

Week 10: Persuasive Conclusions and Exam Preparation

Writing Topic: "Should historical monuments that represent controversial figures or events be preserved or removed?"
Technique Focus: Compelling Conclusions and Time Management

Introduction: The Power of Conclusions

A persuasive conclusion is not merely an afterthought—it is your final opportunity to sear your argument into your reader's mind and heart. In exam conditions, a powerful conclusion can elevate a good essay to an exceptional one.

"As you stand before a controversial monument—cold stone eyes staring down at you, the weight of history pressing against your chest—your reaction is not merely academic but visceral. Similarly, your conclusion should leave readers feeling the physical impact of your argument, their hearts racing with the urgency of your call to action."

Technique 1: Creating Powerful Calls to Action

What is a Call to Action?

A call to action urges readers to take a specific, tangible step based on the argument you've presented. It transforms passive agreement into active participation.

INEFFECTIVE EXAMPLE

"So in conclusion, I think we should really think about whether monuments should stay or not because history is important but so are people's feelings."

- Lacks specificity and urgency
- Uses weak language ("I think," "really think about")
- Fails to evoke emotional or physical response
- Presents a false balance that undermines position

EFFECTIVE EXAMPLE

"We must not allow another generation of children to walk beneath monuments that crush their spirits with each glance upward. Every day we delay is another day that citizens must physically avert their eyes from the bronze glorification of their ancestors' tormentors. Stand with the city council on May 15th and demand the relocation of these monuments to museums where they can be properly contextualized—where the cold metal that makes your stomach clench with righteous anger can be transformed into an educational tool rather than a daily assault on our collective conscience."

- Uses **physically descriptive language** ("crush their spirits," "avert their eyes")
- Creates **urgency** with time references
- Provides **specific action steps** (city council meeting date)
- Evokes **visceral emotional response** ("stomach clench with righteous anger")
- Offers a **constructive alternative** (relocation to museums)

Key Elements of Powerful Calls to Action:

1. Use imperative verbs that demand action ("Stand," "Demand," "Join")
2. Create immediacy with time references
3. Include specific, actionable steps
4. Evoke physical sensations that reinforce your argument
5. Connect emotional response to logical reasoning

Technique 2: Reinforcing Key Arguments in Conclusions

Strategic Argument Reinforcement

Rather than simply restating your thesis, selectively emphasize your strongest points while creating new emotional resonance.

INEFFECTIVE EXAMPLE

"In conclusion, I have shown that monuments of controversial figures should be removed because they are offensive, they celebrate bad people, and they make some people feel bad when they see them."

- Merely lists arguments without enhancement
- Uses vague language ("bad people," "feel bad")
- Fails to create emotional impact
- Lacks physical or sensory details

EFFECTIVE EXAMPLE

"Throughout this essay, we have traversed the blood-soaked ground upon which these monuments stand—ground that grows increasingly unbearable for those whose ancestors' suffering is mockingly overshadowed by towering figures who would have denied their humanity. The psychological research confirming the trauma inflicted by these daily visual reminders cannot be ignored; we have seen how the constant tightening of the chest, the reflexive lowering of eyes, and the quickening pulse experienced by marginalized citizens creates a physiological burden that no society committed to equality should impose. These monuments do not merely represent history—they actively perpetuate a hierarchy of suffering where some citizens must daily navigate spaces that celebrate their ancestors' oppressors. When balanced against the transformative potential of thoughtfully curated museum exhibits that contextualize rather than glorify, the path forward becomes as clear as the pain in the eyes of those who have shared their testimonies before the city council."

- Uses **metaphorical language** ("blood-soaked ground")
- Incorporates **physical responses** ("tightening of the chest," "lowering of eyes")
- References **evidence briefly** without restating details
- Creates **emotional crescendo** through imagery
- Weaves together **multiple arguments** (psychological impact, social inequality, alternative approaches)
- Ends with **powerful imagery** ("pain in the eyes")

Techniques for Reinforcing Key Arguments:

1. Use metaphors that encapsulate your overall argument
2. Add new emotional or sensory dimensions to previously stated evidence
3. Create thematic connections between seemingly separate arguments
4. Elevate language to create greater intensity than in the main body
5. Transition from specific evidence to broader implications

Technique 3: Addressing Counter-Perspectives in Conclusion

Strategic Final Rebuttal

A sophisticated conclusion acknowledges the strongest counter-argument one final time, but frames it in a way that actually strengthens your position.

