps cause grogginess."
11	"Rather than [framing in the sources], [reframe]."	"Rather than treating napping as a luxury, institutions should treat it as maintenance."
12	"The value of [topic] lies in [specific benefit], but its limits are [specific limit]."	"The value of napping lies in short-term performance, but its limits appear in chronic sleep loss."

Revision drill. Take thesis 1 and ask: Which source supports "restores alertness"? Which supports the concession? If you cannot say in five seconds, adjust the claim to fit the sources.

FRQ 2 (Rhetorical analysis): 14 thesis templates

Modeled on the prompt pattern "analyze the rhetorical choices [Speaker] makes to convey her message about [topic]." The key is to **name moves**, not labels. Every example uses a hypothetical commencement speech about perseverance.

#	TEMPLATE	EXAMPLE
1	"[Speaker] [verb] [choice A] and [choice B] in order to [purpose] for [audience]."	"The speaker contrasts her own early failures with the graduates' confidence and then turns to a shared challenge in order to persuade them that persistence matters more than talent."
2	"[Speaker] shifts from [X] to [Y] to [purpose]."	"She shifts from a funny story about failing a driving test to a serious account of a lost job to reassure graduates that failure is survivable."
3	"By [choice], [Speaker] [effect on audience], which allows her to [purpose]."	"By addressing graduates as 'you' and herself as 'we,' she closes the distance between them, which allows her to give advice without condescension."
4	"[Speaker] grounds [appeal] in [specific choice] before [second move]."	"She grounds her authority in her own career before redirecting attention to the graduates' futures."
5	"Beginning with [choice], then [choice], and concluding with [choice], [Speaker] builds [effect]."	"Beginning with a personal anecdote, moving to historical examples, and concluding with a call to action, the speaker builds from intimacy to responsibility."
6	"[Speaker] [qualifies/complicates] [idea] through [choice], showing that [message]."	"She complicates the idea of success by pairing triumphs with confessions, showing that growth is uneven."
7	"Through [concrete image] and [syntactic choice], [Speaker] makes [abstraction] tangible."	"Through the image of a muddy field and a rhythm of short sentences, she makes endurance feel physical."
8	"[Speaker] positions [audience] as [role] by [choice], so that [message] reads as [duty/invitation/etc.]."	"She positions graduates as heirs to a long line of workers by listing their predecessors, so that her advice reads as an inheritance rather than a lecture."
9	"Although [tension in the passage], [Speaker] [verb] [choice] to [purpose]."	"Although she is celebrated for success, she dwells on setbacks to make her advice credible."
10	"[Speaker]'s choice to [choice], given [context/occasion], [effect]."	"Her choice to end with a question, given a ceremony that expects answers, leaves graduates with a task instead of a conclusion."

#	TEMPLATE	EXAMPLE
11	"The speech moves from [stage 1] to [stage 2] to [stage 3], and each move [function]."	"The speech moves from memory to analysis to appeal, and each move narrows the audience's options until action seems inevitable."
12	"[Speaker] tempers [tone A] with [tone B] to [purpose]."	"She tempers humor with solemn detail so that her warnings are heard without defensiveness."
13	"By [diction choice] and [syntax choice], [Speaker] [creates tone] that [advances purpose]."	"By choosing plain, monosyllabic words and parallel clauses, she creates an unadorned authority that makes her call to persevere feel earned."
14	"Recognizing that [audience trait], [Speaker] [choice] to [purpose]."	"Recognizing that graduates distrust inspiration, she opens with ridicule of commencement clichés to earn a hearing."

Do not write: "Kelley uses ethos, pathos, and logos to convey her message." (Row A is earned by the letter of the rubric, but the essay it launches will stall at Row B 1-2 because nothing specific is named.)

FRQ 3 (Argument): 12 thesis templates

Modeled on "the extent to which [Speaker]'s claim about [topic] is valid." Examples use the claim "Never be limited by other people's limited imaginations" (Mae Jemison's 2026 prompt claim, paraphrased).

