

Term: “Ideas and writing are clear”

Definition: If ideas are clear, then the author is mostly saying what they mean to say. There may be some words where the connotation is not totally accurate (precision), but for the most part, it is clear.

Clear writing is definitely a higher threshold than understandable writing. Clear writing means that the student has basic command over a number of elements of language:

- Generally correct grammar
- Major subject-verb agreement is correct
- Generally active verbs
- Absence of awkward clauses, syntax, phrases

Generally, if ideas and writing are clear then the reader can comprehend the argument after one reading. Obviously, if an argument is especially complex then a position where “ideas and writing are clear” may take several readings to grasp the full extent of the scholar’s argument.

Example

“Some historians believe that the colonists in America during the 18th century were in the wrong when they rebelled against Britain and started the American Revolution. Even though Britain did help the colonists’ get established in America, the colonists’ rebellion was indeed justified. No matter how much they may have aided the Americans, the Parliament had no right to strip them of their liberty. The three primary events that portray their just mutiny were: the Navigation Acts, the Stamp Act, and the Boston Tea Party.”

Analysis: This thesis is quite strong. However, a few phrases are not concise:

- “were in the wrong”
- “colonists’ “
- “get established”