



Common Core Reading Standards: Understanding Argument

Focus: Fun with Fallacies!

Overview

This lesson will reinforce the definitions of rhetoric and argument while introducing the idea of fallacies. Students will compete to find examples of fallacy in written argument before working independently to discover the mode of the author's argument, his or her claims and use of evidence, and his or her use of fallacy (if present).

Standards

9-10.RI.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

9-10.RI.2. Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

9-10.RI.3. Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

9-10.RI.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

9-10.RI.5. Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

9-10.RI.6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

9-10.RI.8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.



9-10.RI.9. Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”), including how they address related themes and concepts.

Objectives

- To understand logical fallacies.
- To learn and/or review argument.

Materials

Students will need to be provided with copies of the following core works.

- Thomas Jefferson, [*The Declaration of Independence*](#)
- Patrick Henry, [*“Speech to the Second Virginia Convention”*](#)
- Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address”
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt, [*“State of the Union Address”*](#)
- Learned Hand, [*“I Am an American Day Address”*](#)
- Margaret Chase Smith, [*“Remarks to the Senate in Support of a Declaration of Conscience”*](#)
- Elie Wiesel, “Hope, Despair and Memory”
- Ronald Reagan, [*“Address to Students at Moscow State University”*](#)

Students also need to be provided with information about logical fallacies.

- [Fallacies](#)
- [Examples of fallacies in argument](#)
- [Explanation of examples of fallacies in argument](#)

Additional materials:

- Computers
- Projector
- Folder that all students can access for saving documents



Activity 1

Lecture

Remind students of the basic definition of rhetoric:

Rhetoric is the art of using language to persuade.

Ask students, “What are some ways we use language to persuade? If I wanted to convince you to do something, to take an action, what could I say or how could I use language to get you to do it?”

Write students’ ideas on the board as they emerge.

Logos, Pathos, Ethos

Remind students that Aristotle grouped rhetoric into three basic categories or three basic kinds of appeals: **logos, pathos, and ethos.**

Logos: Logos is an appeal to logic, and as such, a logos argument uses facts, statistics, evidence, numbers, and clearly logical patterns such as the [syllogism](#) to prove a point. Through reasoned discourse, the speaker convinces his audience that an idea is right or wrong, an action good or bad, a plan worthy or unworthy.

Pathos: Pathos is an appeal to the emotions of the audience, an appeal to their emotions, sympathies, or imaginations. The speaker tries to convince the audience through awakening their emotional connection to a particular subject or idea.

Ethos: Ethos is a form of argument that uses the credibility of the speaker to persuade. It is similar to “street cred” in the sense that the argument is believable primarily because of the character or reputation or qualities of the speaker him- or herself. Ethos can be achieved by the speaker’s practical knowledge or professional experience, the speaker’s position as a person of credibility or honor, or the speaker’s goodwill toward the audience (that is, the idea that the speaker has the audience’s best interests in mind).

Reinforcement

Students can watch [Texas A&M video lectures](#) on rhetoric in technical writing.



Discussion

With the class, review the information given in the lecture, especially discussing ethos, pathos, and logos.

Activity 2: Fun with Fallacies

Lecture

Remind students that in rhetoric as in life, not all speechmakers, politicians, advertisers, lawyers (or essentially anyone) always “play fair” all the time in argumentation. That’s where fallacies come in.

Have students write down the definition of a fallacy: **A fallacy is an example of incorrect reasoning in an argument that leads to a false or mistaken conclusion.**

Small Group Work

- Pass out copies of UNC’s handout on [Fallacies](#).
- Go over the first three paragraphs together, annotating as you go.
- At the section with specific fallacies, assign each group of students a specific fallacy to work with.
- Have each pair complete the following:
 - Paraphrase the fallacy
 - Create one example of the fallacy
 - Point to three examples of the fallacy found in popular culture - on t.v. or news
 - They can save their material to the “Fallacies folder” you have established on the server.

Whole Group Discussion

Have groups share their examples of the fallacies assigned to them. Ask, “Where have you seen some examples of hasty generalization? If you’re willing to share information about your own experiences, do you know someone (including yourself) who’s ever made one? How about a “slippery slope” fallacy?”

**Find the Fallacy!**

Pass out copies of UNC's [Examples of fallacies in argument](#). Have students, in groups of four, read and analyze the first argumentative example. Their task is to find the fallacies in the argument. They need to be able to defend their reasons for identifying the particular fallacy.

