Composition Processes of First-Year Students

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Abstract

Process pedagogy posits there are effective strategies and guidelines which can be universally used and navigated by students in order to create a suitable piece of writing, creating a bridge leading from a concept to a fully published academic paper. However, recent research calls into question the supposed-universality of these techniques, instead promoting the notion of individualized processes and assessment. This research project consists of an investigation into the individual writing habits of students enrolled in the same section of a first-year course on rhetoric and composition at Chapman University. Within, various drafts of a given assignment are evaluated using both close-reading and distant-reading techniques, in order to determine the efficacy of their arguments and the development over a unique "style" throughout the stages of writing. As student self-reporting can be unreliable, research consists solely of a close reading of the sample students' works. The research will ultimately yield three results: first, the lack of a uniform relationship between the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study; second, a conscious effort by the subjects to revise and improve their work; and third, the necessity for individualized writing assessment. The primary focus of this research is to determine whether an individualized focus on writing can be effective in producing a cogent and well-written paper, with the goal of this study being the empowerment of new and uninitiated writers who determine the processes which are most helpful to them, on a case-by-case basis. A conscious understanding of *how* something is written can be a difficult perspective to reach, but by teaching writers from an early age to be aware can be helpful in establishing a stronger internal feeling of compositional skills.

Introduction

Process pedagogy relies on viewing writing as a "process" instead of a "product." Rather than solely examining the so-called final draft of a text, there is a greater focus on the evolution of an idea across multiple versions and texts. The value is drawn away from the completed text and the final grade, with privilege being placed on the creation of a text and how it exists even *beyond* its publication. This is freeing for the new writer entering an academic institution, who, unfamiliar with the practices of the university, is more focused on performing according to the expectations of the classroom. However, in recent years, there have been arguments against the efficacy of process pedagogy strategies and how universalized certain practices should be. This project will act as an investigation into the writing process, which will determine the necessity for even more individualization in the writing classroom.

On a more personalized note, I became fascinated with process pedagogy as a result of my undergraduate studies. As I writer, I was provided with many opportunities to workshop my own compositions and edit the works of my peers. Throughout my years in academics, revision strategies were a constant throughout most of my composition classroom experiences. "Looking at the bigger picture" or "cutting down on the fat" became two of among many adages that slunk their way into my consciousness. One thing that became clear to me, however, over the course of the many workshops I took part in was that the strategies and techniques which were effectively used by one student would turn out to be ineffective for another. The various deviations in style became all the more apparent when I observed how these devices were helpful to some and harmful to others. This caused a sort of dissonance in me. What I had been taught over the course of decades was coming into conflict with my personal experience. Even though I've had teachers and professors who have said otherwise, what works for them doesn't necessarily work for me. I've managed to become adept at writing by understanding the practices that work for me and work against me. This research project acts as a

justification for the individualization of writing practices and assessment. When one can incorporate

and understand composition on its most personal level, that is the moment when the average student

can become a writer.

Literature Review

Process pedagogy began in the late 1960s as a sort of counter-reaction to "the dominance of a

product-centered pedagogy, which has come to be known as current-traditional rhetoric" (Matsuda 67).

Originally, papers were only evaluated as a final product, with students receiving only a letter grade

and lacking feedback or revise. Product-centered pedagogies were damaging, in the sense that students

could not have a chance to understand and correct their mistakes in order to improve their efforts upon

the next attempt. Without the opportunity for revision, students couldn't develop their own stylistic

voice and become extremely familiar with the ins and outs of composition. This changed when

advocates like Ann Berthoff championed "Composition – putting things together [… as] a continuum, a

process that continues without any sharp breaks", understanding composition as a process of pre-

writing, writing, and post-writing (11). This perspective forces one to consider the temporality of a text.

As understood by product-centered pedagogy, a text can be, in a sense, completed; there is a definitive

start and end to any writing of a text. Process pedagogy, then, acts as a liberation from this mentality,

freeing writers to understand that a text is never complete. Even after it is published, there is always

room to grow, places where the language can be improved. Thinking of a text beyond the traditional

constraints of when it was written and when it was published opens an endless number of possibilities

available to a text.

There is an especially increased need to evaluate process pedagogy as it is applied to the first-

year writing classroom at the university: "while first-year composition isn't always a universal

requirement, it does persist as a nearly-universal experience at colleges and universities across the

country" (Harrington 322). Writing is additionally seen as important beyond the composition classroom, as aspects of writing, including the fostering of critical thought and analysis, can be applied to various other fields of study. Considering the pervasiveness of writing throughout the university experience, understanding the influence and process of composition within the college setting is necessary.

In recent years, there has been a shift away from the conventional understanding of process pedagogy toward the next stage in evolution of the system. Critics of process pedagogy refer to the paradigm as having "reduced the writing act to a series of codified phrases that can be taught" (Breuch 119). The worry is that what once started as a liberating strategy of composition now bottlenecks students into a rigid structure of pre-writing, writing, and post-writing. What is now more properly accepted is the notion of post-process pedagogy, which rejects "process as the ultimate explanation for the writing act and instead [recognizes] the role of interpretation and indeterminacy in the writing act", creating a model of writing as a a never-ending, fluid process (121). This form of resistance, though seemingly small to the outside observer, is a complete revolution in the understanding of the writing process. The individualized nature of writing, by necessity, requires engagement on a singular level.

It is important to recognize, however, that post-process pedagogy doesn't perfectly align with this study, as the three student subjects engaged with the traditional process pedagogy. Instead, this study applies the philosophy of post-process pedagogy, interpreting it as the differences in the individualized act of writing. Techniques and practices that are advantageous to some can be detrimental to others, so positing the universality of certain writing strategies can be damaging for young writers. This is yet another failing of including composition as a part of the academic institution, requiring students to follow a specific format or set of rules for a desired grade, rather than promoting continued growth as a writer: "Academic discourse does not preclude discourse conceived of as a performance, but writing pedagogy that does not foreground writing as a process may not convey to students that their 'real' investments matter" (Jacobs 669).

This shift towards understanding the writing process as individual engagement with a text, rather than a series of universal practices, stands at the foundation of this study. Rather than all students applying the same kinds of edits and revisions to their respective essays, recent research has shown that writers move back and forth throughout the process, and thus will benefit more from understanding their text on a more personalized level. By applying this philosophy toward the more malleable students enrolled in the first-year writing classroom, it will be possible to see whether individuation acts as the liberating practice critics claim it to be.

Methodology

This research project consists of a case study of students' writing, with the focus being on first-year students. The subjects were chosen out of a pool of students all enrolled in the same section of English 103, the introductory course to rhetoric and composition, at Chapman University. To further contextualize, the primary texts for this class were comic books, so there will be reference to superhero serials in this study. The subjects were chosen after receiving approval from the university's institutional review board, acquiring consent from the students, and consulting with the class's professor. Out of the fifteen students in the class, three candidates were chosen to be the primary subjects of this investigation. Subjects were not asked to undergo any form of survey before submitting their papers for assessment, as the purpose of this research is the efficacy of their writing and whether there is significant improvement over the course of the drafts. Evaluations with the professor yielded individual profiles for the subjects, who will each represent one of three different types of students: the student lacking confidence, the high-achieving student, and the student with disability.

Student 1 (S1) is an undeclared student who identifies as a low-achieving writer, someone who struggles to find the right words. Nevertheless, S1 was selected for being a diligent student who works hard, attends office hours, and responds well to feedback. Student 2 (S2) is an English major who

desires to become a screenwriter, with this wish being reflected by their clear and well-constructed prose style. S2's previous experience qualifies them as a high-functioning writer, for the purposes of this research. Student 3 (S3) is also undeclared. S3 is registered with Chapman's Disability services and, according to the student's professor, has improved significantly over the course of the semester.

Once the three students were selected, rough and final drafts of their assignments were collected. Both distant-reading and close-reading techniques were utilized for this study, with the more-objective and more-subjective data being compared. First, the drafts were individually scanned and marked up using the self-designed RAEL system (figure 1). The RAEL system was used to parse the number of phrases within each text and divide them into four categories: rhetorical, analytic, evidential, and linguistic. The categories will be defined as follows, for the purposes of this study. Rhetorical phrases relate to the author's primary thesis; analytic phrases count original judgments and interpretations by the author; evidential phrases signify any direct or indirect citation used by the author; and linguistic phrases mark each instance of a grammatical or syntactical error which may interfere with reading a text. Each instance of a rhetorical, analytic, evidential, and linguistic phrase was counted, recorded, and graphed. After the numbers for each were collected, the drafts were read, compared, and judged based on the quality and effectiveness of the essay and whether the composition had been improved after revision.

Figure 1: An excerpt from S1's final draft, showcasing the RAEL system in action. Rhetorical phrases are highlighted in red, analytic phrases are highlighted in blue, evidential phrases are highlighted in green, and linguistic phrases are highlighted in orange.

