



connect

Chapter Eleven: Evaluating the Author's Reasoning and Evidence

- Quickly form groups of four.
- See if you can answer the following questions:
 1. What are the three comprehension questions you should ask while reading?
 2. How do these questions relate to paragraph structure?
 3. What is the formula you can use to find a topic sentence?
 4. To find a purpose for reading, you should turn the topic sentence into a _____.



Paragraph Structure for Arguments

In arguments, the terminology changes but the concepts are essentially the same.

- The argument is about an issue: a topic people disagree about.
- The proof of the argument is evidence: Reason is supported by facts or other forms of support.
- Usually an argument has more than one paragraph. The sentence that contains both the argument and the claim is the thesis statement.

Topic Sentences in Arguments

T + **MI** = **TS**

Topic + **Main Idea** = **Topic Sentence**



Examining Reasoning

- An author's reasoning – the way authors structure arguments – is especially important in persuasive writing.
- When an author has a persuasive purpose and sets out to influence readers, you should evaluate the claim, the reasoning, and the evidence being used.



Reading Arguments

When reading arguments it's a good idea to

1. Mark the claim and the evidence
2. Evaluate the author's reasoning
3. Make a summary, which will be useful if you're asked to respond to the argument
4. Be able to share the author's point of view about the argument in order to tell others how your opinion differs from the author's.

Relevance

- Relevance refers to how directly related the evidence is to the claim.
- Information that isn't relevant can cloud the real issue.
- Each piece of evidence can be evaluated separately to determine if it is *more relevant* or *less relevant* to the argument.

Active Learning → Identify Irrelevant Information

- Quickly break into groups of three.
- On the following slides, you will see an argument and several numbered statements of evidence.
- Decide which statement is most irrelevant to the argument.

You deserve an A in this class.

1. You have spent hours on the homework.
2. You know everyone's name and enjoy sharing knowledge and opinions.
3. You tell jokes to make lecture more entertaining.
4. You made an A on every test.
5. You have learned lots of new information that will make you a better student.

Energy drinks are worth the extra expense.

1. They have vitamins and additives that probably cost a lot of money.
2. They help people stay in shape.
3. The manufacturers spent lots of money on advertising.
4. All the extra energy can be used to earn more money, which makes up for the expense.

Illegal Immigration hurts America.

- Out-of-work Americans could take the jobs that typically go to illegal immigrants.
- Illegal immigrants are using social services, but don't pay taxes. That means taxpayers have higher taxes, which hurts the nation.
- Most illegal immigrants can't read English, and some people claim our efforts to be bilingual are destroying American culture.
- There are no jobs in Mexico, so people have to come to the US.



Types of Evidence

- Expert Authority
- Facts
- Statistics
- Examples
- Personal Experiences

Credibility

- Credibility means having the quality of trustworthiness. If someone is credible, then you are willing to trust or believe him or her.
- In reading, credibility is often determined by the sources authors use when they are writing.



Expert Authority

- A person with significant knowledge of the field in question.
- To judge credibility, ask
 - What biases does this person have?
 - What credentials does this person have?



Facts

To evaluate the relevance of facts, ask

- Is this really true? Is it a fact?
- What use is the author making of the fact?
- Does the fact apply under these conditions?
- What facts are not being stated?

Remember, facts are selected by a person who has a particular point of view or bias.

Statistics

- People tend to believe statistics, but they can be used to misrepresent facts just like words can.
- When evaluating statistics, ask
 - How accurate are these numbers?
 - How were they gathered, and who analyzed them?
 - What use is the author making of them?



Examples

- Examples can be persuasive, but they do not have the same level of credibility as other types of evidence.
- When evaluating examples, ask
 - Are the examples true? Are they relevant?
 - Are the examples representative of most of the instances of an event of this kind?
 - What other forms of evidence might the author use if there is any other evidence?



Personal Experiences

- An author's experiences are colored by his or her own history, culture, beliefs, etc.
- When evaluating personal experiences, ask
 - Would another person in this situation have a similar experience? In other words, is the experience representative?
 - How relevant to others is the author's experience?
 - Does the author present any other kinds of evidence along with personal experience?



An Author's Assumptions

- An assumption is something that is believed to be true but has not been proven.
- When an author assumes something, it usually means that he or she accepts certain notions as fact, and so does not feel the need to support or defend them.



The Impact of Assumptions

An author's religious, cultural, ethnic, and economic background affects his or her assumptions.

