

Below you will find an annotated version of a student essay. Read the essay and then examine my annotations running along the right hand margin in order to get a sense of why this essay is a good example of the kind of analysis you should be doing in your own essays.

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English 100

Week 3 Assignment

In the excerpt entitled "Idiot Nation," Michael Moore discusses the state of the educational system in America and what he feels is the cause of its deterioration. Moore touches on a few key reasons why education in America is failing which include elected political leaders, a lack of qualified school teachers and corporations. His belief is that political leaders throughout America are more interested in building more "bombers" and holding hearings about inappropriate television shows than about focusing on improving America's educational system. Moore also points out the irony with politicians because they refuse to fund education but are angry about how America has fallen behind other nations in that aspect. A shortage of qualified teachers is also mentioned in Moore's excerpt as a reason why the educational system is failing. Moore cites the low salaries as the primary reason for this shortage which has resulted in uncertified teachers being brought from overseas to teach. Lastly, Moore addresses Corporate America's involvement with schools across the nation and what their true intentions are. He calls attention to the fact that corporations provide funding to schools in exchange for a number of things that may consist of advertising, access to children's search habits or exclusive rights to vending machines. Moore's use of his own credibility as a source, sarcasm and insults as argumentative strategies in his excerpt result in the reader questioning the validity of his accusations and becoming distracted from the true meaning of his argument and therefore are ineffective.

Comment: Here the student introduces the author and title of the work right up front

Comment: The first 2/3 of this opening paragraph is simply a detailed, thorough introduction and summary of the work to be analyzed below – the student is doing a good job imagining an "ignorant" audience who has *not* read Moore's work and so needs *everything* explained to it.

Notice that there are *no* direct quotations from the text in this opening paragraph – the writer has taken pains to summarize the text in his own words without relying on the author to say things for him.

Comment: Here the writer has presented us with a clear, focused thesis statement in which he sets forth for us the specific "argumentative strategies" he sees Moore using in his writing.

The writer is making an **evaluation** of the effectiveness of those strategies in terms of the overall success (or not, in this case) of Moore's writing. This is what a thesis statement should do: make an argument about the text rather than express a subjective opinion about the ideas expressed in the work.