

Application Packet Part 2

(Pages 38-72)

Please note: The Final Exam covers pages 1-72

Distinguishing fact from opinion is not always easy. A fact is usually defined as a truth, something that can be tested by experimentation, observation, or research and shown to be real. But even that is an elusive definition. For example, in 1930 it was generally accepted as fact that the atom was the smallest particle of an element and could not be split. With the advent of atomic power in the 1940s, scientists split the atom, making what was once thought to be a fact a fallacy. Today, physicists are just beginning to understand subatomic particles and refer to many of their findings as theory rather than fact. The point is that facts are sometimes "slippery."

An opinion, on the other hand, is often easier to distinguish. Your belief, feeling, or judgment about something is an opinion. It is a subjective or value judgment, not something that can be objectively verified. Even though you base your opinion on fact, others may not agree; an opinion cannot be proven to everyone's satisfaction. For instance, you may be of the opinion that George Clooney is the greatest actor of our time, but there is no way to make your opinion fact. Others have their own favorite actors, while still others do not know who George Clooney is. The only fact that you can prove is that Clooney is an actor.

Test your skill in recognizing fact from opinion by placing an *F* in the blank next to each of the following statements that you believe to be fact.

- _____ 1. Harry S. Truman was the president of the United States.
- _____ 2. Truman was one of the best presidents the United States has had.
- _____ 3. Generally speaking, movies are more entertaining than books.
- _____ 4. *TIME* is a better magazine than *Newsweek*.
- _____ 5. Columbus, in 1492, was the first person to discover America.

Now see how well you did. You should have marked the first one as a fact. It is a fact that can be verified objectively. The second statement, however, is not a fact. It is a subjective statement claiming "Truman was one of the best." This claim is a value judgment; although we can prove that Truman was a president, historians may never agree that he was one of the best, even though he might have been. Words that give something value, such as *great*, *wonderful*, *beautiful*, *ugly*, *intelligent*, or *stupid*, make statements subjective opinions, not verifiable facts.

The third statement is not fact; it is a value judgment. To say something is "more entertaining" or "better" or "worse" is to place a personal value on something. Value judgments may be based on facts, but they are opinions nonetheless.

The fourth statement is not a fact. You may believe one magazine is better than another, but the use of the word "better" needs clarification. Better in what way? Editorial content? News coverage? Critical reviews? Again, "better" implies a value judgment. *TIME* may have a larger circulation than does *Newsweek*, but that in itself does not make it a better magazine.

The fifth statement is one of those "slippery" facts. According to many sources, Columbus did discover America in 1492. Yet, factually, he never actually landed on the continent; Vikings are said to have explored America long before Columbus, and evidence indicates that Native Americans inhabited America more than 25,000 years before Columbus. Obviously, he wasn't the first person to discover America. It is a European viewpoint that many history books continue to express, yet many textbooks are now changing wording to clarify this historical point. As stated, the fifth statement is not an opinion; it is more an erroneous statement than anything else.

On the other hand, if someone claimed that Columbus sailed to the New World in 1592 rather than 1492, it would be easy enough to consult historical records to show that the correct date was 1492. Knowledge that we share and agree upon as a society is called *shared knowledge*. Agreed-upon facts, then, are generally referred to as objective. If we argue that Columbus was a better sailor than Magellan, we get into the subjective realm of opinion. Unless we can find objective evidence that one was better than the other, we can't speak factually.

Which of the following statements are based on objective evidence?

- _____ 1. Coca-Cola tastes better than Pepsi-Cola.
- _____ 2. The capital of Illinois is Springfield.
- _____ 3. The moon revolves around the earth.
- _____ 4. Italians make great lovers.

Both statements 1 and 4 are based on subjective evidence. You might get fifty people to say Coke tastes better than Pepsi, but you can get another fifty to say the opposite. The same goes for Italians as great lovers. These statements are opinions, not facts. Statements 2 and 3 can be verified by checking agreed-upon information; thus they are facts based on objective evidence until such time as Springfield is no longer the capital and the moon quits revolving around the earth.

Just as our purpose for reading affects our speed and comprehension needs, it also affects the degree to which we must be aware of the differences in objective and subjective statements. When we read the paper for the news of the day, we want facts based on objective reporting. If we want to read someone's interpretation of the facts and what implications that news may have for us, we read editorials and columnists' opinions to see how they subjectively interpret the news. When we read a recipe, we want factual measurements, not opinions on how the finished product will taste. When we read an encyclopedia, we want the facts. But when we read a critic's opinion or interpretation of the importance of those facts, we are looking for a subjective reaction, an opinion.

As a critical reader of all kinds of writing, you need to be able to discern between objective and subjective statements and then draw your own conclusions. The following drills will help you develop your ability to distinguish facts, opinions, and erroneous-sounding statements. If some of the answers seem "picky," just remember that the point is to sharpen your reading versatility.

A. Fact-Finding

PRACTICE A-1: Fact-Finding

Directions: Read each of the following statements and place an *F* in the blank next to each statement that you feel is *mostly* fact and an *O* in the blank next to each statement that is *mostly* opinion.

- _____ 1. A world auction record for a single piece of furniture—\$415,800 for a Louis XVI table—was set today at a sale of the French furniture collection of the late Mrs. Anna Thomson Dodge of the Detroit auto fortune. (From a United Press International release.)
- _____ 2. The junior college is a better place to attend school for the first two years than is a university or four-year school. This is so primarily because classes are smaller at a junior college and more individualized attention can be given to students.

- _____ 3. Medsker and Trent found that four-year colleges draw approximately three-fourths of their freshmen from the upper 40 percent of the high school graduating class, whereas about half the junior college transfer students were in the upper 40 percent of their high school graduating classes. (From K. Patricia Cross, *The Junior College Student: A Research Description*, Educational Testing Service, 1968.)
- _____ 4. A black person can expect to live, on the average, seven years less than a white person of the same sex, to enjoy a little more than half the income—even if he has more education than his white brothers—and to suffer about twice the unemployment rate. (From Robert K. Carr et al., *Essentials of American Democracy*, 1968.)
- _____ 5. Not since the frontier days have Native Americans faced greater threats to their existence than they do today. Malnutrition, disease, and despair are rampant. Their school dropout rate is 50 percent greater than the national average. Unemployment is ten times the rate of other Americans. The Native American today has the shortest life expectancy of any group in the country.
- _____ 6. Eric Larnabee's *Commander in Chief* is a bold, fresh, and utterly convincing portrait of FDR as a war leader.
- _____ 7. Adolf Hitler's mistress, Eva Braun, was a pudgy, middle-class blonde who gloomed more than she glittered. Yet her name will go down in history alongside such famous and glamorous kept women as Lola Montez, Madame de Pompadour, Nell Gwyn, and Du Barry.
- _____ 8. America's Favorite Cigarette Break—Benson & Hedges 100s. (From a Benson & Hedges advertising slogan.)
- _____ 9. The president is the only official who represents every American—rich and poor, privileged and underprivileged. He represents...also the great, quiet, forgotten majority—the non-shouters and the non-demonstrators, the millions who ask principally to go their own way in decency and dignity. (From a 1968 campaign speech by Richard M. Nixon.)
- _____ 10. Businessmen, especially big-businessmen, do whatever they want to you: They set outrageously high prices on their products, bombard you with advertising so that you'll buy something you don't want and don't even need, and then make sure that what you've bought falls apart just when you get it home. (From Angus Black, *A Radical's Guide to Economic Reality*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.)

PRACTICE A-2: More Fact-Finding

Directions: Read each of the following statements. Circle the number of any that you think are primarily factual or can be objectively proven. Then underline any words in the statements that you feel are too subjective to be verified as factual.

1. In the first seven months of 1988, once-private companies raised \$17.4 billion through initial public offerings, or two-thirds more than in the same period of 1987.
2. There are still young people who read for pleasure and who do well in school, but their number dwindles. The middle range of children muddle through high school and some go through college, but the general level of their academic achievement is significantly below what it was thirty years ago.

