

Reading and Writing the Line of Reasoning: From Scavenging to Curating



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What was your first take on “line of reasoning” when it appeared on the scoring guide?

How have you framed it to your students?

What approaches have you used in class?

What stumbling blocks have you confronted?

Description in CED + Our Definition

“Writers guide understanding of a text’s lines of reasoning and claims through that text’s organization and integration of evidence.” (p.15) The “line of reasoning” is thus distinct from the claim.”

“The body paragraphs of an argument make claims, support them with evidence, and provide commentary that explains how the paragraphs contribute to the reasoning of the argument.”

“Line,” of course, is a metaphor for a progression of thought and expression. The phrase, “line of reasoning,” refers to:

- the moves that a logical and cogent analysis and/or argument would make as it proceeds
- the path that connects a writer’s ideas
- the progression from thesis through the marshalling of evidence and commentary that explains, supports, and proves the claim.

Fil conducteur

From French: *fil conducteur* (vs. "through line")



Fil Conducteur, Peter Klasen (German,
b. 1935) acrylic on canvas, 45.3" x
33.4"

Tracking a line of reasoning in a text

Students must learn to read a text rhetorically and look for the connections between the writer's rhetorical moves and the larger purpose, tracing the “line of reasoning” that establishes those connections. To trace is to follow the path or trail, to track the moves.

Questions Students Should Ask as Readers of a Text:

- What are the writer's intentions?
- What premises does the writer pursue in support of those intentions?
- How does the writer establish and explain them?
- Does the text follow a clear path?
- How does the writer ensure the reader is able to follow that path?
- How does the line lead to a logical conclusion?

As Writers, students should follow the same process and ask themselves the same questions. They will establish a “line of reasoning” as they compose.

MADAM,

I hope you will believe that my delay in answering
your letter could proceed only from my unwillingness to
destroy any hope that you had formed. Hope is itself a
Line species of happiness, and, perhaps, the chief happiness
5 which this world affords: but, like all other pleasures
immoderately enjoyed, the excesses of hope must be
expiated by pain; and expectations improperly indulged,
must end in disappointment. If it be asked, what is the
improper expectation which it is dangerous to indulge,
10 experience will quickly answer, that it is such
expectation as is dictated not by reason, but by desire;
expectation raised, not by the common occurrences of
life, but by the wants of the expectant; an expectation
that requires the common course of things to be changed,
15 and the general rules of action to be broken.

When you made your request to me, you should have
considered, Madam, what you were asking. You ask me
to solicit a great man, to whom I never spoke, for a
young person whom I had never seen, upon a
20 supposition which I had no means of knowing to be true.
There is no reason why, amongst all the great, I should
chuse* to supplicate the Archbishop, nor why, among all
the possible objects of his bounty, the Archbishop
should chuse your son. I know, Madam, how unwillingly
25 conviction is admitted, when interest opposes it; but
surely, Madam, you must allow, that there is no reason
why that should be done by me, which every other man
may do with equal reason, and which, indeed, no man

can do properly, without some very particular relation
30 both to the Archbishop and to you. If I could help you in
this exigence by any proper means, it would give me
pleasure: but this proposal is so very remote from usual
methods, that I cannot comply with it, but at the risk of
such answer and suspicions as I believe you do not wish
35 me to undergo.

I have seen your son this morning; he seems a pretty
youth, and will, perhaps, find some better friend than I
can procure him; but though he should at last miss the
University, he may still be wise, useful, and happy.

What are the writer's intentions?

How does he guide his audience through his line of reasoning?

What does that line of reasoning look like?

MADAM,

I hope you will believe that my delay in answering your letter could proceed only from my unwillingness to destroy any hope that you had formed. Hope is itself a species of happiness, and, perhaps, the chief happiness which this world affords: but, like all other pleasures immoderately enjoyed, the excesses of hope must be expiated by pain; and expectations improperly indulged, must end in disappointment. If it be asked, what is the improper expectation which it is dangerous to indulge, experience will quickly answer, that it is such expectation as is dictated not by reason, but by desire; expectation raised, not by the common occurrences of life, but by the wants of the expectant; an expectation that requires the common course of things to be changed, and the general rules of action to be broken.

