**Logical Argument: The Heart of Critical Thinking**

Of all the writing techniques presented in this text to help you improve your critical skills, *argument* is the most sophisticated. Argument is always based on controversial issues—points, matters, or questions that are disputed or undecided. An argumentative essay requires more than simply stating the thesis, adequately supporting it, and reaching an appropriate conclusion. In addition, you must try to get the reader to accept or even adopt your views about the subject. Use any appropriate form of writing, such as comparison, contrast, definition, description, or cause and effect, to present your argument.

LOGICAL ARGUMENT

Argument is intended to convince an opponent to overcome doubts about your side of an issue by offering logical proofs in a reasonable way. The word logic, introduced by the ancient Greeks, is still used today to describe the process of correct reasoning used to evaluate any proposition. Plato (c.4280348 B.C.) and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) taught their students to think clearly and critically about implications and contradictions of evidence presented in arguments and to use valid induction and deduction to reach conclusions.

Induction uses many specifics to reach a generalization. For example, if you were a poor hitter in baseball, if you could scarcely complete a volley in ping pong, and if you had trouble driving a golf ball, you might infer or decide that you are not suited to any sport that requires hitting a ball with a piece of equipment like a bat, racquet, paddle, or club. This generalization might lead you to decline an invitation to play racquetball, even though you had never tried it.

You think inductively during prewriting when you link similar or parallel ideas or fit many pieces of evidence together to form some kind of pattern allowing you to reach a generalization or thesis. You can also write inductively. For instance, an argument presented to a hostile audience may have a hostile chance of success if your position is not openly stated in the beginning. But beware! Inductive essays are difficult to write because of the danger of wandering from the subjects. Be sure you have a thesis even though you wait to state it. Make each piece of evidence that follows the introduction stronger and more compelling than its predecessor so that the total accumulation of proof erases the reader's doubts about the merits of your position.

Deduction uses generalities derived from induction as the bases for reasoning. This process is comparative and draws on past experience, for example, since you are not able to hit a golf or tennis ball, you might generalize that you aren’t good at ball games of any kind, citing football, soccer, volleyball, handball, and basketball as evidence. From this, a reader may generalize that you are poor at all sports. But this logic may be faulty because you may be an excellent swimmer, runner, bicycler, or skier.

This text concentrates on the deductive method of writing an argument by suggesting that essays begin with a preliminary judgment (a thesis or premise) about an issue and conclude with a refined judgment that evaluates the proofs offered in support of the thesis. A good argument should include facts, examples, details, or statistics which can be readily observed by the reader or are attributed to some knowledgeable authority; for example, a hospital emergency room physician who has treated hundreds of automobile accident victims would be a good authority for the argument that both drivers and passengers should fasten seat belts to prevent death or serious injury. Conversely, this physician would be a poor authority to support an argument that everyone should buy a new car every year. An automobile manufacturer would be a more logical choice to supply data for this argument.

The dialectic method of argument is based on contrasts. The thesis states one position and the antithesis the opposite. After each is discussed fully, the synthesis (conclusion) reaches a moderate view somewhere between the two extremes. Here is an example of the dialectic method:

I. Citizens have the right to revolt if they believe their taxes are unreasonably high.

II. On the other hand, citizens should realize that they must pay high taxes to provide essential services (street lights, road repairs, police protection, etc.).

III. Citizens should be willing to pay reasonable taxes, but should insist on limits.

Analyzing alternatives is another logical way to argue. This type of argument examines all possible solutions to a particular problem, eliminates undesirable alternatives, and ranks other possibilities in the order of their desirability. Here is an example.

The problem: Several neighbors who live on a short, private street are frequent victims of burglary. Each family submits one suggestion for the most efficient, practical, and economical way to jointly protect community property. The alternatives are.

1. Killer watchdogs could patrol the neighborhood to frighten and discourage strangers from entering the street.

2. Laser cannons, mounted at the entrance to the street, could be programmed to fire at unauthorized intruders.

3. Armed security guards could patrol the neighborhood twenty-four hours a day.

4. Residents could wire explosives to their valuable items.

5. Burglar alarms with piercing sirens and the capacity to notify police could be installed in all homes.

6. Residents could form a Neighborhood Watch program with the help of the police department.

Analysis of alternatives shows that they range from the truly unworkable to the definitely practical. Killer dogs might attack harmless strangers or even neighborhood children. Laser cannons could fire at innocent people—delivery persons, visitors, and children's playmates. If valuables such as jewelry were wired with explosives, owners might forget to disarm the explosive devices when reaching for necklaces or rings and blow themselves up. Conversely, armed security guards could be given explicit instructions that would allow them to be selective in their methods of protection, but the cost would be prohibitive. Less expensive burglar alarms would cause no physical harm and would call the police for help when an intruder tried to break in, but if an electronic system malfunctioned and caused false alarms, the property owner could be charged a fee for each one. A Neighborhood Watch program would be free of cost, but would be effective only if some of the residents were always at home to call the police if they saw anything suspicious.

Recommendations weigh the pros and cons of the acceptable alternatives If the neighborhood is deserted for several hours every day when residents are away at work and school, either costly security guards or less expensive alarm systems would be best. But if several adults are usually at home, the Neighborhood Watch would be effective and cheap.

COMMON LOGICAL FALLACIES

Fallacies, or mistakes in logic, are caused by faulty or misleading reasoning. An argument that includes such errors is not sound. There are many, many kinds of logical fallacies. Only the most common are discussed here.

1. *Sweeping generalizations* fail to qualify an assertion that can't possibly apply to the entire population. Often such a statement begins with “All” or “Everyone,” but sometimes these words are only implied when the writer or speaker refers to a general class. Here are some examples:

All Americans like hot dogs.