#	TEMPLATE	EXAMPLE
1	"[Claim] is valid [to a large extent], but only when [condition]."	"Jemison's claim is largely valid, but only when ambition is tested against evidence."
2	"[Claim] holds for [domain A] but fails for [domain B] because [reason]."	"The claim holds for creative pursuits but fails for safety-critical work, where other people's caution protects lives."
3	"Although [counter], [claim] is valid because [reason 1] and [reason 2]."	"Although outside opinions can contain real wisdom, ignoring limiting imaginations is valid because progress has often come from people who ignored them."
4	"The claim confuses [A] with [B]; once we distinguish them, [position]."	"The claim confuses doubt with limitation; once we separate them, it is valid against limitation and wrong against feedback."

#	TEMPLATE	EXAMPLE
5	"[Claim] is better understood as [reframe] than as [literal reading]."	"The claim is better understood as a defense of experimentation than as permission to ignore advice."
6	"The validity of [claim] depends on [variable], as shown by [category of evidence]."	"The validity depends on who holds the power to limit, as shown by cases from science and civil rights."
7	"[Claim] is valid in [time/place] and less valid in [time/place]."	"The claim is more valid in eras of rapid change than in stable ones."
8	"While [claim] captures [truth], it overlooks [complication], which matters because [consequence]."	"While the claim captures the cost of timid thinking, it overlooks the role of collaboration, which matters because most advances are shared."
9	"To the extent that [definition of key term], [claim] is [valid/invalid]."	"To the extent that 'limited imagination' means refusal to consider evidence, the claim is valid."
10	"[Claim] is valid not because [popular reason] but because [better reason]."	"The claim is valid not because confidence guarantees success but because the alternative guarantees stagnation."
11	"A fair test of [claim] is [criterion]; by that test, [position]."	"A fair test is whether the people who limited others later changed their minds; by that test, the claim holds."
12	"[Claim] is true as a [description of function, e.g., warning, aspiration] and false as a [rule]."	"The claim is true as an aspiration and false as a rule for every decision."

Part 2: Commentary Sentence Starters (36)

Commentary does one of five jobs: it explains **what the evidence means**, what it **does to the audience**, **why the writer chose it**, **how it connects** to the thesis or another claim, or **what it reveals** about a tension. Pick starters according to the job.

Explain meaning

1. "This detail suggests that ..."
2. "In context, the phrase '___' implies ..."
3. "The word '___' carries connotations of ..., which ..."
4. "The specificity of ___ makes the abstraction concrete by ..."
5. "Here, the repetition of '___' turns a single complaint into a ..."

Explain effect on the audience

- 6. "By ___, the writer positions readers to ..."
- 7. "The effect is to make the audience ..."
- 8. "This choice invites listeners to see themselves as ..."
- 9. "For an audience of ___, this image ..."
- 10. "Hearing this, the audience cannot easily ..."
- 11. "The shift to the second person implicates the audience by ..."

Explain the writer's reason

- 12. "The writer likely chose ___ because ..."
- 13. "This move allows the writer to ..."
- 14. "By delaying ___, the writer ensures that ..."
- 15. "Placing ___ at the end of the paragraph leaves the audience with ..."
- 16. "This is strategic because ..."

Connect to the line of reasoning

- 17. "This moment sets up the later ..."
- 18. "Having established ___, the writer can now ..."
- 19. "This builds on the previous point by ..."
- 20. "The cumulative effect of ___ and ___ is ..."
- 21. "This evidence matters to the larger argument because ..."
- 22. "Without this step, the claim that ___ would ..."

Explain tension or complexity

- 23. "At first glance this suggests ___, but ..."
- 24. "The passage presents ___ not simply as ___ but as ..."
- 25. "This detail pulls against the earlier ..."
- 26. "The writer holds two ideas at once: ..."
- 27. "What looks like ___ is also ..."
- 28. "This tension matters because ..."

Advanced stems for synthesis

- 29. "Source B's data qualifies Source A's claim by showing ..."
- 30. "Taken together, Sources C and E reveal ..."
- 31. "Source D supplies the mechanism that Source A leaves unexplained: ..."
- 32. "What the sources share, despite different conclusions, is ..."

Closing stems for a paragraph

- 33. "In this way, the writer ..."
- 34. "Taken together, these choices ..."