I

E

Elizabeth Hollow

10:54 AM Today

Conventional-sounding apology for delay serves to introduce idea of "hope"

E

Elizabeth Hollow

11:18 AM Today

Philosophical musing on "excessive" hope and "improper" expectations (which must inevitably end in disappointment)

E

Elizabeth Hollow

11:17 AM Today

Defines improper expectations: those dictated "not by reason but by desire"

E

Elizabeth Hollow

11:07 AM Today

and outside the "common course" and/or "general rules of action"

When you made your request to me, you should have considered, Madam, what you were asking. You ask me to solicit a great man, to whom I never spoke, for a young person whom I had never seen, upon a supposition which I had no means of knowing to be true. There is no reason why, amongst all the great, I should chuse* to supplicate the Archbishop, nor why, among all the possible objects of his bounty, the Archbishop should chuse your son. I know, Madam, how unwillingly conviction is admitted, when interest opposes it; but surely, Madam, you must allow, that there is no reason why that should be done by me, which every other man may do with equal reason, and which, indeed, no man can do properly, without some very particular relation both to the Archbishop and to you. If I could help you in this exigence by any proper means, it would give me pleasure: but this proposal is so very remote from usual methods, that I cannot comply with it, but at the risk of such answer and suspicions as I believe you do not wish me to undergo.

I have seen your son this morning; he seems a pretty youth, and will, perhaps, find some better friend than I can procure him; but though he should at last miss the University, he may still be wise, useful, and happy.

E Elizabeth Hollow
11:09 AM Today

Shifts to mother's particular request, showing how it fits definition

E Elizabeth Hollow
11:09 AM Today

dictated by desire

E Elizabeth Hollow
11:10 AM Today

against common reason

E Elizabeth Hollow
11:10 AM Today

and "remote from usual methods"

E Elizabeth Hollow
11:20 AM Today

Ends more kindly, with compliments to son... and reminder that university education not essential.



On June 8th 1762, Samuel Johnson - who had previously received a woman's request to obtain the archbishop of Canterbury's patronage for her son to go to university - responds to her in a letter. In this letter, he denies the woman's request by showing respect for her, acting as a moral figure giving her advice, and manipulating her into thinking she is at fault for asking him.

Samuel Johnson starts by showing his respect for the woman and her request. He starts his letter with "Madam" and references her throughout the letter with that title. Although this would have been quite common in the 18th century, it still shows his politeness towards her. He then apologizes for the delay in answering her letter and for any hope he will be destroying.

Samuel Johnson makes sure to show his respect for the woman as he wants to come off as proper and polite before denying the request which will make the news less hard on her. By expressing his "unwillingness" to hurt her, he also shows his good intentions in declining her request which puts her in a good light rather than a bad one.

Samuel then acts as a sort of moralist, explaining to the woman what Hope is and how it can be dangerous. This allows her to justify his choice, because "the excesses of Hope must be expiated by pain". This gives him credibility which is what allows him to justify his actions and his words. He is convincing her that by hoping her request would be fulfilled, she is bound to "end in disappointment" (18) and her expectations were bound to "be broken" (18). At the end of the letter, Samuel also acts as "the

nil.

good guy" by giving her hope that her son will "still be wise, useful, and happy", without going to university. Although it is kind of ironic to end on a hopeful note - the thing he spent a full paragraph warning the woman about - it still allows her to be understood by the woman and not end on the sad reality of her son's future.

But Samuel also uses some manipulation into positioning himself as the rational one and the woman as the irrational one. He says that she "should have considered" what she was asking him. By making her doubt her own reason, he makes it seem as though his only possible answer to the request could have been no. In fact, he was being asked to solicit a man to whom he'd "never spoke" for her son whom he'd "never seen" for suppositions which he had "no means of knowing to be true."
→ make her question her demand

His words are meant to

body

and make her feel almost guilty for asking him. This puts her in the wrong and again, Shries Samuel in this imaginary light of reason, wisdom, and good intentions.