Results

Across the two drafts from each student, leading to six drafts in all, a total of 211 individual phrases were identified, breaking down as 65 rhetorical phrases, 79 analytic phrases, 48 evidential phrases, and 19 linguistic phrases among all three subjects (figure 2). In their initial draft, S1's essay contained 12 rhetorical, 15 analytic, 9 evidential, and 6 linguistic phrases. In S1's second draft, the evidential phrases remained the same at 9, while reducing the analytic phrases to 13 and increasing the rhetorical and linguistic phrases to 13 and 7, respectively. This leads to a total of 42 distinct phrases, both in the first and second drafts. S2's rough draft contained 11 rhetorical, 12 analytic, 6 evidential, and 0 linguistic phrases, as compared to the final draft's 11 rhetorical, 15 analytic, 8 evidential, and 1 linguistic phrases, totaling to 29 phrases in the first draft and 35 phrases in the second. S3 had 7 rhetorical, 11 analytic, 8 evidential, and 4 linguistic phrase in their first draft, with a total of 33 phrases, while 11 rhetorical, 13 analytic, 8 evidential, and 1 linguistic phrases were found in the revised draft, with a total of 30 phrases. Refer to Appendix A for further details and graphical results.
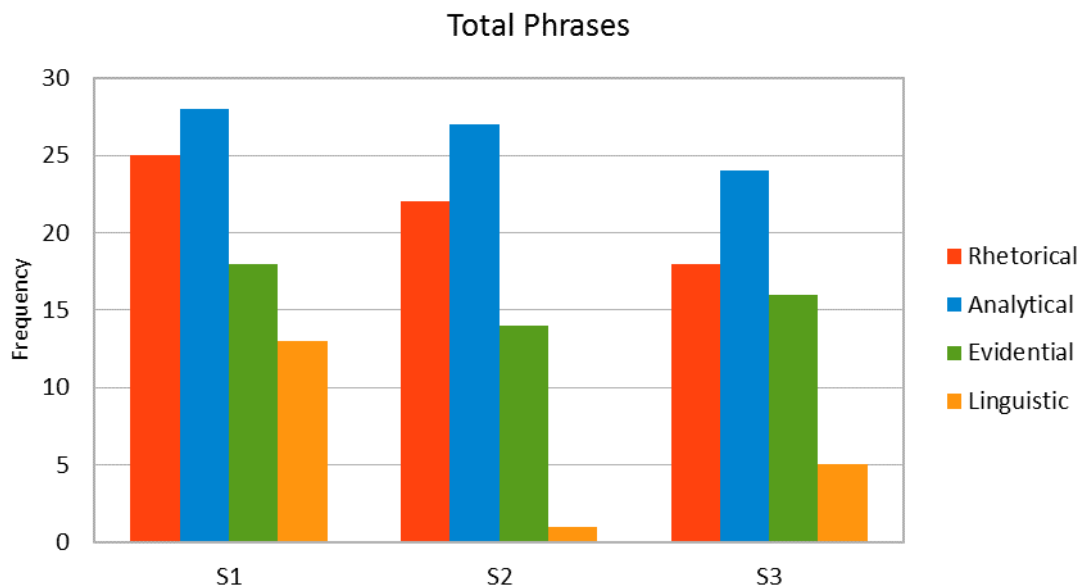
Total Phrases

Figure 2: Total number of phrase occurrences across all drafts of subject's essays.

Discussion

Although each subject edited their drafts individually, there is a conscious effort apparent among all three subjects to revise and improve their writings. How this progress was achieved, however, varies from student to student, who utilized differing methods to all reach beneficial results.

S1's drafts saw the least amount of revision. Comparing the two drafts side-by-side, the essays are virtually identical, appearing as though there were very little changes made in between versions, if any. The majority of the changes made by S1 are not to the meat of their argument, but to the structure, diction, and syntax, which help to make S1's essay much more precise in its analysis. While rhetorical content is the most highly privileged subject in the classroom, updates to mechanics are ultimately necessary to allow for a more complete understanding of a text's thesis. For example, when discussing a scene in which Superman's love interest, Lois Lane, is captured by a giant robot, S1 initially describes the image of an enraged superhero, "showing the reader Superman's love and protection for Lois Lane". While it is true that Superman has love for Lois Lane and a desire to protect her, the wording in this phrase is clunky and bulky, as compared to "showing the reader Lois Lane's importance to Superman".

The edited statement is sharper, lacking the awkwardness of its original counterpart. Any time an author can cut the fat off their work, so to say, and find a shorter, more concise way of describing their thoughts, the pithier statement is far more likely to precisely depict their musings.

S1, however, did not entirely improve the linguistic structure of their essay over the course of revision. The second draft contains slightly more instances of mechanical errors; for instance, a sentence in the updated draft reads: "Morrison transitions from action to privacy as the scene is a still, yet private conversation between Superman and Lois Lane". This does not read particularly clearly, as it appears to discuss a single scene as opposed to two separate scenes. This can be off-putting to a reader who isn't necessarily as familiar with the source material. Ultimately though, S1 challenged themselves to improve transitional phrases between concepts in their essay. Where they struggled in one example, they flourished in another. In the first draft, S1, moving from discussing an action scene to the conversational scene following it, wrote "[...] to establish the setting of the fight, after the action scene, Morrison steps [...]". This incorrect comma usage throws off the cadence of the sentence and does not plainly act as a shift between ideas. S1 seems to have recognized this and changed it in the second draft to "[...] to establish the setting of the fight. Once the action scene has succeeded, Morrison steps [...]". In the revision, there are clearer demarcations were one clause or thought ends and another one begins. These updates may be minor in the grand scheme of the writing classroom, but by being aware of these changes, S1 will be able to present their thoughts in a more straightforward, coherent manner.

Across S2's drafts, the most significant change came in terms of their use of contextual evidence to support their argument. In the first draft, S2 assumes that the audience has some level of familiarity with the primary source, opening their essay describing Superman "hovering over a city encased in glass and standing in front of the universe he created". To the uninitiated, without knowing the exact issue of the exact series, this citation does not help to contextualize the represented situation. S2's

revision is adjusted to depict the Man of Steel "on pages 5 and 6 of *All Star Superman* #10. On these pages he hovers over Kandor, a city encased in glass, and stands in front of Universe Q, the universe he created." With this simple revision, S2 is able to demonstrate their awareness of a rhetorical audience. The revised draft directs the reader toward the precise circumstances that the student will discuss. S2 does not explicitly consider that their audience has any prior knowledge of Superman and adjusted their paper accordingly. This level of consciousness toward their own writing suggests a level of rhetorical maturity, that the student is able to account for and writes to a specific, intended audience.

Likewise, S2's analysis became more personal and poignant over the course of revision. Both versions of S2's essays address how the author will be incorporating their own worldview into their understanding of the primary text: "I don't think that portraying superheroes as omnipotent beings or godlike figures is a good exploration of what a superhero could be." Where their rough draft fails in this regard, however, is that lack of individual connection with the source. S2 closes their first draft writing, "Giving people a perfect role model sets impossible standards to live up to" and "lessens their opinions of themselves", making generalizations when the personal touch would be far more effective. In their second draft, S2 seems to recognize this area of improvement and changes that section to read, "A perfect role model sets impossible standards to live up to, and trying to reach that level of perfection would cause me to think less of myself". This small act of reducing their conclusions from considering others to considering themselves makes their statements more authentic. S2 is able to draw from personal feelings and uses them as an effective justification for their thesis.

This is eerily reminiscent, though perhaps not strictly so, of Kenneth Burke's "The Unending Conversation", of the author trying to insert themselves into a debate that began long before their introduction. Usually, this awareness and understanding of rhetorical systems is more evident in graduate students, as opposed to the first-year S2. There are instances where S2's internalized connections are written, admittedly, messily, such as when addressing how Superman's death could

prevent him from becoming evil, writing, " I don't see the point of having to wrestle with the idea of Superman's possibly becoming evil because of his unlimited power if his death is inevitable". This one sentence results in S2's only linguistic error across both versions of their essay. However, this instance aside, S2 was effective overall in terms of incorporating their personal connection to the text.

There are additionally minor alterations to the syntax which serve to make the statements more efficient and punchy. S2's first draft, when mentioning Superman's visual isolation on one page, reads: "The decision to show Superman as an isolated figure emphasises that he is the only one of his kind, but it also distances him from everyone else in the story. Depicting Superman as larger and more powerful than everyone makes him less relatable as a character." While accurate, these sentences are cut down upon in the revision, now reading as: "The decision to show Superman as an isolated figure emphasises that he is the only one of his kind. However, depicting Superman as larger and more powerful than everyone makes him less relatable as a character." This simple change helps to make the argument more compelling and generally improve the reading of the essay, and this presence of mind shows a clear and conscious effort on S2's behalf to improve their essay.

The differences between S3's drafts marks the most drastic jump in quality over the course of the revision process (figure 3). The original version attempted to analyze the differences between action panels and dialogue panels. The entirety of the opening paragraph reads:

> "On pages 9 and 10 there are 2 types of panels: small panels with lots of dialogue and big panels with sparse dialogue but dynamic action. Action panels use their size to excite and show the story, whereas dialogue panels focus heavily on the words within them. This explains why action panels get more page space than dialogue panels."

While this information can be helpful, S3 did not deepen their argument until the final paragraph, observing the function of the comic book almost entirely as just a comic. Without a strong thesis, the analysis made is superficial and, like the thesis, only addresses the significance of the research toward

the essay's conclusion. The reader is front-loaded with plenty of information but the thread tying all of the citations and analysis together is insufficient. Between this and the extremely rigid format in which the information is presented, it fulfills the basic requirements of an essay, but is perhaps weaker than what is desired in the composition classroom.

