

Sample TOK Essays with Comments and Scores

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For more information contact:

Carolyn P. Henly

Meadowbrook HS

4901 Cogbill Rd.

Richmond, VA 23234

carolyn_henly@ccpsnet.net



Sample Essay #1
THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE ESSAY
PRESCRIBED TITLE # 3

“Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of reason as a way of knowing.”

Exam Session May 2009
June 6th, 2008
1,488 words

Reasoning, which occurs in the frontal cortex of the brain, is a way of knowing that we use on a daily basis. Reason is used to, but not limited to, make decisions, solve problems, and construct complex ideas. When attempting to gain or expand one's knowledge, reason as a way of knowing has its strengths; however, this particular way of knowing also has its weaknesses.

Comment [CPH1]: This paragraph does not offer much of substance. No knowledge issues are directly raised; the generic comment that reason has both strengths and weaknesses is inherent in the title, so repeating it is not necessary.

Reasoning can be used to make a choice about something. One example of this is when I had to make a decision about adhering to what was expected from me based on the Indian culture that I live with in my household. I had to choose whether I would follow my free will and have a boyfriend outside my race or instead listen to my parents and do what was expected. I felt that what I was doing was okay, and that my parents would eventually accept the situation; however this was not the case. I ended up trying to reason in order to reach a decision; I evaluated my options, my means, and my predicted outcomes. I reasoned that ultimately, my parents were going to be the ones who would be there for me, they were the ones who have always raised me, and that I should therefore respect their wishes because of those reasons. To me, this conclusion seemed to be a logical one; however, I realized that I did not use reason alone—my emotions were also involved when I made this decision. I have a much stronger emotional connection with my parents than I did with the boy I was dating. This example shows that I cannot use reason alone to make a decision in a case like this; involving my emotions is actually an important factor in a situation like this, and after all, every piece of data that the brain takes in goes to the amygdala—the portion of the brain where emotions occur—first. Incorporating emotions when making a decision is necessary until one runs into a situation such as one that I once dealt with, when the incorporation is not

Comment [CPH2]: There is an effort here to bring in personal experience with reasoning (Criterion B); however, there is nothing in the example which addresses the question of whether reason was a strength or a weakness, and the example wanders off into a discussion of the role of emotion, which is not relevant to the title as prescribed. The conclusion that she "cannot" reach a decision using reason alone doesn't follow from the argument which actually shows that she DID not, not that she could not. The writer perhaps intends to suggest that since reason cannot be used alone, it is a weak way of knowing, but this argument is not actually made. There is, therefore, no clear discussion of whether reason was an asset in this situation or whether it was a liability. For criterion A, then, there is very little or no relevant knowledge issue here, and with regard to Criterion C, the analysis of the example suffers from illogic.

Comment [CPH3]: At this point, the discussion is entirely irrelevant to the title; the discussion of the physical processing of sensory data in the emotional center of the brain does not help us understand how reason works.

as important. **It** was a simple situation that required the use of reason. **Because** my list of extracurricular activities was becoming too long and too time-consuming, I had to choose whether I should continue being a part of the Spanish club at my school, or remove myself from it and instead join a new club. Although I used emotion when considering my options, since I had somewhat of an emotional connection to being a club member for a long time and to the people in the club, emotion was not as important of a factor as reason **was**. I told myself that it would be better for me to continue being a member of the same club because my ability to do one thing and stick with it would probably end up looking best on my transcript. The example with my parents shows a strength of reason; it shows how using reason to help make a decision that requires logic can lead to positive long-term results, which in this case it **did**. With the example concerning what would look best on my transcript, for now, I can only hope that my reasoning will lead to positive long-term **results**.

Comment [CPH4]: The preceding sentence is very difficult to understand, and appears to be contradictory. The writer has just attempted to argue that reason can't be effectively used in this kind of situation, but this sentence seems to suggest that using emotions ("incorporating emotions") is not important in this situation. This suggests limited understanding of KI on the part of the author (Criterion A)

Comment [CPH5]: The topic seems to have changed abruptly from defying cultural norms with regard to a boyfriend to staying in the Spanish club (which may explain the preceding sentence--perhaps this is the situation in which emotion is not important?); the meaning here is not clear, and the organization is confusing. (Criterion D)

Comment [CPH6]: At this point, the essay seems to have shifted to focusing on when one should use emotion to make decisions. This is irrelevant. The writer does go on to try to demonstrate that she used reason to make a decision, but she does not assess the value or utility of reason in this situation. Ironically, she also fails to recognize that reason here comes off as the means of decision ... [1]

Comment [CPH7]: This conclusion directly contradicts the argument earlier in the paragraph, which suggested that reason was not useful in making the decision, because emotion was necessary. This does not meet the standard of coherent and compelling required by Criterion C.

