

Refutation

Definition of Refutation

The literary term *refutation* refers to that part of an [argument](#) where a [speaker](#) or a writer encounters contradicting points of view. Alternatively, refutation can be described as the negation of an argument, opinion, testimony, doctrine, or theory, through contradicting [evidence](#). It normally constitutes a part of an [essay](#) that disproves the opposing arguments.

An important distinction to be appreciated is the difference between refutation and counter-argument. In the case of counter-argument, the writer acknowledges that there is substance in the contradicting argument, yet he provides evidence for his alleged stance. On the other hand, refutation goes a bit further by presenting evidence that in turn negates the opposing arguments.

In a circumstance in which the writer happens to agree with certain aspects of the opposing argument, he makes a [concession](#). However, writers and speakers rarely employ concession, as it can very easily undermine their own stance.

Types of Refutation

There are various ways through which the tool of refutation can be employed. The three most common modes used for the purpose of incorporating the device of refutation in an argument are: (1) refutation through evidence, (2) refutation through logic, and (3) refutation through exposing the discrepancies of opposing argument.

Refutation through Evidence

For an argument to be counted as one of the valid examples of refutation through evidence, it needs to be an argument backed up by some form of

evidence. In the absence of clear bases or justifications it cannot be declared valid. Therefore, a writer can refute a contradicting argument if he can provide evidence that conclusively negates it, or by presenting more recent or credible evidence.

Refutation through Logic

Refutation examples through logic are quite tricky to construct. It involves deconstructing the opposing argument, and presenting it in such a way as to highlight the discrepancies present within the argument. Most skilled writers check the validity of their arguments before publishing them. This makes refutation through logic all the more difficult. There is no denying the fact then that refutation through logic constitutes a difficult task at hand. However, writers have employed this tool in their respective writings.

Refutation through Exposing Discrepancies

The method involves showing that one of the contradicting arguments lacks the core ingredient of centrality to the issue as the opposition had intended to project. Also, the writer can logically present his argument as being superior to the one presented by the opposition, by showing that the opposition's argument lacks the crucial link to the topic. Further, the writer can highlight the insignificance of the opposition's argument by exposing the deficiencies found within the opposing argument.

Examples of Refutation in Literature

Example #1: *Elements of Rhetoric* (By Richard Whately)

“If indeed very strong objections have obtained much currency, or have been just stated by an opponent, so that what is asserted is likely to be regarded as paradoxical, it may be advisable to begin with a Refutation.”

As can be seen from the excerpt quoted above, refutation of an objection

the beginning the more effective it is likely to be.

Example #2: *Remarks made to the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, Seattle, Washington* (By William Kennard, Chairman of the FCC)

“So we may well hear from a whole chorus of naysayers. And to all of them I have only one response: we cannot afford to wait. We cannot afford to let the homes and schools and businesses throughout America wait. Not when we have seen the future. We have seen what high capacity broadband can do for education and for our economy. We must act today to create an environment where all competitors have a fair shot at bringing high capacity bandwidth to consumers—especially residential consumers. And especially residential consumers in rural and underserved areas.”

This excerpt serves to illustrate the effectiveness of early refutation. The early placement of refutation within the extract has had an enhanced persuasive impact on the [audience](#).

Function of Refutation

The tool of refutation has a crucial significance in writing. It is important in determining whether the speaker or writer has successfully persuaded his readers or not. Mostly, the device of refutation is employed when one is dealing with a controversial topic. It allows the reader to prefer one argument over another. The use of the device is frequently witnessed in intricate arguments.