

Grade 8: Reading Benchmark

Argument

8.R.2.4: Track the development of an argument, analyzing the types of reasoning used and their effectiveness, identifying ways in which the argument could be improved.



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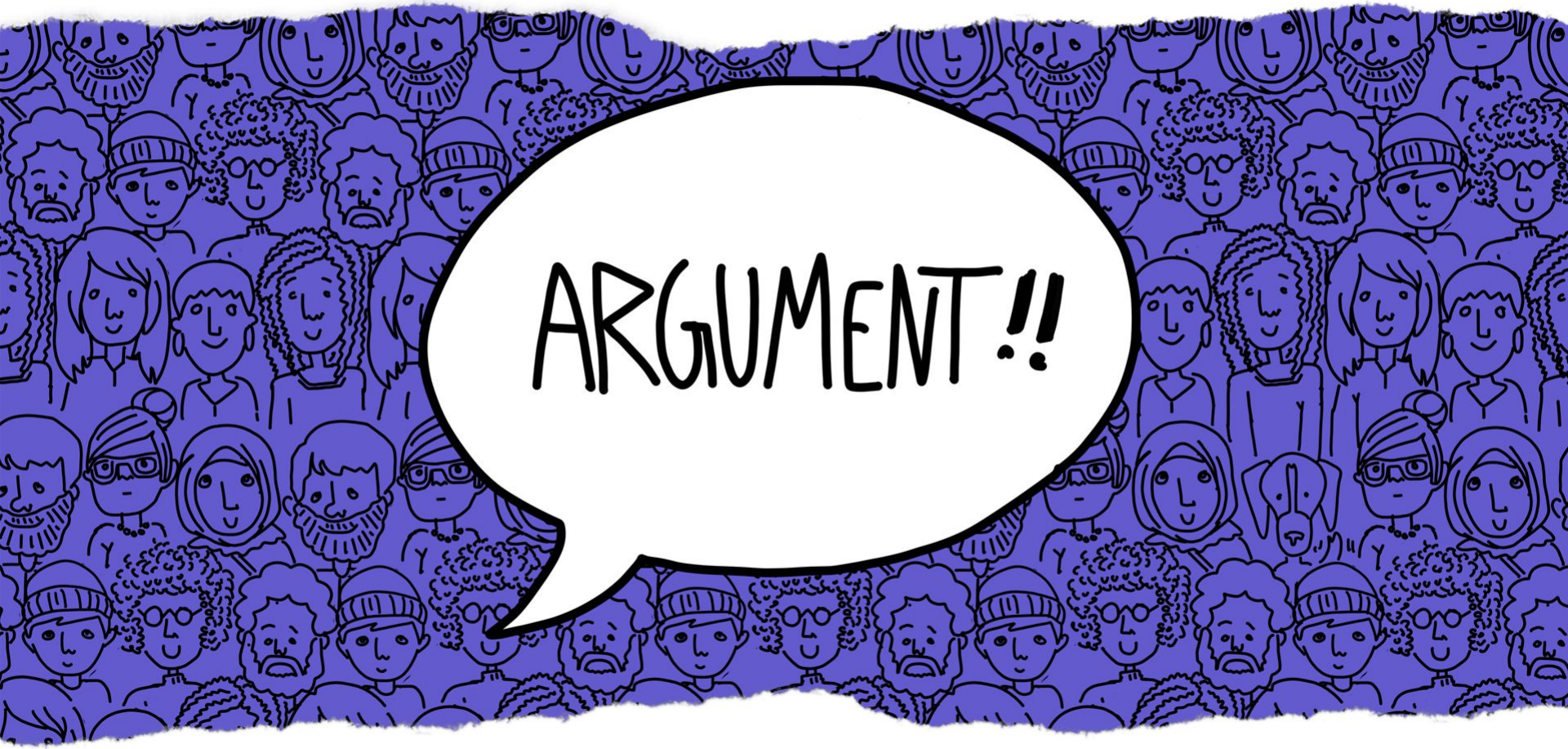
Benchmark Introduction



Benchmark:

Track the development of an argument, analyze the types of reasoning used, evaluate the effectiveness of the reasoning, and identify ways in which the argument could be improved.



Definition of Argument

An **argument** is a coherent series of reasons, statements, or facts intended to support or establish a **claim**.