Comment [CPH8]: This now seems to call into question the idea that reason was useful here. The end of the paragraph thus undermines both examples. Criterion C

Comment [CPH9]: This transition presents the idea that there are problems with using reason as a means of making decisions, and structurally, it suggests that this paragraph will offer a counterclaim (in the form of an alternative perspective) from what has gone before. This might be seen as a positive fo ... [2]

Comment [CPH10]: This, too, contradicts her earlier point, since she said that she used emotion to make a determination about the boyfriend--and even mentioned that emotion was a factor in her decision about the Spanish Club.

Comment [CPH11]: Here the author is using an example to try to examine a relevant KI: the question of whether deductive reasoning can, or should, be used in making decisions about personal relationships. This earns some credit for Criterion A and B; however, this writer does not appear to be fluent with th ... [3]

Using reason to make decisions still tends to have its **weaknesses**. There are some people, sadly enough such as myself, who use reason for almost **everything!** When I do this, I tend to regret it. For example, I was once angry at one of my best friends for telling several people something that I had told her and had trusted her to keep to herself. I tried very hard reasoning whether or not I should speak to her again and ended up deciding that I should not because I would never be able to trust her again. My premises for the argument were not accurate to begin with because I did not actually know whether or not she would break my trust again—since I can never know about what can happen in the **future**—and I completely wiped out the fact that she had been my best friend for

several years. In this situation, I used reason to a great extent when I should have incorporated my emotions **more**. My emotional connection with my best friend was a strong one and by overlooking it, I was ignoring an important part of the decision-making process.

Comment [CPH12]: Here again, the example has devolved from an examination of the power of reason (or lack thereof) to a description of what she DID do, and what she thinks she SHOULD have done. Her failure to make good decisions is not necessarily evidence of an inherent weakness in reason as a way of knowing. The analysis of the KI is not overtly stated.

As I have shown above, using reason can help us make decisions; however, using reason can also help us with problem **solving**. One obvious example of this particular use of reason occurs in the area of knowledge of Math. In math, reason is used to create new mathematical relationships. An individual can do this by creating axioms, which is when he or she simply uses certain mathematical ideas that he or she already **knows**, in relation to what he or she is trying to figure out. Then, the individual uses logic to create theorems about what he or she is trying to figure out. In this sense, reason as a way of knowing proves itself to be a great strength because it can lead to absolute certainty, and once absolute certainty is achieved, an individual can be sure about what he or she **knows**; however, one problem with the use of reason in mathematics is that there is always room for error(s) that can prevent someone from making accurate knowledge.

Comment [CPH13]: This transition is also ineffective, and the overall organization of the essay is unclear here. She had been writing about an example which she apparently intended to demonstrate a weakness of reason, but this transition makes a connection to some previous example in which reason was helpful. This writer also apparently intends to differentiate "decision-making" from "problem-solving," although there is no attempt to define those concepts (Criterion D). The rest of the paragraph suggest that she intends to discuss problem-solving ONLY in terms of mathematics, which is quite a limit. ... [4]

Comment [CPH14]: This example demonstrates some factual inaccuracy. Individuals do not "create axioms" in mathematics; they USE axioms. She then compounds the problem by trying to explain what she means by saying that people create axioms by saying that creation axioms is the same as using mathematical ideas that they already... [5]

An individual can also use reason to lead themselves to the construction of complex ideas. **That** is, reasoning can be used to take an idea and turn it into things such as poems or **speeches**. Personally, I enjoy writing poems as a hobby. When doing so, I am constantly reasoning until my work is finished. First, I take my emotions and personal experiences into **consideration**. I use those things to create a story relating to whatever it may be that I am thinking about. Then, I continue using reason when I take the English language that I use when writing my poems to turn my ideas into words that