INEFFECTIVE EXAMPLE

"Some people think history will be erased if monuments are removed, but I disagree because we can still learn about history in other ways."

- Weak acknowledgment of opposition
- Insufficient rebuttal
- Lacks emotional engagement with the concern
- Missing sensory or physical elements

EFFECTIVE EXAMPLE

"Those who clutch desperately at these monuments, fear etched into their furrowed brows at the prospect of history being 'erased,' fail to recognize that history doesn't reside in cold metal and stone but in comprehensive education, in the tear-stained pages of personal accounts, in the trembling voices of survivors and their descendants. True historical preservation doesn't demand that we force communities to live beneath the towering shadows of figures who would have denied their humanity—it demands that we create more complete narratives that acknowledge the full spectrum of pain and progress that has brought us to this moment. By moving these monuments to educational settings, we don't erase history; we finally allow it to be fully seen, fully felt, fully understood—not as propaganda cast in bronze but as the complex, often agonizing human story that continues to unfold around us."

- Acknowledges opponents' **emotional investment** ("clutch desperately," "fear etched")
- Uses **physical descriptions** to humanize both sides
- Reframes the debate from **binary choices** to better alternatives
- Includes **sensory language** ("tear-stained pages," "trembling voices")
- Ends with **transcendent perspective** that elevates beyond the immediate argument

Techniques for Final Rebuttals:

1. Acknowledge the emotional core of opposition with empathy
2. Reframe the apparent dichotomy as a false choice
3. Use sensory language to make abstract concepts tangible
4. Elevate the discussion to shared values both sides hold
5. End with forward-looking perspective that transcends the immediate debate

Exam Strategy: Managing Time Effectively

Time Management for Persuasive Essays

Allocate your time strategically to ensure your conclusion receives the attention it deserves.

Recommended Time Allocation (40-minute essay):

- **5 minutes:** Planning and outlining (include notes for conclusion)
- **25 minutes:** Introduction and body paragraphs
- **7 minutes:** Crafting your conclusion
- **3 minutes:** Proofreading and editing

INEFFECTIVE APPROACH

Rushing through your conclusion in the final minute of the exam, hastily writing: "In conclusion, monuments should/shouldn't be removed because of the reasons I mentioned above."

EFFECTIVE APPROACH

Reserving 7 minutes specifically for your conclusion, allowing time to craft language that evokes physical and emotional responses: "As we stand at this crossroads of commemoration and conscience, the weight of bronze figures looms as heavily as the weight of our moral responsibility..."

Time Management Strategies:

1. Write key conclusion phrases during your planning stage
2. Set a specific time trigger (e.g., 30 minutes in) to begin your conclusion
3. If time is running short, prioritize a powerful final sentence over a complete conclusion paragraph
4. Practice writing conclusions under timed conditions regularly
5. Keep a clock or watch visible and set mental checkpoints

Exam Strategy: Quick Editing and Proofreading

Efficient Editing Under Time Constraints

Even with limited time, strategic editing can significantly elevate your conclusion's impact.

3-Minute Proofreading Priority List:

1. **Thesis alignment** - Does your conclusion reinforce your thesis?
2. **Impact language** - Have you replaced weak verbs/adjectives with powerful ones?
3. **Sensory richness** - Have you included at least one physical or sensory detail?
4. **Call to action** - Is your final sentence compelling and action-oriented?
5. **Basic errors** - Scan for obvious spelling/grammar issues

BEFORE EDITING

"In conclusion, controversial monuments are a big issue that needs to be thought about carefully. The feelings of all people matter and we should try to find solutions that work for everyone. History is important but so is making sure people feel good in public spaces."