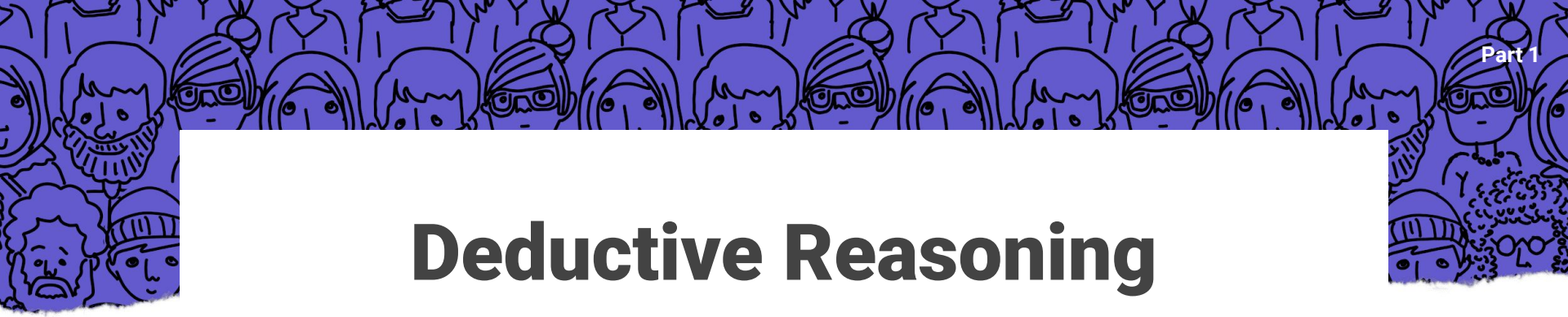


Types of Reasoning

When someone constructs an argument, they use logical reasoning to support their conclusion or claim.

Two distinct types of logical reasoning are:

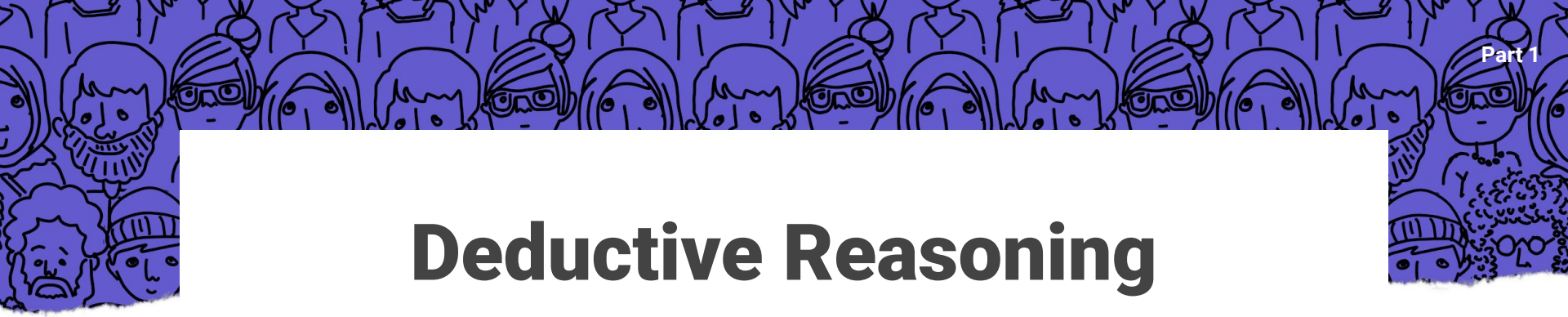
- Deductive reasoning
- Inductive reasoning



Deductive Reasoning

Deductive reasoning begins with a **premise**, which is a generally accepted statement or fact.

The arguer leads from one premise to another until reaching a **conclusion** (claim). This reasoning tends to sound something like “If X is true, then Y is true, and if Y is true, then Z must be true.”



Deductive Reasoning

Example: All mammals have lungs (premise). A cat is a mammal (premise). Therefore, all cats have lungs (conclusion/claim).



Inductive Reasoning

Inductive reasoning begins with an observation or a set of observations, such as an experiment, a statistic, or a personal experience.

The arguer then draws a conclusion (makes a claim) based on the observation(s).

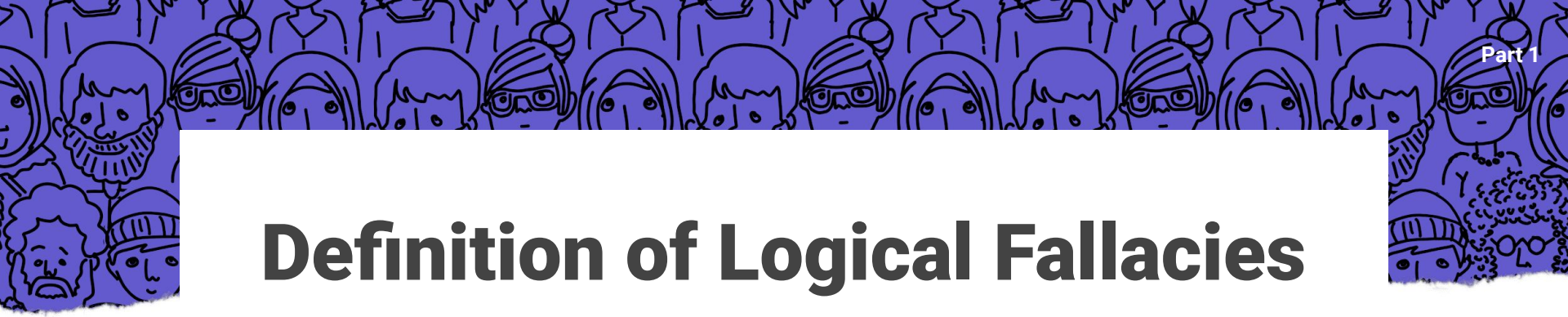


Inductive Reasoning

Here are two examples:

Our group of researchers gave 500 children the marshmallow test, and most of the children in the study failed the marshmallow test (observation). We concluded that most children in the world struggle with delayed gratification (conclusion/claim).