Everyone has a home computer.

Men are stronger than women.

People are so selfish!

Nobody would buy an ugly car like that.

“Some” or “Many” should be used unless the claim truly applies to everyone.

2. *Hasty generalizations* are errors caused by jumping to conclusions (making quick judgments) about an entire group based on a single experience.

A restaurant owner who discharged a cook for gross incompetence would be guilty of hasty generalization if he or she then insisted that all cooks were

3. *Rationalizing* is simply making excuses; for example, “I got a speeding ticket for driving 75 mph in a 35 mph zone on Main Street today. The policeman would have given a warning to an older person, but he cited me because I'm a student.” The driver ignores the fact he or she was traveling 40 mph in excess of the speed limit.

4. *Non sequiturs* (Latin for “that which does not follow”) occur when a person jumps from a basic premise to a conclusion without explaining the intermediate logic used to reach it; for example, “The Ritz is my favorite restaurant. I always eat at the Savoy.” A confused reaction to these seemingly connected, but obviously contradictory, statements is predictable. “I’m sorry, I don't follow your reasoning. If you like the Ritz so much, why do you always eat at the Savoy?” The logical process looks something like this:

The Ritz is my favorite restaurant. (but)

The food there is too expensive. (and/or)

No one will ever go there with me. (and/or)

The Ritz has no parking facilities available. (and/or)

Reservations must be made weeks in advance. (so/therefore)

I always eat at the Savoy.

Another cause of non sequiturs is failure to show some logical connection between one sentence or clause that is supposed to be the result of another.

Examples.

When Elizabeth Taylor married Richard Burton, she became a British citizen. She owned one of the biggest diamonds in the world. (What’s the connection between citizenship and ownership?)

Richard Nixon liked to eat catsup on his cottage cheese, and he was the first President of the United States to resign his office. (Was his taste in food the cause of his resignation?)

5. Oversimplifying applies a simple or incomplete answer to a complex problem. For instance, explaining that health care costs so much in the United States because doctors and hospitals want to make a lot of money is an oversimplification. The explanation fails to take into account that because people are now living much longer, they must expect increased medical costs. Further, doctors fear malpractice suits, so they often order many expensive laboratory tests to support their diagnoses. Finally health care services pass along to the patients the costs of sophisticated medical equipment and of increasingly expensive malpractice insurance.

6. *False dilemmas* try to block an opponent's recognition of other alternatives that exist. A genuine dilemma allows only two options. it is an “either/or” situation. Neither alternative is acceptable, but one must be chosen.

When a salesperson warns parents, “Without a home computer, your kids will never master mathematics,” he or she is ignoring the fact that many schools have terminals for children to use, and that most schools have other successful methods for teaching the subject.

7. *Appeals to illegitimate authority* use well-known, important, or respected persons or occupations to “sell” unrelated ideas or products. For example, unidentified physicians endorse filtered cigarettes. “Doctors everywhere testify that Carcinorettes contain less tar than any other cigarette on the market.” (Which doctors, No ethical physician would advertise any product.)

Here is an appeal to an irrelevant authority. “Mary Smith, local veterinarian, supports Joe Doaks for election to the School Board.” (What is the connection between veterinary medicine and school administration?)

8.*Ignoring the question* is a technique that pretends to answer an opponent's charges, but actually changes the subject. A politician might state, “In reply to my opponent's criticism that I do not support increasing government benefits for widows and orphans, I want to go on record as advocating that gasoline taxes be used to build a new public swimming pool to benefit the entire community.”

9. *Begging the question* tries to prejudice the reader by stating an unproved assumption as if it were a fact. Examples

“The total lack of morality in this country can be directly traced to the bad influence of television.” (Is there really a total lack of morality? If there were, would television be its sole cause?)

“The reason our high school graduates can neither read nor write is the weakening of the high school programs in the last two decades.” (Can none of them read or write?)

“The insane idea that the welfare system should be restructured is causing many problems in Washington, D.C.” (Who says the idea is insane?)

10. *Circular argument* restates the initial assumption instead of giving proof For instance, “Sherlock Holmes was a brilliant detective because he was so intelligent.” Since “brilliant” and “intelligent” are synonymous, no cause is given. A valid argument might be that Holmes was a brilliant detective because he understood logic and psychology.

11. *Argument ad hominem* (Latin for “argument to the man”) uses false statements that damage the character or reputation of an opponent to distract the audience from the real issues by questioning the opponent's credibility or morals. When politicians use this technique. it is called “mudslinging.” A candidate for political office might try to discredit a competitor by stating, “I certainly don't want to say that my opponent is lying on this issue, check the record yourselves.” (The implication is that you will agree that he or she is lying once you have seen the facts.)

Closely related to argument ad hominem are two commonly used fallacies. The first, name-calling, uses insults to try to beat down an opponent. For instance, a conservative banker and a liberal social worker might argue angrily over the need to raise taxes to provide more help for the needy. The banker might call the social worker a “radical extremist,” which sounds immoderate, unreasonable, and even dangerous. In return, the social worker might call the banker a “Wall Street profiteer,” which makes him or her seem greedy and unscrupulous.

The second, appeal to emotion, plays on people's fears and feelings. As an example, after World War II, the American mood was vehemently anti-communist. Joseph McCarthy (U.S. Senator from 1946 until 1957) began a series of investigations of the political activities of influential citizens, alleging that they were or had once been communists or communist sympathizers and therefore disloyal to the United States. Many Hollywood writers, directors, and actors were summoned to testify before the Senate Un-American Activities Committee (chaired by McCarthy). Those who protested or resisted the senator's methods because they believed their civil rights were being violated were labeled “communists” or “subversives” even though the charges against them were not proved. Because of fear of guilt by association, many were blacklisted and unable to work in the film industry for years. “MaCarthyism” or “MaCarthy witch hunt” are still common terms that describe the use of “scare” tactics and name calling to intimidate others. But these names can also be misused to turn others against a person making a just conclusion.

