

Assessment sheet 4.2: Essay writing – using PIE structure

This resource supports Activities 3.3 and 3.4 in Unit 4.3, on pages 165–66 of the *IB English B* coursebook.

A good essay will have body paragraphs that use the following structure:

- 1 Points:** sentences in which you state your argument clearly.
- 2 Illustrations:** sentences in which you provide evidence to support your claims. These may include words and phrases such as ‘for example’, ‘to illustrate’ or ‘such as’.
- 3 Explanations:** sentences that connect the illustrations to the points you have made, saying why they are relevant. These sentences may include words and phrases such as ‘if x, then y ...’, ‘therefore ...’, or ‘because ...’.

These sentences are the building blocks of an essay. You should try to remember how to use these sentences to structure your main paragraphs. You might find it helpful to remember the order by using the acronym PIE (**P**oint; **I**llustration; **E**xplanation).

- 1 Here is a copy of Text 4.8, which you can find on pages 163–64 of your coursebook. Read carefully through this copy of the text, and try to identify the PIE structure that has been used. Use different colours to highlight or underline examples of the three different sentence types: points, illustrations and explanations.

Text 4.8

Affirmative action: Racist by nature

In view of our nation’s tragic history of segregation and discrimination, lawmakers realized that action was necessary to correct the many wrongs done to blacks and other minorities during this period. Their solution, called “affirmative action,” includes giving minority citizens preferential treatment for college admission and scholarship purposes. At the time, this reverse-discrimination was exactly what the nation needed, and it served as an apology to those citizens whose lives were hurt by prior policies. However, the continuance of affirmative action into modern society has become more of a plague than a benefit. *Abigail Fisher v. University of Texas*, a new discrimination case against UT, is going to the Supreme Court, and for the good of Fisher, the University and the nation, the court should take Fisher’s side and abolish affirmative action in college admissions once and for all.

The biggest problem with affirmative action is simple. Using discrimination to combat discrimination encourages racial hatred in our society. By being discriminated against, whites and Asian-Americans may feel resentment toward those races that have been selected as the most elite of the disadvantaged. In turn, African-Americans and Hispanics could feel inferior because the government is essentially telling them that – for no reason other than the color of their skin – they need special assistance to put them on par with their peers.

Ideally, we would like to reach a state where society does not judge its members based on the color of their skin but rather on the content of their character, as Martin Luther King Jr. said. If he could only see how his speeches are being interpreted and where the direction of racial equality is going in our nation today, he would surely be rolling in his grave. Reversing the direction of inequality does not bring anyone closer to equality.

Perhaps what is most foolish about affirmative action is that it doesn't even directly target the problem it is trying to solve. It makes the assumption that since blacks and Hispanics are typically more economically disadvantaged than whites and Asians, blacks and Hispanics should be given extra support. However, it would seem to make monumentally more sense to give the economically disadvantaged more support, regardless of race. For example, who needs a scholarship more: a black child from a family of doctors and lawyers or a white child living in a slum with a single parent working as a janitor? Financial data does a much better job of predicting financial need than does the color of one's skin. If scholarships and admission procedures aim to help the disadvantaged, they should target the disadvantaged. It makes no sense to simply target a race and assume that race will be disadvantaged.

Supporters of affirmative action point to the racial gap in socioeconomic equality. While they point to valid statistics, they have somehow come to flawed conclusions in their goal to help level the playing field. It is true that blacks and Hispanics represent the impoverished at higher rates than the general population, but by taking a socioeconomic approach to the problem, the government does not have to use racist policies to fix it.

Good arguments can be made for factoring financial need into scholarships. And while more of a stretch, factoring socioeconomic position into college admission criteria could have positive benefits. However, race has no place in either criterion. Though this may seem to be a complicated issue, it all boils down to a single underlying question: Should it be legal to discriminate against people based on the color of their skin? Answer that, and you've answered whether we should continue affirmative action.

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- 2 When you have highlighted examples of the three types of sentences in the PIE structure, look at the complete text. Do you notice any patterns? Use the space below to make some brief notes to describe any patterns that you see.