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Foundations of Arguments

Who Is a Critical Thinker, and When Do You Need to Be One?

A critical thinker understands the structure of an argument, whether that argument is presented by a politician, a salesperson, a talk-show host, a friend, or a child.

A critical thinker recognizes the issue under discussion and the varying conclusions about the issue.

A critical thinker examines the reasons given to support conclusions.

A critical thinker uses the structure of argument to make thoughtful decisions.



We need to use critical thinking to deal with the choices that we are constantly confronting in our lives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

THIS CHAPTER WILL COVER

- The structure of an argument
- The three parts of an argument: issues, conclusions, and reasons
- An approach to making decisions

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We live in what has been called the Information Age because of the many messages that we receive daily from television, radio, newspapers, magazines, books, blogs, text messages, tweets, and the hundreds of millions of sites on the Internet.

Sometimes we turn to this information for its entertainment value, such as when we watch a situation comedy, listen to music, scan the sports page, or read an online movie review. But in a democratic society, in which the people are asked to vote on candidates and political propositions, we also need to use print and electronic sources to help us make decisions about our personal lives and about the direction our community, state, and nation will take.

We need to know how to understand and evaluate the information that comes our way. This book will give you tools for coming to rational conclusions and making responsible choices.

A critical thinker is someone who uses specific criteria to evaluate reasoning, form positions, and make decisions.

You can strengthen your critical thinking by becoming aware of and practicing certain skills. The skills will be covered in this text and include an understanding of

- The structure of arguments
- Value assumptions and reality assumptions that are foundational to arguments
- The quality of evidence used to support reasoning
- Common errors in reasoning
- The effect of language on perception, and
- The ways in which media frame issues

In addition, **critical thinkers** develop and exhibit personal traits, such as fair-mindedness and empathy. We will discuss how these qualities strengthen critical thinking and decision making. Finally, critical thinkers use their skills to solve problems and to advocate for causes in which they believe. This chapter covers the first skill: understanding the structure of arguments.

critical thinker
Someone who uses specific criteria to evaluate reasoning, form positions, and make decisions.

Stop and Think

When people hear the word *critical*, they sometimes associate it with faultfinding. The field of critical thinking, however, uses the word *critical* to mean "discerning." A film, art, dance, or music critic forms and expresses opinions on the basis of standards. The skills you will learn in this text will give you a set of standards with which to evaluate messages and make thoughtful decisions.

When you learn to communicate well in a formal situation, your skill usually transfers to informal situations as well. For example, if you learn to make an effective informative speech in the classroom, you will also feel better about introducing yourself at parties or making a spontaneous toast at your brother's wedding. This same principle applies to critical thinking skills.

When you can listen to a presidential debate and make good judgments about what each candidate has to offer, you may also be more thoughtful about less formal arguments that are presented, such as which breakfast cereal is best for you or which car you should buy. You will be better prepared to deal with sales pitches, whether written or presented in person.

The methods of discernment and decision making that you will learn apply to choosing a viewpoint on a political issue or to choosing a career, a place to live, or a mate.

In short, critical thinkers do not just drift through life subject to every message that they hear; they think through their choices and make conscious decisions. They also understand the basics of both creating and presenting credible arguments.

The Structure of Argument

The aim of argument, or of discussion, should not be victory, but progress.

Joseph Joubert, *Pensees* (1842)

When most people hear the word *argument*, they think of a disagreement between two or more people that may escalate into name calling, angry words, or even physical violence. In their book *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson discuss how our metaphors for argument often affect our perception and our behavior. They claim that the metaphor *Argument Is War* "is reflected in our everyday language by a wide variety of expressions":

Argument Is War

Your claims are indefensible.

He attacked every weak point in my argument.

His criticisms were right on target.

I demolished his argument.

I've never won an argument with him.

You disagree? Okay, shoot!

If you use that strategy, he'll wipe you out.

He shot down all of my arguments.¹

Similarly, Deborah Tannen, in her book *The Argument Culture*, notes that as a society, we frame our social issues in warlike terms:

The war on drugs, the war on cancer, the battle of the sexes, politicians' turf battles—in the argument culture, war metaphors pervade our talk and shape our thinking. Nearly everything is framed as a battle or game in which winning or losing is the main concern. These all have their uses and their place, but they are not the only way—and often not the best way—to understand and approach our world.²

Our definition of **argument** is different. When, as critical thinkers, we speak about an argument, we are referring to a **conclusion** (often called a claim or position) that someone has about a particular **issue**. This conclusion is supported with **reasons** (often called **premises**). If an individual has a conclusion but offers no reasons supporting that conclusion, then he or she has made only a statement, not an argument.

Political slogans, often found on billboards or in television advertisements, are good examples of conclusions (opinions) that should not be relied upon because supporting reasons are not offered. If you see a billboard that proclaims, "A vote for Johnson is a vote for the right choice," or if you hear a politician proclaiming, "Education has always been a priority for me," you are encountering conclusions with no evidence; conclusions alone do not constitute an argument.

Critical thinkers withhold judgment on such claims until they have looked at evidence both for and against a particular candidate.

argument A conclusion about an issue that is supported by reasons.

conclusion A position taken about an issue, also called a claim or an opinion; in deductive reasoning, the inference drawn from the major and minor premises; in research, the meaning and significance of the data as interpreted by the researcher.

issue The question or subject under discussion.

reasons Statements of evidence given to support conclusions.

Stop and Think

Can you think of a slogan, perhaps from an advertisement or a bumper sticker, that is a statement without supporting reasons?

An argument has three parts: the *issue*, the *conclusion*, and the *reasons*.

The Issue

The *issue* is what we are arguing about; it is the question that is being addressed. It is easiest to put the issue in question form so that you know what is being discussed. When you listen to a discussion of a political or social issue, think of the question being addressed.

¹ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 4.

² Deborah Tannen, *The Argument Culture* (New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 1999), p. 4.

Examples of Issues

- Should energy drinks be regulated?
- Should air traffic controllers be given periodic drug tests?
- Should the minimum wage be raised?
- Are the salaries paid to professional athletes too high?

The same method of “issue detection” will be useful in understanding commercial appeals (ads) and personal requests.

More Examples of Issues

- Is Alpo the best food for your dog?
- Should you marry Taylor?
- Should you subscribe to the *Wall Street Journal*?

Another way to isolate the issue is to state, “The issue is whether ____.”

- The issue is whether aspirin can prevent heart disease.
- The issue is whether reproductive cloning should be banned.
- The issue is whether our community should create 200 new homes.

It is important to distinguish issues from topics. Topics are ideas or subjects. Topics become issues when a question or controversy is introduced. In the previous examples, the topics would include Alpo, Taylor, the *Wall Street Journal*, aspirin, and cloning. The issues are questions about the topics.

Issues can be about facts, values, or policies. *Factual issues*, sometimes called *descriptive issues*, concern whether something is true or false, as in the following examples:

- Does zinc prevent common colds?
- Are smog-control devices effective in preventing pollution?
- Do we have enough money to buy a new car?

Factual issues can also involve definitions, whether something or someone fits into a certain category:

- Is digital photography a fine art?
- Is drug addiction a disease?
- Is a platypus a mammal?

Issues about *values*, sometimes called *prescriptive issues*, deal with what is considered good or bad or right or wrong, as, for example:

- Is there too much violence on television?
- Is marriage better than living together?
- Are salaries of executives of major corporations too high?

Policy issues involve specific actions; often, these issues emerge from discussions of facts and values. If we find that, in fact, smog-control devices are effective in preventing pollution and if we value clean air, then we will probably continue to support policies to enforce the use of these devices. If aspirin prevents heart disease and we

value a longer life, then we might ask a doctor whether we should take aspirin. If we do have enough money for a new car and we value a car more than other items at this time, then we should buy the new car.

As we have seen, all issues involve decisions about how to think about a topic or what action to take. We deliberate about issues from our earliest years. For example, children think about how to spend allowance money, what games to play, and what books to choose from the library. Teenagers consider what to wear; how much to study; what sports, musical instruments, and hobbies to pursue and/or languages to learn; and how best to spend the time and money they have. Adults make life choices concerning careers, spouses, children, friends, and homes; they also decide how to think about social and political issues and which causes, organizations, and candidates they will support.