12. *Slanting* takes several forms. One is deliberate misinterpretation by making a true statement in such a way that is misleading. For instance, in the twelfth-century story The Romance of Tristan and Iseult, the lovers carry on an adulterous relationship because they have accidentally drunk a love potion. Iseult is married to King Mark (Tristan’s uncle). To prove her innocence of deliberate wrongdoing (remember, the potion was the cause of her liaison with Tristan), Iseult undergoes the Ordeal by Iron, a test requiring that she walk nine steps without her hands being burned by the red-hot iron she has to hold in them. She successfully completes this test after swearing an oath that no man except her husband (the king) and the poor beggar (Tristan in disguise) who carried her across the stream had ever held her in his arms. (Iseult isn’t lying, is she?) Does that mean she is telling the truth?)

The Slanted question is just as deceiving , for example, “When did you stop cheating on your taxes?” (Maybe you have never done such a thing in your life, but the question suggests that you have always cheated on your taxes and that the speaker is surprised that you have finally stopped.)

Gossip magazines and newspapers frequently use another form of slanting. They attract and deceive readers by quoting out of context or by omitting or rearranging facts; thus, the printed story may be completely different from what actually happened. The next time you are waiting in the check-out line at the supermarket, you might see something like this:

Headline on the magazine cover: PALACE GARDENER REAL FATHER OF BABY PRINCE

The article inside: Because their loyal highness, the Prince and Princess are required to attend so many state functions, they are often away from home for hours at a time. Although the baby prince is looked after by several devoted nursemaids, he is occasionally left for an hour or so in the care of Hiram Higby, a trusted gardener on the royal estate. While Higby tends to his duties, the baby snoozes in his pram. Higby, who has ten children of his own, jokingly describes himself as “a real dad, all right,” and confides to his friends that “I don’t mind being a father to one more, especially one as well behaved as the bonny baby prince.”

Here is another example of material taken out of context to mislead the reader. “Edward and Sarah Andrews announced today they will divorce. Their stormy six-year marriage has been marked by many trial separations. Lawyers for the couple cited irreconcilable differences as the cause of the split. Mrs. Andrews has long been a close friend of Henry Smith, the rich, glamorous playboy.” (The last sentence suggests that whatever is going on between Andrews and Mr. smith is the real cause of the “stormy” marriage and its subsequent breakup.)

13. *Faulty causation* totally ignores logic. Chance or coincidence is sometimes mistaken for true cause and effect. “If I hadn't worn my blue dress. Adam would never have asked me to marry him!” (Does he want to many you or your blue dress?)

Hasty or sweeping generalizations fail to consider all evidence before relating cause and effect. One event may be thought to cause another simply because it occurred first. This is called the *post hoc fallacy* (post hoc, ergo propter hoc. Latin for “after this, therefore because of this”): “My mother telephoned me last night while I was cooking dinner, so the meat burned.” (Don't blame your mother. You could have removed the meat from the broiler while you were talking to her.) “I went to France last summer; of course,. the value of the dollar immediately declined.'' (Really? Because you went abroad?)

Omissions in a chain of causes and effects can be confusing, too. Causal analysis should explain the why of any effect. Identify the most immediate cause and work backward to the underlying or ultimate cause (the reverse

order may also be used). In a long chain of events, each cause becomes the effect of the deeper cause:

Effect: The engine of my new car overheated and caught fire.

Causes: There was no oil in the engine. (immediate)

The garage mechanic forgot to replace the drain plug when the oil was changed. (deeper)

The mechanic was working on three cars at the same time. (deeper)

Another mechanic was unable to come to work that day; the garage failed to, hire a substitute, but tried to get the usual amount of work done. (ultimate)

PERSUASION

Argument may originate with an opinion about some issue, but it must use sound logic and include proof (facts, examples, statistics, or details) to reach a reliable conclusion and convince the reader or listener. On the other hand, persuasion is meant to convert. It may use some logic, but it often relies heavily on opinion, emotion, distorted facts, logical fallacies, or unreliable sources.

Most individuals occasionally use their persuasive skills on relatives and friends. However, propaganda is a more sophisticated form of persuasion that is regularly used by certain elelments of society—governments, elected officials, businesses, non-profit organizations, and others—to promote certain ideas or practices or to defeat opponents. The aim of propaganda is to affect the emotions of audiences to achieve a targeted goal. Our highly developed media communications systems—radio, television, and print—make it easy for propagandists to reach huge numbers of people with their messages, whether they are single one-minute spot announcements oh radio or television or well-placed publicity releases or advertisements in newspapers and magazines. As critical thinkers, you should be alert to both obvious and subtle attempts to affect, influence, or direct your ideas, beliefs or behavior.

In 1937, the institute for Propaganda Analysis published a list of seven devices that were (and still are) commonly used in propaganda to fool people by distorting logic. Propagandists do not present claims for you to examine intellectually; they send emotional messages for you to act upon. If you become familiar with these seven propaganda devices and understand the logical fallacies, you can easily recognize propaganda.

1. **The Name Calling Device** (see argument ad hominem). Propagandists attach labels to causes or individuals that they wish to discredit. During the Viet Nam War, the labels “hawk” and “dove” were used to show how people felt about the war. Initially, hawks had good motives. They were patriotic. They wanted to halt the spread of communism and were willing to sacrifice American lives and resources to do it. Later , hawks seemed unreasonable and their ideas became increasingly more and more U.S. involvement in the war and seemed be disregard both human and monetary costs. Doves, in the beginning were soft on communism and unpatriotic. In the end, doves seemed totally reasonable in their demands that the United States end the war to save both American and Vietnamese lives. Other common labels such as”big business,” “working people,” “special interests,” and “women’s equality” can be good or bad depending on who is making the claim and who is listening to it.

