

Line of Reasoning – Examples
from 2019 Open Question on Idealism

Sample DD (1–4–1) *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*

Lines of reasoning are underlined, **literary elements** named specifically are in **red**.

Prompt: In his 2004 novel *Magic Seeds*, V. S. Naipaul writes: “It is wrong to have an ideal view of the world. That’s where the mischief starts. That’s where everything starts unravelling.” Select a novel, play, or epic poem in which a character holds an “ideal view of the world.” Then write an essay in which you analyze the character’s idealism and its positive or negative consequences. Explain how the author’s portrayal of this idealism illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. You may choose a work from the list below or one of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.

Thesis (Overarching Claim):

Through McMurphy’s idealism, he allows the patients to regain a sense of dignity and he charts the course for his ultimate demise; through this, Kesey is able to show that despite the inevitable negative consequences which will result from idealism, it is a necessary quality to ignite social change. (Complexity: Idealism is both uplifting and damaging)

Subdaim #1 Idealism is uplifting

- **Assertion:** McMurphy’s idealism compels him to take risks.
- **Proof:** Testing Nurse Ratched
- **Explanation:** Establishes himself as a martyr and becomes a **symbol** of hope through his idealism
- **Assertion:** Patients abandon their own perceptions and follow McMurphy’s idealism.
- **Proof:** McMurphy and patients on fishing trip
- **Explanation:** McMurphy’s idealism on this trip gives them autonomy and a sense of dignity
- **Assertion:** Bromden in particular is affected by McMurphy’s idealism
- **Proof:** Bromden’s cynicism and fears
- **Explanation:** McMurphy’s idealistic enthusiasm breaks this fog and engages Bromden.
- **Further explanation:** Idealism is contagious and because of it the men reclaim their identities from Ratched

Subdaim #2 Idealism leads to McMurphy’s demise

- **Assertion:** McMurphy’s idealism leads to his demise
- **Proof:** Ratched recognizes McMurphy as a threat and lobotomizes him
- **Explanation:** This happened directly as a result of McMurphy’s idealistic actions
- **Assertion:** Despite McMurphy’s demise, the idealism pervades to the end
- **Proof:** Bromden euthanizes McMurphy and escapes, “freeing” them both
- **Explanation:** Bromden would not have done this without McMurphy’s idealism, which caused him to regain his dignity
- **Further explanation:** Kesey demonstrates the need for idealism in certain leaders, like McMurphy, in order to free the oppressed

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Conclusion: (Reiterates thesis and ends claim)

Ultimately, through showing how idealism uniquely benefitted the patients on the ward and resulted in long-term, positive ramifications despite McMurphy's tragic end, Kesey is able to convey the key role that idealism plays in effecting social change.

Scorer's Comments on Evidence & Commentary:

The response earned four points in Row B by offering specific references to the text that are relevant to the thesis about the positive and negative consequences of McMurphy's idealism. The response mentions specific plot points in both body paragraphs—McMurphy's TV watching, his fishing trip, his interaction with Bromden, Ratched's responses—and offers careful and consistent commentary for each, connecting them not only to each other but back to the thesis to establish the line of reasoning and ultimately offering an interpretation of the work as a whole.

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Sample FF (1-3-1) *The Grapes of Wrath*

Prompt: In his 2004 novel *Magic Seeds*, V. S. Naipaul writes: “It is wrong to have an ideal view of the world. That’s where the mischief starts. That’s where everything starts unravelling.” Select a novel, play, or epic poem in which a character holds an “ideal view of the world.” Then write an essay in which you analyze the character’s idealism and its positive or negative consequences. Explain how the author’s portrayal of this idealism illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. You may choose a work from the list below or one of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.

Thesis (Overarching Claim): Steinbeck uses this idealism of the Joads to illuminate the meaning of the work by portraying the experience of migrant farmers.

Subdaim #1: Idealism is essential to the story

- **Assertion:** The Joads never lose hope despite losing their farm, showing their Idealism.
- **Proof:** The handbill Ma found inspired this Idealism
- **Explanation:** Although it was misguided, this idealism led their journey towards California and actually saved their lives.

Subdaim #2: Without their idealism, the Joads would have died

- **Assertion:** The Joads pressed on through hardships because of their hope in what lay in California
- **Proof:** N/A
- **Explanation:** The Joads pressed on through danger because of their idealism, ensuring their own survival.

Subdaim #3: Idealism illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole

- **Assertion:** Steinbeck uses this idealism to demonstrate the plight of the migrant workers during the Dust Bowl
- **Proof:** N/A
- **Explanation:** Steinbeck displays that idealism was a necessary trait in migrant workers.
- **Further explanation:** Steinbeck uses this idealism to highlight a major theme: migrant farmers needed to be perseverant even in the worst of times

Conclusion: (Reiterates thesis and ends claim)

The Joads consistently hold an idealist view of California, without which they would not have been able to survive and set up a new life. Steinbeck uses this to illuminate the meaning of the novel, highlighting the necessity of an ideal worldview to migrant farmers.