Stop and Think

We make large and small decisions every day. List your decisions for a day, from deciding when to wake up through your evening hours. Also, look at your calendar and checkbook or credit card record and note the decisions about the use of time and money that they reveal.

Every decision that we need to make, whether it involves public or private matters, will be made easier if we can define exactly what it is that we are being asked to believe or do. Discourse often breaks down when two or more parties get into a heated discussion over different issues. This phenomenon occurs regularly on talk shows.

For example, a television talk show featured the general topic of spousal support, and the issue was “Should the salary of a second wife be used in figuring alimony for the first wife?” The lawyer who was being interviewed kept reminding the guests of this issue as they proceeded to argue instead about whether child support should be figured from the second wife’s salary, whether the first wife should hold a job, and even whether one of the wives was a good person.

A general rule is that the more emotional the reactions to the issue, the more likely the issue will become lost. The real problem here is that the basic issue can become fragmented into different subissues so that people are no longer discussing the same question.

Skill

Understand the issue, make sure everyone is discussing the same issue, and bring the discussion back on target when necessary.

When you listen to televised debates or interviews, note how often a good speaker or interviewer will remind the audience of the issue. Also notice how experienced spokespersons or politicians will often respond to a direct, clearly defined issue with a preprogrammed answer that addresses a different issue, one they can discuss more easily.

If a presidential candidate is asked how he is going to balance our federal budget, he might declare passionately that he will never raise taxes. He has thus skillfully accomplished two things: He has avoided the difficult issue, and he has taken a popular, vote-enhancing stand on a separate issue. (See Exercise 1.1 on page 17.)

Reminder

Whenever you are confronted with an argument, try to define the issue and put the issue in question form.

* Explore on mythinkinglab.com

The Conclusion

Once an issue has been defined, we can state our *conclusion* about the issue. Using some examples previously mentioned, *we can say yes or no to the issues presented*: Yes, I believe air traffic controllers should be tested for drug usage; yes, I want to subscribe to the *Wall Street Journal*; no, I will not marry Taylor at this time; and so on. We take a stand on the issues given.

The conclusion can also be defined as the position taken about an issue. It is a claim supported by evidence statements. These evidence statements are called *reasons* or *premises*.

We often hear the cliché that “Everyone has a right to his or her opinion.” This is true, in the legal sense. North Americans do not have “thought police” who decide what can and cannot be discussed. When you are a critically thinking person, however, your opinion has *substance*. That substance consists of the reasons you give to support your opinion. Conclusions with substance are more valuable and credible than are conclusions with no supporting evidence.

Critical thinkers who strive to have opinions with substance exhibit two important qualities as they try to understand the truth of a matter:

1. They realize their own personal limitations. They know that they have a lot to learn about different areas and that they may need to revise their thoughts on issues as new information comes to light. This trait is also called *intellectual humility*.
2. They make an effort to be discerning about what they read and hear. They look for good evidence and are open to hearing all sides of an issue. When they make up their minds about something, they have solid reasons for their decisions.

The term *conclusion* is used differently in different fields of study. The definition given here applies most correctly to the study of argumentation. In an argumentative essay, the thesis statement will express the conclusion of the writer. In Chapters 3 and 4, you will note a related definition of conclusion used by philosophers in the study of deductive and inductive reasoning. In addition, the term *conclusion* is used to describe the final part of an essay or speech.

Reminder

Conclusions are the positions people take on issues. Other words used to mean conclusions are *claims, viewpoints, positions, opinions, and stands*. We use the term *conclusion* because most people who teach argumentation use the term. The other words listed can mean the same thing.

* Explore on mythinkinglab.com

How can we locate the conclusion of an argument? Try the following methods when you are having trouble finding the conclusion:

1. Find the issue and ask what position the writer or speaker is taking on the issue.
2. Look at the beginning or ending of a paragraph or an essay; the conclusion is often found in either of these places.
3. Look for conclusion indicator words: *therefore, so, thus, hence*. Also, look for indicator phrases: *My point is, What I am saying is, What I believe is*. Some indicator words and phrases are selected to imply that the conclusion drawn is the right one. These include *obviously, it is evident that, there is no doubt (or question) that, certainly, and of course*.
4. Ask yourself, “What is being claimed by this writer or speaker?”
5. Look at the title of an essay; sometimes the conclusion is contained within the title. For example, an essay might be titled, “Why I Believe Vitamins Are Essential to Health.”

Skill

Find the conclusion or conclusions to an argument. Ask yourself what position the writer or speaker is taking on the issue.

You may hear people discussing an issue and someone says, “I don’t know anything about this, but . . .” and proceeds to state an opinion about the issue. This comment is sometimes made as a means of continuing a conversation. Critical thinkers take a stand only when they know something about the issue; they give reasons why they have come to a certain conclusion. Of course, a critical thinker is open to hearing new evidence and may change his or her opinion on issues, as new information becomes available. (See Exercise 1.2 on page 17.)

Stop and Think

As humans, we have limitations in our perception and knowledge. At the same time, we have wonderful tools for discovering new truths in every area of life. What personal qualities does a person need in order to give a fair hearing to new information?

The Reasons

Everything reasonable may be supported.

Epictetus, *Discourses* (Second century)

Reasons are the statements that provide support for conclusions. Without reasons, you have no argument; you simply have an assertion, a statement of someone’s opinion, as evidenced in the following classic limerick:

I do not like you, Doctor Fell
The reason why I cannot tell
But this I know, I know full well
I do not like you, Doctor Fell.

Reasons are also called *evidence*, *premises*, *support*, or *justification*. You will spend most of your time and energy as a critical thinker and responsible writer and speaker looking at the quality of the reasons used to support a conclusion.

Here are some ways to locate the reasons in an argument:

1. Find the conclusion and then apply the “because trick.” The writer or speaker believes ____ (conclusion) because _____. The reasons will naturally follow the word *because*.
2. Look for other indicator words that are similar to *because*: *since*, *for*, *first*, *second*, *third*, *as evidenced by*, *also*, *furthermore*, *in addition*.
3. Look for evidence supporting the conclusion. This support can be in the form of examples, statistics, analogies, research studies, and expert testimony.

Stop and Think

What was your most recent “argument”? What reasons were given to you, and what reasons did you give to support your conclusion?

There is a world of difference between supporting a political candidate because his or her policies make sense to you and supporting the same candidate because he or she seems like a charismatic person. Information in the following chapters of this book will give you the skills to help you decide whether a reason supports a conclusion.



Critical thinkers focus their attention on the issue being discussed, the conclusions drawn, and the reasons given to support or justify the conclusions. (See Exercise 1.3 on pages 18–19.)

Skill

Find the reasons that support the conclusion.

As a listener: Be able to hear the issue, conclusion, and reasons given for an argument.

As a speaker: Be able to clearly articulate your own conclusion and the reasons you have come to that conclusion about an issue.

Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide.

Napoleon, *Maxims* (1804)

Using Reasons to Make Decisions. When people engage in formal arguments, they usually present their conclusions about issues first and then give reasons to support their conclusions. In decision making, however, people often struggle with reasons on both sides of an issue in order to reach a conclusion (decision). For example, consider the following online dialogue between two friends, jointly deciding on the issue of whether to go to a water park. Note that the conclusion (the decision to go or not to go) does not become clear until they go over the reasons on both sides.

GenPeach: Hey Claire!

ClaireDies: Hi Gen!

GenPeach: How are you?

ClaireDies: I'm okay I think. kind of tired.

ClaireDies: am I going to see you today?

GenPeach: I think so, . . . Waterworld?

ClaireDies: yeah. should I go or not?

GenPeach: If you want, IDK if I will or not. I'm so tired.

ClaireDies: Me too, and I have to pack. if you go, I will, but I don't want to go if I'm going to be the only one there

ClaireDies: my age

GenPeach: Ditto.

ClaireDies: so

GenPeach: The ? is, do we really want to go, or not?

ClaireDies: well, what's the advantage of going?

GenPeach: I was just thinking that. Um . . . water and slides and stuff, and we get to see each other

ClaireDies: and I'm leaving soon . . . but if we stay, well, I'll get to do laundry and sleep

ClaireDies: and pack and do the dishes

ClaireDies: I'm leaning towards going now

GenPeach: Negatives—small children screaming, sun, noise, more energy required than I have

ClaireDies: very true.

