Editing….This editor's pet peeves

These constructions might not exactly be wrong, but this editor would prefer a different construction, so please avoid. I will try to persuade you why with some notes below:

The author "seems to be saying"

Either figure out what the author is arguing, or take a stab at making a claim. "Seems" is hardly an argument.

You may make a weaker claim, but make some kind of claim.

> Weaker claim: "Although many readers may be persuaded by the logic of the argument, the main idea is not adequately supported."

> Strong claim: No careful reader will be persuaded by the logic of this argument. The main idea is patently erroneous.

Paragraphs a page long or longer

The purpose of most academic papers by student is to display your knowledge. If you have paragraphs that are less than a page long, you can make more points— display more of your ideas.

The article talks about…

No, articles don't talk. The article discusses…states…says….

"One might assume…." or "one might argue…"

No, be more specific than "one." Critics have argues that…. A reader might think….

Also don't assume your reader believes the same things you do. If the author makes an assumption, you may point that out, but don't characterize the assumption as an idea the reader shares with you. You have to earn each point by arguing it.

"The reader must understand…."

Don't order the reader about. Explain it for us.