Synthesis of a Current Issue: FOLLOWING A COLUMNIST

AP English Language

Some of the most prominent practitioners of stylish written rhetoric in our culture are newspaper columnists. Sometimes they are called *pundits –* that is, sources of opinion, or critics.

On the reverse side find a list of well-known newspaper columnists. Select one (or another one that I approve of) and complete the tasks below. Please start a new page and label as **TASK #** each time you start a new task.

**TASK 1—Brief Biography**.

Write a brief (100-200 word) biography of the columnist. Make sure you cite your source(s) at the bottom of the page. I suggest you import a picture of the author if possible.

**TASK 2—Five Annotated Columns**.

Make copies from newspapers or magazines or download them from the internet. I suggest cutting and pasting the columns into Microsoft word and double-spacing them because it makes them easier to annotate and work with. Your annotations should emphasize such things as:

- the central idea of the column

- identify appeals to logos, pathos, or ethos

- (by what means does the columnist seek to convince readers of the truth of his central idea?)

- the chief rhetorical and stylistic devices at work in the column

- the tone (or tones) of the column

- errors of logic (if any) that appear in the column

- the way the author uses sources, the type of sources the author uses (**Be sure to pay attention to this one**!)

- the apparent audience the author is writing for

Add a few final comments to each column that summarizes your general response to the piece—

do not summarize the column! This task is hand-written.

**TASK 3 – Depth Analysis of One Column and Two Extras**.

Choose a favorite column from Task 2 and compare it to two other treatments of the same

subject:

- a straight, un-slanted news report about the topic of the column or

- another columnist’s opposing take on the issue or

- an editorial or

- a letter to the editor that disagrees with the original column.

Informed by the two extras you found and your own thinking and reading on the subject, write a

brief assessment of the original column. Is it sound? Is it convincing?

**TASK 4 – Final Remarks**

Add a statement titled ―Final Remarks.‖ In this reflect on what your learned, what value this

had, what you think of the writer or subject matter, etc.

**PROMINENT NEWSPAPER COLUMNISTS**

Michael Kinsley –founder of slate.com. Syndicated columnist. L

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/opinions/>

Richard Cohen – *Washington Post* columnist. l<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/opinions/>

Bob Herbert – *New York Times* columnist. L

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html>

William F. Buckley – founder of *National Review.* Syndicated columnist C

<http://www.nationalreview.com/buckley/buckley.asp>

Thomas Sowell – Hoover Institute scholar. Syndicated columnist C

<http://www.townhall.com/columnists/thomassowell/archive.shtml>

Ellen Goodman - *Boston Globe* columnist. L

<http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/goodman/>

George Will – *Washington Post* columnist. C

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/opinions/> John Tierney – *New York Times* columnist. c

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html>

David Brooks - *New York Times* columnist. c<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html>

Paul Krugman - *New York Times* columnist. L

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html>

Thomas Friedman - *New York Times* columnist. l<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html>

Jonah Goldberg - *Los Angeles Times* columnist. c<http://www.latimes.com/news/columnist>

Peggy Noonan - former presidential speechwriter; *Wall Street Journal* columnist. C

<http://www.opinionjournal.com/columnists/pnoonan/>

Maureen Dowd - ―Modo‖ *New York Times* columnist. L

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html>

Charles Krauthammer - *Washington Post* columnist. c

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/opinions/> Mona Charen - syndicated columnist. C

<http://www.townhall.com/columnists/monacharen/archive.shtml>

E.J. Dionne - *Washington Post* columnist. l

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/opinions/> Cynthia Tucker – *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* columnist. L

<http://www.ajc.com/opinion/content/opinion/tucker/index.html>

**Pictured below:**

top row: Will, Charen, Dionne, Tucker, Tierney, Krauthammer, Kinsley, Cohen, Herbert

bottom row: Buckley, Sowell, Goodman, Brooks, Krugman, Friedman, Goldberg, Noonan, Dowd

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Courtesy Peachtre Suwanee

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