

AP ARGUMENT ESSAY – LET’S GET READY

Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant.

—Horace

Consider this quotation about adversity from the Roman poet Horace. Then write an essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies Horace’s assertion about the role that adversity (financial or political hardship, danger, misfortune, etc.) plays in developing a person’s character. Support your argument with appropriate evidence from your reading, observation, or experience.

In the box above is an argument essay prompt from an AP Lang & Comp test from a few years ago. Unlike the rhetorical analysis essay, the TASK for the argument prompt can vary, so it’s very important to make sure you fully understand and address what the prompt demands of you.

1) What is the prompt asking you to do? What is the specific task?

Many prompts often include thought-provoking—and difficult—quotes from great thinkers. If we misinterpret the quote, the ballgame is already over.

2) Jot down some notes. What specific argument does Horace make in the prompt’s selected quote? Put it into your own words. Don’t be fancy or flashy. Don’t even worry about academic language yet. You’re talking to a friend explaining Horace’s idea. What is it?

3) Just to make sure you’ve got it, it’s often helpful to determine what his argument is NOT about? People who don’t read closely might think he’s contending _____, but more specifically, he’s addressing the idea that _____.

Current Events
History
Experiences from your life
Literature
Popular culture
Science
Sports

4) CHELPSS-ing: One first step to help you attack the argument prompt is a free-associating technique we will refer to as **CHELPSS-ing**. Using these seven categories, brainstorming examples that connect to the prompt—in any way—can help you develop an idea for the stance you will take in your thesis (your “I Say”). Additionally, you can cull through the strongest ideas you come up with to use as concrete examples (D&E) for your body paragraphs.

Brainstorm specific examples from at least five of the seven CHELPSS categories. For each example, give a brief explanation of why it connects.

****See if an event/example you learned about from Newsies can apply to the prompt.**

Examples:

- **SCIENCE:** British mathematician and scientist Alan Turing – Because of the horrors of WWII and the need to crack the code of the German enigma machine, this adversity forced Turing to use his genius to create what many consider to be the first computer.
- **PERSONAL EXPERIENCE:** Me (Ms. Bech) not getting into a sorority in college—the whole campus was empty during weekly sorority/fraternity dinners and I felt like a loser sitting alone in the cafeteria, so I would walk to the art-house theater, discovering a passion for film that led me to attending graduate film school.



5) After CHELPSS-ing, use those examples to help you hone in on your response to Horace's argument—your stance, your "I Say." Complete this template:

The Roman poet Horace once claimed that _____ On the other hand, others
paraphrase Horace's argument

believe / suggest / contend/ or another strong verb that _____
offer another "They Say" idea that differs from Horace's argument

AND THEN CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

DEFEND

I agree with Horace's assertion/statement/idea/etc. because _____.

My theory on _____ aligns with Horace's argument because _____.

CHALLENGE

I disagree with Horace's assertion/statement/idea/etc. because _____.

Horace is mistaken because he overlooks _____.

Horace's claim that _____ rests upon the questionable assumption that _____.

By focusing on _____, Horace overlooks the real question of _____.

QUALIFY

While I agree with Horace's observation that _____, I disagree with the premise of his theory because _____.

Horace's position that _____ makes sense, but only in cases where _____.

Horace is absolutely correct, but only up to a point. While _____ is certainly true, there are many exceptions, such as _____.

Although I disagree with Horace's insistence that we _____, I fully endorse his final conclusion that _____.