For as long as I can remember, my grandmother has mailed me a card every year on my birthday (observation). I bet she'll send me a birthday card again this year (conclusion/claim).



Definition of Logical Fallacies

Logical fallacies are errors found in the reasoning of an argument.

Logical fallacies weaken an argument by using an approach that is irrelevant or flawed, and/or information that is untrue.

Examples of Logical Fallacies

Two commonly seen logical fallacies are:

- **Hasty generalization**: A hasty generalization is when an arguer draws a conclusion without sufficient observations.
  Example: My mom's parents both wear glasses. I guess all grandparents wear glasses.

- **Bandwagon fallacy**: A bandwagon fallacy is when an arguer draws a conclusion based on how popular something is.
  Example: Practically everyone drives faster than the speed limit in this neighborhood. The city should raise the legal speed limit.

Example of identifying types of reasoning

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it...But when a long train of abuses and usurpations...evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government."
(from the Declaration of Independence)

- The authors use **deductive reasoning**. They state as **premises** certain "self-evident" truths about people's rights and the role of government. They use these premises to support the claim (conclusion) that it is their right and duty to declare independence from a government that denies them their rights.

Example of identifying types of reasoning

“Unfortunately, the doctor’s ability to treat these wounds or simply to lessen pain was primitive at best.

The science of doctoring was still in its infancy when the Civil War started. Morphine and chloroform were used to ease pain, and when these ran short, whiskey and bourbon had to do. Iron pokers were heated until they were white-hot and then applied directly to wounds to stop the bleeding. And if a wound to an arm or leg seemed too severe or became infected, the usual course of action was to cut off the limb.”
(from *The Boys’ War*, Chapter 8 “Prison Bars and the Surgeon’s Saw”)

- The author uses **inductive reasoning**. He provides **observations** about the ways doctors treated injuries and pain during the Civil War to support the **claim** (conclusion) that doctors’ methods at the time were primitive.

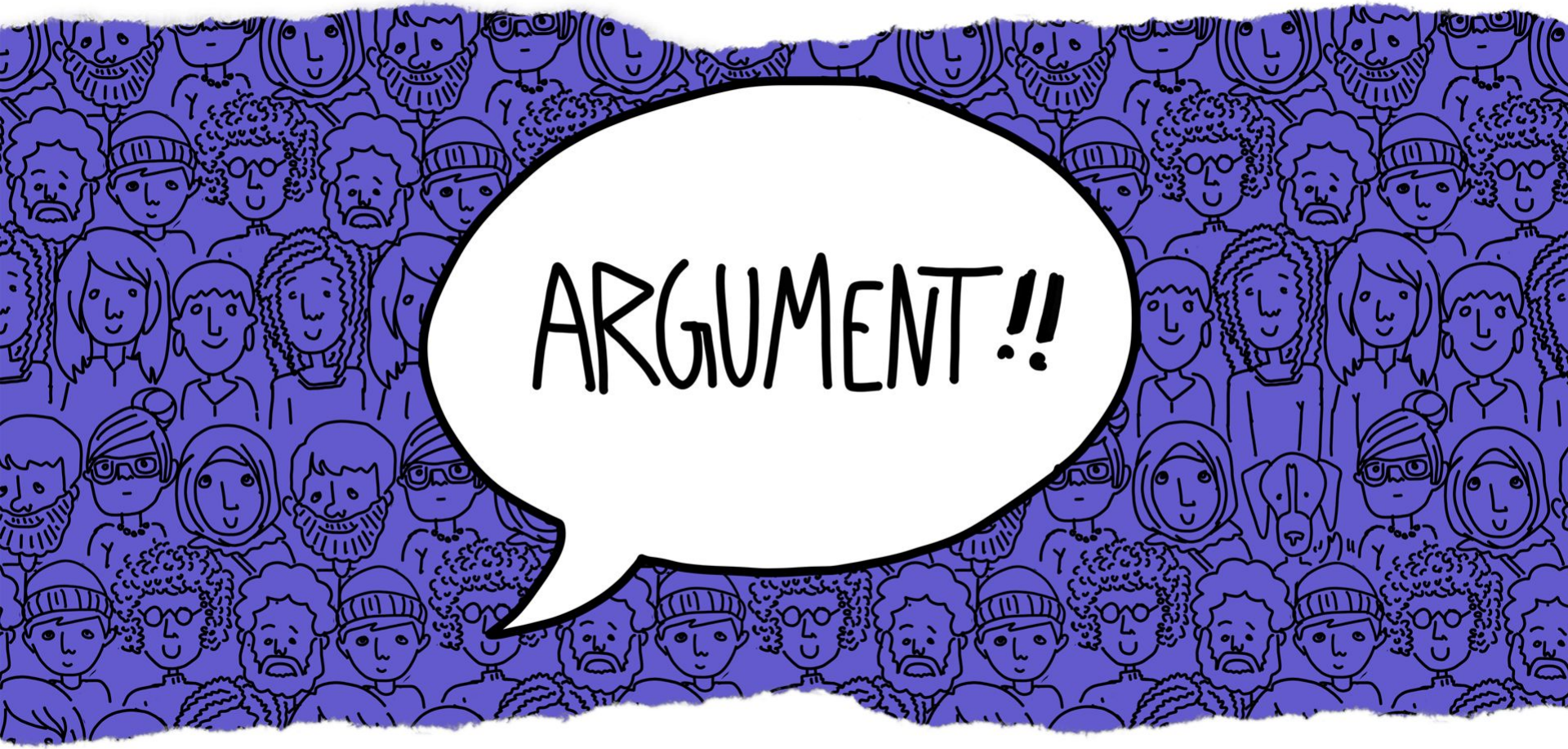
Example of identifying types of reasoning and logical fallacies

