

Day 4: Friday, 11/18/11

Evaluating Arguments and Evidence (Day 2)

Objective:

SWBAT evaluate an argument by analyzing facts and opinions.

Do Now:

List 4 elements that make a POWERFUL argument.

1. Clear thesis and assertions.
2. LOTS of evidence.
3. Evidence comes from many sources.
4. Factual evidence
5. Opinions come from experts on the subject.
6. All evidence is clearly related to the thesis/assertions.
7. Acknowledges and attacks counter arguments.

Hook/Connection:

Yesterday you read two articles about the drawbacks of oil drilling in general. From looking over your work, it looked like MOST people were strongly persuaded by the writer's argument because the writer used so many facts—numbers, charts, graphs. Today I want to take a closer look at the way authors use facts and opinions because not all facts are and opinions are equally strong.

I:

Before we start zooming in on some evidence, I want to first clarify something about the persuasive texts we're reading.

These authors all have arguments they are trying to prove. Remember how we talked about facts being difficult to argue about because a fact is a fact and it's true because you can check out and research the information? Therefore, when a writer makes an argument, he/she is making an argument based on their opinion. Take for example the article we read yesterday:

"Oil Dependence is Dangerous"

The authors BELIEVE that oil dependence is dangerous. This is their OPINION. They back their opinion up, they try to persuade readers that their opinion is correct by using FACTS and some EXPERT opinions as evidence.

So simplified:

argument: the writer's opinion

evidence: facts and expert opinions

So now let's look at evidence (these facts and expert opinions) more closely so we can evaluate the strength of an author's argument (their opinion).

We:

Here are two passages from the text we read yesterday.

Title: “Oil Dependence is a Dangerous Habit” by Rebecca Lefton, Daniel J. Weiss

Climate change is a major threat to U.S. and world security

Meanwhile, America’s voracious oil appetite continues to contribute to another growing national security concern: climate change. Burning oil is one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions and therefore a major driver of climate change, which if left unchecked could have very serious security challenges. Burning oil imported from “dangerous or unstable” countries alone released 640.7 million metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which is the same as keeping more than 122.5 million passenger vehicles on the road.

Recent studies found that the most serious consequences of climate change could threaten to destabilize governments, intensify terrorist actions, and leave hundreds of millions of people homeless due to increasingly frequent and severe natural disasters, higher incidences of diseases such as malaria, rising sea levels, and food and water shortages.

A 2007 analysis by the Center for American Progress concludes that the consequences of climate change could include wide-spanning social, political, and environmental consequences such as “destabilizing levels of internal migration” in developing countries and more immigration into the United States. The U.S. military will face increasing pressure to deal with these crises, which will further put our military at risk and require already strapped resources to be sent abroad.

An important difference between the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs is that the 2nd paragraph only states that there are recent studies that show this. The 3rd paragraph is much more specific. We know exactly where the evidence comes from and we even get a quote from the study.

So, if I’m trying to make up my mind about whether or not I should trust Lefton and Weiss, when I see hard evidence from a specific source with a specific quote, I am much more strongly persuaded.

You:

Your job today is going to be to once again evaluate the strength of an argument—this time, zooming in on the quality of facts and opinions. Are the facts specific? Do the opinions come from expert sources?

You’ll be reading an article that takes a specific stance on the issue you’ll be writing about: whether we should increase off shore drilling or not.