Comment [CPH15]: Here again is some minimum understanding about the nature of mathematics and the role of reason in mathematics (Criterion A); however, this does not rise above the level of rudimentary. There is no attempt to explain WHY certainty is possible in mathematics; she simply assumes that it is so. There is no justification of t... [6]

Comment [CPH16]: Here again the transition fails to create integral connections between two adjacent paragraphs; each paragraph in this essay relates directly back to the thesis, but the paragraphs only relate to each other topically. This organizational structure is not confusing--we don't get lost--but it does not rise to the level of "good" ... [7]

Comment [CPH17]: This sentence suggests that complex ideas occur only in "such things as" poems or speeches. This is an overly simplistic idea.

Comment [CPH18]: Here again, we are getting a personal example; however, the discussion still occurs at the level of what this person DOES, and fails to rise to the level of general understanding about how reason contributes to knowledge in these various situations, or whether and why it is an asset or a liability.

can be understood by anyone else who knows the English language. This process is a very precise one because every word that I use has to be used carefully in order for me to be able to paint a vivid picture in the reader's mind. This shows reason as a way of knowing to be a strength because the process and outcome help me think in more complex ways, enabling me to connect different ideas. It also helps explain that reason has different levels—a level where an individual can think things through with more complexity, such as when writing a Theory of Knowledge essay, and a level where an individual can think things through more simplistically, such as when using basic addition.

Reason can even be used to build arguments. For example, I could set up a group of premises and come to a conclusion saying, "All apples are red, and my car is red; therefore, my car is an apple." This argument is a valid one; however, it is clearly not true because my car is not an apple, and it is highly unlikely that it will ever actually be an apple. This example shows that if I do not go through a process of careful reasoning, then the person I am talking to and I will not make accurate knowledge. On the other hand, if I say, "The sun rises in the east, and the earth rotates constantly; therefore, as long as the sun rises in the east, it will set in the west based on the rotation of the earth," then my reasoning would be more accurate, and the individual that I am speaking to and I would obtain more accurate knowledge. With these examples, one can conclude that if an individual makes an argument through the use of reason, then knowledge can be made only if the argument is true, making this use of reasoning a strength; however, if the individual does not reason carefully, then the possibility of making accurate knowledge can be immediately limited as shown in the example above.

Comment [CPH19]: This general discussion again shows a rudimentary understanding about a potentially relevant KI: how reasoning is used in creating effective language; however, the analysis is again missing. The discussion never rises above the simple statement THAT reason is used. There is no detailed example to show us HOW reason is used to produce exactly the right word.

Comment [CPH20]: This claim is not demonstrated at all. The argument she gave focused on using words to create a vivid picture; there was no discussion of complex thinking. Justifications are missing. (Criterion C)

Comment [CPH21]: This appears to be a new idea that might have something to do with a strength of reason (along the lines of "reason can be used in a variety of situations, for simple thinking or complex thinking"), but there is no justification, analysis, or example to demonstrate the point. It is also not clear why this sentence is in this paragraph, which was about using language to write poetry, but now ends with a point about math. Organizationally unclear. (Criterion D)

Comment [CPH22]: This transition is formulated to suggest that this paragraph will introduce a whole new idea about reason (presumably a strength, since it can "even" accomplish the task, which must be extremely difficult, given the phraseology, of building arguments; however, the idea of using deductive reasoning was raised, albeit to a minimal level, in both the example about the boyfriend and the example about math. The organization is ineffective, and the failure of the author to recognize the connections between the ideas in her paper suggest that her understanding of the issues is weak. (Criterion A)

Comment [CPH23]: This is incorrect; the argument is not valid. Poor understanding of the KI (deductive reasoning--Criterion A) and factual inaccuracy (Criterion D)

Comment [CPH24]: This conclusion does not follow from the example. (Criterion C)

Comment [CPH25]: This conclusion also does not follow; if the "I" made the statement, then presumably she knew it already, and did not obtain any knowledge from making it.

Comment [CPH26]: This is a rudimentary attempt to analyze a strength and weakness. It is not convincing, but it is one of the clearest attempts in the essay to directly address the demands of the prompt.

