

Dancing to the Tunes of Another's Music: Peer Review Exhibit



“Hatho Se Hatheli Bhaje Pav Se Padhan Chanda

Muha Se Murchanga Bhaje

Taka Taka Thun Thun Taka Taka Thun Thun Taka Taka Thun Thun

Thei-ya

Sur Das Sangeet Kahata Jab

Bhaja ta Mridangam Tab Nachata Khaniya Dha ss

Bhaja ta Mridangam Tab Nachata Khaniya Dha ss

Bhaja ta Mridangam Tab Nachata Khaniya Dha”

(Through the clapping of hands, we hear the beat of the Taal. To that beat, dancers match their footwork, and musicians play their Murchanga and Mridangam. As the music of the famous poet, Surdas, says, **when these instruments are heard and a musical atmosphere is created,**

Lord Krishna responds by dancing).

For the following peer review exhibit, I use a section of a classmate's work from her analysis of the short story “Battle Royal” by Ralph Ellison and the speech “Atlanta Compromise” by Booker T. Washington. Her thesis claimed that Ellison uses the unfortunate situations the main character of the story encounters as a way to prove that “Washington's tactics will ultimately fail in assimilating African Americans into white society.”

During this peer review, I focused on evaluating my classmate's evidence and commentary in her body paragraphs. This peer-review process was extremely helpful to my own revision as it emphasized the importance of a balance between evidence and commentary.

While I struggled with overbearing commentary, my classmate's essay suffered from an abundance of evidence. Regardless of the difference in our issues, the imbalance caused our papers to be equally as weak. I realized aimlessly adding evidence is as detrimental to the argument as adding baseless claims. Since I used a variety of colors, we can visually see how the commentary compared to the evidence it supported. Simply by looking at the paragraphs from a visual perspective, one can see which paragraphs need more work, and which contain a more ideal structure.

In addition, I made sure to keep a lookout for any grammatical issues that would decrease the validity of her claims. I annotated within her writing as well as ended my review with an overall evaluation that addresses all three paragraphs and their general nature.

Key:

Central claim and topic sentence- yellow

Evidence- green

Analysis or interpretation of evidence/commentary- pink

My comments and suggestions within their paper- red text

After delivering a speech at his high school graduation, the main character was invited to give the speech in front of "the town's leading white citizens" (Ellison 2). Naturally, he couldn't give up this exciting opportunity, yet he was unaware of the great lengths he would endure before reaching the stage. Once he arrived at the assembly, he was forced to participate in a battle royal, which consisted of black classmates fight (fighting) each other as part of the entertainment. The group of young men were (one group, so was) led out into the ballroom and placed in front of a naked dancer. Immediately, the black high schoolers were embarrassed to the

point where the narrator “saw one boy faint” and another “plead to go home” (Ellison 3). The white leaders purposefully manipulated the young men to uncomfortable elicit a reaction, displaying their hunger for power. Explain the previous piece of evidence before you move on to the next. Further, once the fight begins, the whites shout phrases like, “Let me at those black sonsabitches!” (Ellison 5). Not to mention, they go to the extent of blindfolding the boys. This shows the hostility towards blacks in the supposed time of unification and the degradation of the blacks to worthless savages. Is this your central claim? If so, I feel it is too far into the paragraph and should be established earlier. If not, I am a little confused on the general purpose of this paragraph. I would recommend deepening your explanations early on. The speaker himself says, “I had no dignity” (Ellison 5). He was truly embarrassed that he had to act the way that the whites saw him, a violent, ruthless individual, without speaking up for himself.

Within the context of the narrator’s speech, he addresses that humility is the essence of progress. The white community of course praised him for his innovative thoughts, as it (they) aligned with their perception on (of) how blacks should be treated. However, he felt guilty for not believing in what he wrote. He could “only believe that it worked” as his grandfather did (Ellison 2). His grandfather felt as though being “a spy in the enemy’s country” was the only way to gain rights, even though it meant humiliating himself in front of the black community for not sticking up for himself (Ellison 1). The speech shows that Washington’s ideals are being questioned within the minds of the young black generation as they were being educated to learn right from wrong. The delivery of the speech further uncovers the true intentions of whites in the south towards (toward) making amends with African Americans. Whilst the speech was being given, the grandson “spoke louder in spite of the pain. But still they talked and still they laughed, as though deaf with cotton in dirty ears (Ellison 10).” Although the invitation to speak was so

