

Grade 9 Unit 19: Fallacies

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GRADE 9 | English

UNIT 19

Fallacies

We all want to be heard. Part of being who we are depends on having opportunities to express our thoughts and feelings, and sometimes, having the need to be believed in. We try to justify our intentions and convince others to believe in us. However, we often find ourselves falling short of getting them on our side. Why? Because we use the wrong logic and language. In this unit, you will learn about the different types of fallacies writers commit, as well as know how to avoid committing them yourself.



Objectives

In this unit, you should be able to:

- identify key concepts involving fallacies;
- identify and use logical fallacies; and
- judge the relevance and worth of ideas, soundness of author's reasoning, and the effectiveness of the presentation.



Lesson 1: What Is a Logical Fallacy?

People are gifted with the ability of speech, but it does not mean that we are always able to use it effectively. Sometimes, humans as we are, we say some things that we have never thought much about and we end up causing misunderstandings among people or hurting others. Thus, it is important that we become aware of how sensible our arguments are. In this lesson you will learn about fallacies.



Essential Question

Why do we have to be keen with our arguments?



Warm-up!

Can you recall something that your parents or your siblings told you that you found hard to believe or understand? Why do you think does it not make sense to you? Share your experience with your seatmate.



Learn About It!

When people state **arguments**, they give a reason or set of reasons in order to persuade others that an action or idea is right or wrong.

However, sometimes, writers commit mistakes in forming their arguments. These errors are called **fallacies**. They can either be committed deliberately in order to deceive or persuade people to do something, or unintentionally if the person is not aware of it.



There are two types of fallacies--**formal** and **informal**. Formal fallacy refers to the mistake in the logical structure of the argument, especially if the **premise**, or an assertion, belief, or assumption, does not logically connect with the **conclusion**. If this happens, the **validity** diminishes.

Informal fallacy, on the other hand, is a flaw in the relationships between the argument and the supporting evidence, usually committed by faulty use of language or by unwise use of irrelevant information.

Below is an example of a formal fallacy:

Premise 1: Some men are intelligent.

Premise 2: Peter is a man.

Conclusion: Therefore, Peter is intelligent.

In this example, the conclusion is clearly not correct because in Premise 1, it says "Some", therefore, we cannot be completely sure that Peter is intelligent even if he is certainly a man.

Vocabulary

- **deliberately** - intentionally
- **premise** - an assertion, belief, or assumption
- **validity** - the soundness of a statement

Below is an example of an informal fallacy:

"I will not vote for Clarissa as our president because she comes from a broken family and her grade in math is even lower than mine."

This is an example of an informal fallacy because (1) the language used by the writer is an attack or unjust critique on Clarissa's reputation or competence without really knowing her completely, and (2) because the supporting reasons are not valid enough for someone to be discredited to become a president. Maybe it would be more logical if the writer states Clarissa's lack of achievements in her previous term as a more viable reason not to elect her as president.

Let's Check In!

Look at the two arguments below. Choose which one is formal and which is informal. Then, discuss with your classmate why they are fallacious.

"All of my relatives tell me I should study in UP Manila for my pre-medicine course because all of them studied there. However, I don't like to because all of my relatives who studied there did not have successful careers. That school might not help me turn into a doctor that I want to be."

"If God were to show himself to me right now in flesh and bones, then that would prove He truly exists. God has not shown himself up to me in physical form until now. Therefore, He doesn't exist."

**Check Your Understanding**

Identify whether the statement contains a formal fallacy (F) or an informal fallacy (I).

1. The job applicant does not smile much and has no sense of fashion. We should not hire her.
2. Cora told police that a woman with a tattoo stole her phone. Jessa has a tattoo. Therefore, Cora told police that Jessa stole her phone.
3. We will never progress as a nation if we allow all Chinese to remain in the Philippines.
4. Majority of the masses support the president. Therefore, all those who support the president are part of the masses.
5. We won't be at peace until there is a single American in this country.



Let's Step Up!

Read an editorial from a newspaper and underline the fallacies that you see. Identify whether it is a formal or informal fallacy. Share your findings with a classmate and explain why you think it is fallacious.

Let's Revisit The Essentials!

Go back to the essential question on the introduction page and discuss in class.



Lesson 2: Fallacies of Logos

One of the ways a writer persuades his/her audience to believe in his/her point is through the use of sound and valid arguments and supporting evidence. This kind of appeal is called logos. However, sometimes writers fail to give reasonable arguments which misleads the audience and affects the credibility of the writer.



Essential Question

Why is logic important in everyday speech?



Warm-up!

With a partner, discuss why you think students follow the school rules below.

1. wearing a school ID on campus
2. not using cell phones in class
3. not eating in classrooms
4. having the prescribed hairstyle for girls and boys
5. wearing the school uniform



Learn About It!

