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Creating and developing arguments

This chapter focuses on the ways that arguments are constructed. Writers and speakers go to great lengths to craft compelling arguments based on strong ideas and a logical, thoughtful structure. Good persuasive texts will demonstrate a clear argument – that is, what is being conveyed – as well as a carefully chosen structure – that is, how the argument is being presented. A poorly articulated or awkwardly structured text will not win over many people!

In this chapter you will:
• consider the differences between issues and events, and between points of view and contentions
• reflect on the importance of identifying an author’s contention and supporting arguments in order to better analyse their purpose
• identify and explain the significance of different argument structures, in terms of how they can influence audience opinion
• identify and explain the significance of an argument’s development, in terms of how each idea connects to and builds upon others.
2.1 ISSUES AND EVENTS

When analysing an argument of any kind, it is important to be able to distinguish between an  
*event* and an *issue*. An *event* is *something that happens*, such as the ‘incidents’ that are reported in  
news media. An *issue*, on the other hand, is a *contentious or complex problem, situation or concern*,  
and usually has its origins in one or more events.

For example, the injury of a specific horse during the running of the 2018 Melbourne Cup  
constitutes an *event*, which might be reported by the media.

**MELBOURNE CUP: THE CLIFFS OF MOHER EUTHANASED ON TRACK AFTER SUSTAINING INJURY DURING RACE**

ABC News

Animal activists might subsequently protest the treatment of race horses in general, arguing  
about *issues* of neglect, cruelty and exploitation.

**WHY THE MELBOURNE CUP IS ACTUALLY ONE OF THE CRUELLEST DAYS ON AUSTRALIA’S CALENDAR**

Laura Weyman-Jones, SMH

Many complex and contentious political issues, such as climate change or asylum seeker  
policy, have been debated for many years. However, each time a new event occurs (such as  
instances of asylum seekers on Nauru being taken to Australia for medical care or the release  
of the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report) new arguments and debates  
surface while old ones are revived in a fresh context.

If a journalist reports on the *events* that have occurred, as we would expect from a balanced  
news report, only the *facts* about what happened would be included. However, the *issues* that  
might be raised as a consequence of these events are many and varied, as people debate the  
ideas they feel most strongly about. For example, with the issue of duty of care for asylum  
seekers, some people feel that protecting Australia’s borders outweigh humanitarian concerns.  
Others feel strongly about an individual’s right to appropriate medical treatment, regardless of  
their social circumstance. It is differences of *opinion* such as these that create issues, as there is  
often no clear-cut solution.
It’s Hotter than Hell in Australia Right Now

I’m sure this is all totally normal.

By Brad Esposito

The sun is hammering down on Australia this week and, frankly, it’s all a bit much.

Temperature records have already been broken in South Australia (49ºC in Tarcoola), bats are falling out of trees from the heat, and the country’s health officials have warned of ’high ozone air pollution’, which I’m sure is totally normal and nothing to worry about.

The temperature map of the country is marred with deep reds and oranges, as well as the return of purple: a colour that was added to maps in 2013 because, uh... it be getting hot.

’Severe to extreme weather conditions are forecast for a large part of the country,’ a recent update from the Bureau of Meteorology said.

’Temperatures are expected to climb into the low to high 40s, broadly 8–12 degrees above the average for this time of year.

’Whilst inland parts will see the highest temperatures, coastal locations will see an increase in humidity and the feels-like temperature will make for really oppressive conditions.

Total fire bans are in place and humidity levels in Sydney are rising above 80%.

Western Australia, Tasmania, Canberra, Victoria, NSW, southern Queensland, the Northern Territory: It’s gonna be hot everywhere.

Parts of greater Sydney could get to the mid-40s for four consecutive days, while it’s likely Canberra and regional NSW will experience the same if not worse. On Tuesday the town of Hay in west NSW almost reached 48ºC.

NSW’s Health Department says the state hasn’t experienced heat this bad for a prolonged period since 2011, and the temperature could affect the mortality rate.

Meanwhile, South Australia’s government has declared an ominous ’Code Red’ heat emergency, allowing extra funding to help the most vulnerable, like elderly people and the state’s homeless population, during the rough conditions.

All of this is happening while Australia hosts two of its biggest sporting events, the Tour Down Under cycle tour and the Australian Open.