Overall, Samuel Johnson denies the woman's request by showing his respect and only good intentions, by acting as a figure full of wisdom and intelligence and by manipulating her into thinking she was in the wrong for asking him such as request.

What is the student's thesis?

How does she support it?

How does she connect her support to her claim?

Argument: Line of Reasoning In The Wild

- What does line of reasoning look like?
- NYT Opinion
- This piece is about Jacinda Ardern's decision to resign from her role as Prime Minister of New Zealand. It's a taut, clear argument essay about why she didn't quite live up to the hype.
- <http://bit.ly/opedjacindaardern>



WELLINGTON, New Zealand — There used to be a website devoted to pointing out examples of world maps that didn't bother to include New Zealand. If we did make it, we were tucked into the lower right corner, just past Australia. We're used to being far away and forgotten. For a brief time, Jacinda Ardern put us on the map.

Here was a young prime minister, elected in 2017 at just 37, with an Obama-grade 1,000-watt smile, who symbolized optimism and Kiwi values of fairness and hope. To progressive admirers around the world, she became a symbolic alternative to Donald Trump, proving that progressives could win elections and even have a baby in office.

Ms. Ardern, who announced last week that she would resign, citing burnout, had promised New Zealanders a "transformational" government that would build homes to address a housing crisis and reduce child poverty. After the murder of 51 people at two mosques in the quiet and lovely city of Christchurch by a white supremacist, she rose to the moment with her empathetic response and quick action to ban most semiautomatic weapons.

To us she was just Jacinda.

But over time, many Kiwis came to feel that, despite her international image, her rhetoric was never quite matched by substance.

In the first flush of her leadership, it was easy to ignore her Labour Party's populism. Like Mr. Trump, who, on protectionist grounds, pulled the United States out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership — which would have established the world's largest free trade zone — Labour campaigned against the deal. (Once in power, Ms. Ardern signed on to a virtually unchanged version).

Before Ms. Ardern became its leader, Labour compiled lists of home buyers with Chinese last names to support its view that Asian immigration was driving up housing prices. While prime minister, her government banned many nonresident foreigners from buying most types of homes. Ms. Ardern never sounded destructive or divisive during all this, but the underlying populism was little changed.

Early in her first term I hosted a group of British and American political strategists who came to New Zealand hoping to learn the secrets of this charismatic leader's success. One of them asked Ms. Ardern, "How would you beat yourself?" It's a tough question, so they answered it for her: The opposition could spotlight her star quality overseas and ask Kiwis, "But what has she done for you?"



David Freeman
1:31 PM Yesterday

A compelling, not-cliché opening paragraph that entices the reader.



David Freeman
1:05 PM Today

Lists accomplishments that readers will recognize to establish ethos before subverting them in thesis statement.



David Freeman
1:32 PM Yesterday

Thesis statement.



David Freeman
1:08 PM Today

Begins (logically) with three paragraphs on her early tenure, using varied examples from personal anecdote, public policy, and direct quotation.

Yellow = Intro & Conclusion "Frame"

Pink = Thesis Statement

Green = Line of Reasoning

This is not a question the rest of the world was asking. But by that time, after she had been in office less than a year, Kiwis were.

Then came Christchurch. Thrust into the global eye, she rose to the moment and the world applauded her grace in responding to an unspeakable act of terrorism. Of the Muslim victims, she said: "They have chosen to make New Zealand their home, and it is their home. They are us."

When Covid arrived, any sensible government would likely have closed the border. It's easy to do for one of the most remote countries in the world. **She went further,** locking down the country and confining everyone but essential workers to our homes in an attempt to banish the virus from our shores.