important to the young man to the point where he spoke through the pain, the audience behaved in utter disrespect. They were not interested in what he had to say, emphasizing that black Americans wouldn't ever be identified as equals, even if they conform to the rules of society. The apparent discourtesy of the gentlemen yelling "Louder! Louder!" drives the narrator to stutter "social equality" instead of "social responsibly" (Ellison 11)." The unconscious expression of this phrase exhibits that he loathes the way he has lived his life in that moment. The silence which filled the room thereafter amplifies his shame and accentuates that the white population disagrees with any other approach to achieve equal opportunity, confining blacks to their rule. The balance between commentary and evidence is substantially better in this paragraph! While you could focus a little more on the "so what" factor and spend a bit more time developing your central claim, the increase in the commentary has helped shape the paragraph overall. Therefore, if African Americans cannot make their own set of policies, they will never have the same privileges as whites.

However, as the narrator receives a scholarship to an in-state college for negroes and an "gleaming calfskin briefcase" for his speech, it appears he has finally come to terms with his way of life. He runs home overjoyed, thankful he has a future beyond a high school education. He is reminded of Washington's words, "There is no defense or security for any of us except in the highest intelligence and development of all (Washington 2)." By adhering to the beliefs of Booker T. Washington, he is rewarded with the utmost highest achievement: a formal education. Even though he celebrates with his neighbors and family, there is a familiar voice growing in the back of this (his) mind. That night, he dreams of an envelope within the prized briefcase. He opened it to find another envelope and another until he reached a stamp which (that) read, "To Whom It May Concern...Keep This Nigger-Boy Running" (Ellison 12). After reading this, his

grandfather's laugh floods his head. The continuous commentary makes it seem like a summary: Either remove some evidence or interrupt the continuity by explaining your interpretation of the evidence after every line or two. This occurrence symbolizes that the narrator will always be oppressed by the white figures above him. The endless envelopes can be related to the struggle of attaining his people's goal of fair social status. He is putting in so much effort to open each envelope to be torn down by the words of the white men. Even though they are giving him an education to become a somebody, they will always have the power. The grandfather is almost mocking him for following his advice instead of his own gut. Several years in the future, the narrator has now discovered that he should've asked himself what he should do instead of fulfilling others' expectations. He calls himself "an invisible man" for this reason (Ellison 1). He sees himself as just another African American who fell to social constructs rather than challenging them, just another man without a voice of his own. That is a good observation, but you are falling short on why all of this matters. I can not help but feel you keep setting yourself up for a really compelling argument, but then are not able to go through with it. Instead, you resort to another piece of evidence.

Overall Evaluation/Commentary-

1. Is the central claim of the paragraph clear? Is it broken down or is it too broad or abstract? Is there more than one claim competing to be the central claim of this paragraph?

For all three paragraphs, the central claim is not conveyed clearly enough. In the first paragraph, what seems like the closest sentence to the central claim is too far into your writing. It is hard to make sense of the purpose of the evidence and paragraph.

2. Is there enough evidence to support the claims in this paragraph? Is enough of the evidence quotation from the text, or is too much of it assumption on the writer's part?

There is plenty of evidence, almost to where it is a direct summary of the event. Personally, I feel your quote integration is wonderful, but there is just too much evidence overall. There are not many assumptions, however, the commentary about the evidence is not concrete enough to support the thesis nor speak for itself either. There is definitely potential for it to be further developed if you take a second to think about the purpose of each piece of evidence and how it relates to your argument.

3. Are the links between claim and evidence clear enough?

No; there need to be more links. I struggled to find the end of the evidence and the beginning of the commentary because everything seemed to flow into each other.

4. Does anything in the paragraph need to be taken out because it is repetitive or just doesn't belong?

For the entirety of your paper, I do not think all of this evidence is necessary to make the claim you are trying to convey. Focus more on analyzing your evidence and explaining how this highlights Washington's failed tactic as opposed to talking about the event itself. You have a good complex thesis but your use of evidence is not doing justice to your set-up.

5. Does the last sentence of the paragraph tie the details in the paragraph together and make their significance to the essay as a whole clear?

No; the ending for the first paragraph feels empty and seems like an observation as opposed to proving some argument. It can be developed further and has the potential to end on a stronger note. In the second and third paragraphs, there is no final statement that wraps the argument together. Instead, it seems like a small piece of incomplete commentary.