Oh, and on Tuesday the 15 hottest places IN THE WORLD were all in Australia. Normal.

Sure, Australia is known worldwide for being ’hot’ but this... this is just ridiculous.

BuzzFeed News, 16 January 2019

A report from the Bureau of Meteorology on 15 January 2019 outlines ’heat intensifying over southern and central Australia’.
### 2.1 Your turn

1. Decide whether each of the following is an issue or an event, then match each event to its resulting issue or, if it’s an issue, suggest a matching event. The first row has been done for you as an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE OR EVENT?</th>
<th>CORRESPONDS TO…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a principal suspends Year 12 students for poor behaviour on ‘muck-up day’</td>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sexual discrimination in the workplace</td>
<td>issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the impact of technology on language</td>
<td>issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing authorities shut down a website that denounces the use of police violence on Tibetan monks</td>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the morality of the death penalty</td>
<td>issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an English teacher asks students to write a poem in the language of text messages</td>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a woman is harassed after requesting a salary increase to match that of her male colleagues’</td>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human rights and freedom of expression</td>
<td>issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘mob mentality’ behaviour</td>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three Australian drug smugglers are executed after a string of unsuccessful appeals by lawyers</td>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 Choose two events from the table and for each event, identify a second issue that might be debated as a result.

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

3 Now do the reverse: for two of the issues listed in the first activity, imagine one other specific event that might have sparked the debate.

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

4 Consider the Buzzfeed article on Australia’s January 2019 heatwave in Source 1, then answer the following questions.
   a Highlight all of the facts in the article that are reported objectively.
   b Despite being a news article, some aspects of the text position readers to see the events and related issues from a particular perspective:
      i What is the perspective? What does the article imply?

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

   ii How many subjective – in other words, opinionated – features can you identify? Highlight them in a different colour from the facts you identified. How do they position readers to see the events in a particular light?

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

   iii Do you think this is an example of balanced (fair) or biased reporting? Why?

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________
5 How many issues can you and a partner identify that might emerge from the events included in the Buzzfeed news report? Aim to identify at least five.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

6 What is your opinion about one or more of the issues that you identified in Question 5? Write three to four sentences that explain your views and try to justify them with reasoning (logical supporting explanations). Alternatively, debate the issue with your classmates and teacher, establishing clear arguments in support of your views.

________________________________________________________________________

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7 Select an event you have seen in the media recently that has sparked controversy.
   a Give a brief, 2-minute presentation to your class about the event and the range of issues it raised. Include your own opinion, and argue your beliefs by incorporating some supporting explanations or evidence.
   b Which class member offered the strongest point of view? Why?
      What does this tell you about how an argument can be constructed effectively and persuasively?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
2.2 POINTS OF VIEW

Have you ever heard people arguing about an issue of public concern? Consider the following topics:

- the place of religion in government schools
- the increase of gambling advertising during sporting events
- live animal exports
- the links between social media and anxiety or depression.

Why do people argue about these topics? Usually they argue because they have contrasting opinions – or points of view – to share.

In a democratic country such as Australia, people have the right to freely express their point of view. As a society, we frequently debate issues of public concern in order to work through their complexities.

An issue will generally have at least two contrasting points of view that can be strongly supported, which is why easy solutions are rarely available. Debating an issue forces us to explain and justify the reasons behind our beliefs. Sometimes, when we come to understand that we have not considered all the aspects of an issue, we might even change our point of view as a result of a debate. Of course, this can only happen if we remain open-minded when considering other points of view.

2.2a Your turn

1 Think about the issue of gambling advertising during professional sporting matches. What different points of view do you often hear expressed? Outline them, and then compare with a partner or as a class.

2 Now, choose one of the other issues from the list above and consider which groups or individuals would be likely to debate the topic, what their viewpoints might be and why they might hold these views. Do this exercise with a partner and try to establish several different points of view for different groups of people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>WHO MIGHT DEBATE THIS ISSUE?</th>
<th>WHAT VIEWPOINT MIGHT THEY HOLD?</th>
<th>WHY?</th>
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</table>
CONSIDERING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

When exploring an issue, consider the full range of views that might be expressed. By understanding and addressing other people’s points of view, you can strengthen your own argument. Similarly, when your knowledge of a particular issue is broad, you will be able to evaluate the quality of another person’s argument more effectively. Considering opposing viewpoints is a strategy applied during debates, but it can also be extended to any situation in which you must develop your own view. Considering the various points of view will help you construct a more reasoned response to a complex issue.