2. **The Glittering Generalities Device** (see sweeping generalizations and hasty generalizations) This propaganda technique overgeneralizes and arouses emotions, often by using “virtue” (good) and “vice” (bad) words or phrases. Most people find “good” words like honor, freedom, truth, duty, human right, fair play, social justice, public service, generosity, motherhood, and democracy very appealing because they suggest noble ideals to live by. On the other hand, “bad” words like human suffering, imperialists, colonialists, Wall Street profiteers, and warmongers produce anger and something violence. Both vice and virtue words may have a wide range of meaning within specific group.

Here are some excerpts from Woodrow Wilson’s speech of April 2, 1917, in which he asked the Congress to declare war against Germany. An excerpt from the response of Senator George W. Norris immediately follows. Identify as many vice and virtue words and phrases as possible.

…Property can be paid for; the lives of peaceful and innocent people cannot be. The present German submarines warfare against commerce is a warfare against mankind.

It is a war against all nations. American ships have been sunk, American lives taken, in ways which it has stirred us very deeply to learn of, but the ships and people of other neutral and friendly nations have been sunk and overwhelmed in the waters in the same way. There has been no discrimination. The challenge is to all mankind. Each nation must decide for itself how it will meet it. The choice we make for ourselves must be made with a moderation of counsel and temperateness of judgment befitting out character and our motives as a nation. We must put excited feeling away. Our motive will not be revenge or the victorious assertation of the physical might of the nation, but only the vindication o fright, of human right, of which we are only a single champion…

Just because we fight without rancor and without selfish object, seeking nothing for ourselves but what we shall wish to share with all free people, we shall, I feel confident, conduct our operations as belligerents without passion and ourselves observe…the principle of right and of fair play we profess to be fighting for….

…There are, it may be, many months of fiery trial and sacrifice ahead of us. It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy, for the rights of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own Governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free people as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free. To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.

Excerpt from the response of Senator George W. Norris of Nebraska:

To whom does the war bring prosperity? Not to the soldier who for …$16 per month shoulders his musket and goes into the trench, there to shed his blood and to die if necessary; not to the broken-hearted widow who waits for the return of the mangled body of her husband; not to the mother who weeps at the death of her brave boy; not to the little children who shiver with cold; not to the babe who suffers from hunger; nor to the millions of mothers and daughters who carry broken hearts to their graves. War brings no prosperity to the great mass of common and patriotic citizens. It increases the cost of living of those who toil and those who already must strain every effort to keep soul and body together. War brings prosperity to the stock gambler on Wall Street—to those who are already in possession of more wealth than can be realized or enjoyed….

Their object in having war and in preparing for war is to make money. Human suffering and the sacrifice of human life are necessary. But Wall Street considers only the dollars and the cents….The stock brokers would not, of course, go to war, because the very object they have in bringing on the war is profit, and therefore they must remain in their Wall Street offices in order to share in that great prosperity which they say war will bring. The volunteer officer, even the drafting officer, will not find them. They will be concealed in their palatial offices on Wall Street, sitting behind mahogany desks, covered up with clipped coupons—coupons soiled with the sweat of honest toil, coupons stained with mothers’ tears, coupons dyed in the lifeblood of their fellow men.

We are taking a step today that is fraught with untold anger. We are going into war upon the command of gold. We are going to run the risk of sacrificing millions of our countrymen’s lives in order that other countrymen may coin their lifeblood into money. And even if we do not cross the Atlantic and go into the trenches, we are going to pile up a debt that the toiling masses that shall come many generations after us will have to pay. Unborn millions will bend their backs in toil in order to pay for the terrible step we are now about to take. We are about to do the bidding of wealth’s terrible mandate. By our act we will make millions of our countrymen suffer,… and all because we want to preserve the commercial right of American citizens to deliver munitions of war to belligerent nations.

3. **The Transfer Device** (see appeals to illegitimate authority). With this method, the propagandist uses the authority or prestige of an individual or an institution to persuade others to accept an idea, product, or program that is unrelated to the authority’s area of expertise. Church groups advocate tax reform. A former vice presidential candidate speaks candidly with her daughter about women’s issues as part of a soft drink commercial. Obviously, any concept appears more worthy if it is presented or supported by a respected authority.

Symbols, too, are widely used as a visual means of propaganda. Clyde R. Miller, in his article, “How to detect propaganda” (Ford and Turpin, Language in Uniform【New York: Odyssey, 1967】) points out that “ the cross represents the Christian Church. The flag represents the nation. Cartoons featuring Uncle Sam represent a consensus of public opinion. These symbols stir emotions.

At their very sight, with the speed of light, is aroused the whole complex of feelings we have with respect to church or nation. A cartoonist by having Uncle Sam disapprove a budget for unemployment relief would have us feel that the whole United States disapprove relief costs.”

4. *The Testimonial Device* (see appeals to authority). Testimonials, both positive and negative, are frequently used because people tend to believe that “experience is the best teacher,” so when a famous film star, whose appearance shows that he clearly enjoys his food and drink, assures you in rich, mellow tones that a well-known wine maker “sells perfection, not just ordinary wine,” you pay attention. But is he worth listening to? Actually, he may know nothing at all about wine making, However, you can be sure he is earning a lot of money for making the commercial. If you want the wine, buy it for that reason, not because of the movie star’s pitch. Otherwise, a consumers’ research organization is a better source of information about almost all products than the famous men and women employed to advertise them. As for political, social, and import quotas, you are better off to research them yourself before making a decision or judgment. Remember that many testimonials are based on anticipated gain—of money, power or advantage.