35. "The result is an argument that ..."

36. "Thus, the passage's central idea ... is not stated but enacted."

Model: from weak to strong commentary

Evidence (original, from a hypothetical speech): *"We are not asking for a miracle; we are asking for a Tuesday."*

- **Summary (Row B 1):** "This shows that the speaker wants a normal day."
- **Basic explanation (Row B 2-3):** "The contrast between 'miracle' and 'Tuesday' suggests the speaker wants only ordinary fairness."
- **Strong commentary (Row B 4):** "By setting the dramatic 'miracle' against the mundane 'Tuesday,' the speaker shrinks the request until refusing it would look petty. The plain day also lets listeners imagine their own Tuesdays, so the demand for equal treatment feels less like politics and more like common decency, which is exactly the frame she needs to win over wavering listeners."

Notice the strong version: names the contrast, states what it does to the *audience*, and ties to the *purpose*.

Part 3: They Say / I Say Moves

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say / I Say* gives writers templates for entering a conversation.

Adapted and summarized here from the widely used templates. The templates below are paraphrased in my own words.

Moves for introducing what "they say"

MOVE	FRAME
Standard view	"Conventional wisdom holds that ____."
Common assumption	"Many people assume ____."
What a source argues	"Source A argues that ____."
An ongoing debate	"On one side, ; on the other , ."
A particular person	"Critics such as ____ claim ____."

Moves for responding

MOVE	FRAME
Agree, with a difference	"I agree with ____ that , but I would add ."
Disagree, with reasons	"I disagree with ____ because ____."
Agree and disagree at once	"Though I concede that , I still insist that ."
Reframe	"The real issue is not ____ but ____."
Test with an example	"Consider the case of , which suggests ."

MOVE	FRAME
Anticipate an objection	"Some will object that . <i>This objection overlooks .</i> "
Why it matters	"This matters because ____."
What it implies	"If this is right, then ____."

Moves for FRQ 1 specifically

- "While Source A emphasizes , ***Source B reveals .***" (Frame cited in the 2025 Chief Reader Report.)
- "Source A and Source D disagree about , ***but both assume .***"
- "Source E complicates the picture by ____."
- "A reader of Source C alone might conclude ____; Source F reveals the limits of that view."

Moves for FRQ 3 specifically

- "At first the claim sounds obvious, but it hides a distinction between ____ and ____."
- "The strongest objection to my position is ; ***however, .***"
- "A skeptic might ask, 'How do you know?' The answer lies in ____."
- "I do not claim that ____ is always true; I claim that ____."

Chief Reader caution: the 2025 report discourages the bolt-on counterargument paragraph. Make these moves *inside* your line of reasoning.

Part 4: Transition Bank by Function

Transitions signal relationships. On the exam's writing questions, the correct transition is the one whose relationship matches the two sentences, not the fanciest one. First identify the relationship, then choose the word.

FUNCTION	TRANSITIONS	MODEL SENTENCE
Addition	furthermore, moreover, in addition, also, besides, equally important	"Moreover, the policy reduces costs for the district."
Contrast	however, in contrast, conversely, on the other hand, yet, still, nevertheless, whereas	"However, the benefit appears only for small towns."
Concession	admittedly, granted, to be sure, of course, although, while it is true	"Admittedly, a longer day complicates transportation."
Cause / effect	therefore, thus, consequently, as a result, accordingly, because of this, hence	"As a result, the program lost its funding."
Comparison	similarly, likewise, in the same way, just as, equally	"Similarly, the second study found a modest effect."

FUNCTION	TRANSITIONS	MODEL SENTENCE
Example	for example, for instance, to illustrate, such as, in particular, specifically	"To illustrate, consider the library in Springfield."
Elaboration / clarification	in other words, that is, put differently, namely, more precisely	"In other words, the rule was never enforced."
Sequence	first, next, then, finally, subsequently, meanwhile, afterward	"Finally, the committee voted."
Emphasis	indeed, in fact, above all, most importantly, notably	"Indeed, the data point in one direction."
Summary / conclusion	in short, ultimately, in the end, taken together, on balance	"Ultimately, the evidence favors reform."
Qualification	in most cases, to a degree, up to a point, under these conditions	"Up to a point, the claim is valid."
Turn of argument	and yet, even so, despite this, still, but consider	"And yet the numbers tell a different story."