3. In the presidential election of 1828, Andrew Jackson defeated John Quincy Adams with a popular vote of 647,286 votes over 508,064 for Adams.
4. Take the plunge into the splashiest resort on the most spectacular beach on the most exquisite island in Hawaii—the new Willoughby Maui Hotel. Join in the dreamlike atmosphere of waterfalls, tropical lagoons, and lush tiered gardens—or simply soak up the sun.
5. While grammar usage offers the most immediate clues to a person's educational background, another important clue is vocabulary. The writer or speaker who uses words appropriately and accurately is probably well educated. One who often misuses words or phrases is not soundly educated, because a major purpose of education is to teach people to use their native tongue with accuracy.
6. Since 1957, writes Ben J. Wattenberg in his *The Birth Dearth*, the average American woman's fertility rate has dropped from 3.77 children to 1.8—below the 2.1 size needed to maintain the present population level. Meanwhile, he argues, Communist-bloc countries are producing at a rate of 2.3 children per mother, while the Third World rate is rising so fast that within fifty years its population may be ten times that of the West.
7. But specific challenges to Wattenberg's data have been raised. Some demographers question his projections, because he gathered his information from population trends with little or no regard for such unpredictable factors as wars, epidemics, famines, and baby booms.
8. Scientific data show that, although the Sahara desert moved south between 1980 and 1984, it went north in 1985 and 1986. In 1987 the Sahara's border shifted south, north in 1988, and south again in 1989 and 1990. To find any long-term trends in these annual fluctuations, the researchers say, data would have to be taken for several decades.

PRACTICE A-3: Fact versus Opinion

Directions: Each sentence is lettered in the following statements. On the line below each statement, write the letter of each sentence you think can be accepted as a statement of fact. The first one has been done for you.

1. (a) The last great Greek astronomer of antiquity was Claudius Ptolemy (or Ptolemaeus), who flourished about a.d. 140. (b) He compiled a series of thirteen volumes on astronomy known as the *Almagest*. (c) All of the *Almagest* does not deal with Ptolemy's own work, for it includes a compilation of the astronomical achievements of the past, principally of Hipparchus. (d) In fact, it is our main source of information about Greek astronomy. (e) The *Almagest* also contains accounts of the contributions of Ptolemy himself. (From George Abell, *Exploration of the Universe*, Saunders College Publisher, 1982.)
(a), although the phrase last great may not be fact (b), (c), (d), (e)
2. (a) The July 1987 Almanac states that there are four West Coast species of salmon. This is incorrect. (b) There are five species. (c) The West Coast species belong to the genus *Oncorhynchus*. (d) Their common names are chinook, also called the spring or king salmon; the chum or dog salmon; the coho or silver salmon; the pink salmon; and the sockeye or red salmon.

DO WE NEED GOD IN THE PLEDGE?

JAY SEKULOW

IT'S A STATEMENT OF PATRIOTISM, NOT RELIGION

- 1 As our nation battles terrorism—at home and abroad—there is a very real threat that millions of students in the western United States will no longer have an opportunity to express their patriotism by voluntarily reciting the Pledge of Allegiance with the phrase “one nation under God.”
- 2 That phrase has been declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit in California. The full appeals court refused to reconsider an earlier ruling by a three-judge panel of the appeals court that determined the phrase “one nation under God” violates the separation of church and state. Now, the only recourse rests with the Supreme Court.
- 3 The Supreme Court is being asked to take the case and ultimately uphold the constitutionality of a phrase that has become a time-honored tradition—an integral part of the Pledge for nearly 50 years.
- 4 The Pledge first appeared in print in 1892 as a patriotic exercise expressing loyalty to our nation. Congress added the phrase “under God” in 1954. That phrase first appeared in President Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, which concluded that “this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that the government of the people, by the people, shall not perish from the earth.”
- 5 While the Supreme Court has never ruled directly on the constitutionality of the Pledge, there are numerous cases over the years where justices concluded that the phrase “one nation under God” is not an establishment of religion, but merely a way for the government to acknowledge our religious heritage.
- 6 In 1962, in *Engel v. Vitale*, Justice Potter Stewart referred to the Pledge of Allegiance as an example of governmental recognition when he quoted a 1952 finding by the court (*Zorach v. Clauson*) that Americans “...are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.”
- 7 In *Abington v. Schempp*, Justice William Brennan wrote in 1963 that such patriotic exercises like the Pledge do not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment because such a reference, as he put it, “may merely recognize the historical fact that our nation was believed to have been founded ‘under God.’ Thus reciting the pledge may be no more of a religious exercise than the reading aloud of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.”
- 8 In 1984, the court in *Lynch v. Donnelly* recognized “there is an unbroken history of official acknowledgement by all three branches of government of the role of religion in American life.” Among the many examples of our government’s acknowledgement of our religious heritage, according to the court, is the phrase “one nation, under God.”
- 9 And in 1985, Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, quoting herself from *Lynch v. Donnelly*, argued in *Wallace v. Jaffree* that the inclusion of the words “under God” in the Pledge is not unconstitutional because they “serve as an acknowledgement of religion with ‘the legitimate secular purpose of solemnizing public occasions, and expressing confidence in the future.’”

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10 The California appeals court relied on faulty legal reasoning in reaching a troubling conclusion that can now only be overturned by the Supreme Court. There is no guarantee that the high court will hear the case. But it should. The Pledge is a patriotic expression—not an affirmation of a particular faith.

11 As the Supreme Court considers what to do, it's important to note that the decision will not be made in a vacuum. After all, the court has its own time-honored tradition at stake. Each session begins with the sound of a gavel—and a dramatic call to order that concludes with these words: "God save the United States and this honorable court."

12 The Supreme Court should take the case and keep the Pledge intact.

Now answer the following questions.

1. Is this essay mostly fact or opinion? _____
2. What is the author's thesis or main idea? _____
3. Is the thesis or main argument based on facts? Explain. _____
4. Did the author convince you of his position? _____
5. Do you think the Supreme Court should take the case and keep the Pledge intact? _____

The following essay offers the opposite opinion regarding the pledge. As you read, underline any statements you feel are factual.

GOVERNMENT SHOULDN'T IMPOSE RELIGION ON CITIZENS

BARRY W. LYNN

1 A federal appeals court decision declaring school-sponsored recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance unconstitutional has generated tremendous confusion, to say nothing of downright hysteria.

2 Contrary to popular belief, the use of the phrase "under God" in the Pledge does not have a long history in America. The Pledge was written in 1892 by a clergyman, and it was originally secular. "Under God" was inserted by Congress in 1954 at the behest of conservative religious pressure groups.

3 To hear some tell it, removing "under God" from the Pledge would all but ensure America's downfall. In fact, the United States won two world wars, survived the Great Depression, and became a world economic and military powerhouse with a non-religious Pledge.

From Barry W. Lynn, "Government Shouldn't Impose Religion on Citizens," Scripps Howard News Service. Copyright © Barry Lynn. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission.

4 Under the Constitution, our laws are supposed to have a secular purpose. What is the secular purpose of having schoolchildren recite a pledge with religious content everyday? It can't be to foster love of country and respect for democracy. Those goals could be—and in the past were—met with a non-religious pledge.

5 No, the politicians who altered the Pledge in 1954 by adding "under God" knew exactly what they were doing. They wanted to make a religious statement. They wanted to send the message that belief in God is an essential part of being a good American. "God and country" was their motto.

6 The problem with this is that not everyone believes in God. Some Americans believe in no God, others believe in many gods.

7 For them, "under God" in the Pledge and "In God We Trust" on our money are a constant slap in the face, a daily reminder that they are different, that they are indeed not full members of the American experiment. That they're out of step—and wrong.

8 But it isn't just atheists and polytheists who are offended by government's use of generic religiosity. Many devoutly religious people are offended by the emptiness of such "God and Country" rhetoric. Real devotion to God, they argue, is not enhanced by the endless repetition of a phrase.

9 Some courts have upheld government's use of generic religious language, calling it "ceremonial deism." It's all right for the government to employ ceremonial deism, the argument goes, because it's not really that religious, and the government's constant use of a phrase like "under God" drains it of religious meaning.

10 As a minister, I find this argument bizarre and offensive. Religious terminology does not lose its sacred meaning just because people use it a lot, no more so than a prayer becomes non-religious through frequent repetition.

11 If that argument were true, it should be all the more alarming to the devout because it suggests that the state may promote religion as long as it first drains it of all meaning and power. In other words, we can have an official, government-supported religion in the United States—as long as it is bland, watered-down, generic, and ultimately meaningless.

12 In fact, the U.S. Constitution allows for no establishment of religion, specific or generic. The U.S. Congress lost sight of that fact in 1954 when it altered the Pledge of Allegiance. It has taken nearly 50 years for a federal court to recognize Congress' mistake. It shouldn't take another 50 for people to realize that "ceremonial deism" is a fraudulent myth that offends both church and state.

Now answer the following questions.

1. Is this essay mostly fact or opinion? _____

2. What is the author's thesis or main idea? _____

3. Is the thesis or main argument based on facts? Explain. _____

4. Did the author convince you of his position? _____

5. Have you changed your opinion after reading these two essays? Explain why or why not? _____
- _____
- _____

As a point of information, the Supreme Court did hear the case and overturned the 2002 ruling by California's 9th Circuit Court.

