Name _____ Date _____

How Style Makes an Argument Persuasive: Saving the Town Rink

Directions: Read the op-ed carefully. Most questions ask what a particular stylistic choice accomplishes; examine the sentence immediately before or after it, where the writer usually explains the purpose.

Six O'Clock at the Rink

At six o'clock on a January morning, the outdoor rink behind the Marlow Creek Recreation Center is the quietest place in town. Two volunteers, both retired, have been there since four, dragging a hose across the ice in slow, careful lines so that the surface will be smooth when the first skaters arrive. Their breath hangs in the cold air, and the only sound is the hiss of water spreading across the ice. Most residents, even the ones who skate every weekend, have never witnessed this part of the rink's day.

I begin with those two volunteers because numbers alone never show who keeps a place like this running. The town's proposed budget describes the rink only as "a recurring seasonal expense," a phrase that makes a public gathering place sound like a dripping faucet. The proposal buries the rink's closing on page fourteen of a forty-page document, and it would save $9,000 a year, according to the recreation department's own summary.

Last winter the rink recorded 3,100 visits on its sign-in sheets, and admission was free. Hockey players use the ice at night, figure skaters at dawn and families on weekend afternoons. So what does the town actually buy with that $9,000? It buys the only place in Marlow Creek where a seven-year-old learning to skate and a seventy-year-old who learned sixty years ago share the same afternoon.

Volunteers have flooded the rink every winter since 1974, when a group of parents borrowed a fire hose and built the first wooden boards by hand. Its warming hut, a converted bus shelter with a single space heater, still smells faintly of hot chocolate and wet wool.

Closing the rink to save money is like canceling the Fourth of July fireworks to save on matches. The comparison sounds extreme, but it makes the point plainly: the savings are tiny next to what the town would lose.

I understand that the town's budget is genuinely tight this year. I am not asking the council for a new rink, only for the one we already have, and I want the council to see that as the small request it is. The rink needs very little: water, a few hundred dollars of repairs to its wooden boards and a stretch of cold weather. Cold weather, at least, is free. The joke has a serious edge, because most of what the rink requires costs the town nothing at all.

Members of the council, many of you learned to skate on that ice. I mention it not to embarrass anyone but to remind you that this vote is about your neighbors, not about a line in a spreadsheet. Keep the rink open. The volunteers will be there at four.

1. Why does the writer open the op-ed with two retired volunteers smoothing the ice before dawn?

A. To argue that the two retired volunteers deserve to be paid

B. To prove that the rink loses more and more money every winter

C. To show the people that numbers alone leave out

D. To trace the rink's long history from the day it first opened

2. The writer quotes the budget's description of the rink as "a recurring seasonal expense." According to the writer, what effect does that bureaucratic phrase have?

A. It makes a public gathering place sound like a dripping faucet.

B. It gives readers an exact count of the rink's visitors.

C. It proves that the rink costs far more than the council admits.

D. It shows that the volunteers wrote the budget themselves.

3. Read this sentence from the op-ed: "The proposal buries the rink's closing on page fourteen of a forty-page document, and it would save $9,000 a year, according to the recreation department's own summary." Which word itself suggests that the closing is being kept out of sight?

A. buries B. proposal C. document D. summary

4. Which two sentences back the argument with figures that the writer traces to a specific record?

☐ A. "The proposal buries the rink's closing on page fourteen of a forty-page document, and it would save $9,000 a year, according to the recreation department's own summary."

☐ B. "The rink needs very little: water, a few hundred dollars of repairs to its wooden boards and a stretch of cold weather."

☐ C. "It buys the only place in Marlow Creek where a seven-year-old learning to skate and a seventy-year-old who learned sixty years ago share the same afternoon."

☐ D. "Two volunteers, both retired, have been there since four, dragging a hose across the ice in slow, careful lines so that the surface will be smooth when the first skaters arrive."

☐ E. "Last winter the rink recorded 3,100 visits on its sign-in sheets, and admission was free."

5. What does the question "So what does the town actually buy with that $9,000?" set up?

A. The answer that follows: a place where young and old share the ice

B. A challenge to the accuracy of the recreation department's figure

C. A request for readers to suggest other ways for the town to save money

D. An admission that the writer does not know how the money is spent

6. What point does the writer's comparison to "canceling the Fourth of July fireworks to save on matches" make about the proposal?

A. Fireworks matter more to the people of the town than the skating rink does.

B. Closing the rink would put local skaters in physical danger.

C. The town should spend more on its Fourth of July celebration.

D. The money saved would be tiny next to what the town would lose.

7. What is the purpose of the writer's statement "I am not asking the council for a new rink, only for the one we already have"?

A. To blame the council for damaging the rink's wooden boards

B. To argue that the town's budget is not really tight

C. To present the request as small and reasonable

D. To propose building a second rink on the other side of town

8. The writer jokes, "Cold weather, at least, is free." What serious point does the writer say the joke carries?

A. The volunteers are foolish to work outdoors in the cold.

B. The rink should simply close during unusually warm winters.

C. Keeping the ice frozen is the largest part of the rink's budget.

D. Most of what the rink requires costs the town nothing at all.

9. In the final paragraph, the writer turns to the council and says, "Members of the council, many of you learned to skate on that ice." What does the writer say this direct address is meant to do?

A. Remind the council that this vote is about its neighbors

B. Embarrass the council members in front of the whole town

C. Accuse the council of keeping its budget secret from residents

D. Recruit council members to help the volunteers smooth the ice

10. Which statement best describes the writer's purpose in the op-ed as a whole?

A. To inform readers about how the rink's ice is prepared before dawn each winter morning

B. To propose a new admission fee for skaters that would pay for the rink's repairs

C. To persuade the council to keep the rink open by showing its value in human terms

D. To criticize the retired volunteers for the slow, old-fashioned way they smooth the ice