GenPeach: Not necessarily better than packing and cleaning

ClaireDies: we wouldn't actually have to get up. We could grab a small section of grass and sleep, sunbathe

ClaireDies: relax, read

GenPeach: Yay

ClaireDies: so . . . sounds like we should go.

ClaireDies: should we just go?

GenPeach: OK

Stop and Think

Try to list the reasons to go and the reasons not to go that the friends came up with before making their decision. Note that even routine daily decisions involve the process of weighing pros and cons (reasons) in order to come to a conclusion.

A Decision-Making Method

If you don't know where you're going, you might wind up somewhere else.

Yogi Berra

If you don't have a plan for yourself, you'll be a part of someone else's.

African American Proverb

A decision involves a dilemma between two or more alternative actions. We face these dilemmas daily in small and big ways. Virtually every aspect of our lives involves decision making, especially since we live in a "free" society in which most decisions are not made by authorities but are left to individual citizens. Decisions need to be made about a variety of matters such as whom to support in an election, which career to pursue, which school to attend, whether to marry, whether to have children, where to live, and how to budget time and money.

Many methods exist to help people make life decisions. There are different ways to evaluate reasons on both sides of a difficult decision. The question to be decided can be seen as the issue—Should I vote for Candidate A, Candidate B, or Candidate C? Should I spend money on a car or save the money for future needs? Should I go to graduate school or take a job offer now? The dilemma for the decision maker is that the future consequences of choosing one path over another are not known in the present time; the person making the decision has to choose without knowing the full implications of the choice. He or she must do what seems best with the information available in the present. (See Figure 1-1.) To come to a reasoned conclusion about a decision, it helps to weigh the reasons on both sides. Often, however, people can see many reasons to support two or more choices, and they feel paralyzed by indecision as a result.

One method that can be useful in making decisions that should also help you clarify your reasoning involves listing and giving weights to various reasons and then weighing each of your choices against those reasons.

Let's look at this decision-making method, using the example of the decision of whether to attend School X or School Y.

1. The first step in decision making is to define the dilemma in the form of an issue.

Example

Should I attend School X or School Y?

2. The second step in decision making involves looking at your long-term objective. It answers the question: What do I want this choice to accomplish in my life?

Example

I want to get a good education in my field without going into debt for more than two years.



FIGURE 1-1

A decision usually involves a dilemma between two alternatives. The decision maker must imagine the future consequences of each alternative.

Note that in this step, if either alternative does not meet your objective, the decision is already made. If you find that School X does not have the major that you want or that it would be too expensive to go to School X, then it no longer is an alternative to consider.

3. In the third step, you determine which factors are most important to you concerning your desired outcome (in this case the factors in a school). You list the factors and give an importance to each one (on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest).

Example

Strong department in my major	10 points
Affordable (low cost or scholarship)	10 points
Close to friends and family	6 points
Near a large city	5 points
Gives internship option	8 points
Campus is attractive	4 points
Good arts community nearby	7 points
Climate is mild	5 points
Feels like a good fit when I visit	9 points
Professors are accessible	8 points

Note that the criteria in this example would be different for different people. That is why it is hard to receive advice about your decision or to give advice to others—other people may not weigh the factors the way you do. To one person,

being in a large urban area is a major plus—to another it would be seen as a disadvantage. One person may value a close relationship with professors, while another prefers more formality and distance. One person may want to take advantage of cultural attractions nearby, while another is more interested in the sports scene on campus.

4. The fourth step gets to the heart of the reasons for and against each choice and gives you clear criteria for your decision. In this step, you take each factor and weigh it against your choices. The choice with the highest score is tentatively chosen.

Factor	Weight	School X Score	School Y Score
<i>Example</i>			
Strong department in my major	10 points ×	8	10
Affordable (low cost or scholarship)	10 points ×	9	5
Close to friends and family	6 points ×	8	6
Near a large city	5 points ×	5	9
Gives internship option	8 points ×	7	9
Campus is attractive	4 points ×	8	8
Good arts community nearby	7 points ×	7	10
Climate is mild	5 points ×	5	7
Feels like a good fit when I visit	9 points ×	8	10
Professors are accessible	8 points ×	9	7
Total: Weight of factor times score of choice		549	521

5. The fifth step involves tentatively choosing the highest scoring alternative. Doing this kind of decision analysis may confirm that the individual choice is the right one or that either choice would be acceptable.

If School X is chosen, the individual has resolved his or her own issue. The “argument” for School X could be stated as follows:

Issue: Should I choose School X or School Y?

Conclusion: I should choose School X.

Reasons: School X is affordable, has a good department in my major with professors that I can talk to, is fairly close to my friends and family, and might offer internship possibilities. School Y is good, too, and has an even better reputation but costs significantly more than School X.

Often, this kind of critical analysis can clarify choices for an individual. If, on the other hand, the alternative chosen does not “feel right,” he or she may look at the criteria to determine why. It may be that the strength of the department and the location actually do factor higher for the individual and that the main reason for the low score for the option of School Y is the affordability. If that is the case, the individual making the decision could do more research about scholarships or about the option of getting a job to pay for School Y.

Going through this logical process and seeing which alternative “scores” higher will help you clarify your choice: If you feel satisfied with the choice, the factors listed were the important factors; if you are disappointed or uncomfortable with the

choice, there may be some other, perhaps more emotionally based, factors that need to be entered into the equation.

Individual or Class Exercise: Making a Decision

Purpose: To use reasoning to make a decision.

By yourself, with a partner, or with a class group, choose a current decision that you are facing, and take it through the steps listed in the decision-making model. You can use the model for two or more alternative choices. After you have listed your criteria and the importance (weight) of each factor, rate each of your alternatives.

After weighing the alternatives, use the one with the higher score as your conclusion/decision. Then state the issue (the dilemma or choice that needed to be made), your conclusion (the alternative with the higher score), and the reasons (all of the factors that led to the high score). Whether this exercise is done individually or in groups, it would be helpful to share the results with the class as a further review of issues, conclusions, and reasons.

Ideas for the decision: A voting choice, school choice, career choice, relationship choice, or consumer choice.

Humor as Argument

Humor can also be viewed as argument—humorists often make an argument in a disarming way, using irony and exaggeration. If you listen closely to what comedians and comic writers say, you can isolate issues, conclusions, and reasons in their commentaries. Read the following excerpt from an *Onion Magazine* article about people’s desires to have the latest technological device. See if you can identify issues, conclusions, and reasons.

With the holiday shopping season officially under way, millions of consumers proceeded to their nearest commercial centers this week in hopes of acquiring the latest, and therefore most desirable, personal device.

“The new device is an improvement over the old device, making it more attractive for purchase by all Americans,” said Thomas Wakefield, a spokesperson for the large conglomerate that manufactures the new device. “The old device is no longer sufficient. Consumers should no longer have any use or longing for the old device.”

... “Its higher price indicates to me that it is superior, and that not everyone will be able to afford it, which only makes me want to possess it more,” said Tim Sturges, owner of the old device, which he obtained 18 months ago when it was still the new device.

... “Not only will I be able to perform tasks faster than before, but my new device will also inform those around me that I am a successful individual who is up on the latest trends,” said Rebecca Hodge, whose executive job allowed her to line up for several hours in the middle of the day in order to obtain the previously unavailable item. “Its attractiveness and considerable value are, by extension, my attractiveness and considerable value.”³

³“New Device Desirable, Old Device Undesirable,” *The Onion News*, December 3, 2009, theonion.com.

Life Application: Tips for College and Career

When you are listening to a discussion in class or at a meeting, consider the issue being discussed, the claims being made, and the reasons given for the claims. If you have an opinion to share, frame it in terms of your position and your reasons.

When writing an essay or report, clarify your conclusion about the issue and support it with several reasons.

If you are called upon to make a speech without much time to prepare, use the same format of taking a stand on an issue and supporting it with reasons. For example, if you are asked to make a speech at your grandparent's retirement, you might say something like, "My grandmother has been wonderful to me [conclusion]. She has always encouraged my dreams, she has been there for all of my important events, and she has been a great role model [reasons]." You can then elaborate on each reason with examples.