"I perceived in the gloom a figure which stole from behind a clump of trees near me; I stood fixed, gazing intently: I could not be mistaken.

A flash of lightning illuminated the object, and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature; and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy demon to whom I had given life. Could he be the murderer of my brother? He was the murderer!"
(from *Gris Grimly's Frankenstein*)

- The speaker (Victor Frankenstein) uses **inductive reasoning**. He makes **observations** about the creature's appearance and **concludes** that the creature is responsible for his brother's death. Although Victor turns out to be right, he still commits a **hasty generalization fallacy**, since he does not have enough evidence in this moment to arrive at his conclusion.

Benchmark Skill Routine



How to analyze and evaluate an argument

Read closely, highlight, and annotate the speaker's claim and any reasons or evidence that the speaker uses as support. Identify the reasons/evidence as premises or observations.

How to analyze and evaluate an argument

Ask yourself:

What type(s) of reasoning does the speaker use? How is the argument organized?

How to analyze and evaluate an argument

Evaluate effectiveness:

How effective is the speaker’s reasoning and how might any logical fallacies be addressed?

How to analyze and evaluate an argument

The end matters:

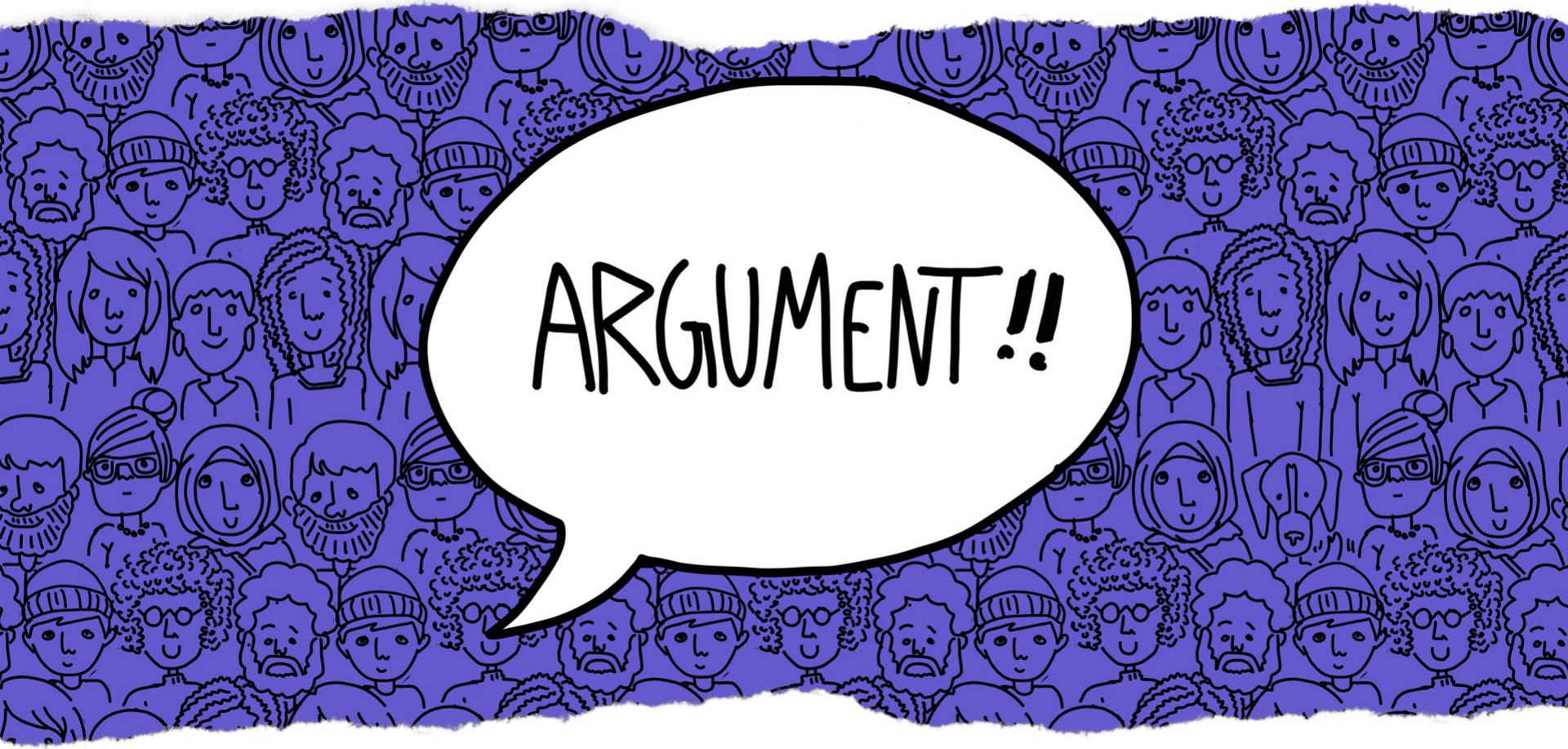
Track how the speaker develops their argument over the remainder of the text.

