

# Rebuttal

## Definition of Rebuttal

Strictly interpreted, “rebuttal” refers to an attempt to disapprove, contradict, or argue to overcome an opposing reasoning or [evidence](#), by introducing another reasoning and evidence to destroy the effect of the previous one. Rebuttal is a literary technique in which a [speaker](#) or writer uses [argument](#), and presents reasoning or evidence intended to undermine or weaken the [claim](#) of an opponent.

## Features of Rebuttal

There are many features of an effective rebuttal. First, rebuttal states the opposing side’s position without any [distortion](#). Secondly, the writers use quotations with accuracy and fidelity. Thirdly, this technique makes use of professional tone with rationality and courtesy, as it does not allow ridiculing to make points. Finally, rebuttal is often constructively critical, as readers bristle if they encounter extreme negativity.

## Examples of Rebuttal in Literature

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**Example #1: *The Founding Foodies: How Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin Revolutionized American Cuisine* (By Dave DeWitt)**

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“A writer in your paper comforts himself, and the India Company, with the fancy that the Americans, should they resolve to drink no more tea, can by no means keep that [resolution](#), their Indian corn not affording ‘an agreeable, or easy digestible breakfast.’ Pray let me, an American, inform the gentleman, who seems quite ignorant of the matter, that Indian corn, take it for all in all, is one of the most agreeable and wholesome grains in the world; that its green ears roasted are a delicacy beyond

expression; that samp, hominy, succatash, and nokehock, made of it, are so many pleasing varieties; and that a johnny, or hoe-cake, hot from the fire, is better than a Yorkshire muffin.”

Benjamin Franklin has written this succinct rebuttal in response to Vindex Patriae, who was a correspondent to *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*. This correspondent had ridiculed corn.

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### **Example #2: *Fahrenheit 451* (By Ray Bradbury)**

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There are many instances of rebuttal in Ray Bradbury’s novel *Fahrenheit 451*. A very notable example is the argument between Beatty and Montag. Beatty uses quotes from prominent intellectuals and authors, including Alexander Pope and Sir Philip Sidney. Beatty, thereby, makes an argument that books are just a source of debate and controversy, because we often see whatever mentioned in one book is contradicted in another. This situation becomes ironic as Beatty’s job is to burn the outlawed books, and he is skillful and well informed of literary works. With it, he is also capable of debating and arguing based on literary knowledge.

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### **Example #3: Editorial Rebuttal in *The Washington Post* (By Eugene Joseph Dionne)**

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Eugene Joseph Dionne, an editorial writer, provides a good instance of rebuttal in *The Washington Post*. Before the 2003 Iraqi invasion, some people were of the opinion that those who opposed this invasion were unpatriotic, because in this way they would oppose the American president. Dionne had rejected this suggestion, arguing that, if this was the case, “then Abraham Lincoln was an unpatriotic appeaser for opposing the Mexican War as a young congressman in the 1840s.” Dionne’s counter-argument is a complete rebuttal intended to show a flaw in the original argument.

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### **Example #4: *Speech on 50th Anniversary Commemoration of Bloody Sunday in Selma* (By President Barack Obama)**

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“For we were born of change. We broke the old aristocracies, declaring ourselves entitled not by bloodline, but endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights. We secure our rights and responsibilities through a system of self-government, of and by and for the people. That’s why we argue and fight with so much passion and conviction, because we know our efforts matter. We know America is what we make of it.”

Many critics interpret this speech of President Obama as a finely veiled rebuttal or an argument for conservative critics such as Rudy Giuliani, ex New York City Mayor, who claimed President Obama “doesn’t love America.” While some others believe that Obama’s verbal attack is on Congress, because it was not renewing the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

### **Function of Rebuttal**

The purpose of using rebuttal is to prove another argument as erroneous and false. It is very common in literature, public affairs, law, and politics, where opponents put forward statements to negate or refute specific arguments against them. In law, rebuttal requires specific rules. The party using rebuttal evidence must confine it solely to the main subject of evidence being rebutted. Whereas, in literary works and politics, rebuttals help writers to defend their points of view, as well as make positive criticisms through argumentation.