If you are trying to get a group to come to consensus about a decision, try using the method outlined in this chapter. Help the group members define the issue that needs to be resolved and the desired outcome and have them weigh each possibility against specific criteria.

Chapter Review

Summary

1. Critical thinking about information is necessary in order for us to make clear decisions as citizens, consumers, and human beings.
2. An argument consists of issues, conclusions, and reasons.
3. The issue is the question that is raised; our decisions are made easier if we can define the issues on which we are asked to comment or act.
4. The conclusion is the position a person takes on an issue.
5. Reasons, often called premises, provide support for conclusions; reasons are acceptable or unacceptable on the basis of their relevance and quality.
6. Critical thinkers carefully consider their objectives and the reasons on all sides of an issue when they make important decisions.

Checkup

Short Answer

1. What is the difference between a topic and an issue?
2. What are some indicator words for a conclusion?
3. Cite three ways to discover the reasons used to support a conclusion.

True-False

4. Everyone's opinion about an issue has equal credibility.
5. Traits such as fair-mindedness and empathy are helpful to critical thinkers.
6. A critical thinker is someone who uses specific criteria to evaluate reasoning, form opinions, and make decisions.

Sentence Completion

7. The question that is being addressed is called the ____.
8. You will spend most of your time and energy as a critical thinker and responsible speaker looking at the quality of the ____ used to support a conclusion.
9. Since the reasons answer the question, "Why do you believe what you believe?" a good trick in isolating the reasons is to write the conclusion and then add the word ____.
10. When we say yes or no to the issues presented, we are stating our ____.

Exercises

Practice is the best of all instructors.

Publius Syrus

EXERCISE 1.1 Purpose: To be able to identify issues.

1. Read an essay, a blog, or an editorial, study an advertisement, listen to a radio talk show, or watch a television program about a controversial issue. Decide whether the issue is primarily one of fact, value, or policy. Define the issue and see if the speakers or writers stay with the issue.
 2. By yourself or as a class, come up with as many current issues as you can. Think of both light and serious issues; consider campus, community, social, national, and international concerns.
- Now, look at your list of issues and choose three that really concern you. Then, try to choose three about which you are neutral. Finally, answer these questions:
- a. What is it about the first three issues that concerns you?
 - b. Why are you neutral about some issues?
 - c. Do you believe there are issues on the list that should be more important to you? If so, why are they not more important to you?

EXERCISE 1.2 Purpose: To be able to isolate conclusions.

Take your list of issues from Question 2 in the previous exercise. Choose four issues and, in a simple declarative sentence, write your conclusion for each one.

Example

Issue: Should air traffic controllers be given periodic drug tests?

Conclusion: Yes, air traffic controllers should be given periodic drug tests.

Reminder

Since the reasons answer the question, “Why do you believe what you believe?” a good trick in isolating the reasons is to write the conclusion and then add the word *because*.

✱ Explore on mythinkinglab.com

EXERCISE 1.3 Purposes: To be able to use reasons to support a conclusion. To use knowledge gained in this chapter to both analyze and construct basic arguments.

1. Write a short rebuttal to the following example about student athletes, using reasons to support your conclusion.

Example

I believe student athletes should be paid (conclusion) *because*

- They commit to certain hours and demands on their time.
 - They make money for their schools.
2. Take your conclusions from Exercise 1.2 and support each conclusion with at least three reasons. This exercise can be done alone or in classroom groups, in writing, or as a short speech. One group might present the “pro” side of an issue and another group the “con.”
 3. Get the editorial page of your favorite newspaper (including your campus paper) or use a favorite blog. List the issue, conclusion, and reasons given by the writer in the editorial or blog post. Use this format:

The issue (question) is:

The conclusion of this writer is:

The reasons he or she gives are:

Then evaluate the opinion piece by answering the following questions:

- a. Was the writer clear about the reasons given for the conclusion?
 - b. Were there other reasons that could have been included in the argument?
 - c. Did the writer express any understanding for an opposing viewpoint? If so, how? If not, can you articulate an opposing viewpoint?
 - d. Were you convinced by the opinion piece? Why or why not?
4. Read the following editorials and essays. Then, isolate the issues discussed, the conclusions of the writers, and the reasons given for the conclusions. Answer the following questions:
 - a. Are the reasons given adequate to support the conclusions? If not, what other reasons could have been given?
 - b. Do you agree or disagree with the conclusions? If you disagree, what are your reasons for disagreeing?
 5. Advertisers make arguments using both words and visual images. As with the preceding essays and editorials, see if you can identify the issue, conclusion, and

reasons given in advertisements you see online, on television, or in magazines and billboards.

Educational Ticket

Dr. Y. Huda

Some bicycle riders complain about getting tickets for running stop signs, especially when they are “just kids.” Those kids who get tickets should be grateful for the important lesson to not run stop signs. If they learn from the tickets, they will live longer.

Running stop signs and red lights hurts the bicycle riders and it also hurts other people. It scares motorists, and if a motorist accidentally hit and hurt a cyclist, the motorist would feel terrible. It also hurts bicycle activists who don’t want to anger motorists—if motorists are angry, they won’t support measures to improve cycling, such as getting wider roads so motorists and cyclists can share the road more safely. ■

War on Drugs Fails

We Need New Approach

Daryl A. Bergman

The war on drugs is an abysmal failure. A fresh and bold approach is needed—beginning with the legalization of marijuana and the registration of drug addicts. It’s also necessary to look to other countries that have been successful. The legalization of pot would:

- Eliminate the stepping-stone to harder drugs.
- Eliminate the crime associated with large dollar street transactions.
- Provide taxes to step up law enforcement efforts (meth labs, heroin smuggling) and rehab programs.
- Free space in jails housing non-violent criminals, saving incarceration costs.

The registration of addicts would:

- Eliminate the use of dirty needles, decreasing victims of AIDS and associated health care costs.
- End warehouse rehabilitation programs.

Let’s move forward to save our children. ■

Drugged Driving

Lavelle Washington

Like alcohol, marijuana and other drugs can impair many of those skills that are imperative to good driving, such as alertness, the ability to concentrate and to read signs, coordination and reaction time. These effects can last up to 24 hours after smoking marijuana. If you combine drug use with teens’ inexperience on the road and risk-taking behavior, we have a recipe for disaster. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that 10 to 22 percent of drivers involved in all vehicle crashes had recently used an illegal drug, often in combination with alcohol.

- The Department of Transportation has published two studies examining the impact of marijuana on driving performance. Marijuana—the most widely abused illegal drug—slows a driver's perception of time, space, and distance, and it leads to drowsiness and distraction.
- Research indicates that cocaine causes drivers to speed and change lanes without signaling and puts other innocent people at risk of a deadly accident.
- While it is illegal in all states to drive a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol, drugs other than alcohol, or a combination of alcohol and other drugs, there is no consistent method across states for identifying drug impairment. As a result, we do not know the full impact of illegal drug use on public safety.
- According to the National Commission Against Drunk Driving, impaired driving is the most frequently committed violent crime in America and every 30 minutes, someone in this country dies in an alcohol-related crash, equating to approximately 17,000 deaths per year. ■

EXERCISE 1.4 Purpose: To practice finding issues, conclusions, and reasons in humor.

Find an excerpt from a book of humor, a list of humorous quotations, or a stand-up comedy routine. You might also look at articles, blogs, or websites that feature humorous political or social commentary. Isolate the issue, conclusion, and reasons that the comedian or humor writer covers. Share your findings with the class.

You Decide

Military Draft

Although no military draft is currently in effect, males from age 18–25 who are living in the United States are still required to register. The military draft has been a contentious issue, particularly during times of war. There were Civil War draft riots, and during World War I, some three million men refused to register. The draft was protested throughout the Vietnam War, and the United States converted to an all-volunteer military in 1973. Draft registration was suspended in 1975, but was required again in 1980 under President Carter following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. A number of reforms have been made to the draft to make it more equitable. In the Vietnam era, students were able to defer their service until graduation. If a draft were held today, a college student would only be able to postpone induction until the end of the current semester or, for college seniors, until the end of the academic year. Those in favor of a draft argue that the new rules make the responsibilities of service equally required of all male citizens and that fulfilling the obligation of serving one's country has good effects both on the individual and on the readiness of the country. Those against the draft believe that it allows a government to infringe upon individual rights and that, if necessary, volunteers will emerge to defend the country.

