

Fallacy Excerpts

Excerpted from *With Good Reason* by S. Morris Engel

Engel, S. Morris. *With Good Reason: An Introduction to Informal Fallacies*. 6th ed. New York: St. Martin's, 2000. Print.

* Use this information to help you complete the annotations and the writing task.

Introduction to Fallacies:

* “A fallacy is an argument that is unsound” (Morris 94). It is “a deceptive argument -- an argument in which the conclusion is not supported by the premises”; the premises [reasons or evidence] are flawed or assumed to be correct when they are not” (“Logical Fallacies”). “Although logically flawed, fallacies frequently persuade us because, on first examination, they appear sound in form and content” (Morris 94). “The ability to identify...fallacies in the arguments of others and avoid them in one’s own arguments is both valuable and increasingly rare. Fallacious reasoning keeps us from knowing the truth, and the inability to think critically makes us vulnerable to manipulation by those skilled in the art of rhetoric” (“Logical Fallacies”).

Type of Fallacy	Definition	Example
Fallacy of Division	The assumption that what is true of the whole or the group must be true of the parts or members.	“This is the richest sorority on campus; Mary, who is a member of it, must therefore be one of the richest young women on campus.”
Fallacy of Composition	The assumption that what is true of a part of a whole or a member of a group must be true of the whole or the group.	Sara and a few other students from period 3 are incredibly smart; therefore, all the students in period 3 are smart.

Sweeping Generalization Fallacy	Applying a fair generalization, one usually true, to an exceptional case by ignoring the peculiarities of the case.	“Everyone has a right to his or her own property. Therefore, even though Jones had been declared insane, you had no right to take away his weapon.”
Hasty Generalization Fallacy	Using insufficient evidence or an isolated example as the basis for a widely general conclusion.	I had a terrible time at Disney World. Therefore, no one will have a good time at Disney World.
Bifurcation (Black and White Fallacy)	Considering a distinction or classification exclusive and exhaustive when other alternatives exist; defining something by one of two extremes.	You are either a Democrat or a Republican.
Slippery Slope Fallacy	Assuming, unjustifiably, that a proposed step will set off an undesirable and uncontrollable chain of events; there is no evidence, though.	The boy is fidgety and hyper; if he doesn't change, he will not graduate from high school, and he will be unable to get a job.
Post Hoc Fallacy	Inferring a causal link between two events when no such causal connection has been established (because A came before B, A caused B).	I sang a song. Then, it rained. The singing caused the rain.
Abusive ad Hominem Fallacy	Attacking the character of the opposing speaker rather than his or her argument.	Mark's theory on relativity is not correct, for he is a terrible person.
Tu Quoque Fallacy	Attempting to show that an opponent does not act in accord with his or her thesis (conclusion); therefore, his or her conclusion is wrong.	“How can she tell me to exercise more when I know that all she does is sit behind a desk?”

Mob Appeal Fallacy (argumentum ad populum)	Using emotional language to sway people <i>en masse</i> .	“I appeal to you as the most downtrodden and abused people on this earth. Rise up and follow me!”
Appeal to Pity Fallacy (argumentum ad misericordiam)	Seeking to persuade not by presenting evidence but by arousing pity.	“Please, officer, don’t give me a ticket. My parents will take the car away from me and my life will be miserable.”
Appeal to Authority Fallacy (argumentum ad verecundiam)	Seeking to persuade not by giving evidence but merely by citing an authority.	“Everybody’s wearing it.” Bill Gates believes in aliens; therefore, they exist. “My mom said so.”
Argumentum ad Ignorantiam Fallacy	Emphasizing not the evidence for a conclusion or argument but the lack of evidence to determine its validity or invalidity.	“There must be extraterrestrial life. No one has proven there isn’t.”
Argumentum ad Baculum Fallacy	Seeking to persuade through fear.	“Bill, if you don’t go to bed this instant, Santa will take note of it.”
Dogmatism Fallacy	Proposing that there simply cannot be any other possible way of making sense of and engaging with an issue but the one you represent.	“There is no way that anyone can argue that the death penalty is wrong because I am right.”
Non Sequitur Fallacy	An argument in which its conclusion does not follow from its premises. In a non sequitur, the conclusion can be either true or false, but the argument is fallacious because there is a disconnection between the evidence and the conclusion (the evidence is irrelevant).	Barbra is homeless; therefore, she is a Satan worshipper.