Their revised draft, on the other hand, represents a complete turnaround and total improvement for the student. Instead of viewing the primary source purely as a comic book, it is as though S3 stepped back and began to look at the text as a story, most evident in their amended thesis: "He continues to push for a greater good, knowing that evil is ever present. Through Superman, Morrison supplies the reader with a moral ideal." Compared to their original argument, this premise examines the source on a sub-textual level, looking beyond just *what* is said but *why* it is being said. With this renewed thesis, the evidence and analysis utilized by S3 likewise saw a rise in quality. S3 now is now considering the ways in which "Superman is working on a range of frontiers to ultimately better the future." S3 even attempts to extrapolate their argument and universalize it, something which is more often seen in papers written by upperclassmen. The student is trying to consider the overall importance of their essay and how it fits into some larger conversation. This level of analytic maturity is both rare and refreshing to find in a first-year student, especially one who is not following the English track. Whereas S2 dipped their toes into the watery surface of Burke's "Unending Conversation", S3 fully submerged themselves.
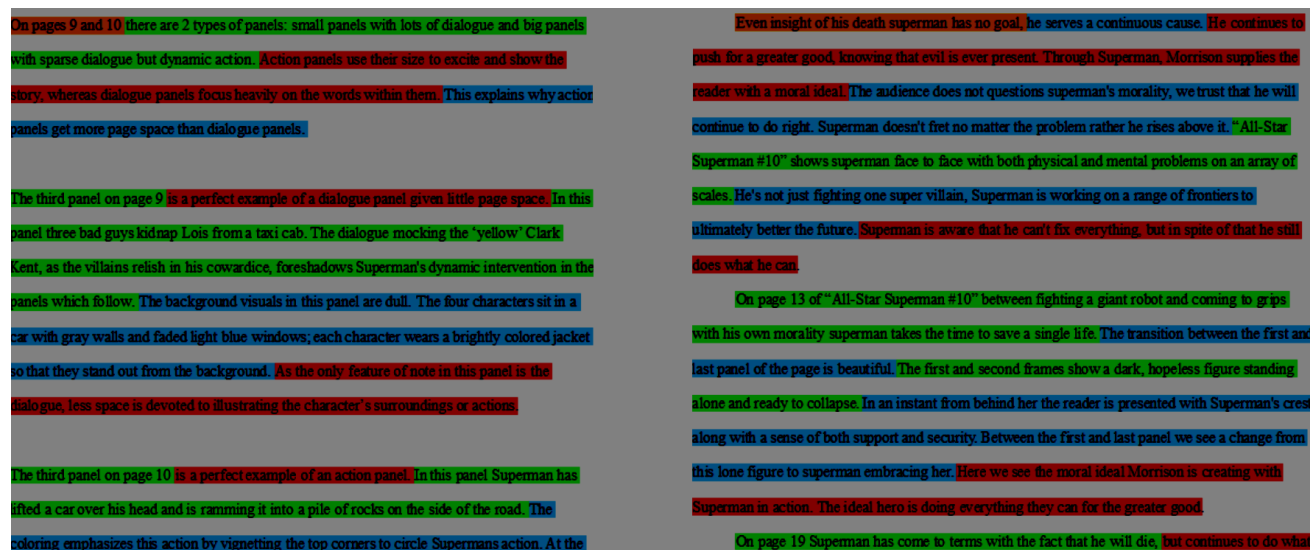
Figure 3: A side-by-side comparisons of excerpts from S3's drafts (LEFT: Original Draft. RIGHT: Revised Draft.).

Conclusions

No single revision strategy was successful across the three subjects. Where S1 thought to reduce their use of analytic phrases, S2 and S3 furthered their scrutiny into the text. S2 saw the length of their essay increase after editing, while S3 shortened their argument, and S1's remained virtually the same. In essence, what was useful for one student was hindering for another. Given this context, it is impossible to utilize any technique throughout the writing process with universal efficacy. Though the numbers do not align evenly, the fact remains that, to varying extents, all three papers were improved over the course of revision. Each student demonstrated a desire and effort to adjust and enhance their essay. Though some changes were more quantitatively apparent than others, there is an observable increase in the quality of the essay's argument, analysis, and evidence. Evaluating success across all three students, much like evaluating revision practices, needs to vary on an individual level. If one strategy aids one student but hinders another, it is not fair to teach this strategy to an entire classroom and assess the students' success on the efficacy of said strategy. Writing is not an inherited gift; it can be imparted. However, simply put, people are different from one another. Each unique human lives a completely separate life from the next. How they cope with problems will differ from person to person.

Likewise, people will each compose in whatever manner is most effective to them. To then have a standard across which all are equally measured, regardless of context, removes the unique quality and style that can come with composition. The lack of a lone procedure across the writing process emphasizes the individual nature upon which writing is founded.