For more information on the debate surrounding the military draft and additional exercises and tutorials about concepts covered in this chapter, log into MyThinkingLab at www.mythinkinglab.com and select Diestler, *Becoming a Critical Thinker*, Sixth Edition.

✱ Explore on mythinkinglab.com

Articles for Discussion

Read the Document on mythinkinglab.com

The following article is an opinion piece on the rescue of 16-year-old Abby Sunderland who attempted to sail around the world. The French ship *Ile De La Reunion* brought Sunderland on board from her stricken craft that had been damaged in a storm.

French authorities called it a “delicate operation,” and said at one point the fishing boat's captain fell into the ocean and had to be rescued. Laurence Sunderland said the crew used its dinghy in the transfer. Abby Sunderland left the French fishing boat after two days and boarded a maritime patrol boat that took her to Reunion Island, according to a statement from the office of the French Indian Ocean island's top official.

Read the article and the comments posted by readers and then consider the questions that follow.

16-Year-Old Sailor Was Already Off Course

Mitch Albom

Most parents worry if teenagers are an hour late. Just imagine if they were lost at sea.

For several tense hours Thursday, that was the case for a 16-year-old Californian named Abby Sunderland. She was in stormy waters on a yacht somewhere in the Indian Ocean, about 2,000 miles west of Australia.

And she was alone.

When I first saw the reports, my heart sank, imagining the worst. A teenager, attempting an around-the-world solo sailing trip, lost at sea forever. Her body never found. Some piece of her boat washing up years from now, reminding her grieving family of her watery grave.

I knew her journey would be criticized, and I thought it would be a long time before a kid that young would try a trip that dangerous.

How naive.

Young, Younger, Youngest

Do a Web search on “youngest person to sail around the world.” It reads like a “Can You Top This?” competition.

In 1996, a 20-year-old Hawaiian named Brian Caldwell set the mark. A few months later, it was broken by an 18-year-old Australian named David Dicks. Three years later, Jesse Martin, another 18-year-old Aussie, did it with no assistance, thus upping the bar.

His mark was broken last year by a 17-year-old named Zac Sunderland. Yes, he is the older brother of Abby. You wonder what this family is feeding the kids.

Of course, Zac's mark was broken that same summer by a Brit who was—aha!—three months younger. And his record was bested last month (under some protest) by a 16-year-old Australian girl named Jessica Walton.

Abby had been alone at sea for *six months*—perhaps trying to win back the family honor—before stormy waves knocked her boat over and left her adrift.

Her rigging was broken. Her sail was in the water. The ocean, you see, doesn't really care how old you are.

Luckily, her distress beacons were detected and the storm abated enough for rescue operations to locate her. Very luckily.

Because different weather might have meant a different story. Death was a real possibility. And then her parents would be answering some pretty tough questions right now, instead of posting the headline on her blog: "Abby is fine!"

Abby is fine. Can we say the same about Mom and Dad?

Risk vs. Ridiculous

Let's face it. We're in a world of super-early achievement. A 13-year-old just climbed Mt. Everest. But no matter how much parents tell you, "We don't push," and "This is my child's dream," no kid gets to these levels without Mom and Dad encouraging, if not prodding. Where else does the money come from? The organization? Dealing with school? And something called "permission"?

The obvious question then is, why couldn't Abby's journey wait? If you want to see what sailing around the world is like, what's the matter with trying it when you're 21?

Because clearly this wasn't only about sailing. This was about beating records and grabbing fame, too. Abby's dream "since she was 13" (according to her publicity machine) was to be the *youngest* to sail around the world. She has a clothing product line called Abby16. That wouldn't sell as well if it were Abby21, would it? Of course, a year from now, if a 15-year-old broke her mark, it wouldn't mean much, either.

Which is where the parents come in. Kids have lots of dreams. A 16-year-old may want to be a stunt pilot or spend a winter alone at the North Pole. This is why the words "Not yet, kiddo" were invented.

Instead, her father, Laurence, said, "You obviously don't know Abigail," when asked by "Good Morning America" about criticism. He also said, "Let's face it, life is dangerous. How many teenagers die in cars every year?"

If he really thinks a drive to the movies and six months alone at sea are the same thing, he's hopeless. But instead of a network TV appearance, he and his wife should be on their knees right now thanking heaven they're not mourning a child in an empty coffin. Sixteen is teen-aged. A time to learn, socialize, grow up. Just being *alone* for six months at that age is a bad idea.

So is tempting death in a wintry sea.

There are normal risks. There are foolish risks. And there are risks done in the name of fame, records and clothing lines. Kids may not know the difference. Parents should.

Comment Posts

Ken Waltz

Do country's charge other sailors for their search and rescue expenses? If not, then why discriminate by age? Nations have search and rescue teams and equipment ready for many types of emergencies and the last thing we need to do in an emergency is a credit check. Not many people could afford to be rescued from even a car accident if they had to pay every expense associated with the rescue. I'm sure that the family will reward the fisherman that come to help her but most people could hardly afford to cover a private jet flying 4700 miles and circling for an hour. So what you would have is a court demanding payment for services not requested? Then you'd have people saying: Hey, you should have let me die, or just sent another boat not the plane. Sometimes rescues turn out to be false alarms, should we charge them too?

Come on all you greedy capitalists; get over the expense and be happy the girl was found alive. Thanks to the latest technology and people who care without judgment. I see this as a great test of our response abilities and feel it helps keep us prepared for the future.

Good luck on your next sailing adventure, Abby. Don't listen to these people that want to hold you down. They are only jealous that you are brave enough to try something they'd be to scared to attempt.

R. Scalzo

I hope they can cover the bill for the rescue. It should only run a few hundred thousand.

Ikie

The Aussies are paying for the rescue.

Although this young woman seems to be very good at sailing, the risk involved in this—and the risk it put her rescuers at—is too great. Certainly it is admirable to test your limits but not when you put others at risk. The pilot who went out to find her was at the limits for his plane and could have been killed because this young woman was in trouble. There has to be some thought about the consequences of a trip like this—not just to the person taking the risk—but the risk they inadvertently put others at. And, who bears the costs of the rescue? Do her parents plan to pay all the costs?

Mike V.

I'm not going to argue your position. If you feel this way fine—but if that's the case the person's age is not relevant. No one should try to go solo around the world in a sailing boat because of what you just described.

Jim

Why does everyone make it out to be about money. Do you hear any comments from these people that have a problem putting billions of dollars out every day for other people? Welfare, insurance, schooling, etc. The girl did something other than play a video game and as someone else said, which is better, a 21 year old with 2 years experience or a 16 year old with probably 10 years experience.

Fact is, her age wasn't the issue. Are we to now charge for all search and rescue services? How about when the Fire Department shows up? Should we charge for that?

Richard

Sailing solo around the world is risky business for anyone. Weather, pirates, mechanical problems, illness, giant mechanical sharks, accidents. . . . I don't think it really matters who you are or your age. The keys to surviving to talk about it are exceptional sailing skills, the ability to deal with and solve problems, an appropriate vessel and utmost preparedness.

She set sail on a robust vessel and was prepared for just about anything. Mommy and Daddy didn't send her out on an inflatable raft. It's really nobody's business to judge one way or another, but from what I can see, this young lady could sail circles around some of the best mariners in the world, and her parent's blessing was more than enough to lend testament to her abilities and game plan.

Benjamin3

As stated by the professional sailor Ian Kiernan, and by many others, she was in the Indian Ocean, known by many sailors to be the most dangerous in the world, in the middle of winter, also the most dangerous time of the year. Her parents sent her off into this knowingly in order to try to obtain a silly world record; was that worth your daughter's life? Most of you who are arguing the case that her parents were right in allowing this are completely ignoring that fact.

Don

Kids are disappearing, walking down the block. How are you going to keep THEM safe? Leave her and her parents alone.

Lisa

Don, are you really *serious* in comparing kids walking to a bus stop to kids sailing the world alone?? The level of risk cannot be compared.