As a way of knowing, reason has its strengths and weaknesses. Reason can either help us gain knowledge or prevent us from making accurate knowledge. These strengths and weaknesses vary depending on the purpose for using reason in order to expand our knowledge. How we reason is something that has been debated for hundreds of years, and it is these same debates that involved reasoning by individuals while trying to figure out the whole nature of reason. Because people such as Kant and Descartes have tried to figure out how people reason, we have been able to use our reasoning in addition to theirs to help increase the strengths of reason as a way of knowing.

Comment [CPH27]: This is an unsophisticated transition into a conclusion, as it simply repeats an idea that was previously stated both in the title and the opening paragraph. She then restates it in the next sentence.

Comment [CPH28]: Sweeping generalization here--factually inaccurate. (Criterion D)

Comment [CPH29]: There seems to be an idea here, about the irony of needing reason in order to argue about reason, but the expression of that idea is unclear.

Comment [CPH30]: There is no justification provided for this claim, and it cannot really be considered to be widely accepted as common knowledge, so this writer has left herself open, right at the end, for a demand for documentation to validate the claim about the work of Kant and Descartes.

Comment [CPH31]: This conclusion seems to take the argument into an entirely new direction which is unwarranted by the essay as presented; neither the prescribed title nor the essay suggests that the strengths of reason can be increased. One might imagine that should this writer have been able to make an argument that one strength of reason is that its efficacy can be increased, then this might make an effective ending statement; however, no such argument was attempted, and so the final paragraph is essentially irrelevant to the essay.

Overall Judgment: 3-3-3-4 = 13 (D)

Criterion A: There are a few relevant KI mentioned, and an attempt is made to evaluate, though none is thoroughly developed. Claims about the KI are most often they are simply named, rather than evaluated. A significant portion of the essay wanders off topic into emotion and, to a lesser degree, language, without sufficient justification for including them as a way of demonstrating the strengths and weaknesses of reason.

Criterion B: There is evidence of personal engagement in the consistent focus on personal experience for the examples. There is also an attempt to consider two perspectives--that reason can be a strength and that it can be a weakness. Several of the examples, however, are ineffective, and there is no clear and detailed assessment of two (or more) perspectives on the question.

Criterion C: There are some rudimentary attempts to analyze KI (so "no inquiry into knowledge issues" is not appropriate), but the inquiry is often contradictory and incomplete. Many claims are offered without justification at all, so the argument rests on assumptions and generalizations.

Criterion D: Although arguably one could penalize this essay for having no attempt at sourcing, the one idea that possibly should have been cited is irrelevant to the main argument of the paper and to the demands of the title, so marking this criterion down to 1 is inappropriate. The organization, however, is often ineffective--particularly in the relationships between adjacent paragraphs--and the intent is sometimes unclear. There is some attempt to clarify concepts, but that does sometimes fail, and factual inaccuracy is a problem. The paper as a whole is organized well enough for general clarity.

Sample #2
Theory of Knowledge Essay
Prescribed Title #8

**To understand something you need to rely on your own experience and culture.
Does this mean that it is impossible to have objective knowledge?**

Exam Session May 2009
June 6, 2008
1604 words

Objective knowledge is the knowledge that is independent from one's **opinion**. A person's opinion includes emotions, preferences, and any other personal related values. Objective knowledge is "discovered" rather than "created" by the **person**. All people rely on personal experiences and cultural teachings to understand many **things**. A person's culture defines his or her bias. One's bias is not unavoidable because the bias is the paradigm in our minds and at all times everyone has a paradigm in his or her mind; thus, it is impossible to be without **bias**. I do rely on my personal experiences in all situations to understand certain pieces of knowledge; however, I have been able to have objective knowledge even though I rely on my culture and personal **experiences**. After all understanding things based on experience and culture does not necessarily mean subjective knowledge. **Therefore**, it is not impossible to have objective knowledge because one may use **reasoning**, while relying on his or her culture, to have objective knowledge.

Comment [CPH32]: Essay opens with an attempt to define an important concept; demonstrates immediately at least some degree of understanding of the demands of the title.

Comment [CPH33]: Tries to develop the concept, though perhaps some additional explanation would be helpful, at least in terms of justifying these claims.

