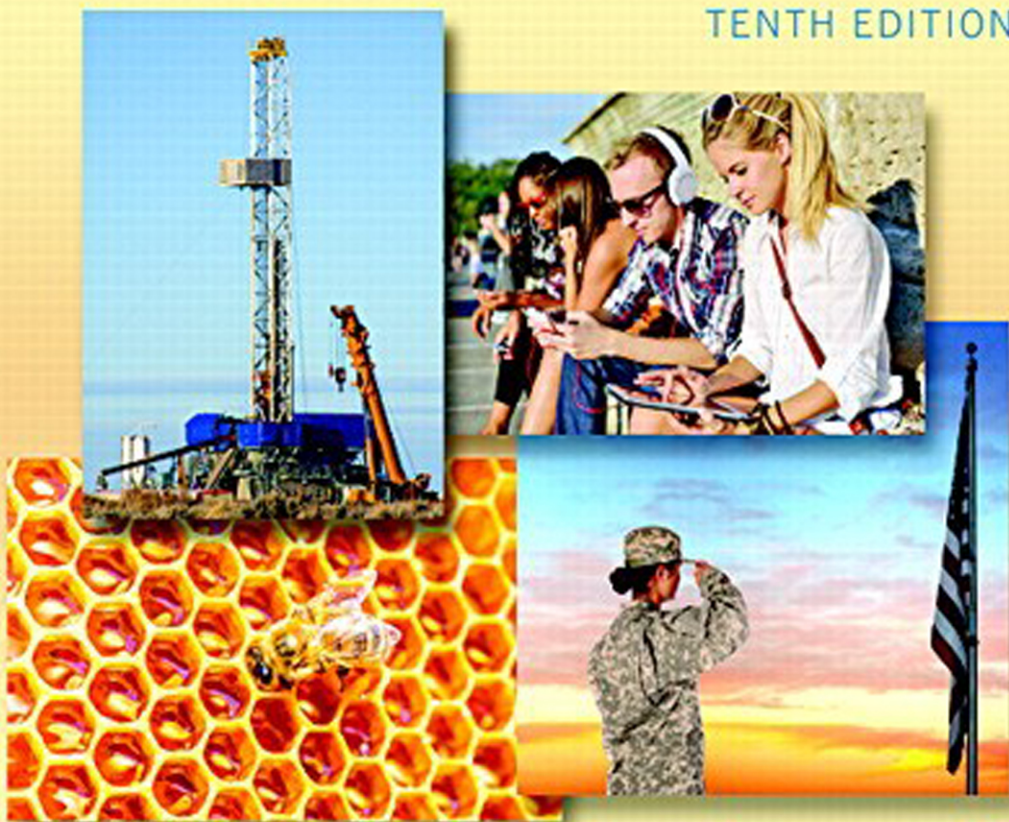


Writing Arguments

A RHETORIC WITH READINGS

TENTH EDITION



John D. Ramage John C. Bean June Johnson

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Tenth Edition

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Preface

Through nine editions, *Writing Arguments* has established itself as a leading college textbook in argumentation. By focusing on argument as dialogue in search of solutions to problems instead of as pro-con debate with winners and losers, *Writing Arguments* treats argument as a process of inquiry as well as a means of persuasion. Users and reviewers have consistently praised the book for teaching the critical thinking skills needed for *writing* arguments: how to analyze the occasion for an argument; how to ground an argument in the values and beliefs of the targeted audience; how to develop and elaborate an argument; and how to respond sensitively to objections and alternative views. We are pleased that in this tenth edition, we have made many improvements while retaining the text's signature strengths.

What's New in the Tenth Edition?

Based on our continuing research into argumentation theory and pedagogy, as well as on the advice of users, we have made significant improvements in the tenth edition that increase the text's flexibility for teachers and its appeal to students. We have made the following major changes:

- **An updated, revised, and streamlined Chapter 2 on “Argument as Inquiry” now focused on the “living wage” controversy.** The previous edition's inquiry topic about immigration has been replaced by the issue of raising the minimum wage for fast-food workers or retail store clerks. Chapter 2 now has all new student examples, visual arguments, and professional readings focussed on minimum wage, including a new annotated student exploratory essay that models the process of rhetorical reading and dialogic thinking.
- **Expanded treatment of evidence.** A revised and expanded Chapter 5 explains with greater clarity the kinds of evidence that can be used in argument and shows students how to analyze evidence rhetorically. A new section shows students how to evaluate evidence encountered in secondary sources by tracing it back to its primary sources.
- **Expanded treatment of Rogerian communication and other means of engaging alternative views.** In Chapter 7, we expand our treatment of Rogerian argument by reframing it as Rogerian communication, which focuses more on mutual listening, negotiation, and growth than on persuasion. Chapter 7 now contains an additional student example of Rogerian communication addressing the issue of charter schools. In addition, we have strengthened our explanation of how classical argument treats opposing views. A new annotated student essay using a rebuttal strategy shows how classical argument can appeal successfully to neutral, undecided, or mildly resistant audiences.
- **Streamlined organization of each chapter now keyed to learning outcomes.** Each chapter now begins with newly formulated learning outcomes. Each main heading in a rhetoric chapter is linked to a respective outcome, enhancing the explanatory power of the outcomes and helping students learn the high-level take-away points and concepts in each chapter

- **New “For Writing and Discussion” activities.** The class discussion activities in this edition now include two types. The first—identified as “For Class Discussion”—helps teachers incorporate small-group discussion tasks that enhance learning of course concepts and skills. The second type—identified as “For Writing and Discussion”—is new to this edition. Each of these activities begins with an “individual task” that can be assigned as homework in advance of class. These tasks are intended as informal, low-stakes write-to-learn activities that motivate reading of the chapter and help students build their own argumentative skills. Each chapter contains at least one of these “For Writing and Discussion” activities.
- **Seven new student model essays, many of which are annotated.** New student model arguments, including many newly annotated models, help demonstrate argument strategies in practice. Showing how other students have developed various types of arguments makes argument concepts and strategies easier for students to grasp and use themselves. New student essays address timely and relevant issues such as raising the minimum wage, evaluating charter schools, analyzing the ethics of downloading films from a person-to-person torrent site on the Web, critiquing a school culture that makes minorities “invisible,” opposing women in combat roles, and evaluating the effect of social media on today’s college students.
- **Seven new professional readings throughout the rhetoric section in the text.** New readings about issues such as a living wage, the use of dietary supplements among athletes, the “amateur” status of college athletes, the impact of adult cell-phone use on children, and therapeutic cloning have been chosen for their illustrative power and student interest.
- **New visual examples throughout the text.** New images, editorial cartoons, and graphics throughout the text highlight current issues such as living wage, climate change, bullying, sexual trafficking, date rape, rainwater conservation, fracking, and gender or racial stereotypes.
- **A thoroughly updated and revised anthology.** The anthology in the tenth edition features newly updated units as well as one new unit.
 - A new unit on food and farming explores controversies over labelling genetically modified foods and the educational, nutritional, and social value of school gardens.
 - An updated unit on digital literacies explores the effects of communications technologies and social media on the way we think, read, and write as well as on our values and social relationships and online identities. The unit also explores the controversy over selfies and shows how social media have been employed to fight gender violence.
 - An updated unit on education continues its focus on the value of a college education. A new sequence of arguments examines the benefits and drawbacks of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), including their effect on teaching, student learning, and society’s commitment to educate its citizens.
 - The unit on immigration has been updated to reflect the latest controversies over the social and economic benefits of immigrants and the humanitarian crisis over undocumented children at the border.
 - An updated unit on sustainability now presents a range of arguments on the technological, economic, and political challenges of converting to renewable energy sources and on the controversy over fracking.

- An updated unit on the Millennial generation includes the difficulties of entering the workforce, the need to live with parents longer than planned, choosing to delay marriage, and more.

What Hasn't Changed? The Distinguishing Features of *Writing Arguments*

Building on earlier success, we have preserved the signature features of earlier editions praised by students, instructors, and reviewers:

- **Focus throughout on writing arguments.** Grounded in composition theory, this text combines explanations of argument with exploratory writing activities, sequenced writing assignments, and class-tested discussion tasks with the aim of helping students produce their own strong arguments. The text emphasizes the critical thinking that underlies effective arguments, particularly the skills of critical reading, of active questioning and listening, of believing and doubting, and of developing effective reasons and evidence to support claims.
- **Emphasis on argument as a rhetorical act.** Analyzing audience, understanding the real-world occasions for argument, and appreciating the context and genre of arguments are all treated as equally important rhetorical considerations. Focusing on both the reading and the writing of arguments, the text emphasizes the critical thinking that underlies effective arguments, particularly the skills of critical reading, of rhetorical analysis, of believing and doubting, of empathic listening, of active questioning, and of negotiating ambiguity and seeking synthesis.
- **Integration of four different approaches to argument.** This text uses
 - the Toulmin system as a means of inventing and analyzing arguments;
 - the enthymeme as a logical structure rooted in the beliefs and values of the audience;
 - the classical concepts of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* as persuasive appeals; and
 - stasis theory (called claim types) as an aid to inventing and structuring arguments through the understanding of generic argumentative moves associated with different categories of claims.
- **Generous treatment of the research process.** Coverage includes guidance for finding sources, reading and evaluating them rhetorically, taking notes, integrating source material, and citing sources using two academic citation systems: MLA and APA.
- **Well-sequenced writing assignments.** The text provides a variety of sequenced writing assignments that include:
 - an argument summary
 - a researched, exploratory essay
 - a “supporting-reasons” argument
 - a classical argument
 - a delayed-thesis argument or Rogerian letter
 - a rhetorical analysis of a written argument
 - a rhetorical analysis of a visual argument
 - an advocacy ad
 - a short argument incorporating quantitative data

- an editorial cartoon
- a definition argument
- a causal argument
- an evaluation or ethical argument
- a proposal argument
- an advocacy poster
- a speech with PowerPoint slides

Part Six, the anthology, provides writing assignments focusing on problems related to each topical unit. Instructors can also design anthology assignments requiring argument analysis.

- **“For Writing and Discussion,” “For Class Discussion,” and “Examining Visual Arguments” exercises.** These class-tested informal activities, which teach critical thinking and build argumentative skills, are designed to produce active class discussion and debate. All “For Class Discussion” exercises can be used either for whole-class discussions or for collaborative group tasks.
- **Effective and engaging student and professional arguments.** The tenth edition contains 54 written arguments and 55 visual arguments drawn from public and academic arenas as well as 16 student essays and 2 student visual arguments to illustrate argumentative strategies and stimulate discussion, analysis, and debate.

Our Approaches to Argumentation

Our interest in argumentation grows out of our interest in the relationship between writing and thinking. When writing arguments, writers are forced to lay bare their thinking processes in an unparalleled way, grappling with the complex interplay between inquiry and persuasion, between issue and audience. In an effort to engage students in the kinds of critical thinking that argument demands, we draw on four major approaches to argumentation:

1. **The enthymeme as a rhetorical and logical structure.** This concept, especially useful for beginning writers, helps students “nutshell” an argument as a claim with one or more supporting *because* clauses. It also helps them see how real-world arguments are rooted in assumptions granted by the audience rather than in universal and unchanging principles.
2. **The three classical types of appeal—*logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*.** These concepts help students place their arguments in a rhetorical context focusing on audience-based appeals; they also help students create an effective voice and style.
3. **Toulmin’s system of analyzing arguments.** Toulmin’s system helps students see the complete, implicit structure that underlies an enthymeme and develop appropriate grounds and backing to support an argument’s reasons and warrants. It also highlights the rhetorical, social, and dialectical nature of argument.
4. **Stasis theory concerning types of claims.** This approach stresses the heuristic value of learning different patterns of support for different types of claims and often leads students to make surprisingly rich and full arguments.

Throughout the text these approaches are integrated and synthesized into generative tools for both producing and analyzing arguments.

Structure of the Text

Writing Arguments provides a sound pedagogical framework for the teaching of argument while giving instructors the flexibility to use what they need. Part One begins with an overview of argument and a chapter on reading arguments and exploring issues. Part Two examines the elements of writing arguments: the enthymeme (a claim with reasons); the rhetorical appeals of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*; Toulmin's system for analyzing arguments; the use of evidence; acknowledging and responding to alternative views; and using delayed-thesis and Rogerian approaches. In Part Three, the focus shifts to analyzing written and visual arguments. Part Four provides a deeper understanding of definition, resemblance, causal, evaluation, and proposal arguments. Part Five shows students how to use sources in support of an argument by evaluating, integrating, citing, and documenting them properly. An appendix on logical fallacies is a handy section where all the major informal fallacies are treated at once for easy reference.

