

**Argument Guide**  
**for**  
**Your Final**  
**Essay or Presentation**

A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and tie, wearing glasses, stands and speaks to a woman. The woman is seated at a desk, looking up at him. She has short, curly hair and is wearing a light-colored top. On the desk in front of her is an open book with a green cover. The background consists of vertical blinds.

MMM. Well, I think it's probably  
best if I start with the one

**An argument is a  
collected series of  
statements to establish a  
definite proposition.**

**in other words ...**

**evidence-based defense  
of a non-obvious position**

**more context**

**The Burkean Parlor  
Context  
for “Good” Argument**

**Imagine you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar.**



**Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.**

**evidence-based defense  
of a non-obvious position**

**Great learning opportunity**

**“the soul of education”**

**Argument forces a writer to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple perspectives. When teachers ask students to consider two or more perspectives on a topic or issue, something far beyond surface knowledge is required: students must think critically and deeply, assess the validity of their own thinking, and anticipate counterclaims in opposition to their own assertions.**









**“If your position on a topic is so strong that you cannot imagine that a rational person would disagree with you, then you should probably pick a different topic.**

**If the evidence is overwhelmingly on your side, the law is on your side, public opinion is on your side, and morality and ethics and common sense are all on your side, then you might want to rethink your topic.”**

**evidence-based defense  
of a non-obvious position**

**the end.**



- 1. Granting of athletic scholarships.**
- 2. Care of automobile tires.**
- 3. Censoring the Web sites of hate groups.**
- 4. History of the town park.**
- 5. Housing for the homeless.**
- 6. Billboards in urban residential areas or in rural areas.**
- 7. Animal testing for cosmetic research.**
- 8. Cats versus dogs as pets.**
- 9. Ten steps in recycling wastepaper.**
- 10. Benefits of being a parent.**

## 1. CLARIFY

Overall, the author is saying (thesis/claim):

What secondary claims does the author make?

Supporting Detail #1

Supporting Detail #2

Supporting Detail #3

## 2. ANALYZE

What perspective is the argument made from?

How is the argument structured?

What are the most important ideas or information?

Where is argument strongest? Weakest?

Which info is new? Old? Timeless?

## 3. EVIDENCE

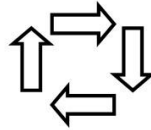
Compelling evidence?

Accurate evidence?

Relevant evidence?

Sufficient evidence?

**Argument Analysis:  
Elements & Evidence**



teachthought

## 4. NUANCE

This argument assumes that...

The author failed to consider...

This argument is explicitly stating...

This argument is implying that...

This argument is structured to highlight...

This argument does/does not seem worth analyzing because...

## 5. STYLE

Tone, diction, syntax, & idea organization

Writing Style (sentence length, paragraph length, diction, literary devices, conventions)

What is the relationship between the audience, purpose, and writing style?

Analyze & Identify

- Logical Fallacies
- Pers. Techniques
- Pathos-Ethos-Logos Balance

## 6. JUDGMENT

Is this a valid claim?

What impact will this argument have on primary & secondary audiences?

What changes could be made to argument & to what effect?

What other media forms could author have considered & to what effect?

**NEXT** What would make sense to think about, read, or “do” next? Should I read more? Have a conversation? Form a response? What other ideas or perspectives should be considered? What deserves my curiosity, creativity, and insight?

**“argument forces a  
writer to evaluate the  
strengths and  
weaknesses of multiple  
perspectives.”**