Paragraph-to-paragraph transitions (the "hinge sentence")

A hinge sentence echoes a key word from the previous paragraph and previews the next claim.

- "If the first cost of the penny is financial, the second is cognitive."
- "Having shown how the speaker earns trust, we can see how she spends it."
- "This concern for audience leads directly to a second choice: structure."
- "The speaker's anger, once established, is quickly redirected."

Transitions that signal weakness (avoid)

AVOID	WHY	USE
"In conclusion" (in a short essay)	Wastes words	"Ultimately" or end on the thought
"Another example is"	Parallel listing	"A harder case is"
"Next"	Does no analytical work	A hinge sentence
"Overall" repeated	Vague	"Taken together"
"Also" at the start of every paragraph	Suggests a list	"Moreover" or a hinge

Part 5: Quote Integration

Graders know the passage. Quote only the words you analyze, and put them into your own grammar. Two widely taught frameworks are TLQ (Transition, Lead-in, Quote) and Jane Schaffer's TLCD, which fights the "kerplunk effect" of dropped quotations.

Four integration methods

METHOD	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE (ORIGINAL)
Weave (embedded)	Fold a short quote into your sentence.	The speaker calls the policy “a quiet failure,” a phrase that makes neglect sound like an act of disobedience.
Lead-in with a colon	Introduce a longer quote with a complete clause.	The speaker’s contempt is explicit: “No one who has watched a child work a loom could call this progress.”
Signal phrase	Use a verb to attribute and characterize.	As Banneker warns, “the colour of a man” does not decide his rights.
Paraphrase plus fragment	Paraphrase the plot, quote the language.	She recounts losing the race, then mocks her own certainty as “that bright confidence.”

Quote length rules of thumb

- **3-8 words** is ideal for analysis.
- If the quote is a full sentence, introduce it with a colon or a signal phrase.
- Long quotes (more than two sentences) need a reason: usually avoid them.
- If you cannot comment on every word in the quote, shorten it.

Brackets and ellipses

TOOL	WHEN	EXAMPLE
Ellipsis (...)	To omit words from the middle of a quotation without changing meaning	“The mills ran ... every night of the week.”
Brackets []	To change a word so the quote fits your grammar, or to add clarification	“[She] refuses to accept ‘the world as it is.’”
[sic]	To flag an error in the original	“The report calls it ‘a mistaken [sic] policy.’”
Omit ellipsis at start/end	When your quote is a fragment woven into your sentence, no ellipsis is needed	The speaker invites listeners to “stay curious.”

Honesty rule. An ellipsis must not distort the author’s meaning. Do not cut “not” from “not a virtue.”

Citing in FRQ 1 (Synthesis)

- Cite by letter and author: (Source A), (Source C, Pew Research).
- Use parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence; no page numbers needed.
- For visuals: “The graph in Source D shows that ...”; “The cartoon in Source B depicts ...”

Citing in FRQ 2 and FRQ 3

- In FRQ 2, refer to paragraphs or the portion of the speech ("in the opening," "midway through"); line numbers are not required on the digital exam.
- In FRQ 3, mention the evidence's source in the sentence: "In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald ...", "During the 1963 March on Washington ...".

Common quote errors

ERROR	FIX
Kerplunk: "The speaker is angry. 'This is a disgrace.'"	"The speaker's anger is plain in her verdict: 'This is a disgrace.'"
Quote with no commentary	Add at least two sentences of explanation
Over-quoting	Keep 3-8 words; paraphrase the rest
Changing the meaning	Do not cut qualifiers
Starting a sentence with a quote	Lead into it
Introducing with "The quote says"	Use a verb that characterizes: "warns," "concedes," "insists"

Part 6: Introductions and Conclusions That Don't Waste Time

Introductions and conclusions are not graded on their own; they matter because they host the thesis and show you understand the rhetorical situation (CED 2.A). A 40-minute essay cannot afford a one-paragraph warm-up.