B. Reading Opinions of Others

PRACTICE B-1

Directions: Take a few seconds to survey the following selection. Referring to the title, the headings, and your brief survey, write in the space below what you think the article will cover.

Probable coverage _____

Now read the article, underlining factual statements.

HOW GOOD ARE YOUR OPINIONS?

VINCENT RYAN RUGGIERO

- 1 "Opinion" is a word that is often used carelessly today. It is used to refer to matters of taste, belief, and judgment. This casual use would probably cause little confusion if people didn't attach too much importance to opinion. Unfortunately, most do attach great importance to it. "I have as much right to my opinion as you to yours" and "Everyone's entitled to his opinion" are common expressions. In fact, anyone who would challenge another's opinion is likely to be branded intolerant.
- 2 Is that label accurate? Is it intolerant to challenge another's opinion? It depends on what definition of opinion you have in mind. For example, you may ask a friend "What do you think of the new Buicks?" And he may reply, "In my opinion, they're ugly." In this case, it would not only be intolerant to challenge his statement, but foolish. For it's obvious that by opinion he means his *personal preference*, a matter of taste. And as the old saying goes, "It's pointless to argue about matters of taste."
- 3 But consider this very different use of the term. A newspaper reports that the Supreme Court has delivered its opinion in a controversial case. Obviously the justices did not state their personal preferences, their mere likes and dislikes. They stated their *considered judgment*, painstakingly arrived at after thorough inquiry and deliberation.
- 4 Most of what is referred to as opinion falls somewhere between these two extremes. It is not an expression of taste. Nor is it careful judgment. Yet it may contain elements of both. It is a view or belief more or less casually arrived at, with or without examining the evidence.
- 5 Is everyone entitled to his opinion? Of course. In a free country this is not only permitted, but guaranteed. In Great Britain, for example, there is still a Flat Earth Society. As the name implies, the members of this organization believe that the earth is not

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spherical, but flat. In this country, too, each of us is free to take as creative a position as we please about any matter we choose. When the telephone operator announces "That'll be 95¢ for the first three minutes," you may respond, "No, it won't—it'll be 28¢." When the service station attendant notifies you "Your oil is down a quart," you may reply "Wrong—it's up three."

6 Being free to hold an opinion and express it does not, of course, guarantee you favorable consequences. The operator may hang up on you. The service station attendant may threaten you with violence.

7 Acting on our opinions carries even less assurance. Some time ago in California a couple took their eleven-year-old diabetic son to a faith healer. Secure in their opinion that the man had cured the boy, they threw away his insulin. Three days later the boy died. They remained unshaken in their belief, expressing the opinion that God would raise the boy from the dead. The police arrested them, charging them with manslaughter. The law in such matters is both clear and reasonable. We are free to act on our opinions only so long as, in doing so, we do not harm others.

OPINIONS CAN BE MISTAKEN

8 It is tempting to conclude that, if we are free to believe something, it must have some validity. But that is not so. Free societies are based on the wise observation that since knowledge often comes through mistakes and truth is elusive, every person must be allowed to make his own path to wisdom. So in a way, free societies are based on the realization that opinions can be wrong.

9 In 1972 a British farmer was hoeing his sugar beet field when he uncovered a tiny statue. It looked to him like the figure of a man listening to a transistor radio. In his opinion, it was a piece of junk. Yet it turned out to be a work of art made of gilt bronze in the twelfth century and worth more than \$85,000. He was free to have his opinion. But his opinion was wrong.

10 For scores of years millions of people lit up billions of cigarettes, firm in their opinion that their habit was messy and expensive, but harmless. Yet now we know that smoking is a significant factor in numerous diseases and even does harm to non-smokers who breathe smoke-polluted air and to unborn babies in the wombs of cigarette addicts. Those millions of people were free to believe smoking harmless. But that didn't make them right. Nor did it protect their bodies from harm.

KINDS OF ERROR

11 There are four general kinds of error that can corrupt anyone's beliefs. Francis Bacon classified them as follows: (1) errors or tendencies to error common among all people by virtue of their being human; (2) errors that come from human communication and the limitations of language; (3) errors in the general fashion or attitude of an age; (4) errors posed to an individual by a particular situation.

12 Some people, of course, are more prone to errors than others. John Locke observed that these people fall into three groups. He described them as follows:

- Those who seldom reason at all, but do and think according to the example of others, whether parents, neighbors, ministers, or whoever else they choose or have implicit faith in, to save themselves the pain and trouble of thinking and examining for themselves.
- Those who are determined to let passion rather than reason govern their actions and arguments, and therefore rely on their own or other people's reasoning only so far as it suits them.

- Those who sincerely follow reason, but lack sound, overall good sense, and so do not have a full view of everything that relates to the issue. They talk with only one type of person, read only one type of book, and so are exposed to only one viewpoint.

INFORMED VERSUS UNINFORMED OPINION

- 13 In forming our opinions it helps to seek out the views of those who know more than we do about the subject. By examining the views of informed people, we broaden our perspective, see details we could not see by ourselves, consider facts we were unaware of. No one can know everything about everything. It is not a mark of inferiority but of good sense to consult those who have given their special attention to the field of knowledge at issue.
- 14 Each of us knows something about food and food preparation. After all, most of us have eaten three meals a day all our lives. But that experience doesn't make us experts on running a restaurant or on the food packaging industry. Many of us have played varsity sports in high school. But it takes more than that experience to make us authorities on a particular sport.
- 15 Some years ago the inmates of Attica prison in New York State overpowered their guards and gained control of the prison. They took a number of hostages and threatened to kill them if their demands were not met. Negotiations proceeded for a time. Then they were at an impasse. The situation grew tense. Finally lawmen stormed the prison and, before order was restored, a number of the hostages were killed. In the wake of the tragedy were two difficult questions: Had the prisoners' demands been reasonable? And who was responsible for the breakdown in negotiations?
- 16 A number of people in public and private life offered their opinions. One newspaper editorial stated that the main fault lay with the prisoners, that they had refused to negotiate reasonably. A letter to the editor explained that the prisoners were unquestionably in the wrong simply because they were prisoners, and thus had forfeited all rights and privileges. A U.S. senator from another state declared that the blame lay with American life in general. "We must ask," he said, "why some men would rather die than live another day in America."
- 17 The governor of New York State issued this statement: "The tragedy was brought on by the highly-organized, revolutionary tactics of militants who rejected all efforts at a peaceful settlement, forcing a confrontation, and carried out cold-blooded killings they had threatened from the outset."
- 18 In a much less publicized statement, a professor at a small liberal arts college, an expert in penology (the study of prison systems), expressed sympathy with the prisoners, criticized the terrible conditions in the nation's prisons, agreed fully with many of the prisoners' demands, rejected a few as absurd, and explained some of the underlying causes of prison unrest.
- 19 Now all those opinions deserved some consideration. But which was most helpful in coming to an understanding of the issue in all its considerable complexity? Certainly the most informed opinion. The opinion of the expert in penology.
- 20 For all of us, whether experts or amateurs, it is natural to form opinions. We are constantly receiving sensory impressions and responding to them first on the level of simple likes and dislikes, then on the level of thought. Even if we wanted to escape having opinions, we couldn't. Nor should we want to. One of the things that makes human beings vastly more complex and interesting than trees or cows is their ability to form opinions.
- 21 This ability has two sides, though. If it can lift man to the heights of understanding, it can also topple him to the depths of ludicrousness. Both the wise man and the fool have opinions. The difference is, the wise man forms his with care, and as time increases his understanding, refines them to fit even more precisely the reality they interpret.

Comprehension Check

Part A

Directions: Answer the following questions. Don't look back unless you are referred to a particular paragraph for an answer.

1. Circle the letter of the statement that best expresses the thesis of the article:
 - a. We need to form our opinions with care.
 - b. It is natural to form opinions.
 - c. The word *opinion* is used carelessly today.
 - d. Everyone has a right to his or her own opinion.
2. T/F The statement "Being free to hold an opinion and express it does not, of course, guarantee you favorable consequences" is a fact.
3. T/F Paragraph 9 is mostly factual in content.
4. Which of the following are mentioned as the kinds of error that can corrupt anyone's beliefs?
 - a. errors posed to an individual by a particular situation
 - b. errors or tendencies to error common among all people by virtue of being human
 - c. errors in the general fashion or attitude of an age
 - d. errors that come from limitations of language
5. T/F In forming our opinions, it helps to seek out the views of those who do not know more than we do about the subject.
6. T/F "No one can know everything about everything" is an opinion.
7. In paragraph 19, the author claims that the expert in penology was the most helpful in coming to an understanding of the prison riot issue. Why would this opinion be better than the others mentioned? _____

8. What is the difference between personal preference and considered judgment? _____

9. "One of the things that makes human beings vastly more complex and interesting than trees or cows is their ability to form opinions," says the author. Is this a statement of fact or opinion? _____ Explain. _____

10. Is the article mostly fact or opinion? _____ Explain. _____

Part B

Directions: The preceding questions can be answered objectively. The following questions require subjective responses. Be ready to explain your answers in class discussion.