With the increase in online news consumption and its associated pitfalls of echo chambers and confirmation bias, being able to consider and address alternative perspectives will strengthen your own arguments, while also showing respect for different world views.

**Reasoned**

Plausible, clearly developed and supported by strong logic

**Echo chamber**

Online environment in which a person encounters only ideas or opinions that reflect their own – as a result, existing views are reinforced, and alternative viewpoints are not considered

**Confirmation bias**

Tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of existing beliefs
Facebook users are more likely to get news that fits political beliefs – but younger voters don’t necessarily realize how much the echo chamber affects them.

By Scott Bixby

Social media users often create ‘walled gardens’ online, which reflects a reluctance to interact with opposing political views.

 [...] Six out of every 10 millennials (61%) get their political news on Facebook, according to a survey conducted by Pew Research Center, making the 1.7 billion-user social behemoth (which includes more than 200 million in the United States) the largest millennial marketplace for news and ideas in the world. But within Facebook’s ecosystem exists a warren of walled gardens, intellectual biomes created by users whose interest in interacting with opposing political views – and those who hold them – is nearly nonexistent.

 [...] According to another Pew Research Center survey from 2014, ‘consistent conservatives’ were twice as likely as the average Facebook user to say that posts about politics on Facebook were ‘mostly or always’ in line with their own views, and that four in 10 ‘consistent liberals’ say they have blocked or unfriended someone over political disagreements.

 [...] That confirmation bias – the psychological tendency for people to embrace new information as affirming their pre-existing beliefs and to ignore evidence that doesn’t – is seeing itself play out in new ways in the social ecosystem of Facebook. Unlike Twitter – or real life – where interaction with those who disagree with you on political matters is an inevitability, Facebook users can block, mute and unfriend any outlet or person that will not further bolster their current worldview.

 Even Facebook itself sees the segmentation of users along political lines on its site – and synchronizes it not only with the posts users see, but with the advertisements they’re shown.

The Guardian website, 1 October 2016 (extracts only)

2.2b Your turn

1 Consider the three extracts from the article in Source 2 on the issue of confirmation bias. The author presents a view that a social media platform like Facebook ‘deepens’ this issue for millennials. What is your personal point of view in relation to this issue? Can you justify your position with reasons or arguments? In your notebook, write two to three sentences explaining your view.
2 Use this table to list as many arguments as you can for and against the use of Facebook as a means of engaging thoughtfully with news and current issues.

| ARGUMENTS FOR THE VIEW THAT FACEBOOK ENCOURAGES OPEN ENGAGEMENT WITH NEWS REPORTS AND OTHER PERSPECTIVES |
| ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE VIEW THAT FACEBOOK ENCOURAGES OPEN ENGAGEMENT WITH NEWS REPORTS AND OTHER PERSPECTIVES |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
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3 With a partner, discuss the arguments you listed in Question 2. Then answer the following questions.

a. What is your partner’s view and what arguments did they offer in support?

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b. Can you add any new arguments to your table as a result of the conversation? If so, why do you think you were unable to identify these arguments yourself?

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</table>
c Which side of the debate appears stronger at this point? Can you suggest possible reasons why this might be the case? (Consider the demographic that you and your partner are part of.)

d Look back at the sentences you wrote for Question 1. Has your viewpoint changed in any way? What new knowledge, if any, now influences your point of view? What benefit was there in sharing information with others?
The terms point of view and contention are often used interchangeably but it is possible to distinguish between them. A point of view is a broad opinion or belief, whereas a contention is a specific argument offered in support of that view. For example, your point of view may be that Australia’s live export trade is wrong, and your contention might be that exporting live animals causes unnecessary distress when the meat could be transported after the animals have been killed. In a more complex or detailed argument, a contention will often be developed with a number of supporting arguments including appropriate explanations and evidence.

It is important to identify writers’ and speakers’ broad points of view as well as their specific contentions and supporting arguments. If you can do this accurately, you will find it easier to analyse the language used and explain how the writer or speaker is trying to influence opinion. You will also be able to identify how and why they use particular language features or strategies to support their arguments, and how they tailor their language to frame their arguments.