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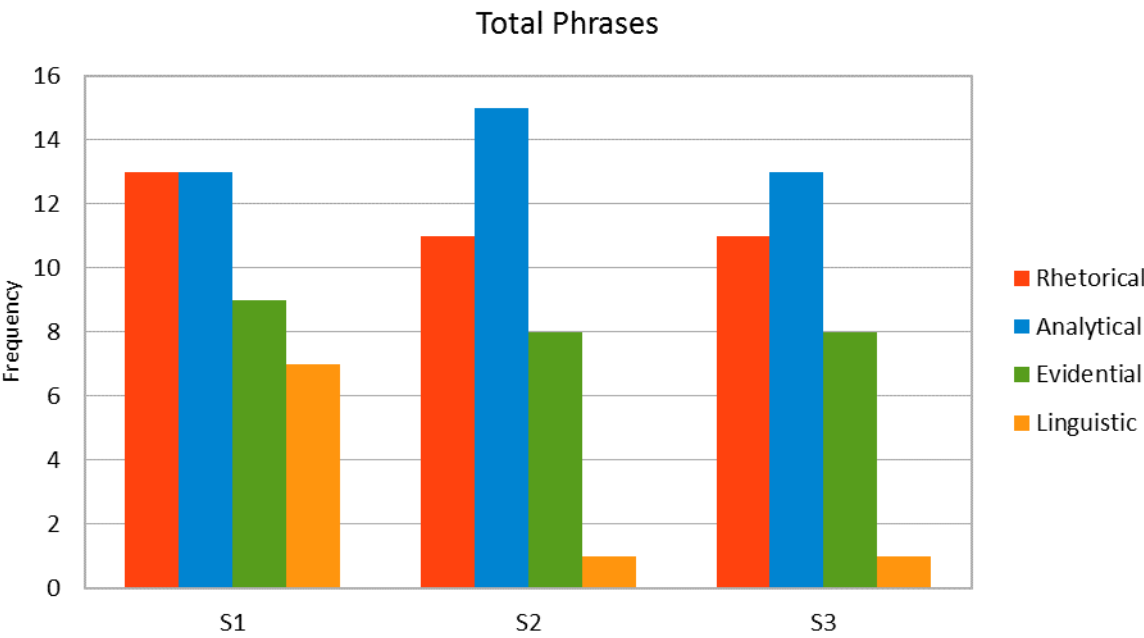
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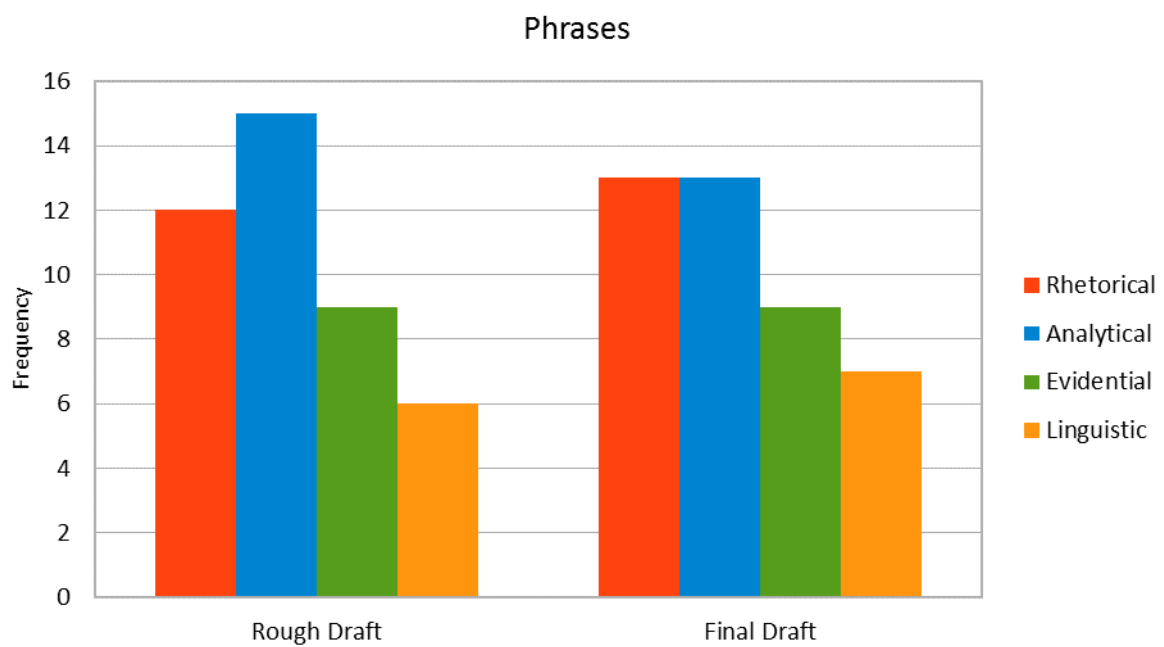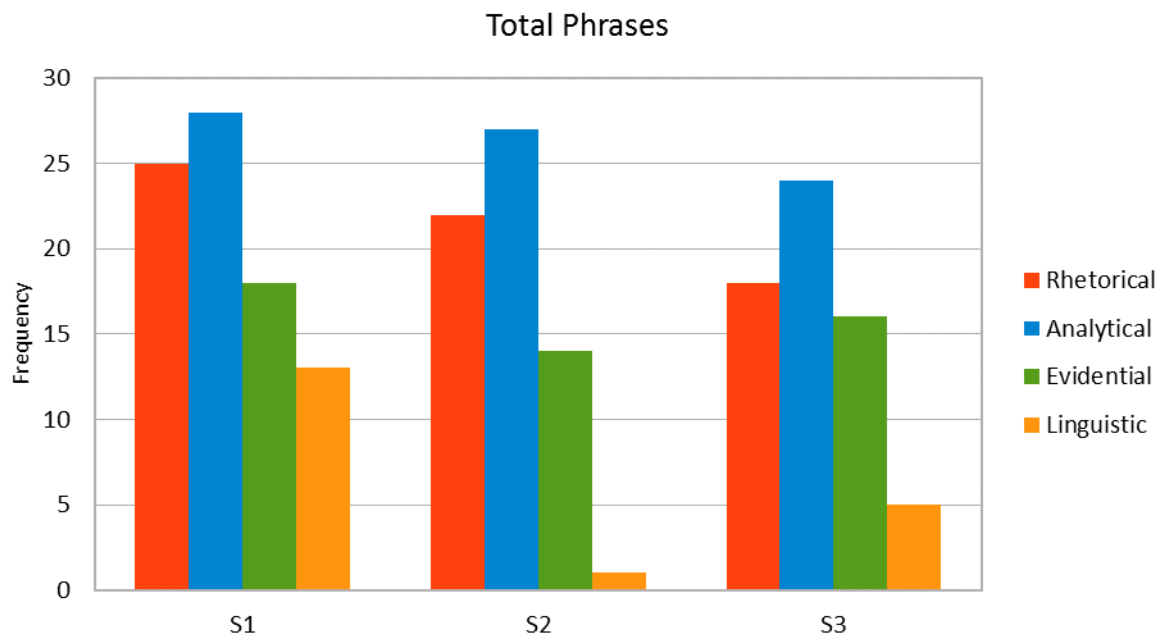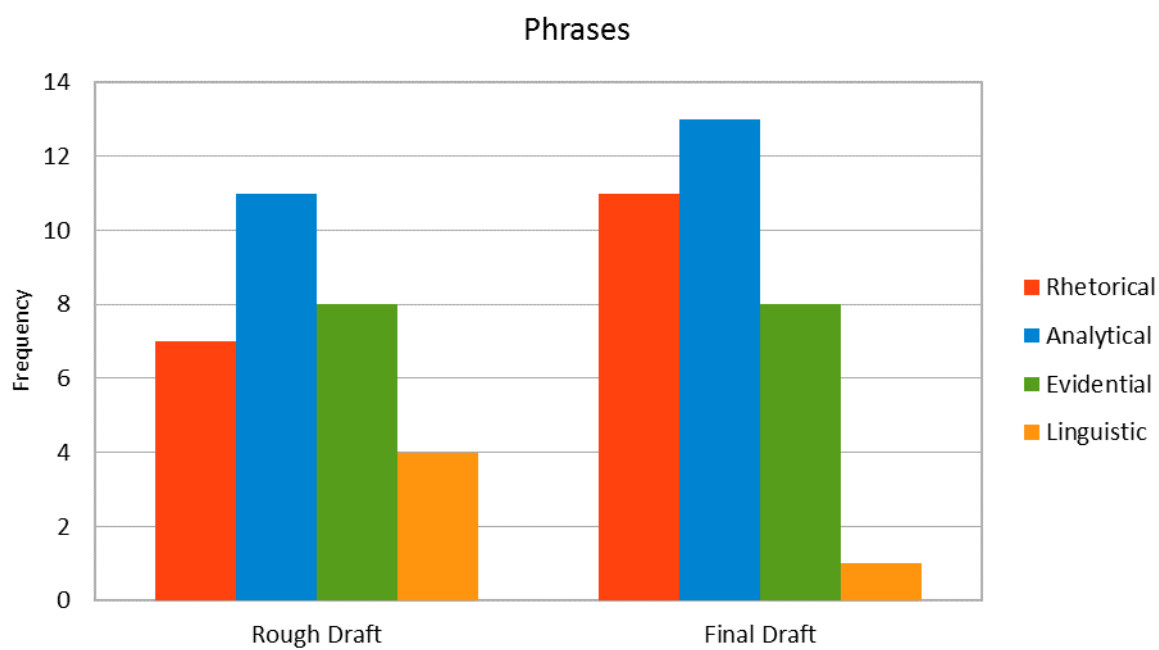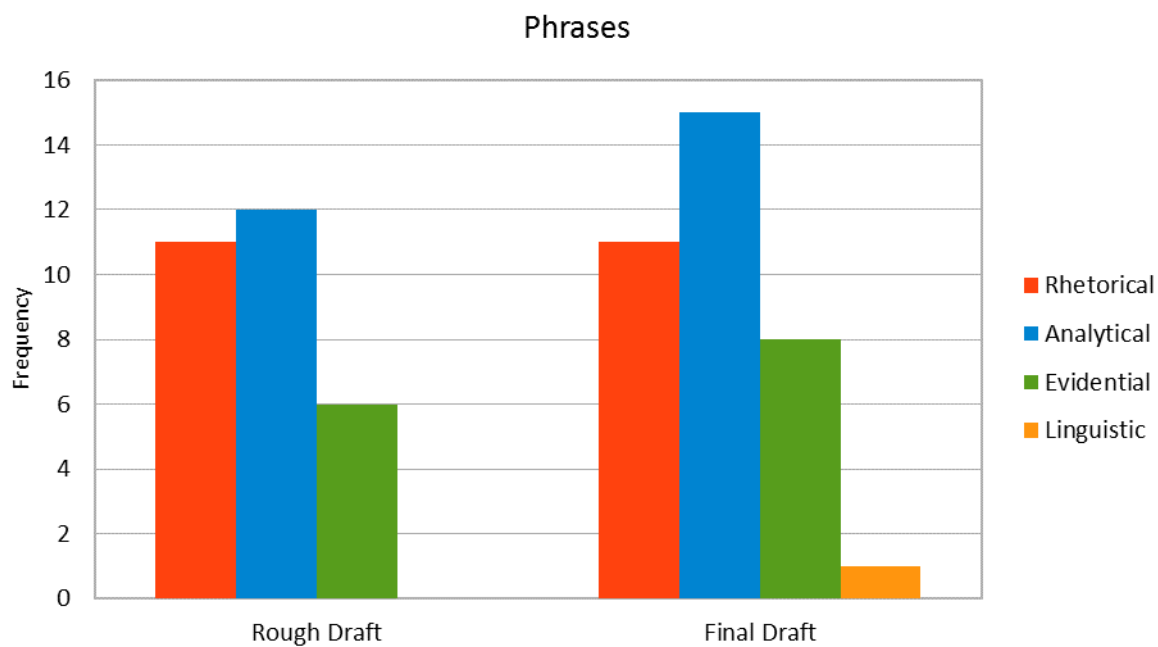
Appendix

Appendix A.