1. "We are free to act on our opinions only as long as, in doing so, we do not harm others," says the author. Is this a good rule to follow? _____ Explain.

2. The author refers to a couple who took their diabetic son to a faith healer as an example of how acting on our opinions can be dangerous. Give an example of an opinion you hold or held at one time that could be dangerous in certain circumstances. _____

3. Reread paragraph 12. In your opinion, do you fit any one of the three groups? Explain. _____

4. Give an example of an opinion you once held but no longer do. Explain why you changed your viewpoint. _____

Vocabulary Check

Part A

Directions: Define the following underlined words from the selection.

1. their considered judgment

2. it must have some validity

3. errors posed to an individual

Part B

Directions: In the space provided, explain what kind of evidence you would have to gather to prove each statement as fact.

1. The viewing of violence on television has created a more violent society. _____

2. City slums breed crime. _____

3. Solar energy is the most efficient way to heat homes in some parts of the United States. _____

4. A college education provides better job opportunities. _____

5. If you are rich, you probably won't get convicted of a crime as easily as you will if you are poor. _____

Discuss your answers in class.

C. Detecting Propaganda

Before you begin this section on propaganda, answer the following questions.

1. Define *propaganda*: _____

2. Does the word *propaganda* have a positive or negative connotation for you? Explain. _____

3. Give some examples of the use of propaganda. _____

4. Do you think you are always aware of propaganda when it is being used? Explain. _____

Now read the following information, comparing your definition and examples of propaganda with those provided here.

Propaganda is the deliberate attempt on the part of a group or an individual to sway our opinions in their favor. Contrary to what some think, propaganda is not merely a tool used by dictatorial governments. We are exposed to various propaganda techniques nearly every day of our lives. Politicians use propaganda, along with other devices, to get us to accept their opinions and vote for them. Newspapers and magazines use propaganda techniques to influence our opinions on political and social issues. Religious leaders use propaganda to influence our opinions on morality. Advertisers, through television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet, use propaganda techniques to get us to buy things we often don't need or to change the brand of soap we use.

Propaganda techniques usually appeal to our emotions or our desires rather than to our reason. They cause us to believe or do things we might not believe or do if we thought and reasoned more carefully. When we are too lazy to think for ourselves, we often become victims of propaganda. Propagandists are usually not concerned with good or bad, right or wrong. They are more concerned with getting us to believe what they want us to believe. The techniques they use can range from outright lies to subtle truths.

The power of propaganda cannot be overrated. While some propaganda may be socially beneficial, it can also be harmful. Through propaganda techniques, our opinions can be changed to be "for" or "against" certain nations, political rulers, races, moral values, and religions. What we must guard against is having our opinions formed for us by others. We must not let ourselves be used or fooled, even for good causes.

The Institute for Propaganda Analysis identified seven of the most frequently used propaganda techniques:

1. *Name calling*: an attempt to arouse people with emotionally charged words that appeal to our fears or hatred. The technique is used with the hope that we will reject a person or idea on the basis of a negative symbol or word. Labeling someone as a *terrorist*, *fascist*, *fag*, or *radical* is done with the intent of creating a negative response to that person. However, sometimes name calling is done in reverse. The government changed the name of the War Department to the Department of

Defense. The MX missile, a weapon of destruction, is called the *Peacekeeper*. The term *shell shock* was changed to *combat fatigue*, then later to *post-traumatic stress disorder* in an attempt to lose its connection to war.

The institute suggests that we ask these questions when we spot name calling being used:

- a. What does the name mean?
 - b. Is there a real connection between the name and the person or idea being labeled?
 - c. Leaving the name out of it, what are the merits of the idea or person?
2. *Glittering generalities*: using words such as *justice*, *founding fathers*, *freedom*, *love of country*, *loyalty*, *the American way*, and *patriot* that are vague but have positive connotations that appeal to our emotions; propagandists often use them because they know we will be touched by such words. *Defending democracy* has a nice ring to it, but what is being planned or done in the name of *defending democracy* may be wrong when the concept is examined beyond the glittering generality. It is name calling in reverse.

When you spot this technique being used:

- a. Consider the merits of the idea itself when separated from specific words.
 - b. Ask whether you are being manipulated by the use of your feelings toward the words being used.
3. *Transfer*: linking something we like or respect to some person, cause, or product; symbols are frequently used. If we respect the flag or the Christian cross, our respect for the symbol is transferred to whatever use it is being associated with. While at war in Iraq, people transfer their support by wearing pins of the American flag or by placing yellow ribbons on their cars saying "Support Our Troops." Cartoons of Uncle Sam smiling or frowning are used to reflect the government's approval or disapproval on an issue. Those referred to as the enemy, on the other hand, burn the American flag in protest using the symbol to transfer their feelings. Transfer is often used in politics to transfer the blame or bad feelings from one politician to another or from one political party to another. Transfer, then, can be used for or against causes and ideas.

When you spot this method being used:

- a. Consider whether the symbol being used really applies to the person, product, or cause.
 - b. Ask whether you are being manipulated by the use of the symbol.
4. *Testimonial*: using well-known people to testify that a certain person, idea, or product is "the best." Famous or respected people are used to sell us ideas or products, because we transfer our positive feelings for them to the product or idea being sold. Look at advertisements in magazines or on television and you will see how many actors and athletes give testimonials for products, hoping we will transfer that respect to the product. This technique is closely connected to the transfer technique.

When you spot this method being used:

- a. Ask yourself whether the person giving the testimonial has any knowledge about the subject or product.
- b. Ask yourself whether you are being convinced by the person or by the facts of the testimonial.
- c. Ask how factual the content of the testimonial is.

5. *Plain folks*: an attempt to convince the public that the propagandist's views reflect those of the common person and that he or she is working in their best interests. A politician speaking to a blue-collar audience may roll up his sleeves, undo his tie, and attempt to use the specific idioms of the crowd. He may even use language incorrectly on purpose to give the impression that he is "just one of the folks." This technique usually also employs the use of glittering generalities to give the impression that the politician's views are the same as those of the crowd being addressed. Labor leaders, businesspeople, ministers, educators, and advertisers have used this technique to win our confidence by appearing to be just plain folks like ourselves.

When you spot this method being used:

- a. Ask what the propagandist's ideas are worth when separated from his or her personality.
 - b. Ask what the plain folks approach is covering up.
 - c. Check for the facts, not the hype.
6. *Card stacking*: including only the information that is for or positive about a certain person or position and omitting evidence to the contrary. This technique stacks the evidence against the truth by omitting, changing, or evading facts; telling half-truths; or stating things out of context. This technique is very effective in convincing the public because most people don't bother to examine the other side of the issue being exploited, especially if the information is being offered by someone whom we admire or who we feel is serving our best interests. This is often used in advertising, in which a product might claim it "helps stop bad breath," leading us to think it *does* stop bad breath.

When you see this method at work:

- a. Evaluate what is being presented as fact.
 - b. Get more information about the subject before making up your mind.
7. *The bandwagon*: an appeal to join in, come aboard, follow the crowd. This technique appeals to our desire to be on the winning side, to be like or better than everyone else, and to be "one of the gang." It is an attempt to make us believe that we will be in the minority if we don't join or believe what's being offered. The propagandist directs the appeal to groups held together by common ties, such as religion, sex, race, and nationality, and uses the fears, hatreds, prejudices, ideals, and convictions of a group to join in or lose what you hold dear. In 2006, public figures found it difficult to criticize the Bush administration's foreign policies because the bandwagon mentality asserts that everyone must unite in the fight against terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and those opposed to freedom and democracy. On the other hand, the United States has more weapons of mass destruction, sells more arms to other countries than any other nation in the world, and seems willing to destroy countries in order to bring them democracy.

When you see this method at work:

- a. Ask yourself what the propagandist's program is.
- b. Ask yourself if there is evidence for or against the program.
- c. Ask whether the program really serves or undermines your own interests.