The following are common fallacies of logos and their examples:

Type of Fallacy	Definition	Example
Circular reasoning	Goes back to the original statement and does not provide fresh and meaningful justification	"If bringing cell phones in class was not prohibited, then it would not have been prohibited by the Discipline Office."
False dilemma	Presents only two options to choose from	"Whoever does not vote for me in the election is either a loyalist or a terrorist."
Slippery slope	Exaggerates the consequence of an event as though it is catastrophic, when in fact, it is not that dangerous	"If we include lessons on romantic relationships in class, many of our female students will become pregnant next year."
Questionable cause	Cause is not directly linked to the effect	"I got healed of my migraine because I took a shower thrice today."
Hasty generalization	Evidence is insufficient in order to make such a conclusion	"That beach resort must really be excellent as we saw many visitors for the two times we went there."
Non-sequitur (It doesn't follow)	Illogical connection between the premise and the conclusion	UP is the best school for engineering since many of its engineering students pass the board exam.

Read the sample text below:

“Men ought not to swear profanely, because it is wrong. It is wrong for the reason that it is contrary to the Moral Law, and it is contrary to the Moral Law because it is contrary to the Scriptures. It is contrary to the Scriptures because it is contrary to the will of God, and we know it is contrary to God's will because it is wrong.”

This is an example of circular reasoning because it starts with the argument that swearing profanely is “wrong”. However, it does not explain clearly why it is wrong other than how it violates doctrines and God’s will. It simply ends with exactly the same argument that it should not be done because it is “wrong.” It would have been better, for example, if the writer mentioned how swearing profanely can hurt other people’s feelings compared to just simply saying “it is contrary to the Scriptures.”

Vocabulary

- **dilemma** - a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives, especially equally undesirable ones
- **catastrophic** - extremely unfortunate or unsuccessful
- **profanely** - having or indicating contempt, irreverence, or disrespect for a divinity or something sacred

Let's Check In!

Give one example of each fallacy of logos that you have heard from your family members, friends, or schoolmates.
Share these with your classmates.



Check Your Understanding

Identify which fallacy of logos below was exhibited by each line. Write the letter of your answer.

- A. Circular reasoning
- B. False dilemma
- C. Slippery slope

- D. Questionable cause
- E. Hasty generalization
- F. Non-sequitur

1. "If the government raises the tax for all sugared drinks then taxes for coffee drinks will increase as well."
2. "It's just my first day in this country and I know I'm not going to enjoy it here."
3. "That shawarma I ate must be the reason why my throat hurts now."
4. "My teacher is an honest person because she gives me honest remarks."
5. "You can just do two things to graduate: either depend on your classmate or yourself alone."



Let's Step Up!

Choose a recent editorial article in a local broadsheet of your choice that you can understand and relate well. Check for arguments that violate the correct use of logos. Underline any and be ready to explain to your seatmate why you think it is fallacious.

Let's Revisit The Essentials!

Go back to the essential question on the introduction page and discuss in class.



Lesson 3: Fallacies of Ethos

Sometimes, writers convince people about their credibility by emphasizing on their own character and reputation as a writer. This is called *ethos*. However, some writers overdo this to the point that people end up just focusing on the writer's merits and not on the validity of the argument itself.



Essential Question

Why should we consider the credibility of the writer before we believe him or her?



Warm-up!

Share your answer to the following questions:

1. Who are your favorite writers?
2. Why do you like reading their work?
3. Do you believe everything that they write? Why/why not?



Learn About It!

When people depend so much on their trust and respect for the writer's character and reputation, the **fallacy of ethos** can be committed. The following are common examples:



Type of Fallacy	Definition	Example
Appeal to authority	Readers are persuaded to believe in an argument just because an expert believed so, even if the argument is not really logical.	A consumer patronizes Brand X toothpaste just because a dentist from a top hospital in the country claims that Brand X toothpaste is the best.
Appeal to person	Attack on the person's character, situation, and actions, and not on the argument itself	"Your ideas about how to make our economy rise are questionable since you just came from a rural area and know nothing about industrialization."
Strawperson	Argument is treated simplistically then it is attacked because of how "shallow" it is	People who don't support same-sex marriage hate homosexuals.

Read the excerpt below from *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare:

*Friends, Romans, countrymen! Lend me your ears;
I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones:
So let it be with Cæsar! The Noble Brutus
Hath told you Cæsar was ambitious.
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Cæsar answered it.
Here, under leave of Brutus, and the rest—
For Brutus is an honorable man,*

*So are they all, all honorable men—
Come I to speak in Cæsar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;*

Vocabulary

- **interred** - placed (a corpse) in a grave or tomb, typically with funeral rites
- **grievous** - (of something bad) very severe or serious
- **brutish** - resembling or characteristic of a savage animal.