Part Six, the anthology, provides a rich and varied selection of professional arguments arranged into seven high-interest units including the value of higher education, digital literacies, current food issues, Millennials in the workplace, immigration, choices for a sustainable world, and a collection of classic arguments. The anthology selections are grouped by topic rather than by issue question to encourage students to see that any conversation of alternative views gives rise to numerous embedded and intertwined issues. Many of the issues raised in the anthology are first raised in the rhetoric (Parts One through Five) so that students' interest in the anthology topics will already be piqued.

Resources for Instructors and Students

Now Available for Composition

MyWritingLab™

Integrated solutions for writing. *MyWritingLab* is an online homework, tutorial, and assessment program that provides engaging experiences for today's instructors and students. New features designed specifically for composition instructors and their course needs include a new writing space for students, customizable rubrics for assessing and grading student writing, multimedia instruction on all aspects of composition, and advanced reporting to improve the ability to analyze class performance.

Adaptive learning. *MyWritingLab* offers pre-assessments and personalized remediation so students see improved results and instructors spend less time in class reviewing the basics. Visit www.mywritinglab.com for more information.

eTextbooks

Pearson eText gives students access to *Writing Arguments*, Tenth Edition, whenever and wherever they can access the Internet. The eText pages look exactly like the printed text, and include powerful interactive and customization functions. Users

can create notes, highlight text in different colors, create bookmarks, zoom, click hyperlinked words and phrases to view definitions, and view as a single page or as two pages. Pearson eText also links students to associated media files, enabling them to view videos as they read the text, and offers a full-text search and the ability to save and export notes. The Pearson eText also includes embedded URLs in the chapter text with active links to the Internet.

The Pearson eText app is a great companion to Pearson's eText browser-based book reader. It allows existing subscribers who view their Pearson eText titles on a Mac or PC to additionally access their titles in a bookshelf on the iPad or an Android tablet either online or via download.

Instructor's Manual

The *Instructor's Manual*, Tenth Edition, includes the following features:

- Discussion of planning decisions an instructor must make in designing an argument course: for example, how to use readings; how much to emphasize Toulmin or claim type theory; how much time to build into the course for invention, peer review of drafts, and other writing instruction; and how to select and sequence assignments.
- For new instructors, a helpful discussion of how to sequence writing assignments and how to use a variety of collaborative tasks in the classroom to promote active learning and critical thinking.
- Four detailed syllabi that support a variety of course structures and emphases.
- An independent, highly teachable introductory lesson on the Toulmin schema and an additional exercise giving students practice using Toulmin to generate argument frames.
- Chapter-by-chapter teaching tips, responses to the For Class Discussion exercises, and sample quizzes.
- Suggestions for encouraging students to explore how visual arguments mold public thinking about issues and controversies.
- Helpful suggestions for using the exercises in Part Four on critiquing readings. By focusing on rhetorical context as well as on the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments, our suggestions will help students connect their reading of arguments to their writing of arguments.
- A list of anthology readings that employ each claim type, either as a major claim or as a substantial portion of the argument.
- An analysis of anthology readings that points out striking connections among readings, suggesting how the readings participate in larger societal argumentative conversations, but that also connects the anthology to the rhetoric portion of the text. Using a bulleted, quick-reference format, each analysis briefly discusses (1) the core of the argument, (2) the major or dominant claims of the argument, (3) the argument's use of evidence and argumentative strategies, (4) the appeals to *ethos* and *pathos* in the argument, and (5) the argument's genre.

Acknowledgments

We are happy for this opportunity to give public thanks to the scholars, teachers, and students who have influenced our approach to composition and argument. For this edition, we owe special thanks to those who helped us revise the anthology of *Writing Arguments*. Hilary Hawley, our colleague at Seattle University, researched and wrote the apparatus for many of the Anthology units. Her experience teaching argument and the public controversies over food appear in the new unit featuring controversies over GMO food and school gardens. We also thank Sarah Bean for her research on the anthology, her keen awareness of social justice issues, and her empathic perspective on Millennials.