Total Phrases

Graphical Statistics

Total Phrases

Total Phrases

Phrases

Phrases

Phrases

Rhetorical Phrases

Rhetorical Phrases

Analytical Phrases

Analytical Phrases

Evidential Phrases

Evidential Phrases

Linguistic Errors
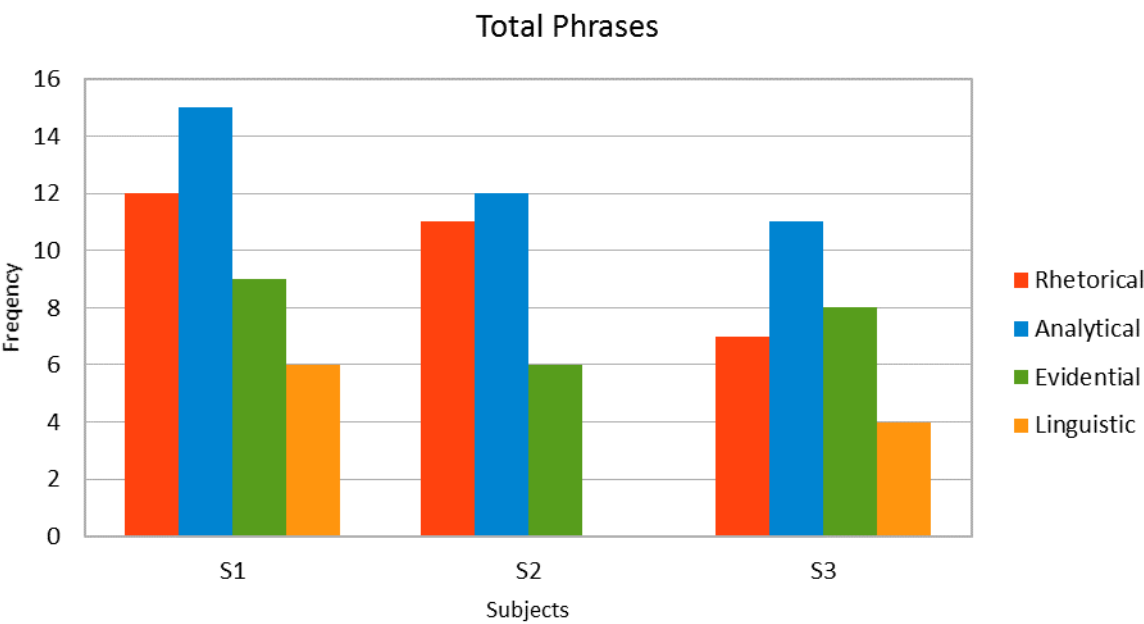
Linguistic Errors
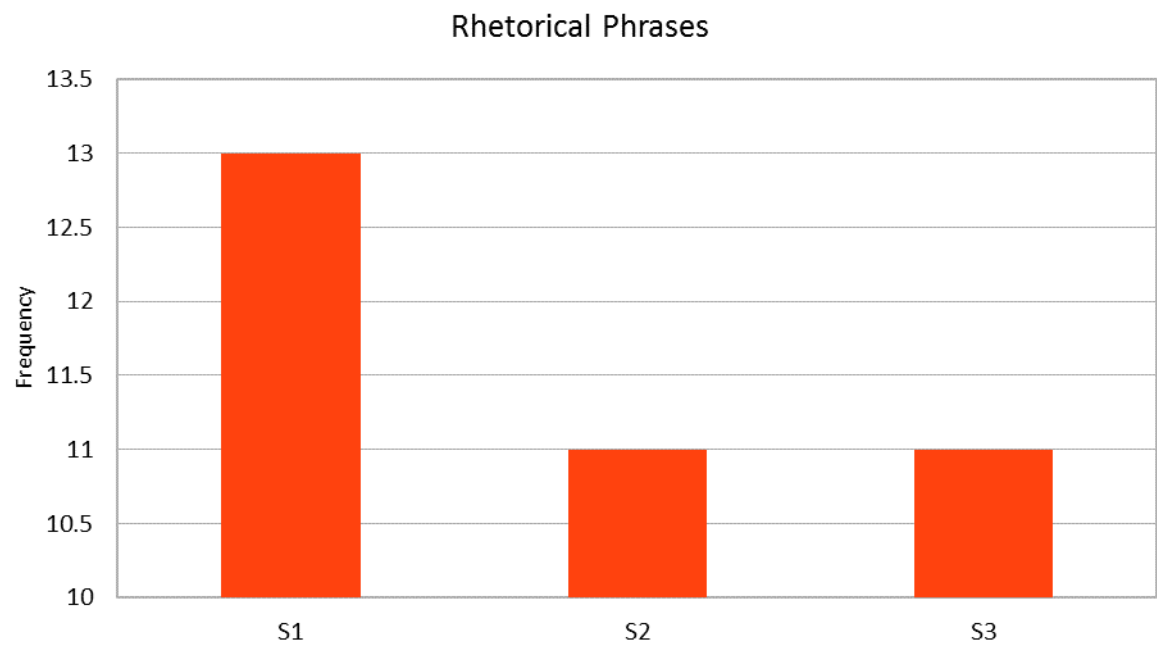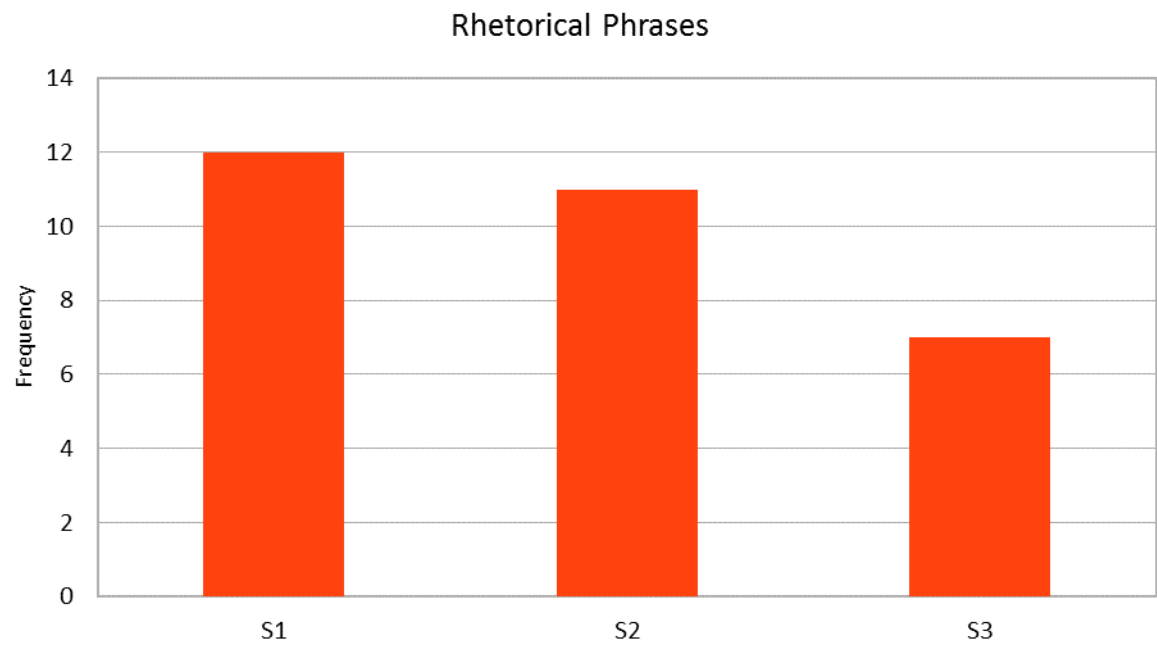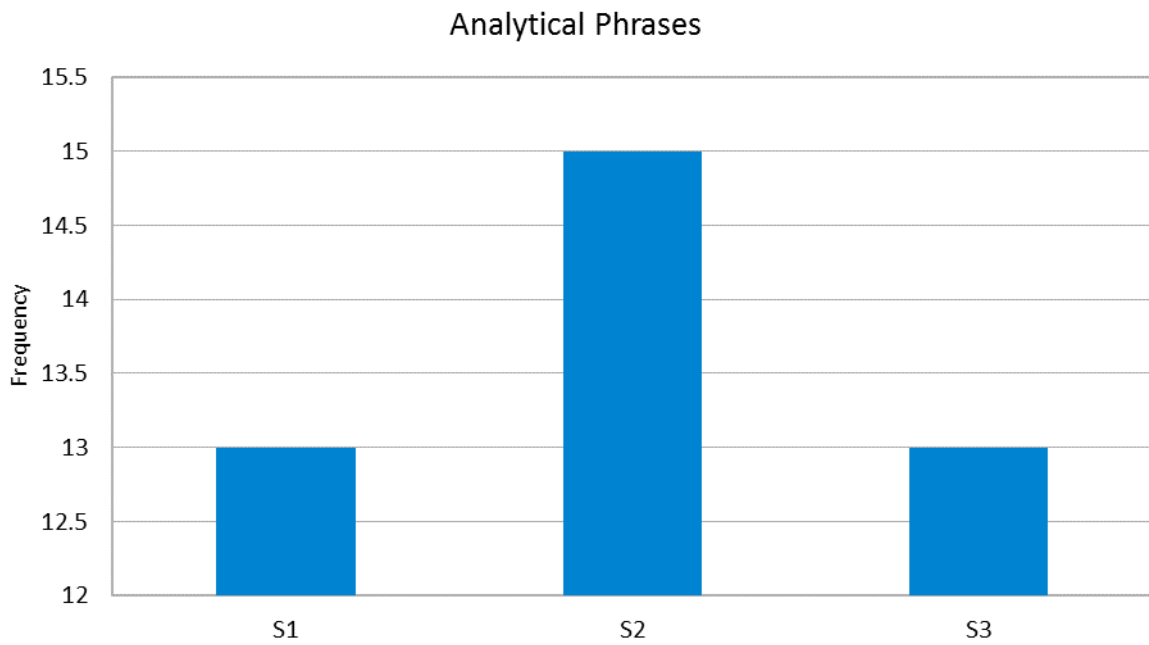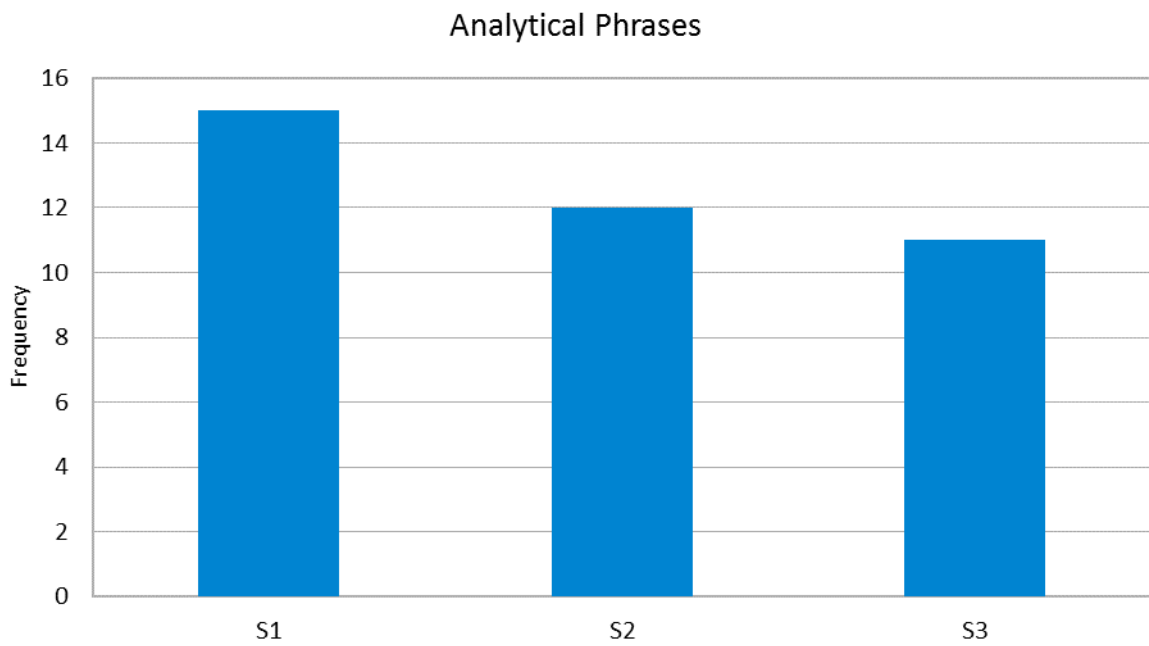
Appendix B.
Subjects' Essays (marked up in RAEL)