Propaganda, for good or bad, tries to manipulate us. As Paul R. Lees-Haley reminds us:

Manipulators strive to divorce us from the facts. Rather than encouraging us to examine the evidence and reasoning of people who appear to disagree

with us, they block communications and openly or indirectly try to persuade us that people who disagree with their views are dishonest, not trustworthy, incompetent, biased, racist, only concerned with money, insulting our intelligence, corrupt, betrayers of the American dream, and so on. The subtext is: "Do not consider alternative points of view. Do what we tell you, without realizing that we are controlling you." Like cult leaders, manipulators encourage us to close ranks and form an in-group suspicious of those who question the party line. (From Paul R. Lees-Haley, "Propaganda Techniques Related to Environmental Scares," Quackwatch, <http://www.quackwatch.org/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/propa.html>.)

Most of these devices work because they appeal to our emotions, our fears, our ignorance, or our desire to do the "right thing." But by sorting facts from opinions, and by recognizing these propaganda techniques when used, we won't become victims, but rather thoughtful readers and thinkers who see these techniques for what they are.

PRACTICE C-1: Detecting Propaganda Techniques

Directions: Read each of the following items and in the space provided write in the propaganda technique or techniques being used and why you think so.

1. "My opponent, Senator Glick, has a record of being soft on crime at a time when we need to be strong." _____

2. "Senator Cluck cares what happens to the farmers; he cares for the future of the American tradition of prosperity. He'll put this country back on track!" _____

3. "Jerry Seinfeld. Cardmember since 1986" (American Express ad). _____

4. "M Lotion helps skin keep its moisture ... discourages tired-looking lines under eyes." _____

5. "Over 8,000,000 sold! Why would anyone want to buy anything else?" _____

6. "Buy Banhead. It contains twice as much pain reliever." _____

7. "Mayor Naste has shown time and again he's for the little guy. You don't see him driving a big limo or wearing fancy suits. No, sir. You'll find him out talking to us folks to see how he can serve us better." _____
8. "Buy the Sportsman's Shaving System, appointed the exclusive skin care system for the Winter Olympics." _____
9. "Yes, I lied. But I did it for my country. As God is my witness, I felt in my heart—and still do—that what I did was right, and the people of this country who want to preserve its freedom will thank me some day." _____
10. "Drive to class reunions in the new Hummer 3 and even Mr. Most-Likely-to-Succeed will be envious." _____

PRACTICE C-2

Directions: Survey the following passage from a textbook titled *Preface to Critical Reading* by reading the opening paragraph, some of the first sentences in selected paragraphs, and the questions that follow the reading. Then use the information from the survey to read the selection, marking key points.

DETECTING PROPAGANDA

RICHARD D. ALTICK and ANDREA A. LUNSFORD

1 All of us, whether we admit it or not, are prejudiced. We dislike certain people, certain activities, certain ideas—in many cases, not because we have reasoned things out and found a logical basis for our dislike, but rather because those people or activities or ideas affect our less generous instincts. Of course we also have positive prejudices, by which we approve of people or things—perhaps because they give us pleasure or perhaps because we have always been taught that they are "good" and never stopped to reason why. In either case, these biases, irrational and unfair though they may be, are aroused by words, principally by name-calling and the use of the glittering generality. Both of these techniques depend on the process of association, by which an idea (the specific person, group, proposal, or situation being discussed) takes on emotional coloration from the language employed.

Excerpt from *Preface to Critical Reading*, 6th edition, by Richard D. Altick and Andrea A. Lunsford, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984. Copyright © 1984 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of the publisher.

■ EMOTIONAL APPEALS IN ARGUMENTS

Emotional appeals are acceptable in persuasive writing, as long as logical evidence is present that balances the discussion. We also need to distinguish between legitimate appeals to the emotions and illegitimate ones. An illegitimate appeal attempts to control our emotions by spurious means; the writer plays on emotions that are either not relevant or appropriate to the argument, or the emotional appeal diverts one's attention from the real argument. A legitimate appeal relates directly and appropriately to the argument.

When you examine a piece of writing or a promotional piece, ask yourself: How good is this argument or product *without the appeal*? Is there any evidence besides the appeal? Strip away the fluff from the argument and examine the claim *for itself*, unobscured by emotion or sentiment. Be aware that the more emotional the appeal, the weaker the argument. This section examines several types of emotional appeals, alphabetized for easy reference.

Appeal to Authority

A writer who uses the appeal to authority allows the claim to rest solely on the fact that a supposed authority is behind it. The authority may not be identified or may be highly biased.

- I read in a recent journal that a scientific study showed no correlation between a low-carbohydrate diet and high cholesterol. This is good news because now I can follow the Atkins diet and eat all the red meat, butter, and sour cream that I want. (Studies like this come out all the time, offering conflicting evidence on nutrition. Before accepting such an argument, wait until more evidence is in.)
- Linus Pauling, a chemist from Stanford University who won both the Nobel Prize for science and the Nobel Peace Prize, believed that massive doses of vitamin C could prevent cancer. (The fact that a famous scientist believes something doesn't make it so, nor in this case did the rest of the scientific and medical community accept his theory. Also, Pauling was a chemist, not a medical doctor or cancer specialist.)

Appeal to Fear

The appeal to fear makes us concerned about what will happen if we adopt (or fail to adopt) a certain course, or what will happen if we don't adopt a certain course. The public has been justifiably worried about the threat of impending terrorist attacks, though cynics have questioned if the timing of such announcements like those issued in the summer of 2004 was politically motivated. A typical headline read, "Al Qaeda Aims to Disrupt Vote, Ridge Warns" (*Los Angeles Times*, July 9, 2004). The government is faced with a dilemma in a case like this: Ignoring a legitimate terrorist threat might jeopardize public safety, while issuing constant warnings keeps everyone in a perpetual state of jitteriness. Here is another example:

- If the Springfield City Council doesn't stop medical marijuana from being distributed, pretty soon you'll have a whole bunch of drug addicts moving here and pretending they're sick just to get the drug.

Appeal to Patriotism

This appeal obviously relates to love of one's country, often implying an accusation that citizens who oppose a policy are not patriotic.

- If you really loved the United States, you would support American foreign policy.
- Common bumpersticker during the Vietnam War: "America: Love it or leave it."

Appeal to Pity or Sympathy

Should we adopt a policy simply because we feel sorry for someone? An **appeal to sympathy or pity** asks us to suspend our critical judgment because we pity a victim of sad circumstances or because we can identify with someone else's troubles.

- The fact that Emma Jones hasn't paid her rent for six months is no reason for her landlord to evict her. Her husband died, she recently found out that she suffers from high blood pressure, and she has three children to support on her salary as a Wal-Mart sales clerk.
- A recent *Wall Street Journal* editorial on Martha Stewart's legal troubles included this paragraph: "Maybe there's some rough justice in putting Miss Stewart in an orange jumpsuit for fibbing about the circumstances of that [stock] sale with her broker. Manifestly the jury thought so. But in a case ostensibly brought on behalf of sticking up for the forgotten 'little guy,' we'd like to think prosecutors might have weighed the price paid by the truly innocent here: all the Martha Stewart Living shareholders, employees, executives, and so forth whose livelihoods have suffered tremendously since this case first broke into the headlines and whose futures, like their company, are now in limbo. And it's not just Miss Stewart's company; Kmart, a big buyer of Martha's products, is going to take a hit too." (Quoted in "Martha Stewart Misgivings," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 8, 2004.)

Appeal to Prejudice

Like the appeal to fear, the **appeal to prejudice** inflames negative feelings, beliefs, or stereotypes about racial, ethnic, or religious groups or gender or sexual orientations. Emotion replaces reasoned discourse.

- Letting so many immigrants into this country is a mistake. They take jobs away from Americans who are out of work, and they don't share our traditional values.
- Why would a man ever want to become a nurse? After all, women are the traditional caregivers in our culture.

Appeal to Tradition

An appeal to tradition asks us to accept a practice because it has always been done that way or because it represents some long-standing, venerable tradition.

- The Roman Catholic Church has forbidden women to become priests for nearly 2,000 years. Why should the church abandon this long-standing practice?
- The Democratic party has always stood up for the little guy.

Bandwagon Appeal

The bandwagon appeal rests on the assumption that everyone likes to be on the winning side or doing what everyone else is doing. The origin of this metaphorically named appeal comes from the fact that lots of people ride on the bandwagon during a parade.

- Eighty percent of Mapleton residents support the petition for the city to build a new football stadium. That's why I'm voting yes on Measure 11 on the November ballot.
- It's inconceivable that the United States still has the death penalty. All the nations in the European Union abolished this barbaric practice years ago.

Bandwagon appeals often use phrases like "everyone agrees," "we all know that," and so forth as a substitute for reasons or other evidence to support the claim.

- Everyone knows that pornography is the main cause of rape.
- Of course, you can see the undeniable logic of requiring all residents to pay for garbage service, whether they use it or not.

Look for evidence, not appeals to join the crowd. The crowd can be wrong. A related appeal tries to bully the reader into accepting an idea.

