

Argument

Argument Definition

An argument is the main statement of a poem, an [essay](#), a short story, or a novel, which usually appears as an introduction, or a point on which the writer will develop his work in order to convince his readers.

Literature does not merely entertain. It also intends to shape the outlook of readers. Therefore, an argument does not intend to serve only as an introduction, but it attracts the reader's focus to an issue that will be made clear gradually.

Common Argument Examples

In our everyday life, we use different arguments in our discussions to convince others to accept our viewpoints. We do it in the same way in literature, meaning we state what we believe is true, and then we gradually build an argument around it to make others believe it is true as well.

For example, the subject of an argument might be, "The internet is a good invention." Then, we support this contention with logical reasons, such as "It is a source of endless information," and "It is a hub of entertainment," and so on. In the end, we conclude the argument by giving our verdict.

Examples of Argument in Literature

Let us now analyze a few examples of argument from literature:

Example #1: *David Copperfield* (By Charles Dickens)

Charles Dickens starts his novel *David Copperfield* with this literary argument:

“Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show.”

The above opening line is considered one of the best opening lines of a novel. It becomes the main statement or argument of the novel, as the whole novel depicts the adventures of the narrator, David. Many people let him down, and many others support him in hard times. In the end, he alone was not the hero of his life, but there were others who deserve the same status.

Example #2: *Paradise Lost* (By John Milton)

John Milton provides his argument or purpose of the poem in the first five lines of *Paradise Lost*, Book I:

“Of Man’s First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat...”

In the above lines, Milton states the reasons why man was thrown out of Eden, what is the reason for all our “woes,” and how “one greater Man” (Jesus Christ) restored our status. The rest of the epic poem develops this argument – to “justify the ways of God to men”.

Example #3: *Pride and Prejudice* (By Jane Austen)

Similarly, the opening lines of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* give a suitable example of argument:

“It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.”

The plot of the novel revolves around this argument. We see girls and their parents hunting for rich bachelors. The eligible bachelors seem to have no other worries in their life except looking for beautiful partners. Hence, we see a game of matchmaking occupying the entire novel.

Example #4: *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (By S. T. Coleridge)

S. T. Coleridge appended his argument at the beginning of his poem *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. He writes:

“How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country.”

Coleridge gives us a summary of his poem in a nutshell.

Function of Argument

Literature, on face value, may be seen as a tool to entertain us – with attractive [verse](#), with sweet melody, or with a story with instances of [humor](#) or emotion displayed by interesting characters. However, this is not its ultimate aim. Writers consider literature as a powerful tool in their hands to shape or reform our thinking. Arguments come into play at this time. Writers carefully play with words, as well as giving reasons and examples, to persuade us to their points of view. Our outlook is molded by words that also entertain us.