

## Sample Student Writing: Comparative Argumentative Essay

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### **Grade this student received on this assignment: C**

**Positive aspects of this work:** the student makes a good effort to reconstruct each author's argument, does a nice job incorporating specific examples into the essay, and begins to develop a plausible defense of how Martin's argument about research and design is flawed.

**Problem-areas with this work:** the student's explanation of each authors' argument lacks some necessary detail (for example, the logical analysis of each authors' reasons and evidence is absent, and no effort is made to explain the underlying warrant of each argument), the writing is peppered with grammatical and spelling errors, the student never refutes the first objection—a concern by Angell with Martin's explanation for the price increases—and neglects to explore a second objection to Martin's argument. Consequently, the student fails to meet the basic objective of this assignment, which is to demonstrate one's argument can actually withstand two possible objections.

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The media has vilified one man, painted him into a scapegoat for corporate greed, deception, and fraud. Now, who exactly is this patron saint? This champion of affordable care? His name is Martin Shkreli. He came under heavy scrutiny by the public after raising the price of a life- saving HIV drug known as Daraprim by more than 5000% (\$13 to \$750). What he did wasn't illegal by any means, and it's actually quite a common thing to do within the pharmaceutical industry. For instance, in the last two years alone, there are three examples of drug companies hiking up prices. Firstly, Cantrell increased the cost of their drug Glycopyrrolate by 2,728%. As well as another company—Nephron, who jacked up the price of their drug Albuterol by 4,014%. Finally, Pfizer hiked up the price of their drug Doxycycline by 8,281%. So all of these occurrences eventually beg the question, "Should pharmaceutical companies act as a business, or should they seek to help the patients they provide drugs for, or is there a common ground?" For the sake of the argument, I am going to limit this to Turing Pharmaceuticals, the company that Martin Shkreli serves as CEO.

Martin Shkreli was interviewed on MedCity News, and he offered up his own justification of the price hikes and why they were a necessity, as well as how there were misconceptions about effects on those who couldn't afford Daraprim. He indicates that such a drastic increase was indeed of dire importance because in order to better treat toxoplasmosis; the parasitic disease seen in patients, capital must be raised to help improve the drug itself. As it is a 62-year-old drug, it has some fallbacks, and is far from perfect, and has a list of painful side effects. Which, according to Internet Drug Index "nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, insomnia, headache, lightheadedness, or dry mouth" (Cunda, 2015). His point being that they want to make an updated, "2016 version" of Daraprim, on that strictly eliminates the toxoplasmosis, and doesn't act as a "nuclear bomb" that has negative consequences on the patient receiving the medication. Shkreli also claims that the profits received aren't out of greed, but will be invested in research and development, to develop, as stated before, a better version of the drug and an ultimate cure to HIV/AIDS. He also says that no individual is paying more than \$20 for each bottle of Daraprim, and that some even receive the antibiotic for no charge. His says the cost is spread by the health care system. Martin ultimately states that are that he believes those suffering should get the treatment they need, but the process should not be a painful one, and the only way to achieve this is to drive up the price of the drug.

On the other side of the debate, Marcia Angell argues that these price hikes are unjustified because they are really based in greed, with the ultimate endgame being profit. This is completely legal under our current laws, as stated by Angels herself,

“Unlike every other advanced country, the United States permits drug companies to charge patients whatever they choose. (In this case, with Daraprim’s patent expired, Turing is probably in a hurry to make as much as possible before a generic version can enter the market” (Angell, 2015)

So basically what is happening here is Turing has monopolized the drug, due to patenting laws, they are the only company out there selling this drug, and there is nothing in our legislation that says otherwise. She talks about how the preliminary discover of the drug usually occurs in a university lab using funds from the NIT (National Instituted of Health) using public funding. To get the drug onto market, the university more often than not has to utilize a start-up company which either the large companies themselves buyout, or they just license the drugs from the them. She says the companies make treatments that are “just different enough” to warrant a new patent, preventing other companies from creating a generic version of the drug. More to the point, she disagrees with the notion that a large sum of the profits goes to R&D. She states, “Major drug companies are hardly strapped for money to cover their R&D: A look at their annual reports shows that they [spend more](#) on marketing and administration than on R&D” (Angell, 2015). Marcia’s overall opinion here is that price gouging within the pharmaceutical industry is not justified, because money is being advertised as going into one aspect of the company when in reality it is going to another, and the company should not be able to just profit off the coattails of a more obscure research institution.

On this multi-layered and controversial argument, I take the side of Martin Shkreli, who I believe to be different than other leaders in Big Pharma, someone who genuinely is fighting towards a better tomorrow, not someone who has succumbed to corporate greed and lies, and seeks the advancements of the drug and ultimately in his words, “a cure.”

But Marcia’s case is a strong one, and there is ample evidence to alienate people against Shkreli. Shkreli makes the opposing claims in his interviews that he put his own money into the drug, in the hopes that any profit received would go into funding better treatments for toxoplasmosis. Here’s the thing. Investors put money into funding the seizure of what was known as Pyrimethamine at the time (before the trade name Daraprim came into existence) and emails from Shkreli to his investors have been leaked,

“I think it will be huge. We raised the price from \$1,700 per bottle to \$75,000...So 5,000 paying bottles at the new price is \$375,000,000—almost all of it is profit and I think we will get 3 years of that or more. Should be a very handsome investment for all of us. Let’s all cross our fingers that the estimates are accurate” (Kollmeyer, 2016). He goes on to say, “Very good. Nice work as usual. \$1 bn here we come.”

So it’s clear that Shkreli is more concerned about garnering a profit to appease his investors. Social issues such as health care shouldn’t be serving the big money doners, it should be serving the people. A profit of that margin is too large to say it can be confined to R&D, because at this same time Shkreli bought the only album of popular rap group “Wu-Tang Clan” for 2 million dollars. Seems like a bit of an excess profit. He also claims that he hasn’t placed a new patent on the newly licensed drug Daraprim, which is factual. But since there are is only a small portion of people who need the drug 1 Million, they seized the opportunity to gouge off of a market that no one would attempt to follow. For example, companies were able to make generic knock-off of Daraprim, but it didn’t seem to have a market-value. That’s true, until you jack up the price 5000%. There’s a difference between capitalism and statists.

## Citations and References

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