

Local Argument's Situation Statement: The Five Parts

Qualifications/Role:

1. Who are you in relation to topic and/or audience?
2. What's your experience with topic and/or audience?

Audience/Stand:

3. Who is intended audience?
4. What does audience think about issue *before* reading your argument? What is audience's stand?

Goal(s):

5. What do you hope to accomplish? Ultimately, what modifications or changes to thinking and/or actions are you striving for?

If King were to craft a situation statement for his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," it might look something like the following:

As a negro* civil rights leader and a clergyman, I have recently been jailed for leading a civil rights demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama. From my prison cell, I am writing to eight white clergymen who have publicly criticized my actions. (I know, too, that soon after a much larger audience will also read my "Letter.") I hope to respond to their criticisms in patient and reasonable terms; I also hope to encourage them to join my colleagues and me in our struggle for civil rights—in the courts and in the streets.

(*I recognize that the term "negro" is not currently appropriate or fitting; I use it here, however, to remain consistent with King's choices.)

Sample Situation: If you're stumped for a topic for the "Local" argument essay, consider a variation on the following one. You may use the following idea or approach, but modify it to fit your own (unique) situation.

As a freshman at the University of Notre Dame, I'm writing to my good friend Bill, who is currently a senior at Adams High School in South Bend. Bill is considering ND, but he isn't sure if ND would be right for him. (He's also considering the University of Michigan, Indiana University, and Ohio State.) As a result of my letter, I want Bill to give serious thought to ND and, ultimately, to attend Notre Dame next year.