Comment [CPH34]: This is a sweeping generalization, but as the title offers this idea as presumption, it is acceptable.

Comment [CPH35]: This discussion begins to make an argument for the significance of the fact posed by the title that we rely on culture.

Comment [CPH36]: The next few sentences offer an initial answer to the question implied by the title ("No, this does not mean it is impossible to have objective knowledge.") It is phrased from a personal perspective; the opening paragraph earns credit for relevant KI (Criterion A) and for personal viewpoint (Criterion B).

Comment [CPH37]: Cause-effect relationship is unclear here.

Comment [CPH38]: Proposes the mechanism for achieving objectivity.

Comment [CPH39]: Offers a personal example; however, the transition is ineffective. We do not, at this point, know where this is going, or why this example is relevant to the argument she is trying to make. (Criterion D)

Comment [CPH40]: Explanation is a little distracting here, as the details offered are a little disjointed. Why, one wonders, was this man making a public declaration of homosexuality in a clinic? This writer does not have complete control over her content, but she is not losing her readers altogether.

Comment [CPH41]: This is the kind of grammatical error that will be entirely overlooked as it is clearly the result of second-language learning, and does not impede clarity.

Comment [CPH42]: This claim is imprecise. The writer has said that "apparently" in Iranian culture, homosexuals are not accepted. This suggests she does not have direct experience with this cultural attitude. She appears, instead, to be relying on her father's judgment. Perhaps a case might be made for this to be considered cultural influence, but this writer does not make that case. (Criterion C)

I lived in Iran for the first fourteen years of my **life**. I had never seen any homosexuals in Iran. Once I came to the U.S, I observed many homosexuals for the first time. They appeared very inhumane to me, because the entire notion of homosexuality seemed very odd. One day, my parents and I encountered a gay male in a clinic. My father seemed very disgusted by that gay male's public declaration of his **homosexuality**. Apparently, in Iranian culture homosexuals are not accepted as "natural" humans; therefore, they are excluded from the Iranian society. I had to make an objective **knowledge** regarding the acceptability of homosexuals. Through reasoning I understood that homosexuality is mostly not a personal choice. I did rely on my **culture** to understand the reason why homosexuality is not accepted in Iran. In Iran the Islamic culture

dominates the society in all aspects of life. Marriage is a well-respected cultural practice, which is also considered a holy duty. In addition, women are considered the men-dependent citizens, so that a woman is given certain values once she is married to a *man*. If homosexuality were to be accepted, then homosexual marriage would also be legal sooner or later, which would decrease the number of men available for straight females.

Comment [CPH43]: This is not necessarily an inevitable outcome (witness the current conflict in the US), so there is a logic problem here. (Criterion C)

Without enough men available for these females, they will not be able to get married.

Women also will be considered of a lesser value without a husband; thus, the government would rather reserve its male supply for its female population so that the social order would not deteriorate. Through the correct use of reasoning I have been able to find the

Comment [CPH44]: The justification for WHY the attitude toward homosexuality is what it is in Iran is valid, once we accept the flawed premise mentioned above, but it is not clear that all this analysis is relevant to the point, which is, presumably, that this writer will eventually be able to be objective, despite her cultural background.

cause of such difference in the view of Iranian culture. Since I do not believe in women's dependency on men anymore, one of the clauses given in the reasoning used above is wrong, which makes the entire argument untrue; hence, homosexuality should not be unacceptable as a practice. In addition, in Iran certain human natural rights are

Comment [CPH45]: This statement is accurate--she did use reason to work out why the attitude exists; however, the point is ancillary to the main argument. Questionable relevance. (Criterion A)

abandoned. As a result, I am aware that Iranian government does not hesitate to abandon its citizens from practicing any form of personal preferences if those personal preferences are going to change the social order; therefore, it is very believable to understand why homosexuality is not allowed in Iran, at least publicly. I relied on my cultural and personal experiences to understand homosexuality. Through reasoning, I have altered my paradigm regarding homosexuality. My new paradigm is more objective because it is more independent from my mind. The American paradigm is more scientific, thus, more objective. Ultimately, I have used reasoning to have this piece of objective knowledge.