S1 – Draft 1

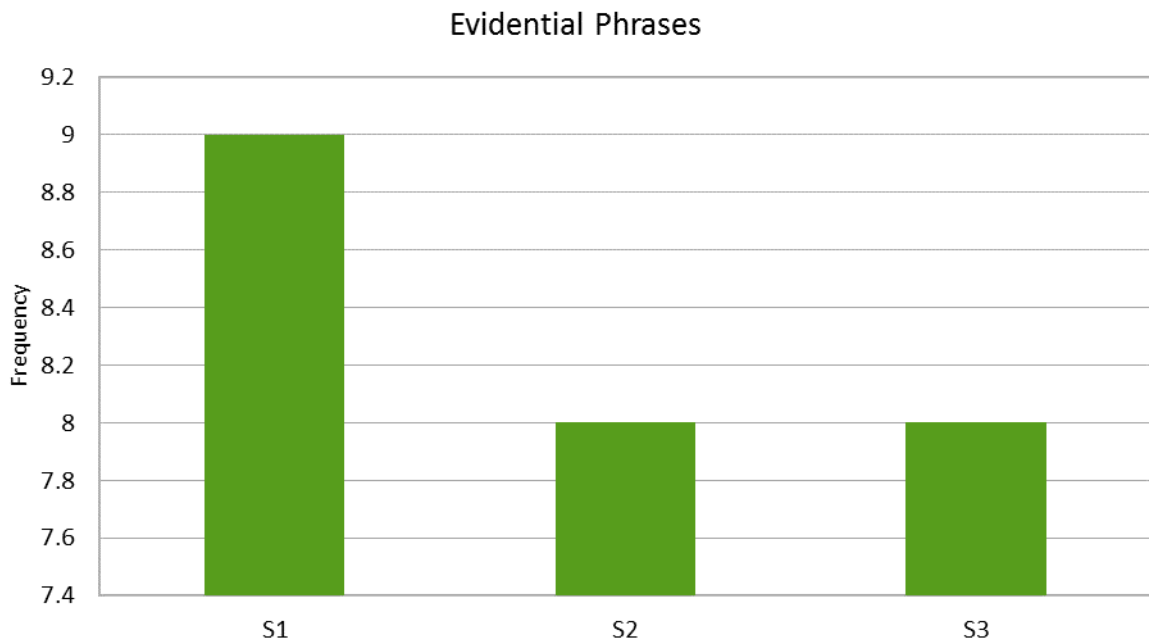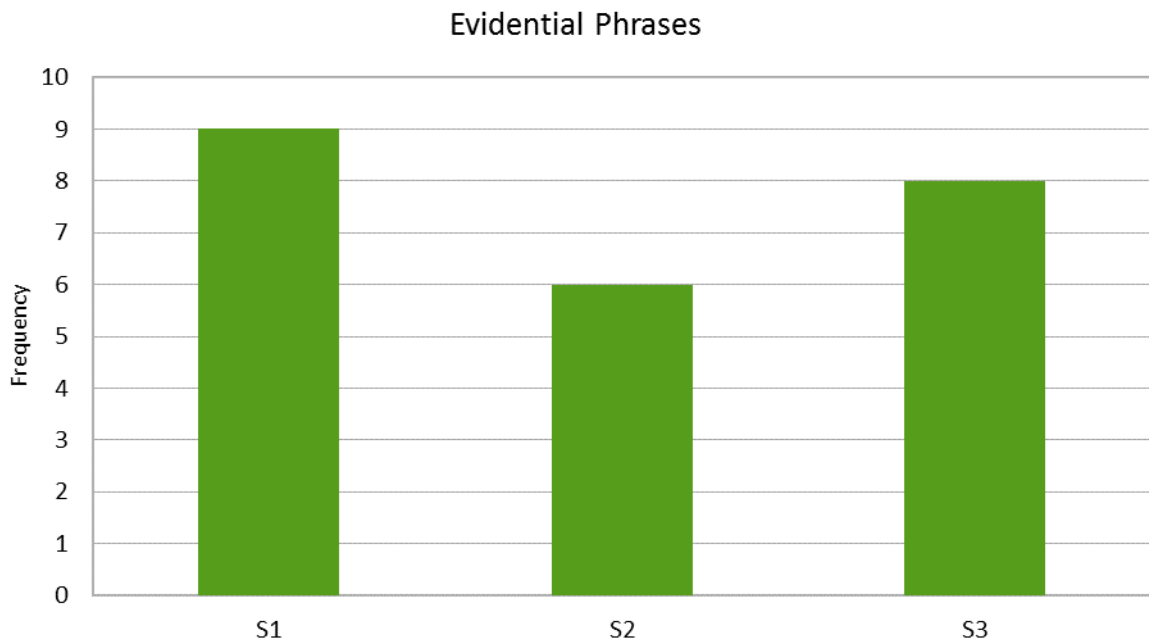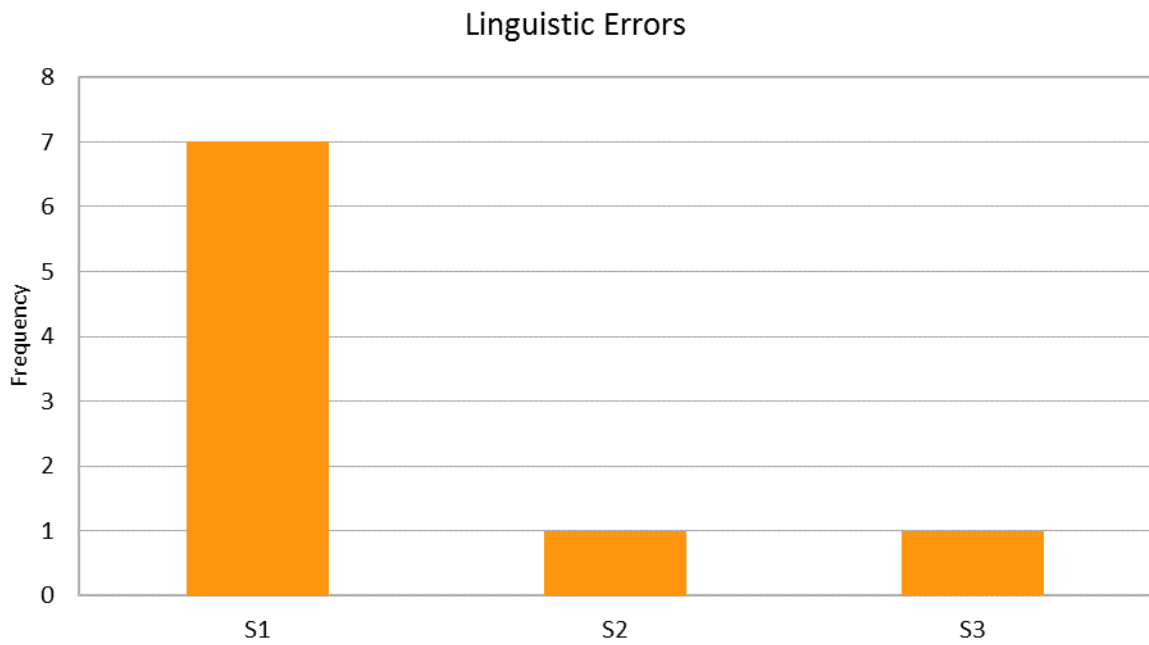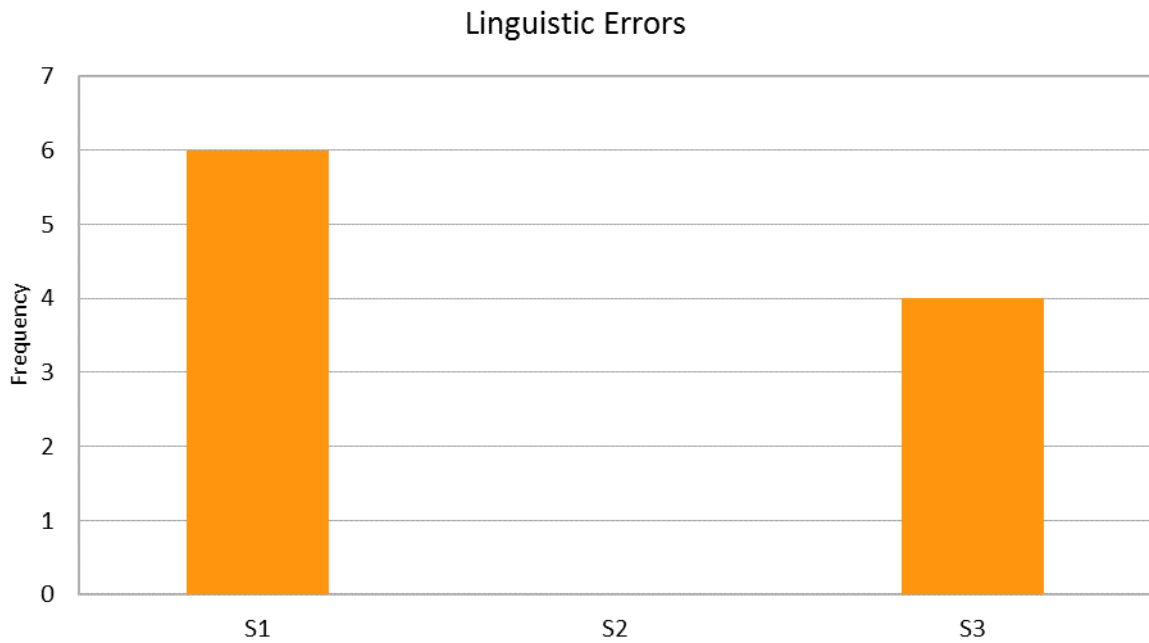With a turn of the page, starting on page 7 and ending on page 9, the comic, All Star Superman #10, written by Grant Morrison, transitions from action to privacy and dialogue to in order to slow down the pace of the story, in order to give Superman and Lois Lane to have a moment alone. Morrison uses separate writing styles in these three pages in order to elicit a different reaction from the reader, from the visual impact of the fight between Superman and the robot, to the emotional conversation with Lois Lane about their relationship and the imminent demise of Superman. The colorist, Jamie Grant, uses immense imagery in order to add to the action of the fighting scene and to establish the setting of the fight, after the action scene, Morrison steps away from the action by creating a dialogue filled emotional scene between Superman and Lois Lane to slow down the pace of the story and to hone in the reader on the underlying elephant in room.

