

EXAMPLE (FOR A DIFFERENT ARTICLE):

In the article titled “Why We Need Azaleas More Than Ever,” *author Genevieve Lewis makes the overall argument that we have given too much of our lives over to controlled environments (made possible by technology) and that we need to reconnect with the outdoors and unstructured time. She does this by making three related points, seemingly for the purpose of convincing us to consider a different way of living.*

Lewis argues that human beings evolved in nature and gain much of their happiness from meeting challenges in the physical environment and solving what she calls “unstructured problems” (p. 42). This is shown in the third paragraph, when she writes “Psychologists are finding that many successful treatments for depression involve reconnecting people to physical challenges that give them a sense of accomplishment and improve their health.” She also cites statistics (in the fifth paragraph) showing that people who are more engaged in the outdoors, or who spend more time in professions or hobbies that involve outdoor activities report being happier in many different cultures. She also comes back to the happiness theme in her conclusion to the article: “What is more important in our lives than happiness? When was the last time you really looked at an azalea?” This shows that her central concern is promoting what she thinks leads to better happiness for more people, and this is reconnected to natural environments with the reference to the azalea.

The second point she makes in the article is that we spend much more of our time indoors, in human-structured environments than we did even 20 years ago. The text provides support for this by relaying statistics on p. 43 for both European nations and the United States. It shows that Americans spend, on average, 1 hour and 34 minutes less time per day in natural, less-structured environments than they did in 1979, for example. In this section, the author does not directly state that this change is producing less happiness, but it is implied by the fact that she places the information right after the section about natural environments helping many people to be happier and right before the final section of the article, when she argues modern technology and highly structured environments have not delivered greater happiness for most people. This is her third main point. On page 45, she states: “When we look at the data about happiness and technology time, in multiple studies we see that there is no positive gain.” She then cites two studies to support this. She does not seem to consider any studies that may not support her point, but implies that there may not be any that contradict it, when she notes on p. 46, “There is little correlation between personal technology and happiness.”

On the surface, Lewis is arguing for more time in natural environments, as can be clearly seen by the line of her argument and by the way she concludes. But the slightly more subtle message is that our society has made the wrong choices about how to develop, choosing convenience over creativity and challenge. As a result, she argues, we have made ourselves less happy. There is a tone of annoyance in the article that can be seen at points (see page 48 for this statement: “One wonders if people have lost the ability to contemplate, seduced instead by the constant presence of a screen’s glow”). While she never directly says it, the underlying message of the article is one of the loss of a world that used to be. She feels we need to return to aspects of that world (see the title for evidence), but offers few concrete examples for doing so.

A FEW EXAMPLES OF POTENTIALLY USEFUL PHRASES OR SENTENCE STARTERS:

- The author’s main argument is . . .
- When the author states _____, it implies that . . .
- This is shown on page _____, where it states “_____” . . .
- _____ indicates that the author . . .
- On page _____, it states that . . . This supports the argument that . . .
- Another example of _____ can be found in the _____ paragraph when . . .
- In the _____ paragraph, it says . . . This indicates . . .
- According to _____, where it states “_____,” . . .
- The text provides support for _____ by stating that . . .