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John C. Bean
June Johnson

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PART ONE

Overview of Argument

- 1 Argument: An Introduction
- 2 Argument as Inquiry: Reading and Exploring



Across the country, protests like this one in front of a Burger King in Boston are raising awareness of the poverty-level wages of fast-food workers, who are not represented by unions and who often depend on public assistance such as food stamps to get by every month. While protestors argue for a minimum wage of \$15 per hour, opponents argue that raising the minimum wage would increase food prices and reduce the number of jobs. If you were making a brochure or poster in favor of an increased minimum wage for fast-food workers, how effective would this realistic, low-keyed photo be in raising sympathy for the cause? Chapters 2 and 7 explore the issue of a living wage for unskilled workers.

Argument: An Introduction

1

What you will learn in this chapter:

- 1.1 To explain common misconceptions about the meaning of argument
- 1.2 To describe defining features of argument
- 1.3 To understand the relationship of argument to the problem of truth

At the outset of a book on argument, you might expect us to provide a simple definition of argument. Instead, we're going to explain why no universally accepted definition is possible. Over the centuries, philosophers and rhetoricians have disagreed about the meaning of the term and about the goals that arguers should set for themselves. This opening chapter introduces you to some of these controversies.

We begin by showing some common misconceptions about argument while also explaining how arguments can be either implicit or explicit. We then proceed to three defining features of argument: it requires writers or speakers to justify their claims; it is both a product and a process; and it combines elements of truth seeking and persuasion. Finally, we explore more fully the relationship between truth seeking and persuasion by asking questions about the nature of "truth" that arguments seek.

What Do We Mean by Argument?

1.1 To explain common misconceptions about the meaning of argument

Let's begin by examining the inadequacies of two popular images of argument—fight and debate.

Argument Is Not a Fight or a Quarrel

To many, the word *argument* connotes anger and hostility, as when we say, "I just got in a huge argument with my roommate," or "My mother and I argue all the time." What we picture here is heated disagreement, rising pulse rates, and an urge to slam doors. Argument imagined as fight conjures images of shouting talk-show guests, flaming bloggers, or fist-banging speakers.

But to our way of thinking, argument doesn't imply anger. In fact, arguing is often pleasurable. It is a creative and productive activity that

engages us at high levels of inquiry and critical thinking, often in conversation with people we like and respect. For your primary image of argument, we invite you to think not of a shouting match on cable news but of a small group of reasonable people seeking the best solution to a problem. We will return to this image throughout the chapter.

Argument Is Not Pro-Con Debate

Another popular image of argument is debate—a presidential debate, perhaps, or a high school or college debate tournament. According to one popular dictionary, *debate* is “a formal contest of argumentation in which two opposing teams defend and attack a given proposition.” Although formal debate can develop critical thinking, its weakness is that it can turn argument into a game of winners and losers rather than a process of cooperative inquiry.

For an illustration of this weakness, consider one of our former students, a champion high school debater who spent his senior year debating the issue of prison reform. Throughout the year he argued for and against propositions such as “The United States should build more prisons” and “Innovative alternatives to prison should replace prison sentences for most crimes.” We asked him, “What do you personally think is the best way to reform prisons?” He replied, “I don’t know. I haven’t thought about what I would actually choose.”

Here was a bright, articulate student who had studied prisons extensively for a year. Yet nothing in the atmosphere of pro-con debate had engaged him in truth-seeking inquiry. He could argue for and against a proposition, but he hadn’t experienced the wrenching process of clarifying his own values and taking a personal stand. As we explain throughout this text, argument entails a desire for truth; it aims to find the best solutions to complex problems. We don’t mean that arguers don’t passionately support their own points of view or expose weaknesses in views they find faulty. Instead, we mean that their goal isn’t to win a game but to find and promote the best belief or course of action.

Arguments Can Be Explicit or Implicit

Before proceeding to some defining features of argument, we should note also that arguments can be either explicit or implicit. An *explicit* argument directly states its controversial claim and supports it with reasons and evidence. An *implicit* argument, in contrast, may not look like an argument at all. It may be a bumper sticker, a billboard, a poster, a photograph, a cartoon, a vanity license plate, a slogan on a T-shirt, an advertisement, a poem, or a song lyric. But like an explicit argument, it persuades its audience toward a certain point of view.