5. **The Plain Folks Device** ( see hasty generalizations). This technique is a favorite of politicians to win your trust and your votes by showing that they are “just like everyone else.” How often have you read about or seen news reports showing candidates picnicking with farm families in Iowa, putting on hard hats to inspect a major construction project in New York, or having a Mother’s Day dinner with the residents of a retirement home in Florida? Former President Carter used this technique regularly by staying overnight in the homes of “typical” American families when he visited different parts of the country. Commercial ventures do the same thing with “family-owned and produced” products—yogurt, beer, and wine. If individuals (rather than large companies) stand behind the product, somehow it seems safe and good. It is even better if more than one generalization seems to be involved—Grandma’s Pie Shop or Pop’s Orangeade.

6. **The Card Stacking Device** (see begging the question, faulty causation, false dilemma, slanting, and ignoring the question). Card stacking is used intentionally to deceive people so that they will support a cause or ideal in which the propagandist strongly believes or from which he or she will realize financial gain. The device is full of half-truths, outright lies, omissions, and distortions. Certainly, Hitler used card stacking in his campaign to rid Germany and the rest of Europe of Jews. The same technique was used during World War II to explain relocation of American citizens of Japanese ancestry. Sometimes sales representatives are so eager or under so much pressure to make sales that they, too, “load the deck” as in the example of the low-mileage, green and white, ten-year-old used car driven by a little old lady from Pasadena only once a week to the market six blocks away from her home. It is only after you buy the car that you learn its true past history from its real former owner, Green & White Taxi Co.

7. **The Band Wagon Device** (see sweeping generalizations). Propagandists employ this device to persuade the masses to buy products, believe ideas, or commit actions. Many people feel more comfortable doing what everybody else is doing than thinking for themselves. Advertisers exert influence by using symbols to illustrate qualities that people admire; for instance, certain expensive makes of automobiles have become status symbols, and people who own them are supposed to be privileged and special, so that you and millions like you want to buy one. Never mind if the car is expensive to repair and in the shop half the time. A more harmful use of this technique is to persuade people to believe and practice certain ideas. propaganda is used to prejudice people against certain groups on the basis of religion, race, sex) political belief, occupation, etc. For instance, during the women's suffrage movement which culminated in the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, people who spoke out in favor of women's voting rights were vilified in many of the newspapers. Cartons showed suffragists wrecking homes, destroying the traditional family, and taking over the nation. Finally, propaganda is used to influence people to commit actions. In the 1980 election voters were warned that they would “throw their votes away” on third-party (Independent) candidate John Anderson, anybody who wanted his or her vote to count was advised to vote for a Democrat (Jimmy Carter) or a Republican (Ronald Reagan).

If you are asked to change your opinion about anything, evaluate the information you are given. Does it include one or more of the seven devices favored by propagandists, if so, remember that it may be intended to pull on your emotions and control your thoughts and actions.

WRITING AN ARGUMENT

When you write an argument, remember that critical thinkers try to see an issue in its broader context rather than in isolation, to use logical proofs to support a position, and to recognize and avoid fallacies and propaganda techniques. Critical thinkers are well-informed about both sides of an issue, understand weaknesses in their own and their opponents’ arguments, and recognize points on which a compromise can be reached. An argumentative essay should include the following information:

1. The first paragraph (a) identifies the issue, (b) briefly explains both sides of the argument, and (c) includes a thesis that states the side of the argument the essay defends.

2. Subsequent paragraphs (a minimum of two) develop the argument logically by discussing and using verifiable evidence.

3. the penultimate (next to last) paragraph anticipates (mentions) and refutes counter arguments that opponents might use in reacting to the proofs presented.

4. The concluding paragraph reexamines the essay’s position on the issue and reevaluate its correctness. The paper may end with a warning, prediction or value judgment.

Many sophisticated arguments contain these four elements in combination or in slightly different order, which in no way diminishes their merit. However, until you are skilled at judging the content of your own arguments, use the four point format to double check your writing.

Readings

**Smoking Bans: Meant to Protect or to Force Beliefs on Others?**

*In 1983, San Francisco voters adopted legislative regulating smoking in offices. In 1985, the Los Angeles City Council passed a law that limits smoking to certain designated areas in all enclosed public places—offices, restaurants, and elevators, for example. The two articles that follow were written before either the San Francisco or the Los Angeles measures were adopted. Lewis C. Solmon and William L. Lewis, the authors, are university professors who are authorities on the subject of the rights of individuals in regard to the issue of whether smoking should be allowed in enclosed public places, specifically the workplace. Both authors express their personal views, not necessarily those of the institutions with which they are affiliated. Dr. Solmon, of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles, is also a consultant to the Tobacco Institute, he opposes prohibition or regulation. Dr. Weiss, o f the Albers School of Business At Seattle University, has authored many articles about the smoking issue. He favors a strict smoking policy. Evaluate their essays as logical arguments. Note that comprehension questions and topics for critical analysis, discussion, and writing are combines to help you synthesize your findings.*

**Arguments in Favor of Bans Are Full of Holes**

Lewis C. Solmon

In a society where individual freedom of action is a basic right, and where productivity is a major concern, laws that make smoking illegal in most enclosed places are ill-advised. In the first place, such ordinances may be unenforceable, or enforceable only at great cost—both monetary and social. Second, once the principle of legislating behavior becomes established, where does it stop? Will the Los Angeles City Council next try to reduce heart attacks by passing a law limiting consumption of red meat, which may increase cholesterol ?