The 3-sentence introduction

SENTENCE	JOB	TEMPLATE
1	Context and exigence	"In [year/occasion], [speaker] addressed [audience] at a time when [exigence]."
2	Name the text and its goal	"In [text], [speaker] seeks to [purpose]."
3	Thesis	"To do so, [speaker] [choice 1] and [choice 2], [effect]."

Model (FRQ 2, original, for a hypothetical speech). "In 1952, as the country debated whether to extend voting rights to young adults, a state senator addressed a crowd of high school seniors in a hot gymnasium. In her remarks, Senator Ruiz seeks to persuade them that responsibility is a privilege, not a burden. To do so, she begins with a story about her first vote, then shifts to a catalog of what citizens have given up for the ballot, using her own modest background to make the demand feel earned."

Introductions for FRQ 3

SENTENCE	JOB	TEMPLATE
1	Engage with the claim	"[Speaker]'s claim that [claim] captures an important truth, but it blurs the line between [A] and [B]."
2	Define the key term	"By '[term]' I mean , not ."
3	Thesis	"[Thesis with qualifier and reason]."

Model. "Naomi Osaka's advice to 'try to be present in each moment' is appealing, but it risks confusing mindfulness with indifference to the future. By 'present' I mean fully attentive to what is happening, not blind to what comes next. That kind of presence is valid as a discipline for performance and relationships, but invalid as a rule for decisions that must account for years." (Wording paraphrases the 2025 prompt claim.)

Introductions for FRQ 1

SENTENCE	JOB	TEMPLATE
1	Frame the issue in its real-world stakes	"As [trend] grows, communities face a choice about [issue]."
2	Name the tension the sources reveal	"The sources divide over whether [A] or [B] matters more."
3	Thesis	"[Position], because [reason], although [concession]."

What to cut from introductions

- Dictionary definitions ("Webster defines ...")
- Broad statements ("Since the dawn of time ...")
- Rhetorical questions that restate the prompt
- A full biography of the author
- "In this essay I will ..."

Conclusions: add significance, do not restate

MOVE	TEMPLATE	EXAMPLE
Implication	"If [speaker]'s strategy works, it suggests that ____."	"If her strategy works, it suggests that audiences accept hard truths when they first feel respected."
Broader context	"This matters beyond the occasion because ____."	"This matters beyond a single graduation because every generation must decide what to inherit."

MOVE	TEMPLATE	EXAMPLE
Return to opening	"Just as she began with , <i>she ends with</i> , closing the circle."	"She ends where she began, at the loom."
Limit or complication	"Yet the strategy carries a cost: ____."	"Yet the strategy carries a cost: it makes protest feel like betrayal."
Call to action (for argument)	"What follows is ____."	"What follows is a duty to test our own limits before others do."

If you are short on time: one strong sentence is enough. Never skip the thesis to write a conclusion.

Part 7: Body-Paragraph Formulas

CEC (Claim, Evidence, Commentary), with the 1:2 ratio

1. **Claim (topic sentence).** States what this paragraph proves, advancing the previous paragraph.
2. **Evidence.** One to three specific, short quotations or references.
3. **Commentary.** At least twice as much as the evidence; explains meaning, effect, purpose, and connection to the thesis.
4. **Link (optional).** One sentence tying to the next paragraph.

Says / Does / Connection (for FRQ 2)

PART	QUESTION	SAMPLE
Says	What does the passage literally say here? (brief)	"She lists the years she spent on the factory floor."
Does	What move is made, in a precise verb?	"The catalog <i>builds</i> a sense of endless labor."
Connection	How does that serve the purpose for this audience?	"That endurance gives her later demand for rest the weight of earned authority."

Teachers say the **Connection** should be the largest part of the paragraph.

TS format (topic sentence frame)

"In [text], [speaker]'s [choice] [active verb] [audience] to [purpose or message]."

Example: "In her Newbery acceptance speech, Schlitz's shift from comic self-mockery to quiet reverence invites the audience to see storytelling as a vocation, not a career."