Consider the striking photograph in Figure 1.1—a baby wearing a bib labeled “POISON.” This photograph enters a conversation about the safety of toys and other baby products sold in the United States. In recent years, fears about toy safety have



FIGURE 1.1 An implicit argument against phthalates

come mostly from two sources: the discovery that many toys imported from China contained lead paint and the discovery that a substance used to make plastics pliable and soft—called *phthalates* (pronounced “thalates”)—may be harmful. Phthalates have been shown to interfere with hormone production in rat fetuses and, based on other rodent studies, may produce some kinds of cancers and other ailments. Because many baby products contain phthalates—bibs, edges of cribs, rubber duckies, and any number of other soft, rubbery toys—parents worry that babies can ingest phthalates by chewing on these toys.

The photograph of the baby and bib makes the argumentative claim that baby products are poisonous; the photograph implicitly urges viewers to take action against phthalates. But this photograph is just one voice in a surprisingly complex conversation. Is the bib in fact poisonous? Such questions were debated during a recent campaign to ban the sale of toys containing phthalates in California. A legislative initiative sparked intense lobbying from both child-advocacy groups and representatives

of the toy industry. At issue were a number of scientific questions about the risk posed by phthalates. To what extent do studies on rats apply to humans? How much exposure to phthalates should be considered dangerous? (Experiments on rats used large amounts of phthalates—amounts that, according to many scientists, far exceed anything a baby could absorb by chewing on a toy.) Also at issue is the level of health risks a free market society should be willing to tolerate. The European Union, operating on the “precautionary principle,” and citing evidence that such toys *might* be dangerous, has banned toys containing phthalates. The U.S. government sets less strict standards than does the European Union. A federal agency generally doesn’t ban a substance unless it has been *proven* harmful to humans, not merely suspected of being harmful. In defense of free markets, the toy and chemical industries accused opponents of phthalates of using “junk science” to produce scary but inaccurate data.

Our point in summarizing the toxic toy controversy is to demonstrate the persuasive roles of both implicit and explicit arguments.

In contrast to the implicit argument made in Figure 1.1, consider the following explicit argument posted by student writer Juan Lucas on a blog site. As an explicit argument, it states its claim directly and supports it with reasons and evidence.

An Argument Against Banning Phthalates

(BLOG POST BY STUDENT JUAN LUCAS)

The campaign to ban phthalates from children’s toys uses scare tactics that aren’t grounded in good science. The anti-phthalate campaign shocks us with photos of baby bibs labeled “poison.” It arouses fear by linking phthalates to possible cancers or abnormalities in hormone production. In contrast, the scientific literature about phthalates is much more guarded and cautious. Political pressure has already led to a 2009 federal ban on phthalates used in toys that can be put in a baby’s mouth, such as bottle nipples and teething rings. But based on the scientific evidence, I argue that further banning of phthalates from children’s toys is a mistake.

Despite the warnings from the anti-phthalates campaign, the federal Consumer Product Safety Commission, after extensive tests and review of the scientific literature, says that the level of phthalates absorbed from toys is too low to be harmful. No scientific study has yet demonstrated harm to humans. Moreover, humans are exposed to phthalates daily, especially from food packaging, plastic bottles, shower curtains, personal care products, and elsewhere. Banning phthalates in children’s toys wouldn’t significantly reduce human exposure to phthalates from other sources.

Banning substances on emotional rather than scientific grounds has its own negative consequences. If we try to ban all potentially harmful substances before they have been proven harmful, we will be less watchful against scientifically proven dangers such as lead, coal dust, sulfur dioxide, or mercury in fish. We should place phthalates in the same category as other possible-but-not-proven threats that are part of living in the industrial world: artificial sweeteners, electromagnetic waves, non-organic foods (because of possible pesticide residue), GMO corn and soy beans, and radon in our walls. We should demand rigorous testing of all these threats, but not try to ban them until evidence-based science proves their harmfulness.

We should also keep in mind the impact of too much regulation on people’s jobs and the economy in general. The toy industry, a vibrant and important one in our economy (just ask Santa Claus), provides thousands of jobs, and is already highly regulated with safety standards. The use of phthalates, in fact, might make many toys safer by making them softer and less brittle. Ensuring toy safety through strong testing and regulation is absolutely necessary. But let’s base our regulations on good science.