Some might argue that, because of economies of scale in collecting and disseminating information, the government would be the logical body to administer measures relating to smoking and health. But the public appears to be well aware of the smoking and health controversy. Because consumers are making choices that some believe are a risk to their health does not necessarily imply that they have inadequate knowledge.

We must avoid failing into the trap of thinking that if consumers do not respond to a piece of information, they do not have enough information or do not understand what they have.

Since the practice of smoking has not declined as certain groups would like, they are offering new types of “information” to foster such a result. These groups are trying to convince employers that corporate profits will decline (by as much as $4,600 per smoker per year) if smokers are hired. Such arguments are without merit.

It is alleged that smokers are absent from work more than nonsmokers. It is not clear, however, that a statistical correlation between smoking and absenteeism really exists. But even if it does, the connection between smoking and absenteeism is unproven and improbable. Numerous factors have been associated with absenteeism, including age, sex, family responsibilities, personal problems, use of drugs, type of employment, job responsibilities, job satisfaction and commuting time.

More specifically, many studies have reported a higher incidence of smoking among blue-collar workers than among white-collar workers. Therefore, if relatively low-paid assembly-line workers are more inclined to skip work occasionally than are top executives, a correlation between smoking and absenteeism would be observed. Actually, however, the absenteeism probably would be linked to boredom, lack of commitment to the employer, low pay and so on.

Merely Using Benefit

Unionized workers negotiate a benefits package that includes salary, insurance, vacations and sick leave. To get more of one benefit (e.g., sick leave) implies giving up some of another (e.g., salary). To take advantage of the total benefits package, workers must use what is theirs. Thus, workers tend to use all their vacation time and all their sick leave. If unionized smokers are entitled to more sick leave than are nonunionized managers who smoke less, they will be observed to take more sick days. But this is not the result of smoking. Rather, it is due to the trade-off between sick leave and relatively lower wages.

Companies incur costs for all benefits they offer, and allowable sick leave is more costly than any other benefit. Workers who take more than their allowable sick leave see their salaries reduced and so they, not their employers, incur the costs. In sum, there is no proof that absenteeism is caused by smoking.

Another claim frequently put forth as a cost of smoking is time lost on the job while smokers put down their pens or tools to light up. This argument assumes that smokers are able to take more leisure time at work than are nonsmokers. But nonsmokers may spend time drinking coffee, gossiping or daydreaming. And productivity should not be measured by minutes worked per day, but by output. It is well-known that work breaks, regardless of how they are spent, can increase total productivity.

**Bid to Reorient Behavior**

My own studies show that other alleged costs to companies from hiring smokers are equally invalid. This general line of argument is an example of efforts by anti-smoking groups be disseminate faulty information in an attempt to reorient behavior in a direction other than the one being chosen by informed citizens.

It has also been argued that workplace smoking bans will improve employee morale. Employers who seek optimal impact from expenditures to improve morale must determine the costs and benefits of various ways to achieve this goal. Before blindly implementing workplace smoking bans, they must ask what is the evidence that this is a more effective means of improving morale than would be piping in music, buying new furniture, giving longer coffee breaks to all employees or increasing salaries. Moreover, since about 50 million Americans are smokers, it should be obvious that a smoking ban is bound to offend a substantial portion of any firm's employees.

And, if substantial numbers of workers in a particular trade or profession are excluded from hiring consideration because they smoke, there are inherent inefficiencies. The situation, from an economic efficiency perspective, is not different from that which exists when blacks, women or other subgroups are systematically excluded for reasons unrelated to job performance.

It is the job of public officials to make sure that accurate information, not data contrived to foster certain behavior, is available, and then follow firms and individuals to act freely according to their informed cost-benefit analyses.

**Curbs Gives Boost to productivity, Morale**

William L. Weis

On Tuesday, the voters of San Francisco will decide whether to protect one of the most basic of all civil rights: the right to pursue one's livelihood in a safe and healthful environment.

Fortunately, with or without legal mandate, a growing number of conscientious employers—including Merle Norman Cosmetics, Unigard Insurance Group and Campbell Soup Co.—are recognizing that untrammeled

smoking in the work placed constitutes a fundamental conflict with human rights, and they are responding that either ban or severely curtail smoking in their organizations. This trend toward more and stronger smoking restrictions is certain to continue because of growing awareness of both the adverse health effects from working in a smoky environment and the substantial incremental costs associated with smoking on the job.

Despite confusion created by tobacco propaganda, no one’s rights are abridged unreasonably by a smoking ban at the workplace. All employees enjoy the same rights, which are, by reason, restricted to behaviors that do not infringe upon the rights of colleagues to a comfortable, healthful work environment. Similar behavioral restrictions apply to singing and whistling on the job (nonhealth-related irritant) and to using nondesignated implumbed repositories when nature calls (both a health hazard and irritant). Normal employees comply easily with these behavioral constraints without feeling, in the words of the Tobacco Institute, like “second-class citizens.”

Probably the most persuasive evidence arguing in favor of smoking restrictions is the cumulative result of several major employee surveys showing that smoking is a prime source of impaired morale among workers. Comprehensive surveys conducted earlier this year at Pacific Telephone and Pacifi Northwest Bell, for example, document that nearly 80% of their employees (both smokers and nonsmokers) want to see smoking either banned or confined to separate smoking areas. Even a majority of smokers at both companies favor a complete ban or separate areas, confirming that the so-called controversy over workplace smoking restrictions is not a feud between “antismokers” (a term coined by the Tobacco institute) and smokers, but between employees, but smokers and nonsmokers, and the American tobacco industry.

Another reason commonly cited by employers who have already banned or curtailed smoking on their premises is that enlightened organizations feel that they should no longer impose on their employees an environment that is known to be contaminated by hazardous substances. Reasonable men and women now recognize that involuntary smoking (i.e. , breathing smoke of one's co-worker) is a serious health hazard and that forcing employees to assume that hazard is an unconscionable accommodation to a minority of the work force. (Government reports indicate that an estimated 31% of employed Americans smoke.)

