

Designs That Argue

Analyze how a writer builds a clear interpretation from evidence.

ELA.11.C.1.4 "Write an analysis of complex texts using logical organization and a tone and voice appropriate to the task and audience, demonstrating an understanding of the subject."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the writer's central claim, circle details that support it, and number the words or phrases that show how the analysis moves from one idea to the next.

Memory in Stone

- ① Public monuments often reveal what a community chooses to remember, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., makes remembrance personal rather than triumphant. Designed by Maya Lin, the memorial consists of two black granite walls that meet at an angle and descend into the earth before rising again. Its surface carries the names of service members who died or went missing in the Vietnam War. Instead of placing a heroic figure above visitors, the design positions visitors beside the names. This choice turns national history into an encounter with individual loss, establishing the memorial's reflective purpose.
- ② The memorial's materials deepen that purpose. Polished black granite reflects the faces of people who stand before it, so visitors see themselves visually joined to the engraved names. The walls' V-shaped form directs attention toward the low central point, where the number of names is most concentrated. As visitors walk along either wall, the names are arranged by date of casualty, not alphabetically. Consequently, the physical path suggests the war's unfolding human cost. The design does not explain the conflict's politics, yet its careful sequence and scale ask visitors to consider the accumulation of absence.
- ③ Lin's approach also helps explain why the memorial has remained influential. A conventional statue might have supplied a single image of courage or victory. By contrast, the descending walls withhold that easy conclusion. They require movement, reading, and reflection, which makes each visitor participate in constructing meaning. The memorial therefore addresses a broad public without speaking in a celebratory voice. Its power comes from restraint: names, stone, and a changing reflection provide the evidence, while visitors bring their own memories and questions. Through this organization of space and detail, the memorial argues that public memory can acknowledge grief without reducing it to a slogan.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What is the writer's central claim about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial? Explain how the first paragraph introduces that claim.

2 Explain how two details from paragraph 2 support the writer's interpretation of the memorial.

3 How does the writer organize the analysis across the three paragraphs, and why is this order effective?

4 What tone does the writer use? Identify two word choices or details that create this tone.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose a public memorial, building, or artwork that you know or research. In 140 to 170 words, write two organized paragraphs that make a clear claim about how one design choice shapes meaning. Use two specific details, an organizational transition, and a formal analytical tone.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the writer's central claim, circle details that support it, and number the words or phrases that show how the analysis moves from one idea to the next. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the writer's central claim about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial? Explain how the first paragraph introduces that claim.	The writer claims that the memorial makes public remembrance personal and reflective rather than triumphant. Paragraph 1 introduces this idea by describing the walls, the names, and the choice to place visitors beside the names.
2	Explain how two details from paragraph 2 support the writer's interpretation of the memorial.	The reflective granite visually joins visitors to the names, making the loss feel personal. The names arranged by casualty date and the path along the walls suggest the war's accumulating human cost.
3	How does the writer organize the analysis across the three paragraphs, and why is this order effective?	The writer begins with the memorial's overall purpose, moves to specific physical details, and then explains the memorial's broader influence and meaning. This order builds from claim to evidence to conclusion.
4	What tone does the writer use? Identify two word choices or details that create this tone.	The tone is reflective and analytical. Phrases such as "individual loss" and "accumulation of absence," along with the focus on names and grief instead of victory, create that tone.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, uses hanging steel monuments to make racial violence impossible to treat as distant statistics. Each monument represents a county where racial terror lynchings occurred, and many bear victims' names. At the entrance, the blocks stand at eye level, allowing visitors to read the county names as separate records of violence. This arrangement first presents the history as something that can be examined closely. Then the pathway slopes downward, and the monuments rise above visitors' heads. The same blocks now resemble bodies suspended in space, an effect that changes the visitor's position from observer to witness. Because the memorial repeats hundreds of county markers rather than featuring one symbolic object, it shows that the violence was widespread and organized. Its design makes a historical argument: public memory must name both individual victims and the systems that endangered them.

Accept equivalent claims and explanations when they are supported by accurate passage details. For Part 3, look for a focused interpretive claim, two relevant details, logical paragraphing, a clear transition, and a formal tone.