At the beginning of page 7, Grant starts off with an image of the robot grasping on to Lois Lane. Once Superman sees Lois Lane in the hands of the robot, Grant depicts an image of an enraged Superman, showing the reader Superman's love and protection for Lois Lane. The visual impact of Superman's protection over Lois Lane elicits his response of destruction of the robot. In this action scene, Grant uses negative space in order to steer away from the main plot of the comic in order to entirely change the direction in which the comic is headed. Once Superman has destroyed the robot, Morrison transitions from action to privacy as the scene is a private conversation between Superman and Lois Lane. It is important that Morrison does this because it develops the underlying story of the relationship between Superman and Lois Lane.

The comic takes a sharp turn from pages 7-8 to pages 9-10, changing from action to dialogue. Visually, the reader can automatically notice the change in scenery, altering not only style of art, but the use of color as well. Superman's bright blue suit is the center of attention in front of a dull wall, making

him pop in the eyes of the reader. Morrison inserts the private dialogue between Lois Lane and Superman in order to bring up problems that are arising between the two, including quality time and the imminent demise of Superman. The impact of the bright colors enhances the dialogue itself, the reader is drawn to the characters depicted in the panel because nothing is happening in the negative space and the two of them are the center of attention. Morrison uses a different style on pages 9-10 then on pages 7-8. On pages 7-8, the dialogue is more simplistic and brief, there is no deep meaning behind the words being said. However, on pages 9-10, the dialogue is intense and completely adds to the development of the comic, enhancing the comic in many ways. What Morrison is doing is developing two stories at the same time, while so many things are happening with Superman and his impact on society and the universe, he is developing the personal life of Superman as well. In the eyes of Morrison, Superman lives two different lifestyles, the one in the eyes of the public and his private life. By having these two different lifestyles, it enables Morrison to enhance the overall development of Superman.

From pages 7-10, the reader is taken on a rollercoaster of emotion with the development of the danger of Lois Lane and Superman saving the day to Superman and Lois Lane having an intimate conversation, ultimately developing the personal side of the life of Superman. By having multiple people work on the comic, it drastically alters the effect of the story. From visual impact and development of the scenery, to the overall comic itself, these things go hand in hand in the creation of the story of Superman. Grant's artwork from pages 7-8 perfectly represents the transition that Morrison is going for, by having an action scene which then transitions into a moment of privacy, it segways from the bigger picture of the comic to the smaller picture of the relationship between Superman and Lois Lane.

S1 – Draft 2

With a turn of the page, starting on page 7 and ending on page 9, the comic, *All Star Superman*

#10, written by Grant Morrison, transitions from action to privacy and dialogue to in order to slow down the pace of the story. The purpose of this is in order to allow Superman and Lois Lane a moment alone. Morrison uses two separate writing styles in these three pages in order to elicit a different reaction from the reader, from the visual impact of the fight between Superman and the robot, to the emotional conversation with Lois Lane about their relationship and the imminent demise of Superman. On page 8, the artist, Frank Quitely, uses strong and vivid imagery in order to add to the action of the fighting scene and to establish the setting of the fight. Once the action scene has succeeded, Morrison steps away from the action by creating a dialogue filled emotional scene between Superman and Lois Lane to slow down the pace of the story and to hone in the reader on the underlying elephant in room, Superman's demise.

At the beginning of page 7, Quitely starts off with an image of the robot grasping on to Lois Lane. Once Superman sees Lois Lane in the hands of the robot, Quitely depicts an image of an enraged Superman, showing the reader Lois Lane's importance to Superman. The visual impact of Superman's protection over Lois Lane elicits his response of destruction of the robot. In this action scene, Quitely uses negative space by isolating Superman from the rest of the people, he does this to steer away from the main plot of the comic in order to entirely change the direction in which the comic is headed. Once Superman has destroyed the robot, Morrison transitions from action to privacy as the scene is a still, yet private conversation between Superman and Lois Lane. It is important that Morrison does this because it develops the underlying story of the relationship between Superman and Lois Lane.

The comic takes a sharp turn from pages 7-8 to pages 9-10, changing from action to dialogue. Visually, the reader can automatically notice the change in scenery, altering not only style of art, but the use of color as well. Superman's bright blue suit is the center of attention in front of a dull wall, making him pop in the eyes of the reader. Morrison inserts the private dialogue between Lois Lane and Superman in order to bring up problems that are arising between the two, including quality time and the

imminent demise of Superman. The impact of the bright colors enhances the dialogue itself, the reader is drawn to the characters depicted in the panel because nothing is happening in the negative space and the two of them are the center of attention. Morrison uses a different style on pages 9-10 then on pages 7-8. On pages 7-8, the dialogue is more simplistic and brief, there is no deep meaning behind the words being said. However, on pages 9-10, the dialogue is emotionally intense and completely adds to the development of the comic, enhancing the comic in many ways. What Morrison is doing is developing two stories at the same time, while so many things are happening with Superman and his impact on society and the universe, he is developing the personal life of Superman as well. In the eyes of Morrison, Superman lives two different lifestyles, the one in the eyes of the public and his private life. By having these two different lifestyles, it enables Morrison to enhance the overall character development of Superman.

Throughout pages 7-10, the reader is taken on a rollercoaster of emotion with the development of the danger of Lois Lane and Superman saving the day to Superman and Lois Lane having an intimate conversation, ultimately developing the personal side of the life of Superman. By having multiple people work on the comic, it drastically alters the effect of the story. From visual impact and development of the scenery, to the overall comic itself, these things go hand in hand in the creation of the story of Superman. Quitely's artwork from pages 7-8 perfectly represents the transition that Morrison is going for, by having an action scene which then transitions into a moment of privacy, it segways from the bigger picture of the comic to the smaller picture of the relationship between Superman and Lois Lane.

S2 – Draft 1

Grant Morrison and Jamie Grant's Superman, as seen on pages 5 and 6 hovering over a city encased in glass and standing in front of the universe he created, defines a superhero as a deity who stands guard over all things. This idea of what a superhero is ventures away from what I traditionally would consider the definition to be, and I don't think that portraying superheroes as omnipotent beings or godlike figures is a good exploration of what a superhero could be.