- Does the speaker use the same or different types of reasoning?
- How do the different parts of the argument work together to support the claim(s)?

Remember

1. Read closely, highlight, and annotate the speaker's claim and any reasons or evidence that the speaker uses as support. Identify the reasons/evidence as premises or observations.
2. Ask yourself: What type(s) of reasoning does the speaker use? How is the argument organized?
3. Evaluate effectiveness: How effective is the speaker's reasoning and how might any logical fallacies be addressed?
4. The end matters: Track how the speaker develops their argument over the remainder of the text.

Benchmark in Action: Example of how to analyze and evaluate an argument



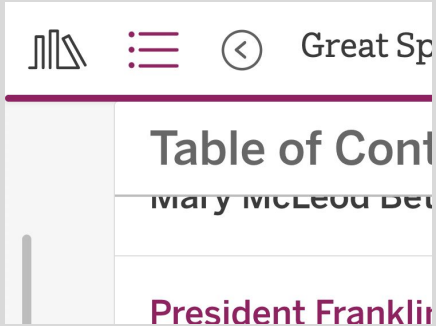
Get ready to read two passages in “A Date Which Will Live in Infamy” by Franklin D. Roosevelt.



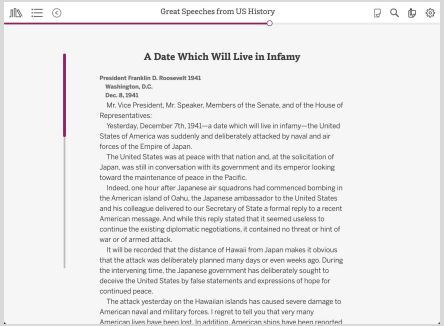
1. Open the Library app.



2. Type “Great Speeches from US History” into the search bar. Click on the title of the book to open it.



3. Click on the Table of Contents. Find and click on “President Franklin D. Roosevelt 1941.”



4. Read paragraphs 3–5 in “A Date Which Will Live in Infamy.”

“A Date Which Will Live in Infamy”

Context for Passage 1

In 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt delivered this address to Congress following the attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Though Japan and the United States had been engaged in escalating economic and political tensions, Roosevelt highlights Japan’s most recent and aggressive acts, hoping to convince Congress to declare war in response.

Read paragraphs 3–5 in “A Date Which Will Live in Infamy.”

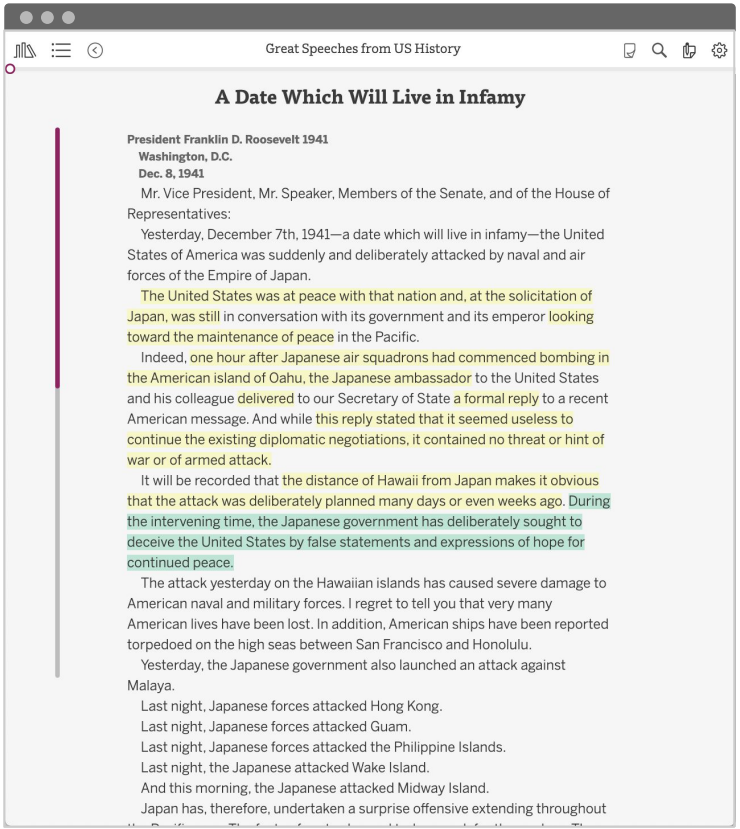
As you read...

