The Classical Argument

Since rhetors began teaching Greek farmers strategies for appealing their cases to Greek courts in the fifth century B.C., the *classical argument* has stood as a model for writers who believe their case can be argued logically and plausibly to an open-minded audience. In its simplest form, the classical argument has five main parts:

The *introduction*, which warms up the audience, establishes goodwill and rapport with the readers, and announces the general theme or *thesis* of the argument.

The *narration*, which summarizes relevant background material, provides any information the audience needs to know about the environment and circumstances that produce the argument, and set up the stakes–what's at risk in this question.

The *confirmation*, which lays out in a logical order (usually strongest to weakest or most obvious to most subtle) the *claims* that support the thesis, providing evidence for each claim.

The *refutation and concession*, which looks at opposing viewpoints to the writer's claims, anticipating objections from the audience, and allowing as much of the opposing viewpoints as possible without weakening the thesis.

The *summation*, which provides a strong conclusion, amplifying the force of the argument, and showing the readers that this solution is the best at meeting the circumstances.

Each of these paragraphs represents a "chunk" of the paper, which might be one or more paragraphs; for instance, the *introduction* and *narration* sections might be combined into one chunk, while the *confirmation* and *concession* sections will probably be several paragraphs each.