Comment [CPH46]: Author fails to recognize that her attitude has changed due to exposure to a new culture, and that, rather than forming a culture-free value, she is forming a value based on new cultural influence. The question of homosexuality is going to be difficult to argue in terms of establishing "objective," as this writer has defined it, so this was not, perhaps the most effective example to choose. (Criterion C). This writer is, however, making a legitimate effort to do analysis of KI (Criterion A), and she is clearly focused on her personal experience as a knower (Criterion B)

Comment [CPH47]: This conclusion is not convincing. (Criterion C)

Reasoning is the key to having objective knowledge. The role of women in the society in Iran is very different from the role of women in the American society. It is very

Comment [CPH48]: This may be true, but no justification is provided for it, if so. Unsubstantiated claim. (Criterion C)

Comment [CPH49]: The transition here appears to work, as it appears to take the specific idea from the preceding sentence and open it out to a more general one to be explored in this paragraph, but the next sentence abandons that pursuit altogether (at least overtly). The organization does not lose us, but it does not rise to the level of "effective."

rare to find women at work places in Iran. Almost all women are homemakers. They are expected to be good cooks and mothers. It does not matter if they are educated as much as it does know how to cook food well. Usually, Iranian men describe women as incapable of doing higher educational work, which always insulted me because I believed that I was an exceptional example of what a typical woman was expected to be. When I

Comment [CPH50]: This statement is unclear. I suspect that the writer means that she considered herself to be capable of much more than knowing how to cook food well, but she has stated, instead, that she is a paragon of what was expected. Clarity is a problem.

came to the U.S I observed that it is almost the opposite notion regarding the role of women here. Most women work outside and I barely encounter women that are solely homemakers. I had to decide whether I wanted to live like an American woman or not.

The objectivity in this decision was that I had personal prejudices for American lifestyle and I had promised myself that I do not want to be an American because I am Iranian.

Comment [CPH51]: Clarity continues to be something of a problem here. The writer is aware that she needs to tie this example to the question of objectivity, and she offers her intention to do so at the beginning of the sentence, but by the end of the sentence she has not shown us an objective fact or idea. She has, in fact, stated that she had a prejudice against Americans, which would seem to represent a strongly culturally-influenced attitude.

This meant that I could not live and work similar to an American woman. On the other hand, I did not like this aspect of Iranian culture, because I see myself as capable of learning and working nice jobs. I concluded that if I get higher education and work

Comment [CPH52]: This conclusion does not seem to follow from the dilemma posed. Logical problem. (Criterion C)

outside home I am not being a “bad” woman, just a more independent one. The entire argument that the Iranian men contend is wrong; because I am a counterexample to their claim that women are incapable. Although my new paradigm is a part of the American

Comment [CPH53]: This is a better job of making the case for an objective understanding.

bias, it is still objective because it is very logical. I still rely on my culture and personal experiences to understand, and the reasoning process solely alters my paradigm.

Comment [CPH54]: Here the writer demonstrates an awareness of the role of bias; offers a counterclaim and attempts to address it. (Criterion C)

The cultural paradigms always shape the biases of our minds. The natural science

Comment [CPH55]: Another example of a transition that connects to the preceding sentence, but not to the following one. (Criterion D)

is one of the most objective areas of knowledge. In Iran, religion has heavily influenced the way natural sciences are taught at schools; for example, when I studied the evolutionary theories in Iran, my science teacher said that the topics regarding the evolution were only theories, which means that those topics are not true! The reason is

Comment [CPH56]: This claim is unsubstantiated. (Criterion C)

that in Iran people do not believe that human being may have descended from apes. The evolutionary theories regarding Darwinism are basically known as one of the most insulting scientific “creations” that the human society could have confronted. As a result, I was never exposed to any original works of evolutionary theories in Iran, since they were abandoned from the public use. The only source of information about this topic was our school textbook, which devoted only one page to explain what an evolutionary theory is and how it is *not* a scientific notion, because this theory is just a mere interpretation of geographical facts. Nothing about the DNA discoveries concerning evolution was mentioned. When I came to the U.S I studied the evolutionary theory in my Biology class and I learned a lot of logical reasoning based on many artifacts that the scientists have observed. I decided to be open-minded and use reasoning to understand the level of the certainty of such theory. Of course, a theory is not proven to 100% but it is very close to certainty because it has not been falsified through so many experiments, and until it has not been falsified it is acceptable. Therefore, I reasoned that there are fossils and DNA similarities between humans and chimpanzees that show such evolutionary relationships. Also, the so many experiments, such as the finches’ peaks in Galapagos Islands, prove that the environmental adaptation theory, a major factor in evolution, is almost certain. Again, I relied on my cultural experiences to understand the conservatism of all aspects of Iranian society; afresh, I reasoned that the government does not want the social order to be altered to any extent, since the evolutionary theory would be contradictory to most of the established cultural practices. For example, if people learn that they are descended from apes, there will be a chaotic revolution in the belief that human is the center of the creations of god, which creates contradictions in the religious practices. The government