*And Brutus is an honorable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Cæsar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Cæsar hath wept;
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says, he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honorable man.
You all did see, that, on the Lupercal,
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And sure, he is an honorable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause;
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?
Oh, judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason!—Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Cæsar,
And I must pause till it come back to me. [Weeps.]*

Notice how Antony, in one of the greatest orations known in literature, repeated his sarcasm that “Brutus is an honorable man” for killing Julius Caesar because “he was ambitious”. Antony clearly attacks Brutus’ character, **an appeal to person**, and not the actual argument about why it is reasonably wrong that Brutus killed a man, regardless if he is the great Julius Caesar. He could have simply argued about how merciless and unjust it is to kill a man without letting him undergo a proper trial and without confirming whether he really had dangerous “ambitions” that would be detrimental to the fate of the country.



Check Your Understanding

Identify what fallacy of ethos is committed in each statement. Write the letter of your answer.

- A. Appeal to authority
- B. Appeal to person
- C. Strawperson

1. I will not stop smoking as the president of the country smokes himself.
2. The lawmakers who wanted death penalty re-implemented are not Christians.
3. Sarah Geronimo says she maintains her smooth and fair skin because of Dra. Belo; I'd better go to her to have my skin taken care of, too. I will surely be as beautiful as Sarah.
4. Ferdinand Marcos' grandchildren should never be allowed to run for office because of how their grandfather abused our economic resources.
5. That toothpaste is certainly the best because the my dentist neighbor already said so.



Let's Step Up!

With the same editorial article you used in Lesson 2, identify if there is a fallacy of ethos you can find in it. Underline it and share it in class.

Let's Revisit The Essentials!

Go back to the essential question on the introduction page and discuss in class.



Lesson 4: Fallacies of Pathos

One of the easiest ways to persuade a person to believe in a writer's point of view is by appealing to his/her emotions, or what is called **pathos**. However, since this is based on feelings, some reasons purely based on the heart and not on the mind may not make sense and may mislead people to make wrong judgments.



Essential Question

Why is it common for writers to appeal to people's emotions?



Warm-up!

Choose 3 advertisements from the newspapers that promote products that you actually use and bring it to class. Share with your seatmate these ads and tell them what specific words enticed you to buy the product.



Learn About It!

When people make illogical arguments because they largely appeal to the emotions of the readers, a **fallacy of pathos** can be committed. The following are its common types and their examples:

Type of Fallacy	Definition	Example
Argument to the people	Appeals to the reader's values and beliefs for them to accept an idea Entices people to believe the same thing just because many people believe in it too	An advertisement for a condominium claims that only people with sophistication and good taste choose their condominiums.

Argument from ignorance	Persuades people to believe in something just because there was no evidence for or against it that exists	"Doppelgangers do not really exist because I haven't seen any yet."
Argument to pity	Appeals for the reader's pity for his/her deplorable situation	"Please do not put me in prison; I only stole those phones because my children do not have anything to eat."
Argument by force	Uses threat or force for the people to believe in an idea	"If you do not stop arguing against my answer to the question, I'll give you a surprise quiz!"
Appeal to traditional wisdom	Continuing to believe in a practice or belief simply because it has been part of the culture for a long time	"Burning of widows should not be stopped because it has been the practice in this village for many centuries now."
Appeal to common practice	Being convinced in doing the same thing most people do simply because it has been done for a long time	"I bribe policemen every time I get caught violating rules because it has been a habit for many drivers ever since."
Red herring	Evading the issue by diverting the attention of the reader to another issue or topic	"Stop accusing me of corruption. Have you not noticed how many resorts and parks I have built for this town in just a matter of 3 years?"

Read the excerpt below from *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare:

*Friends, Romans, countrymen! Lend me your ears;
I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones:
So let it be with Cæsar! The Noble Brutus
Hath told you Cæsar was ambitious.
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Cæsar answered it.
Here, under leave of Brutus, and the rest—
For Brutus is an honorable man,*

*So are they all, all honorable men—
Come I to speak in Cæsar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honorable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Cæsar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Cæsar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says, he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honorable man.
You all did see, that, on the Lupercal,
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And sure, he is an honorable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?
Oh, judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,*

Vocabulary

- **entice** - attract
- **deplorable** - shockingly bad in quality
- **evading** - escaping or avoiding, especially by cleverness or trickery

*And men have lost their reason!—Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Cæsar,
And I must pause till it come back to me. [Weeps.]*

Aside from fallacies of ethos with Antony's attack on Brutus' character, this text is also loaded with many **appeals to pity and appeal to the values of the people of Rome**. Again, instead of focusing on how unreasonable it is that Julius Caesar was killed without proper investigation and trial, Antony opted to enumerate what good Caesar has done to the people so that people could consider him "an honorable man", discrediting what Brutus had thought of Caesar's character that led him to assassinate him. However, when one digs in deeper, what he mentioned are not the only indications that a person is indeed "honorable" and not "ambitious". Instead of focusing on the illogicality and mercilessness of Brutus' action, he appealed to the loyalty and love of the people for Caesar for them to be angry with the brutal murder of their leader. These are not enough reasons to bring Caesar's death to justice.