Lockdown was possible only with the consent of the governed. No one liked it, but most of us agreed with it. We were relieved that thousands were not dying, and her government was re-elected with a colossal mandate in 2020. But those tough Covid policies led to growing division, spurred conspiracy theorists and strained the economy.

She was originally elected on a promise to **reduce inequality and, more importantly, child poverty.** "If you ask me why I'm in politics, my answer will be simple: children," she said. But New Zealand today feels as unequal as when Ms. Ardern was elected.

The proportion of Kiwi children living in "material hardship" has indeed ticked down, to 11 percent in 2021 from 12.7 percent in 2017. That's welcome, but hardly transformational. A family earning average wages cannot afford to buy the average home in many provinces. A signature election promise to build 100,000 new homes has been scrapped after the plan became mired in delays and confusion. Thousands of homeless families are living in motel units.

This isn't all Ms. Ardern's fault. Soaring housing prices predated her, and New Zealand isn't the only place with this problem. Her government kept wages paid and businesses going during the pandemic with stimulus checks and low interest rates. **But that has caused a massive transfer of wealth to asset owners.**

A poll taken just before she announced her resignation showed that for the first time more New Zealanders (41 percent) had an unfavorable opinion of her than a favorable one (40 percent). Another poll showed 64 percent believed the country has become more divided in the past few years.



David Freeman
1:15 PM Today

Shifts to inflection points in her tenure, marked by an abrupt topic sentence.



David Freeman
1:18 PM Today

Evaluates success of her signature campaign promises.



David Freeman
12:52 PM Today

Concession.



David Freeman
12:52 PM Today

& Refutation.

Many in the Labour Party, and others, cite misogyny as a factor driving Ms. Ardern from office. Misogynists are loud and probably wore her down, but they are not the reason her popularity at home tumbled.

Mario Cuomo said that we campaign in poetry and govern in prose. Ms. Ardern gave us the poetry, showing that elections can be won with progressive values and a promise to leave no child behind. But you've got to deliver. Rising crime, inflation and stubborn inequality matter more to New Zealand voters than global star power.

A leader capable of effectively channeling our values can get elected on a progressive agenda. But if that person doesn't have a plan for turning that into results, the busy work of governing soon gets in the way and all the stardom in the world won't help.

Ms. Ardern's star still shines brightly overseas, and her time on the global stage may just be beginning. Since borders reopened to travel as the pandemic eased, her international miles have increased in inverse proportion to her government's popularity. For someone who has never really had to fight through personal political adversity at home until now, it looks better to international fans to resign as an undefeated leader than to lose her bid for a third term in government.

On balance, she deserves credit for knowing when to throw in the towel if her heart is no longer in it. But Ms. Ardern leaves with much of her promised agenda unfulfilled. It's been thrilling to be on the world map. But in the end, her years in power were like those maps that left New Zealand off: flawed and incomplete.



David Freeman
1:22 PM Today

Clear and concise restatement of main argument before shifting to conclusion.



David Freeman
1:24 PM Today

Gestures toward future, albeit with skepticism.



David Freeman
12:56 PM Today

Conclusion that revisits the thesis statement and closes the "frame" opened in the introductory paragraph.

Where the Second Avenue Subway Went Wrong

American infrastructure projects often cost five to six times what they cost in other developed countries. Can we learn to be thriftier?

By James Surowiecki

January 15, 2017

<http://bit.ly/where2ndavesubwaywentwrong>



Where the Second Avenue Subway Went Wrong

American infrastructure projects often cost five to six times what they cost in other developed countries. Can we learn to be thrifter?

By James Surowiecki January 15, 2017 The New Yorker

On New Year's Eve, at a party to celebrate the opening of the long-awaited Second Avenue subway, **Governor Andrew Cuomo said** the project showed that government "can still do big things and great things." What he didn't say is that the project also shows that government can do really expensive things. The line, which so far consists of just three stations and two miles of track, is, at a cost of roughly \$1.7 billion per kilometer of track, the most expensive ever built. And it will keep that record as Phase 2 begins, at a projected cost of \$2.2 billion a kilometer.