Comment [CPH57]: There are some language use problems in the next couple of sentences; the first is somewhat confusing, but we can follow the gist.

Comment [CPH58]: This sentence, however, following on the heels of two or three with misused words is more problematic. The sentence suggests that evolution is presented as being something not scientific, but the cause given for that conclusion appears to be science. (“interpretation of geographical facts”) It is unclear whether the student has misused the words “interpretation” and/or “facts,” or whether in Iran geographical facts are not science. The latter seems unlikely, but so does the former. This is a key idea in establishing the Iranian version of knowledge that will shortly be countered by the American version, so this is a sentence, then, which impedes understanding, and influences the scoring of Criterion C.

Comment [CPH59]: This explanation is a little vague as a means of countering the “interpretation of geological facts” idea. There is an attempt here to assess the counterclaim, but the explanation is not thorough.

Comment [CPH60]: This shows some understanding of how knowledge is made in Natural Science, but the connection to the idea of the possibility of objective knowledge is not made overt.

Comment [CPH61]: There is an attempt here to provide a more precise example to justify the claim; however, the reasoning is flawed: the fossils and the DNA similarities are facts from which the author could reason; she could not reason those facts into existence.

is probably afraid that this contradiction gives enough reason for the citizens to go religion-less, which would then change the entire social order. Even the government is based on religion and the lack of religion would be revolutionary, where the government probably does not want to go.

Comment [CPH62]: Another effort is made here to demonstrate the greater objectivity of the American version over the Iranian version, as the author offers reasons that the Iranian version is self-serving. She does not, however, spell out overtly the reason for her analysis, and so the argumentation is done by implication. (Criterion C)

Religious views are a part of the cultural paradigm of the people. All people refer to their cultural paradigms at all times to understand things, which does not mean that it is impossible to have objective knowledge. Using reasoning, everyone can alter his or her paradigms in order to have objective knowledge. Sometimes it is very hard to notice the objectivity of a piece of knowledge. Usually, scientifically proven knowledge is accepted as objective, because the knowledge has gone through many experiments and has not been falsified yet; however, there is a level of uncertainty in theories. After all, many Americans do not believe in evolution either, even though they have been born and raised in a culture that is very logic-oriented. It is sometimes difficult to find the objectivity when considering a piece of knowledge that does not have any scientific stand. This level of uncertainty may interfere with the reasoning process, because of the lack of concrete scientific knowledge; nevertheless, an individual may make the objective knowledge based on his or her valid reasoning. The pieces of objective knowledge that I made through the examination of my examples were a part of American bias, but they were objective because they were logical. Consequently, the new objective knowledge becomes a part of the person's paradigm. Ultimately, one can conclude that people rely on their paradigms to understand pieces of knowledge, which includes *both* objective and subjective knowledge.

Comment [CPH63]: This is a new aspect of knowledge-making in the Natural Sciences that is being raised for the first time in the conclusion of the essay, and is not justified. This is an organizational problem (Criterion D) and possibly a problem of the quality of analysis (Criterion C).

Comment [CPH64]: This paragraph doesn't hang together well. It is a string of statements of interesting ideas about the possibility of objectivity, but they do not all arise out of the argument in the essay, and they do not necessarily follow one from the other.

Comment [CPH65]: This is a clear statement intended to justify the idea that it is possible to achieve objectivity despite bias. This shows a fairly sophisticated understanding of the potential problems with her own argument, and it demonstrates that the author is still aware of the demands of the title.