- An author believing in Christianity might assume that people of other faiths are misguided.
- A conservative, wealthy author (or politician!) might believe that the 47% of Americans pay no income tax are lazy and lack personal responsibility.

A tall tale is an exaggerated, unreliable story.

- “My father claims his commute to school forced him to walk fifteen miles in the snow, barefoot, backwards and uphill, both ways! That’s just another of his tall tales.”

The following slides have subjects for tall tales. Write a few sentences supporting the subject. Include the types of evidence indicated on the slides.

- An example is provided.
- Have fun with this. Be bold and silly!

Tall Tales (EXAMPLE)

ARGUMENT: Milk can cause cats to develop Mad Cow disease.

Include

- Statistics
- Personal Example

My cat, Theodore, drank milk yesterday and (like 7% of the cats in Texas) contracted Mad Cow disease. He sat on the kitchen floor and moo-ed for four hours. It was just awful.

ARGUMENT: On a reality TV show a man used a paper clip and duct tape to remove a woman's appendix. Reality TV makes people do dumb things like this.

Include

- Facts
- Examples

ARGUMENT: Two household pets, a cat and a dog, are separated from their family during a cross-country move. The pets use the Internet to track down their family. This is not uncommon.

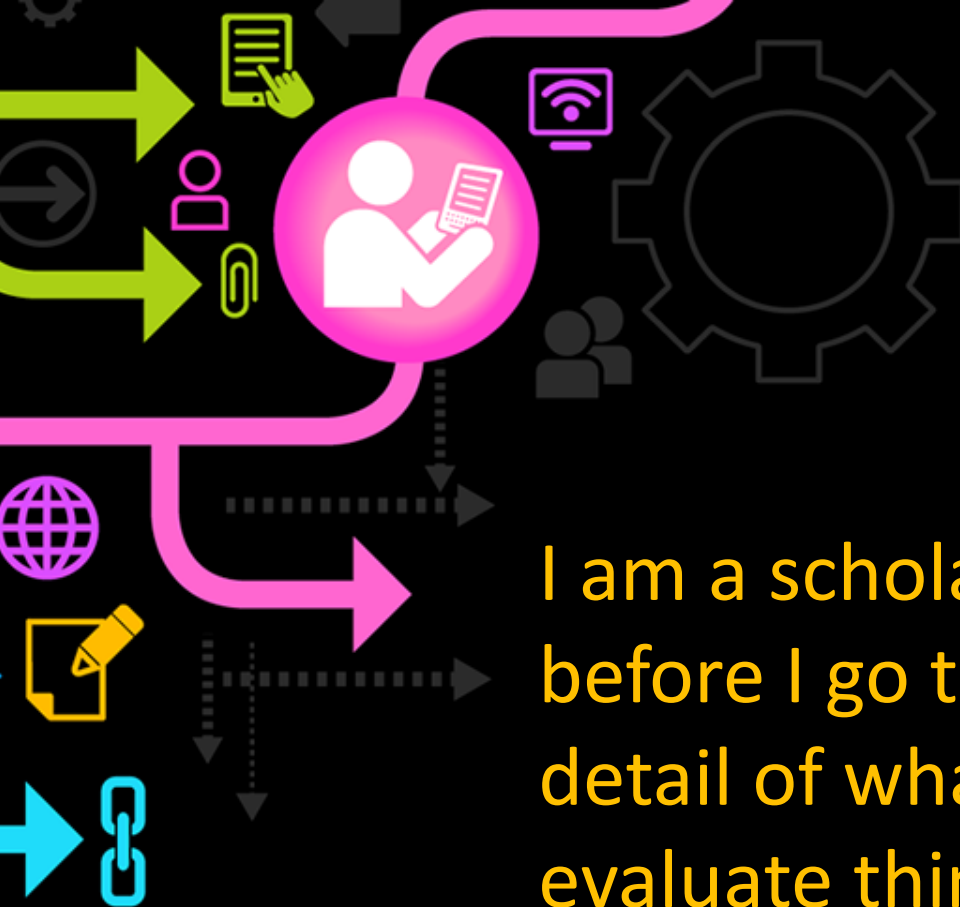
Include

- Expert Authority
- Personal Experiences

ARGUMENT: Aliens forced the government to change the design of the one-dollar bill.

Include

- Statistics
- Expert Opinion



I am a scholar of life. Every night before I go to sleep, I analyze every detail of what I did that day. I evaluate things and people, which helps me avoid mistakes.

- Compay Segundo