

Vocabulaire pour le commentaire de texte en civilisation

Adapté de <http://agreg-ink.net/sahai/capescivili.html>

I . Introduction

a . Origin, date, title, author, addressee

- This text is an extract from
- This is a passage from
- This extract is taken from
- The extract we are commenting upon / on is taken from
 - a book / a history book
 - an essay / a pamphlet
 - a poem
 - an Act of Parliament
 - a newspaper article
 - a letter

- It was published in [January] / in [2008]
- It was published on [October 15th, 2007]
- It is entitled ...
- It is a contemporary account of [.....]. It is a primary source, since the writer witnessed (took part in) the events he relates here / lived in [.....] during the period referred to in the document.

- His view can be expected to be biased as he is a member of [.....].
- In spite of the author's position, this is a rather objective account of [.....]
- It is a secondary source.
- The writer gives us his view with the benefit of hindsight.
- He can be expected to have / an objective / an impartial / a global view / of the events.
- in spite of the fact that there is a rather biased approach of [.....], the writer acknowledges the fact that [.....].

- It was written by ..., who was [.....] at the time of the events related / mentioned / here. We can therefore expect his view to be rather subjective / biased / prejudiced, all the more so since at that time he was [.....].
- This letter was addressed to...
- As this book had been banned, it was circulated in secret in England and therefore was not widely read.
- This sermon / speech was delivered to an audience of supporters...

b . Main subject

- This passage deals with / is about / concerns / is concerned with [.....].
- The point in question in this text is the evolution of [.....].
- The main topic / subject / of this passage is [.....]

c. Approach

- This passage is a general approach / a description / a detailed description / a descriptive approach / an analysis / an objective analysis / an impartial relation / a polemical account / an impassioned narrative / a eulogy / a (violent) criticism / a parody / a reevaluation / an assessment of [...].

d . Main point and structure of the text

- In / through this document the author aims at conveying / expressing the idea that [.....].
- The structure of this text is very clear / quite straightforward
- The structure of this passage is rather confused.
- The author starts by stating his main point, which is to criticize [....].
- Then, he gives a demonstration of it which he backs up with examples.

OR:

- After an introductory passage in which the author gives his opinion on [.....], he goes on to dismiss the view held / put forward by his opponents.
- Then he attempts to prove his point by giving a demonstration illustrated with examples.
- He bases his demonstration on statistics.
- He backs up / supports / his thesis with convincing quotations from [.....].

e . Structure of your commentary

- We shall first examine / consider / discuss / assess / concentrate on / focus our attention on the evolution of the executive branch.
- Then we shall move on to the question of...
- Having discussed / After discussing / the writer's description of...., we shall concentrate on....and finally move on to the question of....

II . The body of your commentary

a . Locating the references in the text

- Line 7, the author says that...
- In the first paragraph, the writer assesses the importance of...
- In the very first line of the text, we learn that....
- From line 8 (down) to line 11, he develops the point he made at the beginning of the second paragraph.
- Throughout / all through / the text, the writer keeps reminding us that...
- As the writer puts it in line 9, ...

b . Describing what the writer does

- The author writes / says / claims / asserts / maintains / declares / states that...
- He gives an account of events / of a situation.
- He describes / depicts / portrays...
- He raises the issue of
- He takes up / tackles / the subject of...

- He concentrates / focuses his attention / dwells on the...
- He draws attention to the...
- He insists on, he lays stress / emphasis on the
- He underlines that the presidential figure has evolved
- He devotes 3 lines to the description of the
- He alludes to a different example
- He quotes (from) the Bible to support his claim
- He examines / considers / discusses / studies / analyses Obama's speeches.
- He illustrates / demonstrates / proves his point by saying that...
- He presents / provides the reader with examples
- He expresses / gives / utters his opinion on the campaign
- He considers the arguments for or against
- He indicates / points out the reasons for Obama's change
- The reasons why..
- why / when / how /where / that + sentence
- He puts forward / develops the idea that...
- He concludes that...
- He summarizes / sums up his view by saying that...

c . Commenting on the writer's words and arguments

· Explaining

- What the author really means is that...
- By using the word... , the author refers to..
- At that time, the term 'puritan' was a word of abuse. It was a derogatory / pejorative word
- This is a clear reference to the Bible.
- The phrase "lame duck" is used metaphorically / in a figurative language / metaphorical sense.
- It means / it stands for / represents ...
- He mentions "the heretics", that is to say / namely / i.e. (id est) the Protestants who...
- In other words, one could say that...
- In short / in brief / in a nutshell the author is aiming at convincing the reader that...