BoBo the Clown

ROFL @ Don. Wow dude. Walking to the bus stop = sailing around the world solo in sailboat.

You must have grown up in Detroit. ■

Questions for Discussion

1. What are some of the many and varied issues that Mitch Albom and the commentators bring up in this article and the reader comments that were posted?
2. To what extent should parents allow children to engage in legal but risky behavior such as sailing solo around the world? Where would you draw the line as a parent?
3. What kinds of policies should be considered when individual decisions may likely impact public expenses? For example, should there be bicycle and motorcycle helmet laws and laws limiting fireworks?

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The following articles give differing viewpoints on basketball player LeBron James' decision to leave the Cleveland Cavaliers and play for the Miami Heat. Read both and then consider the questions that follow.

LeBron James' Decision a Cruel Blow to His Hometown

Pat McManamon

Cleveland sports took a death blow Thursday night. A killing blow right to the gut. Through the gut, really. LeBron James eviscerated a city and an area in one all-about-me hour long show on national TV. He said he was leaving Cleveland for Miami, and he did it on a show generated by him, about him and for him. He toyed with the emotions of people who supported him, who believed because he was one of their own that he might be different. Try telling anyone in Cleveland he's different now.

It was his right, of course. He could leave if he wanted. But he hardly looked happy, hardly seemed exultant. Maybe that will come in time. Maybe he was torn over leaving his town. He did it anyway. And when he did he tore the heart out of his hometown—Akron included. Local TV in Cleveland showed all the usual shots after the announcement. The disappointed faces. The depressed sound bites. The guys in the bar holding their head in their hands. One fan called him "a coward." Another said he "ripped the hearts out of Northeast Ohio." Cleveland City Councilman Zach Reed called the entire TV production and announcement "a slap in the face." "Why would you go on national TV and tell millions of people around the world that the city you grew up in, that embraced you, is not good enough to play for," Reed said on WOIO-Channel 19. "A total slap in the face. You don't go on national television to do that." Folks felt duped, cheated, misled, betrayed. All his words about team and area and loyalty and home . . . all seem hugely hypocritical now. James and his NBA cohorts who pulled this off did it for themselves. And James made no secret of that. He went the 'I and me' route often on his show.

He even used the third person, stating he was doing "what was best for LeBron James" and "what would make LeBron James happy." Meanwhile, kids in Cleveland who looked up to him cried. James talked his entire career about being a leader, but he wound up following. Following his friends to South Florida where they can form a self-generated superteam, in an area where it means as much to be seen at the games as it does to see the games. James had the right to choose, of course, and he chose the way that caused the most pain possible in his hometown. More power to the Heat for pulling this off, but that doesn't lessen Cleveland's pain. Cleveland now is the city that has seen a back-to-back MVP leave town, has seen consecutive American League Cy Young winners traded. Manny Ramirez left. Jim Thome. Albert Belle. And Art Modell left with his football team. Add on the dismay during the games—The Drive, The Fumble, The Elbow—and it just seems whack. Impossible to believe it all happened in one city.

James was going to be different. He grew up in Akron. He could drive 20 minutes to work, shop at Target. And he seemed to care, to understand, because he was from the area. He left. As former NFL player LeCharles Bentley said, his departure "could ruin pro sports in Cleveland" because if Cleveland can't keep one of its own, how can it attract a player from another team? "I never wanted to leave Cleveland," James said. Then why leave? A burned jersey showed up on TV, police cruisers with lights flashing parked outside the "Witness" banner. Shown the

burning '23' jersey, James said he couldn't get involved in the feelings in Cleveland, that he had given his all for seven years and the seven years "we had was like no other." "I'll ultimately be happy with the decision I made and continue to be great," James said. He said his "real fans" would support him, but he didn't seem to understand that his real fans, the ones who watched him since high school, live near Akron and Lake Erie. While he continues, in his words, "to be great," Cleveland suffers. And shows more anger than any place should show over a professional sports figure. But for the fans and people in Cleveland, it feels like unrequited love. Every game James has ever played in Cleveland, going back to his high school days, was a sellout. Fans adored him, and gave him everything they could. Just like his team. The Cavs never gutted their roster to try to save money to keep him, never told him it would hold back on acquiring players until he committed. They tried to win, surrounding him with players they thought he wanted and could win with—to the point that they did all they could to try to acquire Chris Paul the past few days. Perhaps that was why Cavs owner Dan Gilbert reacted so angrily. Gilbert is a fighter, and he did not go quietly when James left, releasing a letter calling James "a former King" and his actions a "cowardly betrayal." The Cavs had done everything they humanly could to keep James happy for seven years, and he left. James seems to forget, too, that he let the people down in the Boston series. He checked out in Game 5 of Cleveland's second-round loss to the Celtics, then after said he had spoiled people in seven years. Gilbert told The Associated Press James quit and that it was "accountability time."

"He quit," Gilbert told the AP. "Not just in Game 5, but in Games 2, 4 and 6. Watch the tape. The Boston series was unlike anything in the history of sports for a superstar." Gilbert also charged James quit in the Cavs Game 6 loss against Orlando in the 2009 playoffs. "Go back and look at the tape," he said. "How many shots did he take?" Gilbert also said James never returned a phone message or text since the end of the season, and added people had "covered up for (James) for way too long. Tonight we saw who he really is." Because James didn't communicate that he wasn't coming back, the Cavs waited for him and now they're in an impossible spot in terms of trying to improve their team after all the key free agents have signed elsewhere.

He held them hostage in free agency the same way he held them hostage the last three years. It was all based on his whims, his desire to have options. He talked team, and played for the team, but had his personal end-goal in mind. The Cavs spent so much money to try to win the past three years that they now have no way to spend to win in the NBA's salary cap structure. James left the team that tried to win, and joined the team that did nothing but manipulate the roster to gain salary cap space. James left the team that tried to win and joined the team that didn't. Imagine if the Cavs had been the team gutting its roster; what would The King and his "team" have said then.

The Cavs released the obligatory statement from GM Chris Grant, and Grant did not even mention James. Grant took the stiff upper lip, saying he believed in the team's future. Gilbert was more pointed, guaranteeing the Cavs would win a championship before James did. James' entire free agent process smacks of a charade, one that was orchestrated for months to bring the threesome of James, Dwayne Wade and Chris Bosh together. The interviews, the discussions—a charade. This was their plan all along. It appears they conceived it, and now they've hatched it. Given it life. And they seemed as interested in their personal "brands" and making each other as much money as possible with their move as they did in basketball. That's the impression they gave, at least. And to make it work James created a moment on national television when the cameras could show the crushed faces in his hometown. It even became laughable when James talked about sacrificing by

taking less money to sign with Miami. He told a town where unemployment is in double figures how he was "sacrificing"; when his contract will be worth, at least, \$80 million. It's surprising people didn't retch right then and there. In Cleveland, a weatherman even got in on the act. Channel 5's Mark Johnson said the way James made his announcement "showed no class" and that Cleveland "saw the true character of LeBron James." "LeBron," he said. "Good riddance and Godspeed." From a weatherman. James did a lot for Cleveland. There is no question of that. He was a great player and he gave the city many great moments. But the city, too, gave him back everything it could, and he left. We are all witnesses, reads the giant banner that still hangs in downtown Cleveland. Witnesses to what, is the question. ■

Roundup

NBA Team Owner Backs LeBron James' Decision

Mikhail Prokhorov

The players are signed, the "Decision" is made, but the passion around this year's extraordinary class of NBA free agents refuses to die down. What surprises me is the amount of negative commentary directed at the three top free agents (especially LeBron James) who decided to play on the same team and to create a great franchise together. Of course, any club owner dreams of having those players, including me, but all questions of how the announcements were made aside, I respect their choice, and no one has the right to judge them. I want to say that I support LeBron, the best athlete in the NBA. He had a truly difficult choice to make. Any move he made was sure to be viewed as wrong, and to leave many unhappy fans. Basing his decision on achieving results on the basketball court shows that the sportsman won the day, not the showman or the businessman. What is wrong with that?