Synthesis paragraph (FRQ 1)

1. Claim that advances the thesis.
2. Evidence from Source A (specific).

3. Evidence from Source C that qualifies or extends A.
4. Commentary tying both to the claim.
5. Link to the next paragraph.

Argument paragraph (FRQ 3)

1. Claim tied to the definition from the introduction.
2. Specific evidence (named example with details).
3. Commentary explaining why the example is relevant to the abstract question.
4. Complication, handled inside the paragraph.

A line-of-reasoning check

After drafting, read only your topic sentences. They should read like a mini-argument, with each sentence building on the last. If you could shuffle them without loss, you have parallel claims, not a line of reasoning. (Chief Reader, 2023: arrange paragraphs “so each idea develops the previous one.”)

Part 8: Sophistication Moves

The sophistication point (Row C) is earned on top of strong Row B work. It is not earned by sweeping generalizations about history, by merely hinting at other arguments, by examining individual choices without relating them, or by ornate language. It is earned by one of the four rubric-defined routes, sustained as part of the argument.

Route 1: Nuance and tension

MOVE	FRAME	MODEL SENTENCE
Layered (“this and that”)	“X is both ___ and ___.”	“The speech is both a eulogy and a manifesto.”
Contradictory (“this, but also that”)	“X , yet also .”	“She honors the dead by refusing to mourn them.”
Paradoxical (“this, in spite of that”)	“Despite , X .”	“The speaker gains authority by confessing her limits.”
Not simply, but	“X presents ___ not simply as ___ but as ___.”	“She presents failure not simply as setback but as evidence.”
Both/and	“Both ___ and ___ are true, and the tension matters because ___.”	“Both pride and shame are present in the speaker, and the tension keeps the speech honest.”

Route 2: Implications and limitations

MOVE	FRAME	MODEL SENTENCE
Scope the claim	"This holds for , <i>though not for</i> ."	"This works for audiences already sympathetic, though not for the skeptical."
Broader context (specific)	"This reflects a longer pattern in which ____."	"This reflects a longer pattern in which reformers turn private grief into public demand."
Consequences	"If this logic is extended, ____."	"If this logic is extended, every disagreement becomes a failure of imagination."
Limit your own position	"A fair objection is ; <i>my argument can absorb it by</i> ."	"A fair objection is the cost of delay; my argument absorbs it by limiting the claim to non-urgent decisions."

Route 3: Rhetorical choices that strengthen the argument's force

This route is about your own writing. Use vivid, precise verbs and concrete nouns; vary sentence length for emphasis; place the strongest word at the end of the sentence; avoid ornate vocabulary that does not do work.

WEAK	STRONG
"The speaker is very persuasive."	"The speaker closes the distance between herself and her listeners with a single plain pronoun."
"This is an important issue."	"This issue decides who gets rest and who is told to earn it."

Route 4: Consistently vivid and persuasive style

Sustain it. A single striking sentence is not enough.

Sophistication in each FRQ

FRQ	MOST RELIABLE MOVES
1 Synthesis	Treat sources as interested voices; show where sources disagree about what counts as evidence; note what the sources leave out
2 Rhetorical analysis	Explain the <i>function of a tension or complexity</i> in the passage; situate choices in the rhetorical situation; relate choices to one another
3 Argument	Define the key term with nuance; explore a distinction (living in the past vs. remembering the past); acknowledge the limits of your own position

A caution. Saying “complex” is not complexity. Show it.

Part 9: Rhetorical Analysis Quick Frames

Paragraph skeleton (chronological, which readers favor)

1. **Intro** (3 sentences, above).
2. **Body 1: Opening move.** “[Speaker] begins by [choice], which [effect], establishing [credibility/common ground].”
3. **Body 2: Middle move or shift.** “At [point], the speech shifts from [X] to [Y], [effect].”
4. **Body 3: Closing move.** “[Speaker] ends with [choice], which [effect], completing the purpose.”
5. **Short conclusion** (optional).