Confirming and illustrating the writer's point

- In line 10, the author says that most people were dissatisfied with the King's policy. Indeed, many petitions were signed and riots took place in...
- The writer's point is confirmed by another argument
- The author is perfectly justified in asserting that the Queen was worried...
- Moreover / what is more / in addition / besides, he makes it clear that...
- We must bear in mind that the economy was flourishing at this time
- Religious intolerance that prevailed at the time
- We must study the economic background of these events
- To illustrate this point, a few examples could be added/ adduced
- This reminds one of the speech that Obama delivered in 2008
- This calls to mind the speech Obama delivered in 2008.

· Drawing conclusions, putting forward hypotheses

- It reveals / shows / proves / indicates / implies that

- From this, we can infer / conclude / derive / gather that...
- *Use modal verbs expressing conjecture:* may / might / must
- I presume / suppose / imagine / guess

· **Challenging the author's view**

- Although the author is right to say that...
- However justified the author may be in claiming that...
- The writer's analysis / reasoning / demonstration is faulty / flawed / inaccurate
- He is prejudiced / biased / in favour of / against...
- His account is partial / incomplete / partisan
- He misjudges / misunderstands the candidate
- He overestimates / overrates / overvalues / exaggerates the importance of [.....]
- He minimizes / undervalues / underestimated / plays down the role of the media
- He seems to have a lot of preconceived ideas on the candidate
- He totally ignores the fact that ...
- He fails to mention [.....]
- His criticism is (totally) irrelevant / unfounded / off the point / because he does not support it with any arguments.

III . Conclusion

- In conclusion / to conclude we can say that...
- In this commentary, we have shown / demonstrated that..
- In view of the historical context, we can conclude that...
- We shall sum up by saying that...

· **Assessing the historical value of the document**

- It is a valuable / reliable / historical document since it was issued by Congress
- It can be trusted because it is an official source.
- It has no great historical value. It is unreliable since it is a personal testimony.
- It sheds new light on the debated question of health reform.
- It allows the modern reader to understand the context of the Civil War
- With the benefit of hindsight (= 'rétrospectivement')/ retrospectively we can say that this document had a tremendous influence on the course of the Civil War.
- The journalist's opinion was confirmed / disproved by what happened later.

IV . Additional remarks

a . Tense

- Most of the time, you will have to use the present to describe what the author does : e.g. The author underlines the fact that...
- Use the **simple past** and **not the present tense** to refer to historical events e.g. Henri VIII came to the throne in 1509

b . Capital letters

- Remember that the English system is different from the French one. e.g. Then English (les Anglais), the English constitution (la constitution anglaise), the English language (la langue anglaise). In English both nouns and adjectives of nationality have a capital letter.

c . Linking words

Enumeration

- Pour commencer: First / to begin with / to start with
- Ne pas dire **at first ni *at last.*
- Secondly, and far more importantly / above all / on top of it all / last but not least / most important of all

Transition

- We have discussed [.....]. **Now**, let us examine...
- As for / As to the Pope's attitude,
- With reference to / with respect to / with regard to / as regards / regarding the reaction of the opposition
- Let us now turn to...

Contrast

- Henri VIII did not favour Protestant ideas. **On the contrary**, he remained faithful to traditional Catholic dogmas.
- On the one hand, he severed all links with Rome. On the other hand, he retained the traditional Catholic hierarchy.
- He never promoted Protestantism. **Instead**, he persecuted protestants.

Concession

- *Phrase + Yet / however / still / nevertheless*, he concedes that Obama was honest...
- *Although / even though* he criticizes him fiercely...

V . Additional vocabulary (synonyms)

- **Admit** : acknowledge, concede, disclose, reveal; recognize
- **Confirm** : establish, reinforce; endorse, verify
- **Deny** : contradict, disagree with, disprove, oppose, refute; discard, disclaim, reject
- **Describe** : define, detail, explain, express, illustrate, report, specify
- **Explain** : define, demonstrate, illustrate, make clear / plain; give an explanation for, give a reason for, justify
- **Imply** : give (someone) to understand, insinuate, suggest; indicate, mean, presuppose
- **Indicate** : add up to, denote, imply, manifest, point to, reveal, signify, suggest; designate, specify; express
- **Justify** : confirm, defend, establish, support
- **Show** : indicate, present, reveal; demonstrate, explain, point out, present, prove
- **Specify** : be specific about, designate, mention.