- Certainly no one sitting in this room would be foolish enough to vote against allowing the annual rodeo to be held in Woodside again this year.

Flattery

A writer who uses flattery tries to put us into a group of people that we admire and might hope to identify with, whether we share their convictions or not.

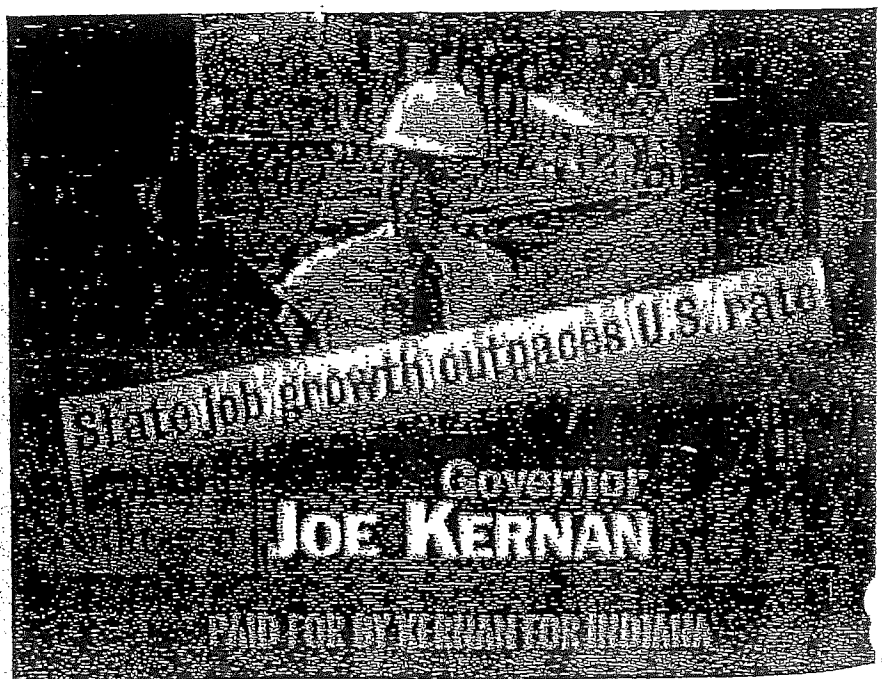
- Every well-educated person knows that James Joyce was one of the most important writers of the twentieth century.
- Men with good taste buy their clothes at Buffalo Shirt Company.

We like to think of ourselves as being well educated or having good taste, and the writer hopes to arouse this emotion in us with this appeal.

Just Plain Folks

This appeal lies in the desire of the subject (usually a politician) to have himself or herself perceived as just an "ordinary citizen" or **just plain folks**. It is the opposite of snob appeal.

- Despite the fact that John Edwards, Democratic vice presidential nominee in the 2004 election, made millions of dollars as a trial lawyer suing large corporations before he ran for the U.S. Senate, during the campaign he made much of his small-town roots, his father's blue-collar job in North Carolina, and the fact that he was the first person in his family to go to college. All of these things, of course, were true; nonetheless, the intent was to use the just-plain-folks appeal.
- When Bob Dole, Republican presidential candidate, was preparing to announce his candidacy in 1987, his media consultants chose Russell, Kansas, Dole's hometown for "the perfect backdrop." They chose Ol' Dawson's drugstore, where Dole had worked during his youth. (Journalists pointed out that this site had symbolic overtones. We know it as the just-plain-folks appeal.)
- When Democrat Joseph E. Kernan ran for governor of Indiana in 2004, his campaign used this billboard advertisement to demonstrate that the candidate was a regular guy, just like his constituents. The candidate is depicted touring a manufacturing facility where hard hats are required for workers. Donning his own hard hat as he talks to factory workers is a subtle way of using the just-plain-folks appeal.



Ridicule

This appeal asks the reader to dismiss an idea by subjecting it to ridicule rather than by analyzing its inherent weaknesses.

- The mayor's proposal to impose a license fee on all bicycles owned by city residents sounds like something an eight-year-old kid would come up with.
- Only irresponsible people would vote to oppose the Rockport City Council's proposed tree-trimming requirement.

A related tactic allows humor to substitute for supporting evidence.

Testimonial

Television and magazine advertisements abound with testimonial appeals whereby famous people—actors, athletes, celebrities, or other notable figures—are paid enormous sums of money to endorse a particular product. Heather Locklear touts L'Oreal hair color, and Michael Jordan has reaped millions for endorsing Nike products.

It's possible that Locklear and Jordan truly do know from personal experience that these products are excellent, but not all endorsements are so reliable. A recent pharmaceutical company ad for Prinivil, a high-blood pressure medication, featured baseball legend, Cal Ripken, Jr., otherwise known as the "Iron Man." The ad's slogan is "Pressure Under Control." The implication, of course is that Ripken takes Prinivil to control his blood pressure. But the tiny print at the bottom of the ad states: "Cal Ripken, Jr., is not hypertensive and is not taking Prinivil." Here, the testimonial is not a personal endorsement, but an attempt to show that the medicine is strong and hard-working, just as Ripken was on the field. The ad is misleading, but only if the unwary reader ignores the fine print.

Transfer

This emotional appeal is most commonly associated with advertising. By using transfer, the writer (or advertiser) deliberately plants the idea that favorable impressions about one thing will transfer or carry over to something else. Ironically, the *association* of the image is almost more important than the product itself. Advertisers identify this phenomenon as "selling the sizzle, not the steak." A glance through *Cosmopolitan*, *GQ*, *Marie Claire*, *Self*, and similar glossy magazines will yield many examples of transfer. (Note that transfer operates both with the appeals of flattery and just plain folks.)

Sometimes attempts to use transfer are so clumsy or transparently deceptive that they backfire. One such case occurred when Governor Pete Wilson of California announced that he would run in the 1995 Republican presidential primaries. Wilson gave his announcement speech in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, the American symbol of welcome for immigrants. By choosing this site, Wilson hoped that the tolerance and generosity associated with Lady Liberty would be transferred to himself for the assembled crowd (and, of course, for that evening's television

viewers). But political commentators saw through the ruse and reported the hypocrisy: Wilson had angered immigration supporters by supporting two anti-immigration propositions.

Practice
Exercise 2

Using the information in the preceding section, study these examples and identify the emotional appeal each represents. For easier reference, the appeals are listed here:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Appeal to authority | • Bandwagon appeal |
| • Appeal to fear | • Flattery |
| • Appeal to patriotism | • Just plain folks |
| • Appeal to pity or sympathy | • Ridicule |
| • Appeal to prejudice | • Testimonial |
| • Appeal to tradition | • Transfer |

1. By the year 2030, if we continue to admit immigrants, especially from Mexico and Central America, at the same level we do today, whites will constitute only 51 percent of the U.S. population. That will mean the death of American culture as we know it.

Appeal(s): _____

2. The government should not have forced the Citadel, a military college in South Carolina, to admit women. The Citadel has always been a men's college, and it should just have been allowed to stay that way.

Appeal(s): _____

3. In 1999, an American fisherman rescued eight-year-old Elián Gonzales from a leaky boat off the coast of Florida. His mother and several other refugees had died trying to escape from Cuba. During the conflict over whether to return the boy to his father in Cuba, this argument was current: Elisabeth Gonzales gave her life to bring the little boy to our shores. To force the little boy to return to Cuba, with its repressive Communist system, can't possibly be in the child's best interests.

Appeal(s): _____

4. Between February and March 2004, 3,955 gay and lesbian couples were married in San Francisco. The California State Supreme Court later invalidated those marriages. While the marriages were taking place, many letters to the editor weighed in on the controversy, both for and against. Here is one such letter (paraphrased): People are ashamed of San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom's order to allow gay marriages to take place at City Hall. My friends around the country call San Francisco San Fran-sicko!

Appeal(s): _____

5. Letter to the editor (paraphrased): Of course, gays and lesbians should be allowed to marry, and San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom is to be commended for engaging in civil disobedience on this issue. In the nineteenth century Henry David Thoreau committed civil disobedience and went to jail for refusing to pay a poll tax to finance a war he opposed. During the 1960s Southern blacks engaged in sit-ins to get segregation laws overturned. Newsom is simply following in the footsteps of these brave Americans.

Appeal(s): _____

6. If God wanted homosexuals to marry, he would have created Adam and Steve instead of Adam and Eve.

Appeal(s): _____

7. Clearly, the nation's new "get-tough" welfare laws have wreaked havoc on recipients. Forcing people who aren't equipped to deal with the real world and who have a limited education and no job experience by cutting off their benefits after two years will just increase the number of homeless on the streets.