When all groups are done, use the key to go over the fallacies that they should have found. If groups are finished early, they should move on to the second argument.

NOTE: The focus should definitely be to emphasize to students that they need to prove their points: What evidence do they have that XYZ argument was using a particular fallacy?

Second Example

The second example of a fallacy uses the same directions as before; however, if you would like to make it even more interesting, put students on a shorter time limit and make it a competition. When they are done with their analysis, the group should bring their results to you so you can check it against the key. The first group completely done is declared the winner. Then go over the material with the whole class.]

Closing:

See if there are any questions regarding the fallacies covered. Then divide the class into eight groups. Each group takes one specific speech. Each group member gets a copy of the assigned speech.

Directions for Homework

- Take the speech you have been assigned and read it carefully once.
- Then, read it more carefully, writing down questions you have about the text, strong emotional reactions you felt, or important ideas the author mentioned.
- Identify the author's main point -- his or her **claim**.
- Identify at least three different reasons s/he gives for why his or her claim is true. Those are his or her **warrants**.
- Identify facts, **evidence**, or specific data s/he gives to support his or her claim.
- Mark with an "L" those places in the text where the author is using a "facts and figures" or data-based approach to convince you. (L is for **Logos**.)
- Mark with a "P" those places in the text where the author is trying to appeal to your emotions -- anger, sorrow, irritation, pity, patriotism, et cetera. (P is for **Pathos**.)



- Mark with an “E” those places in the text where the author refers to his or her own expertise or experience -- that is, the “street cred” that makes this speaker believable. (E is for ***Ethos***.)
- Mark any logical fallacy you encounter with a big “F”!

In a short (3/4-page) composition in paragraph form, please do the following:

1. Identify the author and title of the speech.
2. Summarize the author’s point (his or her **claim**).
3. Summarize the most important reason (**warrant**) for that claim.
4. Summarize the best piece of **evidence** s/he offered for that claim.
5. Prove that your author’s speech was MOSTLY ethos-based, MOSTLY pathos-based, or MOSTLY logos-based. (Note: If it was pretty evenly divided between two of those categories, go ahead and say that.)
6. Briefly prove why you think so. Quote the place where the author is being especially “ethos-y,” “logos-y,” or “pathos-y.”
7. Note any fallacies the author may have used.
8. Briefly explain why this particular quote is outstanding evidence to prove that you are right.
9. Conclude with explaining your personal reaction to the speech and whether or not you found it convincing and why.

Resources Specific to this lesson:

- [*The Declaration of Independence*](#)
- [“Speech to the Second Virginia Convention”](#) by Patrick Henry
- [“Second Inaugural Address”](#) by Abraham Lincoln
- [“State of the Union Address”](#) by Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- [“I Am an American Day Address”](#) by Learned Hand
- [“Remarks to the Senate in Support of a Declaration of Conscience”](#) by Margaret Chase Smith
- [“Hope, Despair and Memory”](#) by Elie Wiesel
- [“Address to Students at Moscow State University”](#) by Ronald Reagan

- [OWL Purdue](#)
- [Logic in Argumentative Writing](#)



- [Logical Fallacies](#)
- [The Rhetorical Situation](#)
- [Rhetorical Strategies for Persuasion](#)
- [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill - Writing Center](#)
 - [Argument](#)
 - [Fallacies](#)
 - [Examples of fallacies in argument](#)
 - [Explanation of examples of fallacies in argument](#)
- [Texas A&M - English 301](#) : Technical Writing
- [Student Resources](#)

General for these seminal texts:

American History Sites

- [National Endowment for the Humanities](#)
- [Teaching American History](#)
- [Lessons on Abraham Lincoln's first election](#)
- [Our Documents](#) - a resource for American Documents
- [American Rhetoric](#) - a resource for American speeches
- [The Charters of Freedom](#) - original documents
- [JSTOR Judge Hand](#) information
- [Brief biography of Learned Hand](#)
- [Senate Art & History Home](#)
- Classic Senate Speeches: [Margaret Chase Smith's](#)
- [Senate Biography Margaret Chase Smith](#)
- [Official Site of the Nobel Prize](#)
- [Video of Elie Wiesel](#) giving his Nobel speech
- [Ronald Reagan Library](#)
- [Video of Reagan](#) delivering his "Address to Students at Moscow State University"

General for Common Core

- [pdf of K - 12 English Language Arts standards](#)