Describing a choice without jargon (examples)

DEVICE NAME	PLAIN DESCRIPTION
Anaphora	“She begins four consecutive sentences with ‘We remember,’ turning memory into a pledge.”
Antithesis	“He places ‘what we want’ against ‘what we need,’ forcing a choice.”
Rhetorical question	“She asks what the audience would do, leaving them to answer in silence.”
Allusion	“The reference to Lincoln links this moment to a longer story of national repair.”
Juxtaposition	“Mansions and tenements share a sentence, so inequality becomes visible at a glance.”

Tone shift phrases

- “moves from playful to grave”
- “softens from rebuke to invitation”
- “hardens from sympathy to demand”

Part 10: Practice

Practice A: Rate the theses (0 or 1) and fix the zeros

For a FRQ 2 prompt: “Analyze the rhetorical choices [Speaker] makes to convey her message about the nature of bravery.”

1. “Saujani uses ethos, pathos, and logos to convey her message about bravery.”
2. “Saujani conveys her message about bravery.”

3. "Saujani shifts from admitting her own fear to redefining bravery as action under fear, persuading readers that courage is learned."
4. "Bravery is an important quality that all people need."
5. "By pairing a personal failure with a plain definition of courage, Saujani positions her readers to see bravery as a skill they can practice."

For a FRQ 3 prompt: "Argue your position on the extent to which Osaka's claim about being present is valid."

6. "Being present is very important and valid."
7. "Being present is valid for performance and relationships, but invalid as a rule for decisions that require planning, because planning needs attention to the future."
8. "There are good and bad sides to being present."

Practice B: Upgrade the commentary

Evidence: *The speaker lists the names of five children who worked in the mill.*

9. Write a Row B 1 comment (summary).
10. Write a Row B 4 comment that explains an effect on the audience and ties to a stated purpose of persuading legislators.

Practice C: Choose the transition

11. "The plan reduced costs. ___, enrollment fell." (A) For example (B) However (C) Similarly (D) Moreover
12. "Schools allow cell phones for emergencies. ___, a ban in class improves focus." (A) Consequently (B) Likewise (C) Nevertheless (D) For instance
13. "Sleep supports memory. ___, students who sleep more tend to recall more." (A) In other words (B) However (C) Nevertheless (D) Instead

Practice D: Quote surgery

14. Fix the kerplunk: *Kelley is concerned about children. "Children are working in the night."*
15. Shorten with an ellipsis without changing the meaning: *"The factories, which had been built hastily and without inspection, ran through the night."*

Practice E: Sophistication

16. Rewrite this sentence to add nuance: "The speaker uses humor to make her audience like her."

Answer Key

Practice A 1. Borderline. It makes a claim about rhetorical choices, so a reader may award the point, but it names appeals instead of concrete choices and sets up a weak essay; treat it as a 0 for practice. Fix: "Saujani opens with an admission of repeated failure and then redefines courage as acting while afraid, persuading readers that bravery is a practice, not a trait." 2. **0.** Restates the prompt; fix: use the model from item 3. 3. **1.** Names two choices (admission, redefinition) and a purpose. 4. **0.** No claim about rhetorical choices. 5. **1.** Names

the pairing and its effect. 6. **0**. Undeveloped; fix: use the model from item 7. 7. **1**. Defensible, qualified, with a reason. 8. **0**. Equivocates; fix: "Being present is valid as a discipline of attention but invalid as a guide to long-term decisions."

Practice B 9. "The speaker lists names of children who worked in the mill." (Summary.) 10. Sample: "By naming five children instead of citing a number, the speaker turns an abstract labor statistic into five people the legislators could imagine meeting. The specificity makes indifference harder to defend, and it moves the legislators from understanding the problem to feeling accountable for it, which is the shift her bill requires."

Practice C 11. **B** (However): contrast between cost reduction and enrollment decline. 12. **C** (Nevertheless): contrast with the first sentence's concession. 13. **A** (In other words): the second sentence restates the first more specifically.

Practice D 14. "Kelley's concern is concrete: 'Children are working in the night,' a statement that places the harm in an ordinary hour." 15. "The factories, which had been built hastily ... ran through the night."

Practice E 16. Sample: "The speaker uses self-mockery to make her audience like her, but the humor also does a second job: by laughing at her own certainty first, she earns the right to question theirs."

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