- identify the speaker’s claim and the reasons/evidence they provide to support it.
- think about what type(s) of reasoning the speaker uses.
- evaluate the effectiveness of the argument and think about how to address any logical fallacies.
- consider how the speaker uses reasoning to build their argument throughout the text.

Practice Step 1

Read closely, highlight, and annotate the speaker's claim and any reasons or evidence that the speaker uses as support. Identify the reasons/evidence as premises or observations.

Practice Step 1



Highlight the speaker's claim and any reasons or evidence that the speaker uses as support.

Reasons or evidence:

"The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still...looking toward the maintenance of peace"

"one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in Oahu, the Japanese ambassador...delivered...a formal reply"

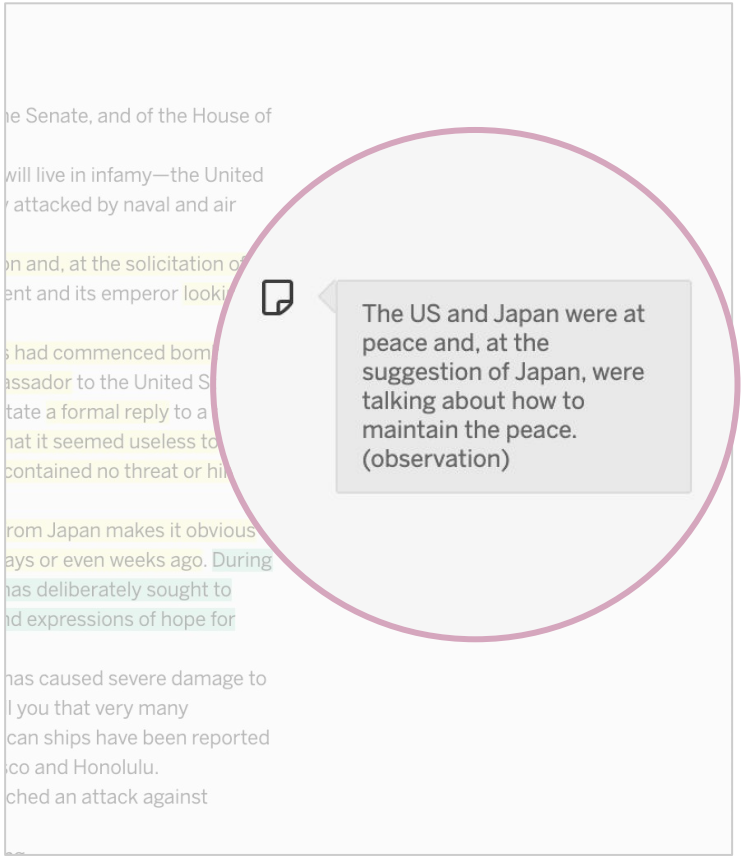
"this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack."

"the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago."

Claim:

"During the intervening time, the Japanese government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace."

Practice Step 1



Annotate to summarize the reasons/evidence and label as premises or observations.

- The US and Japan were at peace and, at the suggestion of Japan, were talking about how to maintain the peace. (observation)
- One hour after the attack began, the US received a message from Japan. (observation)
- The message made no mention of war/an attack. (observation)
- The time required for the bombers to arrive at their destination makes it clear that the attack was planned well in advance. (observation)
- The Japanese government deceived the US regarding their intentions. (claim)

Practice Step 2

Ask yourself:

What type(s) of reasoning does the speaker use?

How is the argument organized?

Remember:

- Deductive reasoning is when the speaker includes premises (generally accepted statements or facts) that lead to a conclusion.
- Inductive reasoning is when the speaker draws a conclusion based on observation(s).

Practice Step 2 Example:

Roosevelt uses **inductive reasoning** in this part of the speech. He makes a series of **observations** about the conduct of the Japanese before the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the logistics of planning such an attack, to support his **claim** that the Japanese purposefully misled the US while planning hostile actions.

Practice Step 3

Evaluate effectiveness:

How effective is the speaker’s reasoning and how might any logical fallacies be addressed?