We are seeing the birth of a new, dynamic team with such star players, and all of us can await the new season with great anticipation. I wish them success and give them my moral support. I will be happy for us to beat the Miami Heat in the conference finals, maybe not this season, but in the very near future. ■

Questions for Discussion

1. Michael Jordan has been quoted as saying, "There's no way, with hindsight, I would've ever called up Larry [Bird], called up Magic [Johnson] and said, 'Hey, look, let's get together and play on one team.'" Why do you think Jordan would not have wanted to team up with the other greatest basketball players of his time?
2. Do you believe that James' decision will, as Charles Barkley commented, "change his legacy?"
3. To what extent should a player consider loyalty to his hometown when making the decision about a contract?
4. The owner of the New Jersey Nets stated, "Any move he [LeBron] made was sure to be viewed as wrong, and to leave many unhappy fans. Basing his decision on achieving results on the basketball court shows that the sportsman won the day, not the showman or the businessman. What is wrong with that?" Do you agree with his statement? Why or why not?

The following excerpt from a Broadway playbill concerns the long-term consequences of talented actress' difficult career decisions.

Onstage and Backstage

Two Jobs. One Actor. What Do You Choose?

Seth Rudetsky

Decisions, decisions. Even though much of an actor's career involves waiting for an actual role to appear, sometimes an actor has the good fortune of getting to decide between two different job offers, or, as I call it, "something that's never happened to me." Here are two career choices that actually ended with Tony Awards.

Sutton Foster got cast in the ensemble of 2002's *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and as the understudy for the title role. Before she accepted the job, she was offered the role of Eponine in *Les Miserables* on Broadway after playing it on the road. She was offered more money than she had ever earned before. Her "people" thought this was a no-brainer and that she should take the Eponine and run!

Instead, she took *Thoroughly Modern Millie* because she believed in the show and wanted to be a part of its creation. That's right . . . an actress chose being in the ensemble over having a role! Close your mouth (which just dropped open in shock) and continue reading.

The show was first staged out of town, and while Sutton was toiling in the chorus, the director asked her to play the leading role for the final dress rehearsal of the show so the star could get a break. She did it and had a wonderful time, but when the morning of opening night came around, she prepared herself to go back to the ensemble. Suddenly, she got a phone call telling her that the actress who had the lead was leaving! Sutton was offered the role, performed it out of town and on Broadway, and eventually won the Tony Award for Best Actress in a Musical. The moral: Do what feels artistically right for you. And if you have a leading role in a show, watch out for the understudy!

Another young actress-singer I know got cast in a big Broadway revival starring a bona fide Broadway star.

Naturally, she was ecstatic. But then she got offered a Broadway revival of a show that had originally run Off-Broadway. Instead of a big, brassy Broadway musical, it was a small ensemble piece and there was no guarantee of how big or small her part would be because her role was being created for the revival.

She mentioned her quandary to me one day and I told her to take the big Broadway revival. It was sure to be a hit and the other seemed too risky. Well, she ignored me and took the ensemble piece.

Who might I be referring to? Well, it's none other than Kristin Chenoweth currently starring in *Promises, Promises*. In 1999 she was offered a role in the *Annie Get Your Gun* revival starring Bernadette Peters but turned it down to play the role of Sally Brown in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*.

Kristin's hilarious comedic chops plus her rendition of Andrew Lippa's (composer of the Addams Family) "My New Philosophy" won her the Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a Musical.

The moral of this story is to always trust your gut. And ignore any advice from me. ■

Questions for Discussion

1. Sutton Foster made the choice to be part of an ensemble rather than to play a lead role despite the disagreement of all of her "people." What were her reasons for going against what her advisers called a "no-brainer"?
2. What were the consequences of Sutton's and Kristin's risky decisions?
3. Seth Rudetsky said that the moral of these tales was to "trust your gut" when making decisions. What does that phrase mean to you?

.....

The following articles give differing viewpoints on the same issue. Read both and then consider the questions that follow.

Talk-Show Host Angers Disabled Community

Hand Deformity Inherited from Mom Sparks L.A. Dispute

Michael Fleeman/Associated Press

Aaron James Lampley, all 7 pounds, 14 1/2 ounces of him, was only a few hours old when a local radio station dedicated a show for the second time to the circumstances and controversy surrounding his birth.

In addressing the matter again, KFI-AM last week refueled a dispute that pitted the station against activists for the disabled and raised questions about freedom of speech and society's treatment of the disabled.

Aaron Lampley was born Wednesday morning, with ectrodactyly, which leaves the bones in the feet and hands fused. His mother, local TV anchorwoman Bree Walker Lampley, also has the condition and knew the child had a 50 percent chance of inheriting it.

Her other child, a daughter, has the condition as well.

Before the boy's birth, KFI outraged the KCBS-TV anchorwoman and advocates for people with disabilities with a July 22 call-in show in which host Jane Norris asked whether it was fair for Walker Lampley to give birth when the child had a "very good chance of having a disfiguring disease."

Critics of the show said it smacked of bigotry and illustrated societal prejudice and lack of understanding toward the disabled. KFI said the matter was handled properly and that radio talk shows are appropriate forums for controversial issues.

In KFI's second visit to the subject, this time with Norris acting as guest on Tom Leykis' afternoon show, Norris accused Walker Lampley of orchestrating a campaign to discredit her and contended she had a First Amendment right to discuss the matter.

"I was supportive of Bree's decision," Norris said on the show. "All I did, and have done, is voice my opinion of what would be right for me. I thought I handled the topic sensitively, but all [Walker Lampley has] seen fit to do is slander me."

Norris' statements did nothing to cool the situation.

"They came on the air supposedly to set the record straight. In our view, she set the record even more crooked," said Lillabeth Navarro of *American Disabled for Access Power Today*.

"This is like a bunch of thugs ganging up on the disability community. It just rained forth what caused us to be outraged to begin with."

Navarro said activists planned a protest at KFI studios.

The demonstration is part of a grassroots campaign organized in part by a media consulting firm hired by Walker Lampley and her husband, KCBS anchorman Jim Lampley.

The company, EIN SOF Communications, gives the disability rights community a public voice. The firm has sent tapes of the Norris show to disability rights groups and is helping to file a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission.

In the original show, Norris said she wasn't intending to dictate what Walker Lampley should have done. But she said she couldn't have made the same decision if she were in Walker Lampley's position.

Norris said there were "so many other options available," including adoption and surrogate parenting, and "it would be difficult to bring myself to morally cast my child forever to disfigured hands."

Throughout the show, Norris seemed to take issue with people who disagreed with her.

After a caller named Jennifer from Los Angeles said, "I don't really see why it's your business," Norris responded, "Well, I think it's everybody's business. This is life. These things happen in life. What's your problem? Do you have a problem talking about deformities?"

Norris also repeatedly referred to Walker Lampley's condition, ectrodactyly, as a disease, even though it is a genetically caused disability.

Walker Lampley and her husband, in interviews before their child was born, said Norris' first program was an attack on the handicapped and Walker Lampley personally, and was full of errors and poorly chosen remarks.

"I felt assaulted and terrorized," Walker Lampley said. "I felt like my pregnancy had been robbed of some of its joy."

She added, "I felt disappointed that someone would be so insensitive." ■

Radio Show on Rights of Disabled Defended

Crippled Woman's Pregnancy Debated

Associated Press

The chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission said a local radio station shouldn't be disciplined for a talk show that debated whether a disabled TV anchorwoman should give birth.

Chairman Evan J. Kemp, who is disabled and confined to a wheelchair, said he was "appalled and sickened" by the majority of callers to the KFI program who said KCBS anchor Bree Walker Lampley had no right to become pregnant and should abort if she did.

However, Kemp said the right of free speech should protect KFI from any Federal Communications Commission action.

Kemp's statements were published in the *Los Angeles Times*.

Lampley, who was pregnant at the time of the July, 1991, broadcast, lodged a complaint to the FCC and asked for an investigation. The newswoman, her husband, co-anchor Jim Lampley, and more than 20 organizations for the disabled asked the agency to examine whether the station and its owner, Cox Broadcasting Corp., should lose their license, be fined or reprimanded.

The couple charged the broadcast was not a thorough discussion, but rather an attack on Lampley's integrity without inviting them to appear and harassed callers who attempted to express contrary views.