Appeal(s): _____

8. Let's face it. Sixty-five percent of the American people in a recent poll voiced concern about the direction in which the country was headed. That shows that things need to change in this country!

Appeal(s): _____

9. In spring 2001 President George W. Bush gave two speeches on national parks. In one, President Bush stood before a magnificent giant sequoia in Sequoia National Park; the other occurred in the Florida Everglades, where the backdrop was a grove of sawgrass and mangrove.

Appeal(s): _____

10. "Neoconservatives widely predicted an easy occupation [of Iraq] followed by an immediate peace, followed by a 'flourishing democracy which would cause a domino effect across the region creating democracies elsewhere,' said Peter Singer, a national security fellow at the Brookings Institution. 'And then the very first foreign policy position taken by this new democratic Iraq, run by their exile friends, would be to recognize Israel, and that would somehow end the Arab-Israeli conflict, and bunnies would dance in the streets, and we would find life on Mars.'" (Quoted in Carolyn Lochhead, "Bush Speech Alarms Even War Enthusiasts," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 26, 2004.)

Appeal(s): _____

LOGICAL FALLACIES: PART 1

The second type of manipulative technique in arguments is the **logical fallacy**, an error in reasoning that also invalidates an argument. Because these fallacies are difficult, I have divided twelve of the most basic fallacies into two sections arranged alphabetically; a practice exercise follows each section. It should be noted that, like emotional appeals, not all fallacies are purposely intended to dupe the unwary reader. Many writers lapse into them as a result of ignorance or sloppy thinking.

Ad Hominem Argument

Ad hominem in Latin means "to the man." This fallacy can take two forms: The first is to attack the person's personality traits rather than his or her position on an issue. For example, calling George W. Bush "stupid" and "arrogant" or John Kerry "cold" and "cerebral" is unfair if these characterizations are irrelevant to their positions on the issues. The second form attacks the character and reputation of a person because of whom he or she associates with (guilt by association), rather than on the basis of his or her actions. Here are some exceptions:

- Letter to the editor (paraphrased): Bill Clinton had a lot of nerve taking a moral stand promoting stem cell research. What a hypocrite! His own scandals and sexual adventures tell me that he had no business lecturing Americans on moral issues.
- During the Vietnam War, Vice President Spiro Agnew characterized intellectuals (who were generally opposed to President Nixon's war policies) with this famous alliterative phrase—"nattering nabobs of negativism"—thereby attacking their collective character rather than the principles they stood for.
- Letter to the editor (paraphrased): Republican Senator Bill Frist of Tennessee should never have been nominated to take over as Senate Majority Leader. His father and brother founded HCA, the hospital corporation that is now in a lot of legal trouble for various wrongdoings.

Begging the Question

When a writer **begs the question**, he or she asserts as true that which has yet to be proved. This unproved "truth" then becomes the basis of the discussion. A simpler way of understanding this fallacy is to think of

it as a circular argument: The writer assumes to be true that which it is his duty to prove. The classic example of this fallacy is this question: When did you stop beating your wife? Either a yes or a no answer confirms that the person either has beaten his wife or still beats her, when in fact that charge needs to be established. Here are two more examples:

- Who is the best person to censor controversial articles in the campus newspaper? (In phrasing the question like this, the writer begs the question, assuming without proof that censorship of the campus newspaper is desirable in the first place.)
- During a murder trial, the prosecuting attorney asks the jury, "Does it make sense to release this murderer so that he can commit the same atrocities again and again? We need to lock this person up for a very long time so that he can never kill someone again." (This argument begs the question, since the very purpose of a trial is to prove whether the defendant actually committed the murder.)

Cause-Effect Fallacies

Fallacies involving cause-effect relationships can be divided into two types.

False Cause

This first type results either from citing a false or a remote cause to explain a situation or from oversimplifying the cause of a complicated issue.

- In the 1950s researchers pointed to public swimming pools as a source of the polio virus, noting that children who contracted polio had swum in public pools. (Note: Since thousands of city children swam in public pools, there were bound to be outbreaks of polio among them.) In fact, it wasn't the pools that caused the disease; the virus was spread by an infected person's sneezing or coughing.
- It is obvious that Sam Anderson would grow up to be an axe murderer. According to an interview I read, he was subjected to a rigid toilet-training regimen when he was a toddler. (The remoteness of this "cause" makes the conclusion improbable or questionable.)
- Billboard ad for ABC Television: "Before TV, Two World Wars. After TV, Zero." (This ad makes it sound as if the ABC network was responsible for world peace.)

Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc

In Latin, this second kind of cause-effect fallacy means "After this, therefore because of this." The fallacy suggests that because event B occurred after event A, event A caused event B; in other words, the writer makes a connection solely because of chronology. This fallacy accounts

for many silly superstitions, for example, when someone breaks a mirror and then blames that action for seven years of bad luck.

- Yesterday I forgot to take my vitamins, and this morning I woke up with a cold. That proves that taking vitamins prevents colds.
- Every time a Republican gets into the White House, the U.S. experiences a recession. That's why I'm not voting Republican in this election.

One problem with cause-and-effect arguments is that sometimes it's difficult to determine which is the cause and which is the effect. For example, research into the effects of excessive television on children has led to two conclusions: (1) children who watch a lot of television tend to be more aggressive, and (2) preschool children who watch a lot of TV tend to have problems paying attention. But which is the cause and which is the effect? As one recent editorial argued, "Maybe more aggressive kids are drawn more to TV. Ditto for the April study about preschoolers who watch hours of TV tending to have attention-span problems later on. It's possible that children with a propensity toward attention problems are drawn more to that jumpy onscreen world in the first place." (Quoted in "Kids' Brains in the Balance," *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 2004.)

Either-Or Fallacy

Sometimes called *false dilemma*, the **either-or fallacy** discusses an issue as if there are only two alternatives available, thereby ignoring other alternatives. Rejecting one choice requires one to accept the other. Here are some examples:

- Rap star and fashion mogul P. Diddy's 2004 campaign slogan to encourage young adults to vote: Vote or die!
- A married woman should stay home and devote herself to raising her children. If she wants a career, she should forget about having children. (This fallacy ignores a middle ground or other alternatives, such as working part time, working at home, or the husband and wife taking turns with child care duties.)

Evasion

Evasion is a fallacy that occurs when a speaker or writer evades or ignores the question by talking around it.

- A reporter asks Mayor Sanchez how he proposes to solve the homeless problem. The mayor answers: "We must find a solution to the problem of homeless people on our streets. This is a complicated problem that I am taking very seriously."
- In March 2003, just prior to declaring war on Iraq, George W. Bush was asked why he thought "so many people around the world take a different view of the threat that Saddam Hussein poses than you and your allies." Bush replied "I've seen all kinds of protests since I've been the president."

I remember the protests against trade. There was [sic] a lot of people who didn't feel like free trade was good for the world. I completely disagree. I think free trade is good for both wealthy and impoverished nations. That didn't change my opinion about trade." (Quoted in William Finnegan, "The Economics of Empire," *Harper's Magazine*, May 2003.)

**Practice
Exercise 3**

Study the following arguments carefully. Then decide which of these fallacies each argument represents:

- Ad hominem argument
- Begging the question
- False cause
- Post hoc, ergo propter hoc
- ~~Either-or fallacy~~ (false dilemma)
- Evasion

1. The Lytton band of Pomo Indians has proposed building a gigantic casino in San Pablo with 2,500 slot machines. Because more and more people have become addicted to gambling, I am opposed to this project.

Fallacy: _____

2. The voters of the Red River Valley should vote against Congressman Lewis when he runs for reelection. He recently was accused of having an affair, and he is rumored to have smoked marijuana in college. He can't possibly represent our community's environmental concerns.

Fallacy: _____

3. The president of XYZ Widget Company reports: "The recent settlement between management and the labor union was a huge mistake. Giving in to the union's demands for a wage increase has resulted in low production figures."

Fallacy: _____

4. Iran and North Korea are part of the Axis of Evil because their leaders are vicious.

Fallacy: _____

5. Letter to the editor (paraphrased): Has anyone else noticed that all of these schoolyard killings have occurred in suburban areas and that minorities are never responsible for such acts? This tells me that the suburbs breed violence more than inner cities.

Fallacy: _____

6. Because having a common language is an essential requirement of any democratic government, I'm planning on voting for Proposition 227, which will eliminate bilingual education in my state's schools.