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Scorer's Comments on Evidence & Commentary:

The response earned three points in Row B because it provides specific evidence from the novel to support the line of reasoning and connects that evidence back to the thesis through commentary. For example, the second paragraph mentions the details of the handbill as a way of showing where the Joad's idealized view of California originated. In the third and fourth paragraphs, however, the evidence becomes broader and less specific, and the commentary becomes less developed as a result. The response does make claims about the effect of the idealism on the novel as a whole, but in paragraph four that discussion makes the broadest of sweeps and offers no specific details for support. The result is commentary that is uneven (detailed in one spot, sweeping in other spots), limited and underdeveloped.

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Sample TT (1-2-0) *Crime and Punishment*

Prompt: In his 2004 novel *Magic Seeds*, V. S. Naipaul writes: “It is wrong to have an ideal view of the world. That’s where the mischief starts. That’s where everything starts unravelling.” Select a novel, play, or epic poem in which a character holds an “ideal view of the world.” Then write an essay in which you analyze the character’s idealism and its positive or negative consequences. Explain how the author’s portrayal of this idealism illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. You may choose a work from the list below or one of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.

Thesis (Overarching Claim): The choices made within the novel, shows a gray area between the good and the bad. The characters idealisms both follow the good and the bad. The languages and interactions between characters allow for the reveal of the true effects on decisions based on life or death.

Subdaim #1: The main character is idealistic

- **Assertion:** The main character is idealistic, believing that he would one day advance humanity.
- **Evidence:** The character is sickly. (???)
- **Evidence:** Rodion commits murder, as he believes people are better off dead.
- **Explanation:** The woman/women he murdered brought good and bad consequences

Subdaim #2: This murder helped the community

- **Assertion:** The murder aided his community for the better.
- **Proof:** Alyona’s valuables went to the community and she stopped stealing from others.
- **Explanation:** (Generality) People’s debts went away.

Subdaim #3: Rodion’s idealism negatively affected society

- **Assertion:** Rodion’s murder, done to help society, didn’t change anything
- **Proof:** Citizens continued to starve and commit suicide
- **Explanation:** The police were not able to enforce proper justice

Subdaim #4: The author illuminates idealism in many ways

- **Assertion:** The author creates an idea that actions need to be taken by those who are strong-willed enough to take it.
- **Proof:** (Vague) Plot action creates doubt and hope for the character and his ideals
- **Explanation:** Rodion no longer believes himself to be chosen, demonstrating the effects of idealism

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Conclusion: (Reiterates thesis and ends claim)

The idealism showed within the novel would be able to be connected to modern actions. The action presented within the novel would be presented by world leaders and their justifications showing how devastating actions have both benefits and consequences when it comes to peoples lives. Once one has an ideal world, they expect certain aspects to be in place. Life does not sit down and take command, so that is where the novel shines the most. Showing how one individual could have everything planned out, yet have everything go sideways after.

Scorer's Comments on Evidence & Commentary:

The response earned two points in Row B because it provides a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. It ties that evidence, rather simplistically, to good and bad results mentioned in the thesis. The consistent yoking of evidence to that thesis moves the response into the two-point range. The commentary keeps the evidence from being non-specific or vague. However, the commentary is slight and oversimplified which keeps it from the three-point range in this row.

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Sample N (1-1-0) *Lord of the Flies*

Prompt: In his 2004 novel *Magic Seeds*, V. S. Naipaul writes: “It is wrong to have an ideal view of the world. That’s where the mischief starts. That’s where everything starts unravelling.” Select a novel, play, or epic poem in which a character holds an “ideal view of the world.” Then write an essay in which you analyze the character’s idealism and its positive or negative consequences. Explain how the author’s portrayal of this idealism illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. You may choose a work from the list below or one of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.

Thesis (Overarching Claim): Their own ideals lead to their downfall in the end by killing one another and the kids turning into savages.

Subdaim #1: The kids were idealistic in believing they could organize their lives on the island

- **Assertion:** The kids figured (idealized) that if they lived like adults their lives would be organized
- **Evidence:** This leads to mischief, plans unravel. The kids are excited to have no rules
- **Explanation:** The kids see this as a problem and try to fix it in order to live like adults

Subdaim #2: The kids were brought down by a lack of rules

- **Assertion:** Their ideals, which matched society’s, led to the kids’ downfall
- **Proof:** They kill another kid. They lost their morals.
- **Explanation:** In a world without rules, the kids lost their ways/minds

Conclusion: (Reiterates thesis and ends claim)

Their own ideals lead to their downfall in the end by killing one another and the kids turning into savages.

Scorer’s Comments on Evidence & Commentary:

The response earned one point in Row B because it focuses on overarching narrative developments of the novel, rather than specific evidence and commentary that develop an interpretation in response to the prompt. For example, the response notes that “the kids figured that if they lived / controlled the islands as they thought adults did that the island would be very organized,” and “the kids soon away seemed to be excited to run the island with no rules,” but it offers no clear specific details. However, it does more than simply restate the prompt, and the references are not “incoherent” or “irrelevant.”