■ ■ ■ FOR WRITING AND DISCUSSION **Implicit and Explicit Arguments** MyWritingLab™

Any argument, whether implicit or explicit, tries to influence the audience’s stance on an issue, moving the audience toward the arguer’s claim. Arguments work on us psychologically as well as cognitively, triggering emotions as well as thoughts and ideas. Each of the implicit arguments in Figures 1.2–1.4 makes a claim on its audience, trying to get viewers to adopt its position, perspective, belief, or point of view on an issue.

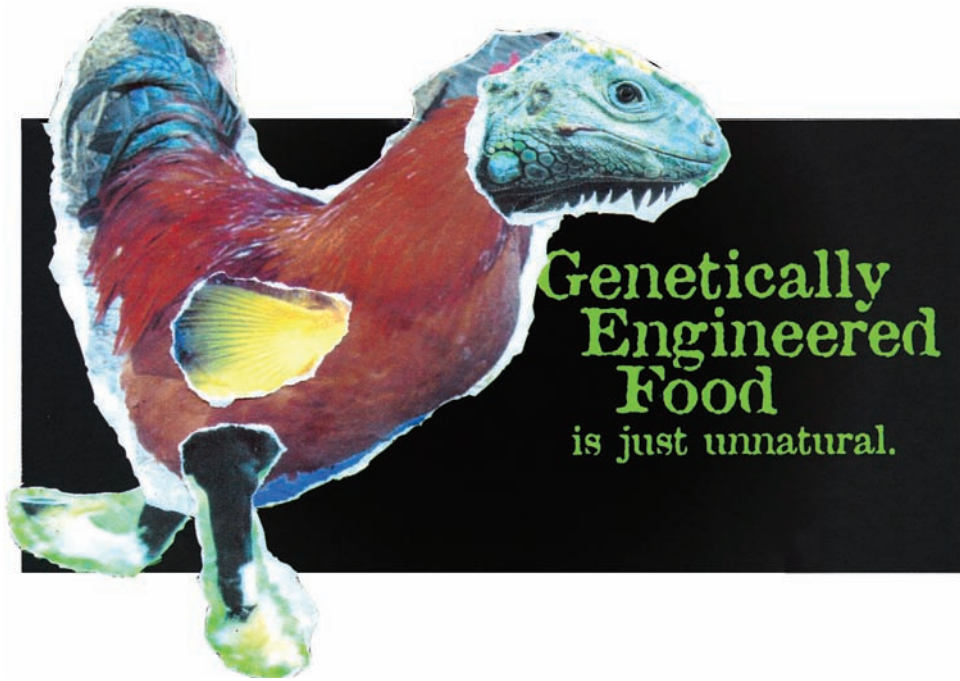


FIGURE 1.2 Poster related to the GMO controversy



FIGURE 1.3 Photograph of protestors at a New York State Occupy Wall Street Rally



“Do you John promise that your schedule, please put your iPhone away, will never be more important than your times together?”

FIGURE 1.4 Cartoon on social etiquette and digital media

Individual task: For each argument, answer the following questions:

1. What conversation does this argument join? What is the issue or controversy? What is at stake? (Sometimes “insider knowledge” might be required to understand the argument. In such cases, explain to an outsider the needed background information or cultural context.)
2. What is the argument’s claim? That is, what value, perspective, belief, or position does the argument ask its viewers to adopt?
3. What is an opposing or alternative view? What views is the argument pushing against?
4. Convert the implicit argument into an explicit argument by stating its claim and supporting reasons in words. How do implicit and explicit arguments work differently on the brains or hearts of the audience?

Group task: Working in pairs or as a whole class, share your answers with classmates. ■ ■ ■

The Defining Features of Argument

1.2 To describe defining features of argument

We turn now to examine arguments in more detail. (Unless we say otherwise, by *argument* we mean explicit arguments that attempt to supply reasons and evidence to support their claims.) This section examines three defining features of such arguments.

Argument Requires Justification of Its Claims

To begin defining argument, let's turn to a humble but universal site of disagreement: the conflict between a parent and a teenager over rules. In what way and in what circumstances do such conflicts constitute arguments?

Consider the following dialogue:

YOUNG PERSON (*racing for the front door while putting coat on*): Bye. See you later.

PARENT: Whoa! What time are you planning on coming home?

YOUNG PERSON (*coolly, hand still on doorknob*): I'm sure we discussed this earlier. I'll be home around 2 A.M. (*The second sentence, spoken very rapidly, is barely audible.*)

PARENT (*mouth tightening*): We did *not* discuss this earlier and you're *not* staying out till two in the morning. You'll be home at twelve.