Practice Step 3 Example:

Roosevelt effectively presents observations suggesting that the Japanese deceived the US before the attack. This suggestion of betrayal would likely anger and rally his audience behind a declaration of war. It may sound like Roosevelt commits a hasty generalization fallacy when he says it is "obvious" that Japan's attack was deliberately planned. However, like many leaders who face a situation in which they must convince people quickly, Roosevelt's purpose is to rally Congress around the justice of his cause rather than to list all the fine points of his reasoning.

Practice Step 4

The end matters:
Track how the speaker develops their argument over the remainder of the text.

- Does the speaker use the same or different types of reasoning?
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Remember

1. Read closely, highlight, and annotate the speaker's claim and any reasons or evidence that the speaker uses as support. Identify the reasons/evidence as premises or observations.
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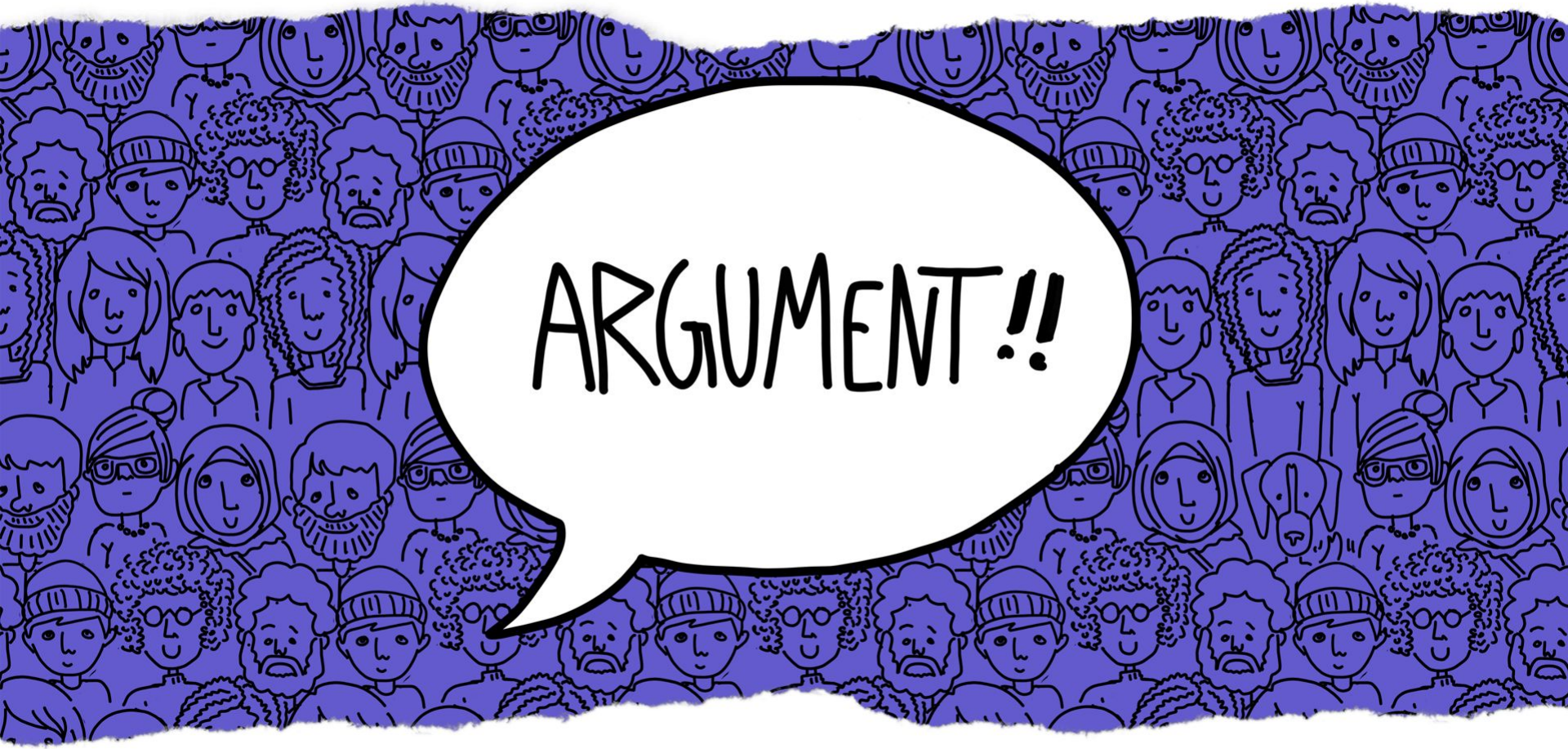
Independent Practice



Benchmark:

Track the development of an argument, analyze the types of reasoning used, evaluate the effectiveness of the reasoning, and identify ways in which the argument could be improved.

Now read paragraphs 6–13 in "A Date Which Will Live in Infamy."



A Date Which Will Live in Infamy

President Franklin D. Roosevelt 1941
Washington, D.C.
Dec. 8, 1941

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Senate, and of the House of Representatives:

Yesterday, December 7th, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific.

Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American island of Oahu, the Japanese ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time, the Japanese government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian islands has caused severe damage to

“A Date Which Will Live in Infamy”

Context for Passage 2

In this passage, Roosevelt continues to lay out his argument for why the United States must declare war on Japan.

Practice reading to analyze and evaluate an argument

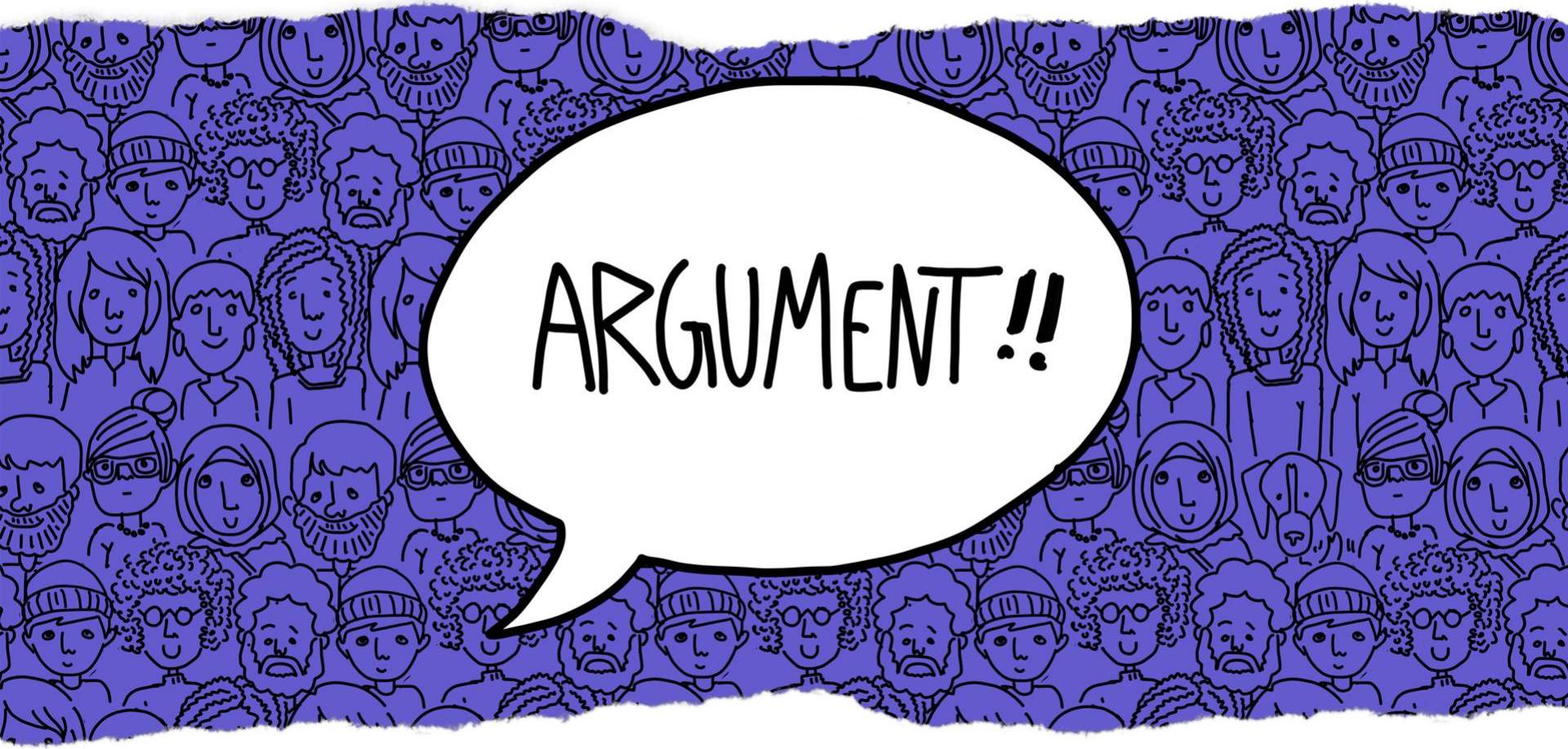
Step 1
Read closely, highlight, and annotate the speaker's claim and any reasons or evidence that the speaker uses as support. Identify the reasons/evidence as premises or observations.

Step 2
Ask yourself: What type(s) of reasoning does the speaker use? How is the argument organized?

Step 3
Evaluate effectiveness: How effective is the speaker's reasoning and how might any logical fallacies be addressed?

Step 4
The end matters: Track the speaker's development of an argument over the remainder of the text.

Check for Understanding



Share and Discuss

1. What is the speaker’s claim and what reasons or evidence does the speaker use as support?

Share and Discuss

2. What type(s) of reasoning does the speaker use? How is the argument organized?

Share and Discuss

3. How effective is the speaker’s reasoning and how might any logical fallacies be addressed?

Share and Discuss

4. How do the different parts of the argument work together to support the claim(s)?