Employers who have imposed workplace bans have, for the most part, been especially sensitive to the problems encountered by smokers when faced with temporary withdrawal from a very powerful drug addiction (nicotine, according to U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, is the most addictive drug in the United States). But the mandate to protect employees from exposure to a toxic substance supersedes the desire to accommodate an addictive behavior in the workplace, when that behavior threatens the health and comfort of co-workers.

Perhaps the reason cited least often for restricting or prohibiting smoking in the workplace—but, paradoxically, a reason that has attracted considerable interest in the popular press—is to take advantage of the substantial cost savings available to a smoke-free business. Employers who have implemented strong smoking policies—policies that ban smoking on company premises and restrict hiring to applicants who agree to be nonsmokers during working hours are reporting positive and envious productivity effects from the smoking restrictions.

These benefits accrue from such factors as lower ratees of absenteeism and turnover; reduced costs for fire, life, industrial accident and health insurance; lower expenditures for routine cleaning and maintenance, property damage and equipment and furniture replacement; greatly reduced rates of working-age mortality and early retirement; elimination of a major drain on employee efficiency—the frequent informal smoke break, and reduced risk of costly litigation initiated by employees whose health is damaged by working in a smoky environment.

These factors alone can deliver cost savings measurable in terms of thousands of dollars per smoker per year to an organization that becomes totally smoke-free. Nevertheless, the most important benefit of a workplace smoking policy is enhanced employee morale. The direct costs associated with work-place smoking are collectively dwarfed by the indirect costs owing to impaired morale when employees are forced to tolerate what most believe today is an unjust, if not inhuman, imposition of irritating and toxic air contamination in their work areas.

Impediment to Sales

The trend toward workplace bans is considered by the tobacco industry to be a major catalyst in eroding the social acceptability of smoking, and hence an impediment to tobacco sales. The industry's argument bridges absurdity with vulgarity. On the absurd side, it states that higher absenteeism is a cost-free factor for businesses, since sick leave benefits are a fixed component of employee compensation packages. Economists whose thinking extends beyond grammar school analysis recognize that excess rates of absenteeism, regardless of the structure of sick-leave benefits, represent an incremental cost of doing business, if only from necessitating an inflated work force.

Moving toward vulgarity, the industry enlists a debased, Tobacco Institute tactic by stating that refusing to hire smokers constitutes a situation that “is not different from that which extends when women, blacks or other subgroups are systematically excluded for reasons unrelated to job performance.”

Not different? Employment discrimination on the basis of sex and race is illegal in this country, and immoral to most of its citizens. Selective hiring based on achieved qualities, on the other hand, is both expected and considered vital in a competitive economy. For the tobacco industry to trivialize the moral depravity of racism and sexism is a vile affront to every American who has been a victim of racial and sexual prejudice, and to every individual with a moral conscience.

The San Francisco ordinance, should it become law, will neither convey nor withdraw preferential rights. It will merely guarantee that all employees who wish to work in a safe, smoke-free environment will be entitled to that basic right.

Regardless of legal mandate, many enlightened, conscientious business organizations now have or are planning a strict smoking policy. Smoking is no longer considered an appropriate behavior in most professional work environments, and that attitude is extending rapidly to other work settings where employee health, morale and productivity are deemed more important than accommodating addictive behavior.

**Comprehension Questions**

1. What is the issue? What is Solmon's position? What position does Weis take?

2. Every citizen is entitled to individual freedom of action unless that freedom takes away someone else's basic rights. How does each author use the idea of basic freedom to support the ideas in his essay?

3. Solmon says that smokers are well aware of the health dangers that government studies have linked to smoking, but they choose to take the risk and smoke anyway. What is Weis’s response? Is the risk assumed solely by the smokers?

4. Does Solmon agree that smokers are absent from work more often than nonsmokers? What type of worker does he say has a higher incidence of smoking? How does this relate to the type of work done? Why does Solmon say workers use all their sick leave benefits if they are not really sick? Employee absenteeism costs the company money, Solmon says. What kinds of activities cause employees to lose time on the job? Who pays for the time lost?

5. Does Weis agree with Solmon that when employees use their sick leave benefits, the employer doesn't have additional expense because sick leave is a fixed cost? What does Weis mean when he says excessive absenteeism causes the work force to be inflated? Who pays for this?

6 .Weis states that employers save a substantial amount of money when smoking is not permitted in the workplace. What kinds of direct costs are reduced? Does Solmon agree that it costs the employer more to employ smokers than nonsmokers? Why does he say people use this kind of argument?

7. Both authors discuss preferential hiring (hiring only nonsmokers). Does Weis agree with Solmon's position that excluding smokers from the work force is the same as excluding blacks, women, or other subgroups for reasons unrelated to job performance? Explain.

8. Do Solmon and Weis differ on whether a smoking ban will improve employee morale in the workplace, Explain their positions.

9. What percentage of employed Americans smoke? Why is this figure important in evaluating arguments?

10. Both essays begin with a discussion of basic rights. Do the authors get back to this concept in their conclusions?

**Topics for Critical Analysis, Discussion and Writing**

1. Identify the four points of argument in each essay.(Remember that the first point names the issue, briefly mentions each side, and includes a thesis that takes a position relating to one side or the other.)

2. Evaluate the credibility of each author as an authority on the subject of smoking in the workplace.

3. Examine the tone (attitude) of each author. What kind of language is used by each? Why?

4. Discuss the evidence used by each author to support his position. Identify any logical fallacies or propaganda techniques that you believe are used to get the message across.

