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JE for Chapter 4: Argument

ENGL 400: Active Citizenship - An advanced Writing Seminar

**Argument** is the debate which evokes a reaction in support or against a particular cause.

There are two parts to an argument. One is the debate itself and the proof you have to

back it up. The second is how the debate causes interaction between the subjects having

discussion in regards to the argument. The parties involved try to come to a resolve on

what is supported and what action should be taken. In your debate you should list

in detail your pros and cons for your cause in order to build the basis for your argument.

The parties in the debate state their supported data to their claim at hand in order

to try to come to an agreement of compromise.

**The Toulmin Model** was put together by Philosopher Stephen Toulmin to answer the

the question of why. This model for argument is comprised of the following: “claims,

data, warrant, qualifications, backing, and conditions for rebuttal”(Rhetoric in Civic Life

pg. 109). The **Claim** is the part of argument the Rhetor is making about the cause he is

debating about by stating his facts, defining those facts and putting his value on these

facts (good vs. bad). Then, the Rhetor, states what solution/resolve should happen for

this claim. Some situation can use all these types of claims and sometimes you only

need a couple to debate your case. Example: “Who murdered the Virunga gorillas?”

“Before you would answer this question of fact, you would need to define whether

killing a gorilla is murder.”(Rhetoric in Civic Life pg. 111)

**Data** would be all information collected for support of your argument. It has to be

reliable, in detail and needs to backup your claim. The more sources you collect

to justify your argument the stronger the claim. Example: “Jenkins’s description of the

gorillas provides data to support the claim that poachers were not at fault: infants were

left clinging to their mothers; and the gorillas’ bodies had not been cut up after death.”

(Rhetoric in Civic life, pg.111). Which the poachers always took the babies and cut up

the bodies.

**Warrants** is the regulation of the data that supports the claim. It brings about the

justification of the claim and heads us towards a solution for the argument. The

rhetor states his data supported facts to all parties apart the debate. The opposition

then taking into consideration all this data has their chance for a **rebuttal** and to state

their challenges to these facts if any. Then hopefully they can come to a compromise

on the issues and persuade the audience to come up with or give support to a solution.

In conclusion arguments are designed to help all parties to look at all the facts presented

in order to make an informed decision on the claim debated. As states in the textbook

(Rhetoric In Civic Life, pg. 123) “the willingness to alter your own position is the basis of

democratic government, the First Amendment, and the marketplace of ideas, all of which

rely on the assumption that people will make reasoned decisions when presented with

Information and arguments.” This statement represents the true power of a democracy.