At this point in the exchange, we have a quarrel, not an argument. Quarrelers exchange antagonistic assertions without any attempt to support them rationally. If the dialogue never gets past the "Yes-you-will/No-I-won't" stage, it either remains a quarrel or degenerates into a fight.

Let us say, however, that the dialogue takes the following turn:

YOUNG PERSON (*tragically*): But I'm *sixteen years old!*

Now we're moving toward argument. Not, to be sure, a particularly well-developed or cogent one, but an argument all the same. It's now an argument because one of the quarrelers has offered a reason for her assertion. Her choice of curfew is satisfactory, she says, *because* she is sixteen years old, an argument that depends on the unstated assumption that sixteen-year-olds are old enough to make decisions about such matters.

The parent can now respond in one of several ways that will either advance the argument or turn it back into a quarrel. The parent can simply invoke parental authority ("I don't care—you're still coming home at twelve"), in which case argument ceases. Or the parent can provide a reason for his or her view ("You will be home at twelve because your dad and I pay the bills around here!"), in which case the argument takes a new turn.

So far we've established two necessary conditions that must be met before we're willing to call something an argument: (1) a set of two or more conflicting assertions and (2) the attempt to resolve the conflict through an appeal to reason.

But good argument demands more than meeting these two formal requirements. For the argument to be effective, an arguer is obligated to clarify and support the reasons presented. For example, "But I'm sixteen years old!" is not yet a clear support for the assertion "I should be allowed to set my own curfew." On the surface, Young Person's argument seems absurd. Her parent, of all people, knows precisely how old she is. What makes it an argument is that behind her claim lies an unstated assumption—all sixteen-year-olds are old enough to set their own curfews. What Young Person needs

to do now is to support that assumption.* In doing so, she must anticipate the sorts of questions the assumption will raise in the mind of her parent: What is the legal status of sixteen-year-olds? How psychologically mature, as opposed to chronologically mature, is Young Person? What is the actual track record of Young Person in being responsible? and so forth. Each of these questions will force Young Person to reexamine and clarify her assumptions about the proper degree of autonomy for sixteen-year-olds. And her responses to those questions should in turn force the parent to reexamine his or her assumptions about the dependence of sixteen-year-olds on parental guidance and wisdom. (Likewise, the parent will need to show why “paying the bills around here” automatically gives the right to set Young Person’s curfew.)

As the argument continues, Young Person and Parent may shift to a different line of reasoning. For example, Young Person might say: “I should be allowed to stay out until 2 A.M. because all my friends get to stay out that late.” (Here the unstated assumption is that the rules in this family ought to be based on the rules in other families.) The parent might in turn respond, “But I certainly never stayed out that late when I was your age”—an argument assuming that the rules in this family should follow the rules of an earlier generation.

As Young Person and Parent listen to each other’s points of view (and begin realizing why their initial arguments have not persuaded their intended audience), both parties find themselves in the uncomfortable position of having to examine their own beliefs and to justify assumptions that they have taken for granted. Here we encounter one of the earliest meanings of the term *to argue*, which is “to clarify.” As an arguer begins to clarify her own position on an issue, she also begins to clarify her audience’s position. Such clarification helps the arguer see how she might accommodate her audience’s views, perhaps by adjusting her own position or by developing reasons that appeal to her audience’s values. Thus Young Person might suggest an argument like this:

I should be allowed to stay out until two on a trial basis because I need enough freedom to demonstrate my maturity and show you I won’t get into trouble.

The assumption underlying this argument is that it is good to give teenagers freedom to demonstrate their maturity. Because this reason is likely to appeal to her parent’s own values (the parent wants to see his or her daughter grow in maturity) and because it is tempered by the qualifier “on a trial basis” (which reduces some of the threat of Young Person’s initial demands), it may prompt productive discussion.

Whether or not Young Person and Parent can work out a best solution, the preceding scenario illustrates how argument leads people to clarify their reasons and provide justifications that can be examined rationally. The scenario also illustrates two specific aspects of argument that we will explore in detail in the next sections: (1) Argument is both a process and a product. (2) Argument combines truth seeking and persuasion.

*Later in this text we will call the assumption underlying a line of reasoning its *warrant* (see Chapter 4).