5. Argue for or against smoking bans in the workplace. Use evidence from the Solmon or Weis articles to support your position. Identify your sources in the essay, for example, Weis states that “an estimated 31% of employed Americans smoke,” an important fact in determining whether a smoking ban would cause extreme hardship. According to Solmon, “many studies have reported a higher incidence of smoking among blue-collar workers then among white-collar workers,” but he believes it is impossible to correlate absenteeism and smoking.

6. Writee an argument in which you defend or attack smoking in one of the following situations: (a) in restaurants; (b) on commercial airliners; (c) on city buses; (d) in hospitals, (e) in any public waiting area; for example, a ticket line at the movies.

**We Should Cherish Our Children's Freedom to Think**

Kie Ho

*Kie Ho, who grew up in Indonesia and is now a Southern California business executive, argues in the following article that the educational system in the United States is the best in the world because it teaches students to think and to experiment with ideas. The author criticizes educational systems that rely solely on memorization and rote learning, because those methods stifle creative impulses. As you rend the article, compare or contrast the educational system of your country with that of the United States.*

Americans who remember “the good old days” are not alone in complaining about the educational system in this country. Immigrants, too, complain, and with more up-to-date comparisons. Lately I have heard a Polish refugee express dismay that his daughter's high school has not taught her the difference between Belgrade and Prague. A German friend was furious when he learned that the mathematics test given to his son on his first day as a freshman included multiplication and division. A Lebanese boasts that the average high-school graduate in his homeland can speak fluently in Arabic, French and English. Japanese businessmen in Los Angeles sent their children to private schools staffed by teachers imported from Japan to learn mathematics at Japanese levels, generally considered at least a year more advanced than the level here.

But I wonder, if American education is so tragically inferior, why is it that this is still the country of innovation?

I think I found the answer on an excursion to the Laguna beach Museum of Art, where the work of school children was on exhibit. Equipped only with colorful yarns, foil paper, felt pens and crayons, they had transformed simple paper lunch bags into, among other things, a waterfall with flying fish, Broom Hilda the witch and a house with a woman in a skimpy bikini hiding behind a swinging door. Their public school had provided these children with opportunities and directions to fulfill their creativity, something that people tend to dismiss or take for granted.

When I was 12 in Indonesia, where education followed the Dutch system, I had to memorize the names of all the world’s major cities, from Kabul to Karachi. At the same age, my son, who was brought up a Californian, thought that Buenos Aires was Spanish for good food—a plate of tacos and burritos, perhaps. However, unlike his counterparts in Asia and Europe, my son had studied creative geography. When he was only 6, he drew a map of the route that he traveled to get to school, including the streets and their names, the buildings and traffic signs and the houses that he passed.

Disgruntled American parents forget that in this country their children are able to experiment freely with ideas; without this they will not really be able to think or to believe in themselves.

In my high school years, we were models of dedication and obedience; we sat to listen, to answer only when asked, and to give the only correct answer. Even when studying word forms, there were no alternatives. In similes, pretty lips were always as red as sliced pomegranates, and beautiful eyebrows were always like a parade of black clouds. Like children in many other countries in the world, I simply did not have a chance to choose, to make decisions. My son, on the contrary, told me that he got a good laugh—and an A—from his teacher for concocting “the man was as nervous as Richard Pryor at a Ku Klux Klan convention.”

There’s no doubt that American education does not meet high standards in such basic skills as mathematics and language. And we realize that our youngsters are ignorant of Latin, put Mussolini in the same category as Dostoevski, cannot recite the periodic Table by heart. Would we, however, prefer to stuff the developing little heads of our children with hundreds of geometry problems, the names of rivers in Brazil and 50 lines from “The Canterbury Tales”? Do we really want to retard their impulses, frustrate their opportunities for self expression?

When I was 8, I had to memorize Hamlet's “To be or not to be” soliloquy flawlessly. In his English class, my son was assigned to write a love letter to Juliet, either in Shakespearean jargon or in modern lingo. (He picked the latter, his Romeo would take Juliet to an arcade for a game of Donkey Kong.)

Where else but in America can a history student take the role of Lyndon Johnson in an open debate against another student playing HoChi Minh? It is unthinkable that a youngster in Japan would dare to do the same regarding the role of Hirohito in World War II.

Critics of American education cannot grasp one thing, something that they don't truly understand because they are never deprived of it: freedom.

This most important measurement has been omitted in the studies of the quality of education in this century, the only one, I think, that extends even to children the license to freely speak, write and be creative. Our public education certainly is not perfect, but it is a great deal better than any other.

**Comprehension Questions**

1. What are some of the complaints of immigrants about the educational system in the Unites States? What do parents want their children to learn?

2. What kinds of innovation did the author observe on a visit to an art museum? Why were the exhibits important?

3. What educational techniques were stressed in Indonesia? How did they differ from American educational methods?

4. What happens to children who are not able to experiment freely with ideas? How important is choice in the educational system?

5. The author concedes that “American education does not meet high standards in such basic skills as mathematics and language,” but states that “it is a great deal better than any other” How can you explain this?

**Topics for Critical Analysis, Discussion, and Writing**

1. How well-qualified is the author to evaluate the educational system of the United States in relation to those of other countries?

2. Identify the four points of argument in the article. Are any of them combined? What is the result?

3. Discuss the evidence (the visit to the museum, the author's own and his son's childhood experiences, examples from literature and other cultures) given in support of the thesis. What do they suggest about the author?.

4. Argue for or against the following statement:

The American educational system is better than any other for preparing students to enter colleges and universities.

Make up a study sheet comparing and contrasting the American system with your own. Based on your findings, take a position and defend your thesis.

5. A critical thinker is able to see an individual problem within a broader context. Does Ho do this? Explain.,