Overall Judgment: 6-7-5-6 = 24 (B)

Criterion A: This essay does clearly identify relevant knowledge issues with regard to reason, emotion, bias, and the nature of natural science. Links are drawn between natural science and reason, emotion and cultural attitudes, and reason and emotion. Some of these are effective. Some of the knowledge claims lack sufficient detailed explanation to rise to the level of "good" understanding.

Criterion B: The personal perspective is a strength here. This writer shows a good deal of self-awareness, and she makes a concerted effort to contrast her knowledge and beliefs with that of two different cultural perspectives. Some of the examples are not completely effective.

Criterion C: Though there is a consistent effort to justify claims, there are significant problems of clarity, failure to justify, and reliance on implication. There are some problems of logic. Counterclaims are considered, but not thoroughly evaluated.

Criterion D: No source citation is necessary for this essay. The overall organization is satisfactory, though there are some problems of relevance of content of the paragraphs to the claims for those paragraphs. There are no significant problems of factual accuracy.

Page 4: [1] Comment [CPH6] Carolyn P. Henly 2/18/2010 7:43:00 PM

At this point, the essay seems to have shifted to focusing on when one should use emotion to make decisions. This is irrelevant. The writer does go on to try to demonstrate that she used reason to make a decision, but she does not assess the value or utility of reason in this situation. Ironically, she also fails to recognize that reason here comes off as the means of decision-making that mercenary people would use, and that the humanity of her emotion attachment had appeal. This might have been a fruitful area for examining strengths and weaknesses, but this author does not appear to recognize that.

Page 4: [2] Comment [CPH9] Carolyn P. Henly 2/18/2010 7:39:00 PM

This transition presents the idea that there are problems with using reason as a means of making decisions, and structurally, it suggests that this paragraph will offer a counter-claim (in the form of an alternative perspective) from what has gone before. This might be seen as a positive for Criterion C; however, the failure to recognize that she presented the first example as a weakness of reason is now entrenched.

Page 4: [3] Comment [CPH11] Carolyn P. Henly 2/18/2010 7:47:00 PM

Here the author is using an example to try to examine a relevant KI: the question of whether deductive reasoning can, or should, be used in making decisions about personal relationships. This earns some credit for Criterion A and B; however, this writer does not appear to be fluent with the relevant terminology, and her explanation lacks depth and insight. The understanding shown of knowledge issues is perhaps somewhat better than "rudimentary," but certainly falls short of "good."

Page 5: [4] Comment [CPH13] Carolyn P. Henly 2/18/2010 7:51:00 PM

This transition is also ineffective, and the overall organization of the essay is unclear here. She had been writing about an example which she apparently intended to demonstrate a weakness of reason, but this transition makes a connection to some previous example in which reason was helpful. This writer also apparently intends to differentiate "decision-making" from "problem-solving," although there is no attempt to define those concepts (Criterion D). The rest of the paragraph suggests that she intends to discuss problem-solving ONLY in terms of mathematics, which is quite a limited vision.

Page 5: [5] Comment [CPH14] Carolyn P. Henly 2/18/2010 7:54:00 PM

This example demonstrates some factual inaccuracy. Individuals do not "create axioms" in mathematics; they USE axioms. She then compounds the problem by trying to explain what she means by saying that people create axioms by saying that creation axioms is the same as using mathematical ideas that they already know. This is not the definition of an axiom, nor does the act of using what one already knows involve any creation. The explanation continues to be inaccurate when the writer tries to say that theorems are what people create "about" the problem they are working on. She clearly does not understand what a "theorem" is.

Page 5: [6] Comment [CPH15] Carolyn P. Henly 2/18/2010 7:57:00 PM

Here again is some minimum understanding about the nature of mathematics and the role of reason in mathematics (Criterion A); however, this does not rise above the level of rudimentary. There is no attempt to explain WHY certainty is possible in mathematics; she simply assumes that it is so. There is no justification of the claim. (Criterion C)

Page 5: [7] Comment [CPH16] Carolyn P. Henly 2/18/2010 8:01:00 PM

Here again the transition fails to create integral connections between two adjacent paragraphs; each paragraph in this essay relates directly back to the thesis, but the paragraphs only relate to each other topically. This organizational structure is not confusing--we don't get lost--but it does not rise to the level of "good" or "effective" organization. (Criterion D)