Let's Check In!

Go back to the ads that you brought to class for Warm Up. Is there a fallacy of pathos that you can find there?
What specific type of fallacy was it?



Check Your Understanding

Identify what fallacy of pathos is committed in each statement. Choose the letter of your answer.

- A. Argument to the people
- B. Argument from ignorance
- C. Argument to pity
- D. Argument by force
- E. Appeal to traditional wisdom

- F. Appeal to common practice
- G. Red herring

1. "I will vote for Mr. Vasquez as president because the entire village will also do."
2. "Ma'am, please do not charge me of cheating. I was not able to study because I suffered from a terrible migraine last night."
3. "I am not lying to you. Have you already forgotten the good I have done to you when you were helpless?"
4. "My grandmother said that toothpaste has long been used in our family to heal cold sores, so I use it."
5. "Sheena should not be accused of plagiarism because they do not have evidence that she really borrowed the notes of her seatmate and copied them."



Let's Step Up!

Choose 3 advertisements you can see in newspapers that you think contain fallacies of pathos. Share your findings with your seatmate.

Let's Revisit The Essentials!

Go back to the essential question on the introduction page and discuss in class.



Performance Task

Letter to the Editor

Goal

Let the editor know your opinion about their ideas.

Role

You are a concerned reader and citizen who would like to voice out his/her opinion about an editorial article in a newspaper.

Audience

You will be writing to the editor of the article and it will also be read by the patrons of the newspaper.

Situation

You read an editorial article and you would like to point out some of the things that you think were fallacious about the article.

Product, Performance, and Purpose

1. Create a letter to the editor that contains:
 - a) the ideas in the article that you agree with
 - b) the ideas that you disagree with because they are illogical in your opinion
 - c) substantial justification for your claims and opinions
 - d) what you think the writer should do moving forward
2. Choose one editorial article that you would like to comment on.
3. After reading, make an outline for your essay that contains all the requirements mentioned in number 1.
4. Make a draft from your outline. Make sure it follows the following format: Times New Roman, 12 font size, justified alignment, in A4 size paper.
5. Let your seatmate peer-edit your work first before you submit your work to your teacher.

Standards and Criteria for Success

Your project will be graded using the rubric below:

	Criteria	Beginning (0-12 points)	Developing (13-16 points)	Accomplished (17-20 points)	Score
General	Content (Focus on details/events are clearly evident; it is clearly related to the topic.)	Two or more requirements were not met.	One content requirement was not met	All the required contents were included	
	Organization (Logical progression of details/events; clear transitions between ideas.)	Transitional devices were barely used	Transitional devices were used in some parts	Transitional devices were used effectively; ideas are very easy to follow	
	Language (spelling, mechanics, grammar and usage)	There were more than 2 language errors.	There were one-two language errors.	There were no language errors.	
Task-specific	Fallacies spotted	There was a fallacy spotted but the reasons why it was deemed fallacious was not clear.	There was only one fallacy spotted and there was a clear reason why it was deemed fallacious.	There were at least 2 fallacies spotted and there were clear reasons why they were fallacious.	
Score:					



Self-Check: How Well Did I Learn?

Do a self-check on how well you learned the lessons in this unit. Place a checkmark in the appropriate box.

<i>Skills</i>	<i>I think I need more practice and assistance</i>	<i>I am familiar and can perform well with minimal assistance</i>	<i>I am confident that I can perform this on my own</i>
I can identify the key concepts about logical fallacies.			
I can identify and use logical fallacies.			
Judge the relevance and worth of ideas, soundness of author's reasoning, and the effectiveness of the presentation.			

Wrap Up

- **Fallacies** are errors in argumentation that can either be **formal** (based on the argument's **premises** and conclusion) or **informal** (based on the language and the **validity** of the evidences used).
- Fallacies can be of **logos** (reasoning), **ethos** (character), or **pathos** (emotions). Below are different types under each fallacy:

Fallacies of Logos	Fallacies of Ethos	Fallacies of Pathos
Circular reasoning	Appeal to authority	Argument to the people
False dilemma	Appeal to person	Argument from ignorance
Slippery slope	Strawperson	Argument to pity
Questionable cause		Argument by force
Hasty generalization		Appeal to traditional wisdom
Non-sequitur (It doesn't follow)		Appeal to common practice
		Red herring



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