

SAT Practice Essay #5 Example

In "Viewpoint: Air Conditioning Will Be the End of Us," Eric Klinenberg condemns the excessive usage of air-conditioning by people in the United States. While Klinenberg does acknowledge the need and importance of artificial cooling, he calls "our habit of converting homes, offices, and massive commercial outlets into igloos" as indefensible. By employing sound reasoning and emotional appeal, Klinenberg effectively conveys his argument.

Klinenberg begins his essay with a compelling statistic: Americans use twice as much energy for air-conditioning as we did 20 years ago, and more than the rest of the world's nations combined. While no source is listed for the data, it is a remarkable claim. That usage has doubled in less than a generation validates Klinenberg's claim that Americans have become too dependent on excessively low indoor temperatures. And that the United States has outpaced the entire world for indoor cooling consumption further underscores the author's message.

Klinenberg also explains the source of the problem, that in recent decades, "the fastest-growing U.S. cities have effectively been built on air-conditioning." New residential and commercial buildings have focused on artificial means instead of historical methods for cooling, such as shading from trees, fans and cross-ventilation. The author effectively communicates that Americans have been conditioned to expect frigid temperature in any venue, and this point allows the reader to understand the crisis. Klinenberg further laments that the United States is setting a poor cultural example to other nations, as sales of air conditioners rose 20% in India and China last year. Again, no source for the data is provided, but Klinenberg's argument does seem believable as most readers can relate to this claim. Last, Klinenberg states that the only realistic solution to reduce air-conditioning consumption is new rules and regulations, which would mandate the adjustment.

The author does make it clear that there are important benefits of air conditioning. That these units can save the lives of the elderly, frail, and sick during heat waves; and that indoor cooling units can enhance safety and productivity. The fact that Klinenberg concedes the benefits of indoor cooling makes him seem less extreme and more credible.

Finally, Klinenberg effectively persuades with emotional modes throughout his essay. He scoffs as the utility providers warning to use energy "wisely." And, he calls America's climate-change adaptation strategy "as dumb as it gets." By associating these poor habits with a disparaging tone, Klinenberg reinforces his position as the smart choice. The author also crafts ironic phrases "the case for air-conditioning is made of hot air" and "let's put our air conditioners on ice before it's too late," to cleverly draw the reader to his side.

By the end of the article, many readers might hesitate before setting their thermostats at 70 degrees. Klinenberg has prompted this reservation with the use of evidence, reasoning, and literary devices. As he concludes "if you can't stand the heat, you should know that blasting the AC will ultimately make us all even hotter."