On page 5, as Superman floats next to the city in a jar, I noticed that he is isolated. He's the only visible figure in the panel, and this separates him from the rest of the characters in the story in a very physical way. I saw this separation again on page 6 when Superman observes his universe. Despite inferring that people exist within this enclosed universe, the fact that Superman is alone is blatantly obvious. The decision to show Superman as an isolated figure emphasises that he is the only one of his kind, but it also distances him from everyone else in the story. Depicting Superman as larger and more powerful than everyone makes him less relatable as a character.

Another thing that makes Superman stand out as a unique and independent character is his wardrobe. In both panels, he wears his blue suit and red cape and shoes. The striking contrast between the red on his suit and the beige and white backgrounds, respectively, draws attention to him as an individual in a sterile world. Red is a color commonly associated with power and strength, which adds to his image of being omnipotent. Ironically, red is also associated with rage and violence. I find this irony interesting, especially because of the 4th panel on page 6. While the scene shown in panel 6 is a wide shot of Superman's universe, the shadow of his head is clearly visible. The idea that Superman could be a dark figure looking over the world is terrifying but not all that implausible. Showing Superman as a godlike being forced me to consider him with the implications of existing as a godlike being. Having unlimited and unconquerable power gives Superman the potential to be a savior but also

the potential to be a tyrant, and even giving him that option negatively impacts how I see Superman as a character. I've always interpreted Superman as an intrinsically good person so being forced to think about him as someone with the potential for great evil is unsettling. This thought brings up another point of irony in the fact that Superman is dying. With Superman being portrayed as an all-powerful being, it seems impossible that he could die. His death does address his potential for evil by ending him before he has a lapse in moral judgment, but it also calls into question the need to show Superman as a godlike figure in the first place.

Depicting Superman as flawless and all-powerful detracts from his reputation as a relatable hero and a moral character but it also raises a point about what readers do want from a superhero in comparison to what they should want. It's been my experience that people want Superman to be a person to look up to and an idol to model behavior after. If Superman were truly someone to look up to, he wouldn't be perfect. Giving people a perfect role model sets impossible standards to live up to and therefore lessens their opinions of themselves because they can never reach that level of perfection. I think that writers and artists should strive to create a Superman that has bad days, not only to provide a better role model for readers but also to spare him from becoming a villain, or even worse, a flat character devoid of a deeper meaning.

S2 – Draft 2

Grant Morrison, Jamie Grant, and Frank Quitely's Superman appears on pages 5 and 6 of *All Star Superman* #10. On these pages he hovers over Kandor, a city encased in glass, and stands in front of Universe Q, the universe he created. The way he is portrayed on these pages leads me to believe that their definition of a superhero is a deity who stands guard over all things. This idea of what a superhero is ventures away from what I traditionally would consider the definition to be, and I don't think that portraying superheroes as omnipotent beings or godlike figures is a good exploration of what a

superhero could be.

On page 5, as Superman floats next to Kandor, I noticed that he is isolated. He's the only visible figure in the panel, and this separates him from the rest of the characters in the story in a very physical way. I saw this separation again on page 6 when Superman observes Universe Q. The decision to show Superman as an isolated figure emphasises that he is the only one of his kind. However, depicting Superman as larger and more powerful than everyone makes him less relatable as a character.

Another thing that makes Superman stand out as a unique and independent character is his wardrobe. In both panels, he wears his blue suit and red cape and shoes. The striking contrast between the red on his suit and the beige and white backgrounds, respectively, draws attention to him as an exceptional individual in a sterile world. Red is a color commonly associated with power and strength, which adds to his image of being omnipotent. Ironically, red is also associated with rage and violence. I find this irony interesting, especially because of the fourth panel on page 6. While the scene shown in panel 4 is a wide shot of Superman's universe, the shadow of his head is clearly visible. The idea that Superman could be a dark figure looking over the world is terrifying but not all that implausible. Showing Superman as a godlike being forced me to consider him with the implications of existing as a godlike being. Having unlimited and unconquerable power gives Superman the potential to be a savior but also the potential to be a tyrant, and even giving him that option negatively impacts how I see Superman as a character. I've always interpreted Superman as an intrinsically good person so being forced to think about him as someone with the potential for great evil is unsettling.

This thought brings up another point of irony in the fact that Superman is dying. With Superman being portrayed as an all-powerful being, it seems impossible that he could die. His death does address his potential for evil by ending him before he has a lapse in moral judgment, but it also calls into question the need to show Superman as a godlike figure in the first place. I don't see the point of having to wrestle with the idea of Superman's possibly becoming evil because of his unlimited

power if his death is inevitable.

Depicting Superman as flawless and all-powerful detracts from his appeal to me as a relatable hero and a moral character but it also raises a point about what I think people want from a superhero in comparison to what they should want. It's been my experience that people want Superman to be a person to look up to and an idol to model behavior after. If Superman were truly someone to look up to, he wouldn't be perfect. A perfect role model sets impossible standards to live up to, and trying to reach that level of perfection would cause me to think less of myself. A perfect hero would also be boring. If there is no task that a godlike Superman can't accomplish, there would be no epic story to tell. I think that writers and artists should strive to create a Superman that has bad days, not only to provide a better role model for readers but also to spare him from becoming a villain, or even worse, a flat character devoid of a deeper meaning.

S3 – Draft 1

On pages 9 and 10 there are 2 types of panels: small panels with lots of dialogue and big panels with sparse dialogue but dynamic action. Action panels use their size to excite and show the story, whereas dialogue panels focus heavily on the words within them. This explains why action panels get more page space than dialogue panels.

The third panel on page 9 is a perfect example of a dialogue panel given little page space. In this panel three bad guys kidnap Lois from a taxi cab. The dialogue mocking the 'yellow' Clark Kent, as the villains relish in his cowardice, foreshadows Superman's dynamic intervention in the panels which follow. The background visuals in this panel are dull. The four characters sit in a car with gray walls and faded light blue windows; each character wears a brightly colored jacket so that they stand out from the background. As the only feature of note in this panel is the dialogue, less space is devoted to illustrating the character's surroundings or actions.

The third panel on page 10 is a perfect example of an action panel. In this panel Superman has lifted a car over his head and is ramming it into a pile of rocks on the side of the road. The coloring emphasizes this action by vignetting the top corners to circle Supermans action. At the center of this circle Superman's cape, bright red, billows to show the speed and power of his dynamic action. The left corner of the panel contains two of the bad guys running away in fear. There is no dialogue from the characters, only the narration: "Next, Superman overtakes Butch in one spring… -- and the car, itself, is smashed to bits!" The narration is not entirely necessary, but helps inform the action. The dynamic movement and multitude of visual elements demands a larger panel to better feature the action

By emphasizing the action panels over the dialogue panels, Siegel and Shuster show that action is more valuable than words. If readers consider the lives of the creators during the writing of *Action Comics* #1 then they will better understand the moral argument being made. Both creators were Jewish American living on the brink of WWII. There showing their audience that waiting around is not as effective as acting, in the comic there some acts so evil that they demand action. Similarly the creators had experienced acts of evil themselves and wanted their readers to reconsider the morality of violence. This philosophy the authors share is so fundamental to their storytelling that they named the comic itself "Action Comics."

S3 – Draft 2

Even insight of his death superman has no goal, he serves a continuous cause. He continues to push for a greater good, knowing that evil is ever present. Through Superman, Morrison supplies the reader with a moral ideal. The audience does not questions superman's morality, we trust that he will continue to do right. Superman doesn't fret no matter the problem rather he rises above it. "All-Star Superman #10" shows superman face to face with both physical and mental problems on an array of scales. He's not just fighting one super villain, Superman is working on a range of frontiers to

ultimately better the future. Superman is aware that he can't fix everything, but in spite of that he still does what he can.

On page 13 of "All-Star Superman #10" between fighting a giant robot and coming to grips with his own morality superman takes the time to save a single life. The transition between the first and last panel of the page is beautiful. The first and second frames show a dark, hopeless figure standing alone and ready to collapse. In an instant from behind her the reader is presented with Superman's crest along with a sense of both support and security. Between the first and last panel we see a change from this lone figure to superman embracing her. Here we see the moral ideal Morrison is creating with Superman in action. The ideal hero is doing everything they can for the greater good.

On page 19 Superman has come to terms with the fact that he will die, but continues to do what he can to better the future. On panel 4 we see the creation of superman on "Earth Q" as an idea. "Behold I teach you Superman" Morrison puts superman as something meant to "teach" and demonstrate to us the ideal hero. Next on page 19 Superman gives his genealogy to Leo Quintum in the last few panels. Superman's entrusts his genealogy to Leo in the hopes of bettering the future.

Since "Action Comics #1" readers have continuously seen Superman thrown into a range of problems and no matter the problem he triumphs. From these continuous triumphs comics have built Superman as society's idea of a pure hero. Superman is not just a character its an idea. The idea of Superman is to fight for what is morally right and not back down to your problems. Morrison teaches this Superman ideology through the character of Superman himself. Seeing Superman face up to these larger than life problems make the everyday ones we face seem a little less threatening. Superman also inspires the reader to not purely fight for self gain, but societal gain as well.

"All-Star Superman #10" pits Superman against death, which is a most dominant fear. The reader witnesses Superman deal with a literal lie threatening problem. We see that with his life ending Superman chooses to do what he can to secure the world's safety even after his death. Faced with this

ultimate fear again Superman does not back down. How he deals with his coming death solidifies the

Superman ideology to not let anything get in your way in hopes of building a better future.