AFTER EDITING

"In conclusion, the towering presence of controversial monuments tears at the fabric of our community with every passing day. The searing pain in the eyes of those forced to walk beneath figures who would have denied their humanity cannot be dismissed in favor of abstract historical preservation. We must relocate these monuments to museums where they can educate without continuing to inflict wounds that never heal. Our public spaces must become sanctuaries of shared dignity, not battlegrounds where some citizens must daily steel themselves against the bronze and marble celebrations of their ancestors' oppressors."

Quick Editing Checklist:

- Replace generic terms with specific, evocative ones (e.g., "big issue" → "towering presence that tears at the fabric")
- Add physical descriptions to abstract concepts (e.g., "feelings matter" → "searing pain in the eyes")
- Strengthen verbs (e.g., "try to find" → "relocate," "must become")
- Eliminate hedging language (e.g., "should try" → "must")
- Add metaphorical language that creates visual imagery (e.g., "sanctuaries of shared dignity")

Practical Application: Complete Conclusion Example

Sample Conclusion: Monuments Should Be Relocated

The monuments that cast long shadows across our public squares were never neutral objects—they were deliberate instruments of narrative control, erected not during the eras they claim to commemorate but during periods when the reassertion of power was deemed necessary by those who felt it slipping from their grasp. As we have seen through the research of Dr. Michaels, the psychological impact of these structures manifests in measurable physical responses: elevated heart rates, cortisol spikes, and the instinctive hunching of shoulders as certain citizens pass beneath these towering figures—physiological markers of ongoing trauma that no society committed to healing can ignore. The argument that relocating these monuments somehow "erases history" collapses under scrutiny; indeed, as the success of the Berlin Documentation Center demonstrates, contextualizing rather than glorifying creates deeper historical understanding. When a child stands before a monument in a public square, neck craned upward toward a figure presented as heroic, the message requires no explanation—nor does the crushing weight that descends upon the shoulders of children whose ancestors would have been considered property by the very figure immortalized in bronze above them. We must not allow another generation to grow up beneath these shadows. The time has come to relocate these monuments to museums and educational settings where the full, complex, painful truth can finally breathe—where context can transform instruments of intimidation into catalysts for understanding. Join the Historical Truth Commission on May 15th and lend your voice to those who have been silenced too long by the cold metal sentinels that have turned our public spaces into battlegrounds of belonging. Our shared future demands no less than our complete commitment to public spaces where all citizens can stand tall, shoulders unburdened by bronze reminders of their prescribed inferiority.

Analysis of Techniques Used:

1. **Opening with historical context** that frames the debate in a new light
2. **Incorporating research evidence** with physical descriptions of impact
3. **Addressing counter-argument** about "erasing history"
4. **Using comparative example** (Berlin Documentation Center)
5. **Creating emotional impact** through child's perspective
6. **Metaphorical language** ("shadows," "cold metal sentinels")
7. **Specific call to action** with date and organization
8. **Forward-looking final sentence** that connects to broader values

Exam Preparation Exercise

Timed Conclusion Practice

Practice writing powerful conclusions under exam conditions to build confidence and skill.

Exercise Instructions:

1. Set a timer for 7 minutes
2. Write a conclusion for either the "preserve monuments" or "remove monuments" position
3. Ensure your conclusion includes:
 - Reference to at least one piece of evidence
 - Physically descriptive language
 - Emotional appeal
 - Acknowledgment of counter-perspective
 - Clear call to action
4. When finished, swap with a partner and evaluate using the techniques learned today

Reminder: Key Elements of Powerful Conclusions:

- Reinforce key arguments with fresh language
- Include physically descriptive and emotionally evocative language
- Address counter-arguments strategically
- Create a compelling call to action
- End with forward-looking perspective

Final Thoughts: The Lasting Impact

"Your conclusion is the echo that remains after your essay ends—the reverberations that continue in your reader's mind and heart. Make it resonate with physical imagery so vivid they can feel it, emotional language so powerful they cannot forget it, and a call to action so compelling they cannot ignore it."

Key Takeaways:

- A powerful conclusion transforms a good essay into a memorable one
- Physical descriptors and sensory language create lasting impressions
- Strategic time management ensures your conclusion receives proper attention
- Quick editing techniques can significantly enhance impact even under time constraints
- Practice writing conclusions separately to build this crucial skill