

# Analyzing an Argument

All texts make some kind of argument, claiming something and then offering reasons and evidence as support for any claim. As a critical reader, you need to look closely at the argument a text makes—to recognize all the claims it makes, consider the support it offers for those claims, and decide how you want to respond. What do you think, and why? Here are some questions to consider when analyzing an argument:

**What claim is the text making?** What is the writer's main point? Is it stated as a thesis, or only implied? Is it limited or qualified somehow? If not, should it have been?

**How is the claim supported?** What reasons does the writer provide for the claim, and what evidence is given for the reasons? What kind of evidence is it? Facts? Statistics? Examples? Expert opinions? Images? How convincing do you find the reasons and evidence? Is there enough evidence?

**What appeals besides logical ones are used?** Does the writer appeal to readers' emotions? try to establish common ground? demonstrate his or her credibility as trustworthy and knowledgeable? How successful are these appeals?

**Are any counterarguments acknowledged?** If so, are they presented accurately and respectfully? Does the writer concede any value to them or try to refute them? How successfully does he or she deal with them?

**What outside sources of information does the writer cite?** What kinds of sources are they, and how credible do they seem? Are they current and authoritative? How well do they support the argument?

**Do you detect any fallacies?** Fallacies are arguments that involve faulty reasoning. Because they often seem plausible, they can be persuasive. It is important, therefore, that you question the legitimacy of such reasoning when you run across it.