Lampley gave birth five weeks after the broadcast to a boy who had the same genetic condition as his mother—ectrodactylism, in which the bones of the hands and feet are fused. There was a 50 percent chance that the baby would have the condition.

Kemp said he was not speaking out as chairman of the Washington, D.C.-based EEOC, but as a "severely disabled person" with a rare polio-like disease—Kugelberg-Welander—that may be inherited.

He said he plans to write to the FCC to defend grassroots discussions and radio talk shows such as the KFI program as necessary forums. ■

Questions for Discussion

1. The author of the first article states that this controversy "raised questions about freedom of speech and society's treatment of the disabled." What were the questions—that is, issues—that were raised?
2. Take one of the issues raised by the talk-show controversy, and discuss how well those mentioned in the articles defended it.
3. Comment on the following excerpt from the first article. What is your opinion of the host's response to the caller?

After a caller named Jennifer from Los Angeles said, "I don't really see why it's your business," Norris responded, "Well, I think it's everybody's business. This is life. These things happen in life. What's your problem? Do you have a problem talking about deformities?"

4. Are there any issues discussed by radio and television talk shows that you consider inappropriate? Are certain groups targeted for criticism and others left alone, or is every topic fair game? Give examples to support your answer.
5. Each article used a different subheading to explain the controversy. The first article's subheading reads: "Hand Deformity Inherited from Mom Sparks L.A. Dispute." The second article's subheading says: "Crippled Woman's Pregnancy Debated." How do these different subheadings frame the issue? To what extent do you think they are fair and accurate statements about the controversy?

Ideas for Writing or Speaking

1. Consider the following quote from the preceding article by Michael Fleeman: "Critics of the show said it smacked of bigotry and illustrated societal prejudice and lack of understanding toward the disabled. KFI said the matter was handled properly and that radio talk shows are appropriate forums for controversial issues."

The framers of our Bill of Rights did not anticipate the phenomenon of broadcast media. Based on your understanding of the freedom of speech, are there any issues that should not be discussed in a public forum? Does sensitivity to the feelings of a particular group make some topics less desirable for public discussion? State your conclusion and support it with reasons.

2. Take a stand on one of the issues involved in these articles. Write an essay or give a short speech expressing your viewpoint and supporting it with reasons.
3. Imagine that you are a program director for a television or radio talk show. What guidelines would you give your talk-show hosts? Give reasons for each guideline. Share your guidelines in a group, or write them in essay form.
4. Write or speak on the following: Given the power of talk-show hosts to influence large numbers of people, do you believe there should be stricter licensing requirements for this profession, as there are for doctors, lawyers, and accountants, in order to ensure a uniform code of journalistic conduct? If so, why? If not, why not?
5. Think about an issue that really interests you; it might be an issue currently being debated on your campus, or a community or national problem. The editorial pages or websites of campus, community, or national newspapers may give you more ideas to help you choose your issue.

In the form of an essay or a brief speech, state the issue and your conclusion and give at least three reasons to support your conclusion.

In the classroom, take a few minutes for each person to share his or her essay or speech, and see if the rest of the class understands the issue, conclusion, and reasons of the speaker. Don't use this exercise to debate issues (that will come later). At this point, strive only to make yourself clear and to understand the basic arguments of others.

6. Letter or speech of complaint: Practice using your knowledge about the structure of argument by writing a letter of complaint or doing a classroom "complaint speech," using the guidelines devised by Professor Lee Loots:

Constructive complaining is an important life skill. Use this letter or speech to express your dissatisfaction. Choose the most relevant aspects of the problem to discuss. A clear statement of the issue, your conclusion, and reasons distinguishes complaining from "whining." Whereas whining could be characterized as a long string of feelings expressed vehemently about random aspects of a problem, a true complaint describes the nature of the problem in an organized and concise fashion. Sincerely expressed feelings then add richness to the clear and organized content.

To make the complaint clear, be sure to support your ideas with examples, illustrations, instances, statistics, testimony, or visual aids. To make your feelings clear, you can use vivid language, humor, and dramatic emphasis.

Examples of topics for the complaint letter or speech: a letter or speech to a city planning commission about excessive airport noise, a letter to a supervisor about a change in salary or working conditions, a complaint to neighbors about reckless driving in the neighborhood, a complaint to housemates about sharing the workload, or a letter or speech to insurance agents about rates for college students.

7. Read the classic poem "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost. How does Frost use the image of two roads to illustrate the dilemma facing people who have to make a decision with unknown consequences? Write about a difficult decision you had to make or a dilemma that you are currently facing. Give

some background to the dilemma and the pros and cons of making a choice as you see them at the present time.

You might also consider a social or national decision that needs to be made, such as implementing a new policy or choosing a candidate for an election. What consequences might be the result of different policies or candidates? Given the present facts and projected short-term and long-term consequences, what choice would you advise?

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

From *Mountain Interval* by Robert Frost. Originally published in 1920 by Henry Holt and Company, Inc.

Films for Analysis and Discussion

Films, plays, and television programs are all rich sources that illustrate the concepts in this text. For Chapter 1, you might view and write about issues, conclusions, and reasons found in fictional story lines. In addition, you can analyze how characters face personal dilemmas and struggle with decision making.

Following are some suggestions for films that illustrate some of the points in Chapter 1. Several deal with important issues and life-changing decisions that are made by the characters.

***The Adjustment Bureau* (2011, PG 13)**

The Adjustment Bureau presents a fantasy world in which the destiny of the main characters, politician David Norris and his love interest, ballet dancer Elise Sellas, are being decided and manipulated by agents of Fate. The agents have the means to control circumstances to keep David and Elise apart so that their predetermined paths may unfold. David and Elise are forced to fight for the ability to make their own choices, and are reminded that “free will is a gift unappreciated unless fought for”.

***Juno* (2007, PG 13)**

Juno is the story of a 16 year old who becomes pregnant and then is faced with a series of decisions about her future. The film follows her thought process throughout her pregnancy as she faces numerous challenges and considers the consequences of each choice that she must make.

***North Country* (2005, R)**

Sexual harassment might be the legal name for the struggle Charlize Theron's character, Josey, goes through in *North Country*, but her fight is about the human right to be treated with respect. After a string of low-paying jobs and abusive relationships, Josey, a single-mother of two, finds work in the male-dominated iron mines. At first, the job is seen as a golden ticket to independence and solid provision for her children, but, as time passes, the mines become a cruel and dangerous place for Josey and her female co-workers. Instead of taking the easy way out and quitting, Josey sets out for the fight of her life, turning many of her friends and family against her in the process. Much like Jonathan Demme's *Philadelphia*, this film is an uncompromising look at what can happen when one takes a stand for what is right, regardless of the personal cost and obstacles in the way.

Similar Films and Classics

***Akeelah and the Bee* (2006, PG)**

Eleven-year-old Akeelah is just discovering her gifts and talents and deciding on the identity she wishes to portray to her middle school classmates. She needs to decide whether to take the hard road of spelling bee competition and whether to agree to the demands of her new mentor. Her mother also has to make decisions about whether to let Akeelah spend time on her spelling that takes her away from obligations at home and at school.

***Pursuit of Happyness* (2006, PG-13)**

This film is based on the story of Chris Gardner, a salesman struggling to make a living, while his wife works double shifts and his son stays in extended day care. Chris needs to make decisions about whether to take an internship as a stockbroker, despite his time-consuming sales job. His wife has to decide whether to remain in the marriage, and both need to make decisions concerning the well-being of their son.

***Good Night and Good Luck* (2005, R)**

In this film about the McCarthy era of the 1950s, CBS journalist Edward R. Murrow uses his talk show to make arguments against Senator McCarthy and his controversial approach to the threat of communism.

***Steel Magnolias* (1989, PG)**

The title *Steel Magnolias* refers to a group of tough-minded Southern belles who share their lives through good times and times of struggle. The drama is centered on the wedding of a young woman named Shelby and the complications that result from her decision to have a child despite her severe diabetes.

***Baby Boom* (1987, PG)**

In this film, a successful businesswoman has to decide whether to accept responsibility for a baby left in her care, whether to continue working and living in New York City, and eventually, whether to sell her own business for a very large profit. Each decision she makes leads to new choices and dilemmas.