Fallacy: _____

■ LOGICAL FALLACIES: PART 2

False Analogy As you will recall from Chapter 4 in Part 2, an analogy discusses one subject in terms of another, completely different subject. Although it does not carry the same force as factual evidence or good reasons, arguing by analogy can be effective and persuasive in supporting an argument. An analogy can break down, however, and become a **false analogy** if there are fewer similarities than differences, if the resemblance is remote or ambiguous, or if there is no connection between the two subjects at all. For example, consider this argument:

- Every red-blooded American serviceman knows that gays should be banned from the military. In the military we're like one big family living in close quarters, and a homosexual just wouldn't fit in.

This argument rests on the dubious idea that people living in military quarters are comparable to a family. To see why the analogy is false, we have to see where it breaks down and if there are more dissimilarities than similarities. Consider this analysis:

- One chooses to enter the military. The United States has a voluntary military, not a draft. However, one cannot choose what family he or she is born into.
- The argument implies in the military there is no privacy, whereas family members enjoy such a luxury.
- Members of the military wouldn't be "comfortable" with gays around, which implies, contradictorily, that gays couldn't "fit in" to a family, either.

In sum, when you examine these inconsistencies, the only real connection between the military and a family is that both are social institutions.

- In 2003, recording artists protested the plan by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) to sue consumers caught downloading music on sites like Morpheus and Kazaa. The RIAA had filed suits against 261 people who had downloaded more than 1,000 files onto their computers because they had violated copyright laws. Alternative musician and Grammy nominee DJ Moby was quoted on his Web site as saying, in response to the RIAA's actions: "File sharing is a reality, and it would seem that the labels would do well to learn how to incorporate it into their business models somehow. Record companies suing 12-year-old girls for file sharing is kind of like horse-and-buggy operators suing Henry Ford." (Quoted in Moby Tour Diary Updates, September 10, 2003. Accessed at www.moby.com.)

Try to explain why this argument rests upon a false analogy.

It is important to note that not all analogies used in persuasive writing are false, and in fact, as noted earlier, analogies can be both effective and cogent—as long as the similarities between the two things being compared are greater than their differences. To illustrate, in 1987 a group of parents from Minneapolis (a city with one of the highest Native American populations in the country), called Concerned American Indian Parents, designed a poster distributed to local high schools. They were protesting the practice in some high schools of calling their athletic teams the "Indians." The poster depicted the banner of the real Cleveland Indians baseball team, along with three other hypothetical banners for the Pittsburgh Negroes, the Kansas City Jews, and the San Diego Caucasians. The slogan at the bottom of the poster read, "Maybe now you know how Native Americans feel." One of the schools that received the poster, Southwest Secondary School in Minneapolis, announced that it had changed the name of one of its teams from the Indians to the Lakers, demonstrating the compelling power of a good analogy.

Oversimplification

The fallacy of **oversimplification** can involve either reducing a complicated issue to overly simple terms or suppressing information that would strengthen the argument.

- Strikes should be illegal because they inconvenience innocent people.
- Human DNA has 23 chromosomes, while dogs have 39. Therefore, dogs are more complex than humans. (This argument oversimplifies the differences between humans and dogs and rests on a simplistic definition of the word *complex*.)

Rationalization

A **rationalization** is a self-serving but incorrect reason to justify one's position. It uses reasons that sound plausible but that are actually false.

- A student received a D in his college chemistry course. When asked by his parents why he received such a low grade, the student responded that he didn't like the instructor.
- It would be bad for my health if I stopped smoking. First, I would gain a lot of weight, and that would cause a strain on my heart, which might lead to high blood pressure. Anyway, science is surely bound to find a cure for cancer one of these days.

Red Herring

This colorfully named fallacy comes from the practice of dragging a fish across a trail to throw dogs off the scent of the fox. The fallacy works in a similar way: The writer who uses the **red herring** fallacy presents another argument that is irrelevant to the real question, thus throwing the discussion off the track.

- It doesn't make sense for people to get so upset about violence on television. All they have to do is look around at the larger society, and they'll see that violence is all around them. Why don't these critics worry about that issue? (The real issue under discussion is violence on television, not violence in the larger society.)
- SUV owners are getting a bad rap. Environmentalists and safety experts complain about the SUV's poor fuel economy and propensity to roll over in an accident. What these critics should really be concerned about is traffic congestion and the need for better mass transit in our cities.

Slippery Slope

The metaphoric name of the **slippery slope fallacy** will help you remember it. It suggests that one step in the wrong direction will lead to increasingly dire occurrences.

- The New York law prohibiting drivers from talking on cell phones while driving provoked this typical response: Denying drivers in New York the right to talk on cell phones is a bad idea. The next thing you know, New York's legislature will be passing laws forbidding drivers to listen to the radio, change the radio station, eat a Big Mac, or talk to their passengers while driving.
- In an NBC interview, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger said that California's law against same-sex marriages needs to be obeyed, adding "we cannot have . . . mayors go and hand out licenses for various different things. Maybe the next thing is another city that hands out licenses for assault weapons, and someone else hands out licenses for selling drugs." (Quoted in Kirk Semple, "Schwarzenegger Backs Amending Presidential Rule," *New York Times*, February 22, 2004.) Since marriage licenses are obviously not in the same category as assault weapons or illegal drugs, Schwarzenegger's argument rests on the slippery slope fallacy.

Two Wrongs Make a Right

The **two wrongs make a right** fallacy is commonly used to defend wrongdoing and make it appear legitimate because others engage in the

same practice. In other words, the writer accuses the opposition of holding the same views or behaving in the same way.

- During the campaign fund-raising investigations of 1997, President Clinton admitted that the Democratic National Committee had been guilty of certain abuses (money laundering, illegal contributions by foreigners, and so forth), but argued that the Republican National Committee had done exactly the same thing. (In fact, the Republicans were in a sticky position concerning the Senate hearings; they risked looking ridiculous if they came down too hard on the Democrats for practices that both parties had been guilty of using for years.)

Practice
Exercise 4

Study the following arguments carefully. Then decide which of these fallacies each represents:

- False analogy
- Oversimplification
- Rationalization
- Red herring
- Slippery slope
- Two wrongs make a right

1. A university fund-raiser routinely sent her personal mail, including bills and gifts, using the university's postage, arguing that the university didn't pay her enough; thus the free postage helped compensate her for the higher salary she thought she deserved.

Fallacy: _____

2. If doctors are allowed to consult reference books, medical journals, and World Wide Web sites, why can't we medical students use our medical textbooks or Web sites during tests?

Fallacy: _____

3. Letter to the editor (paraphrased): For all those bleeding-heart liberals who gripe about the death of the tobacco bill, I say that the idea that a tax increase will stop people from smoking is way out in left field. If the administration really wanted to protect kids, it would do something about all the illegal drugs available to our young people. Children don't die from smoking cigarettes, but plenty die from using illegal drugs.

Fallacy: _____

4. A dog breeder refused to reimburse a customer, who had purchased a pedigreed German shepherd that later was found to have a serious defect requiring corrective surgery. The breeder argued: "You wouldn't expect your doctor to reimburse you if your child needed surgery, would you?"

Fallacy: _____

5. Letter to the editor (paraphrased) after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Texas's sodomy law: If the Supreme Court says that you have the right to do whatever kind of sexual practice you want in your home, then you have the right to commit adultery, to practice bigamy or polygamy, all in the privacy of your own home. And as for gay marriage, if homosexuals are allowed to marry, what's to prevent me from marrying my sister, or marrying my dog, or even marrying myself?!

Fallacy: _____

6. All this talk about conserving electricity and buying more fuel-efficient cars is beside the point. What we really should be concerned with is becoming independent in our energy needs so that we don't have to go begging for oil from OPEC nations.

Fallacy: _____

7. I don't care whether file-sharing and swapping music online is wrong; most CDs cost between \$15 and \$18, and that's too expensive for college students who are already on a tight budget.

Fallacy: _____

8. In 1996, a Massachusetts bill required, among other provisions, that tobacco companies reveal the additives in each cigarette brand, in particular "ammonia-based compounds that tobacco critics say boost nicotine delivery and make cigarettes more potent." Peggy Carter, a spokeswoman for RJR Nabisco, the parent company of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., challenged the bill, arguing: "They wouldn't ask Coke, Pepsi or the Colonel to divulge their soft-drink or chicken recipe, so why should we be deprived of trade-secret privileges?" (Quoted in Barbara Carton, "State Demands List of Contents for Cigarettes," *The Wall Street Journal*," August 2, 1996.)

Fallacy: _____

9. The controversy over cloning human beings and using stem cells for medical research is misguided. People really ought to be concerned about the disregard for human life that pro-abortion types represent.

Fallacy: _____

10. I don't see anything wrong with using the office copy machine to make copies of my personal income tax forms. Just yesterday I saw Joan Wilson downstairs in the duplicating room Xeroxing that mystery novel she's been writing on the side.