Construction projects everywhere are subject to delays and cost overruns. **Bent Flyvbjerg, a Danish economic geographer, has found** that nine out of ten infrastructure mega-projects worldwide ran over budget and the same number finished behind schedule. But the U.S. is the world's spendthrift. **A 2015 study by David Schleicher, a professor at Yale Law School, and Tracy Gordon, a fellow at the Urban Institute, looked** at a hundred and forty-four rail projects in forty-four countries. The four most expensive, and six of the top twelve, were American, the Second Avenue subway among them. In a study of transit construction costs worldwide, **Alon Levy, a transit blogger, has found** that they are often five to six times higher here than in other developed countries.

We used to do better. Hoover Dam was completed under budget, and two years ahead of schedule, and the Golden Gate Bridge, too, was finished early and cost \$1.3 million less than expected. So what's going wrong? It's complicated: one analysis of the problem cited thirty-nine possible causes. And factors that immediately come to mind, like higher land costs or labor costs, don't explain the difference between the U.S. and places like Japan or France. But some problems are clear. A plethora of regulatory hurdles and other veto points drag things out and increase costs. When New Jersey wanted to raise the roadway of the Bayonne Bridge, it took five years, and twenty thousand pages of paperwork, for the project to get under way. Obviously, environmental and workplace standards are important, but **a recent paper by Philip Howard, the chairman of Common Good, suggests** that a more streamlined regulatory process, like those found in many developed countries, could save hundreds of billions of dollars.

Then, too, because most infrastructure decisions in the U.S. are made at the state or local level, involving multiple governing bodies, projects must also satisfy a wide range of constituencies. Political considerations are often as important as technical ones, and schemes that are initially well defined can end up like Swiss Army knives, fulfilling any number of functions. **Long-suffering engineers call this "scope creep."** Washington and Oregon, for instance, spent years collaborating on plans for a new bridge on I-5, spanning the Columbia River. What started as a simple proposal quickly morphed into a full highway expansion (including the rebuilding of ve miles of interchanges), along with a light-rail extension. The cost rose to more than three billion dollars, after which the idea was abandoned.

A major cause of scope creep is the fact that infrastructure spending is at the mercy of political winds. Planners know that opportunities to build are limited, so when they do get a chance they tend to milk it for all it's worth. Politicians, meanwhile, like big, splashy projects that will win headlines and capture the public's attention. This is why we end up putting money into new projects while skimping on maintenance, even though the return on investment from simply keeping roads and bridges in good shape is usually higher.

Politicians are fond of **a quote commonly attributed to Daniel Burnham, the father of Chicago's Exposition of 1893: "Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood."** It's an inspiring sentiment, but emblematic of what you might call the Edifice Complex, a habit, among politicians, of imagining that anything big and glitzy must therefore be worth doing. That's how Detroit ended up with a People Mover monorail that moves very few people, why San Jose is set to spend more than a hundred and fifty million dollars on a transit station intended as "the Grand Central Station of the West," and how New York managed to spend four billion dollars on a station designed by Santiago Calatrava. On the Second Avenue line, too, the stations, which account for most of the cost, are lavish structures with huge mezzanines. They're a pleasure to walk through, but more modest stations would have worked just as well.

Conservatives often reflexively dismiss infrastructure spending as a boondoggle, and liberals, perhaps in reaction, often reflexively defend it, no matter how wasteful. But the pool of dollars available for something like public transit is limited. The result of extravagant spending on subways and the like is that we end up with fewer of them than other cities. For the price of what New York spent on Calatrava's station alone, Stockholm is building nineteen kilometers of subway track and a six-kilometer commuter-rail tunnel. Worse, cost overruns fuel public skepticism toward government, making it harder to invest the next time around. It's good for government to do big things, great things. But it's better if it can do them under budget. ♦

January 23, 2017

This article appears in the print edition of the January 23, 2017, issue, with the headline

How would you use these materials back in the classroom?