2.3a Your turn

1. Consider the example of Australia’s live animal export trade. What is your broad opinion on this issue? Can you create a specific contention to support this view?
   Opinion: 
   Contention: 

2. Think of two more contentions for each of the points of view in the table, and write them in the appropriate space. An example contention for each point of view has been done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POINT OF VIEW</th>
<th>CONTENTION 1</th>
<th>CONTENTION 2</th>
<th>CONTENTION 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia’s live animal export industry is wrong.</td>
<td>Exporting live animals causes them unnecessary distress when the meat could be transported after the animals have been killed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia’s live animal export industry is important.</td>
<td>Our live animal export industry is critical to Australia’s global reputation as a farming industry powerhouse.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 Look at the following excerpt from a letter to the editor. In the space provided and in your own words, summarise the writer’s contention in one sentence.

The atmosphere at the Margaret Court Arena concert last Saturday was not dissimilar to that experienced at a wake for a distant relative. The square concrete box has all the charm of an abandoned museum and from my seat in the heavens I was experiencing, I would estimate, approximately 10% of the performance. Add on the astronomical price of the ticket and the lengthy queue for overpriced refreshments or the toilets, and it would appear that this overused concert space constitutes a blight on Victoria’s reputation as a cultural mecca.

Contention:

4 Consider the following two issues. For each, write a sentence to outline your broad point of view and a sentence that provides a more specific contention in support of this viewpoint.

Lowering the voting age to 16
Point of view:

Contention:

Compulsory sport commitments for all Victorian school students
Point of view:

Contention:

5 Find a partner and, using your answers to Question 4, compare and discuss your points of view. Where your views differ, argue your case by offering a counter argument to your partner’s point of view.

CREATING A STRONG CONTENTION

A good contention is reasoned. It is plausible, clearly developed and supported by strong logic. It should reveal an author’s broad point of view but should also provide specific detail and a good level of insight into the issue at hand. Put simply, a good contention should make it clear that the author knows what they are talking about!

Poor contentions – such as those that do not seem reasoned or convincing – generally suffer from one or more of the following problems.

A poor contention might be:
• narrow-minded or simplistic – the author has not considered the various complexities of an issue or the range of valid viewpoints
• not grounded in facts or strong logic – the author might appear ignorant of important factual details, or of recent developments
• exaggerated or hyperbolic, and therefore unrealistic
• poorly phrased – offering an inarticulate or clumsily-worded viewpoint.

In your own persuasive writing or speaking, ensure that you avoid these pitfalls.
### 2.3b Your turn

1. Read the following contentions and explain exactly what is wrong with each one. Offer more than one criticism of each example. The first one has been done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTION</th>
<th>WHY IT IS INEFFECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Online news sources are just trash [1] and if we keep consuming this rubbish, we’ll lose all perspective and won’t know what’s real and what’s not [2]. They [3] should be offering us much more reliable options than this. | 1 This is a simplistic value judgement, not grounded in fact or logic; the language is also unsophisticated.  
2 This is exaggeration and unrealistic speculation; again, it is not based in fact or logic.  
3 Not specific. It does not clearly state at whom the criticism is aimed, and it shows a lack of insight.  
Overall, the contention is not clearly stated, the language lacks polish and no specific or workable alternatives are offered. |

The issue of genetic screening during pregnancy is a difficult and controversial one. Some say we must accept its inevitability and embrace the possibilities; others feel we should not make any rash decisions.

Greenies need to get a grip and just accept the fact that coal-fired power is here to stay.

2. Choose an issue that you feel strongly about. If you cannot think of one, choose from this list:
   - voluntary euthanasia
   - scientific whaling
   - police corruption
   - the establishment of a formal Indigenous voice in parliament
   - genetically modified food
   - the decline of open-mindedness in the age of online echo chambers.

Research your issue using news sites and other reputable research sites.

a. In your notebook, create a summary of the issue (about 100 words). Be sure to outline:
   - the background – how did the issue arise or what events sparked it? What are people arguing about?
   - the major arguments on various sides of the debate
   - your own viewpoints and beliefs.
b Summarise your viewpoint in a one-sentence contention. Make sure it is reasoned: factual, sensible and logical.

c Finally, list at least three major arguments and the specific evidence you could use to support each one.

d Present your issue to the class in the form of a brief oral presentation. Include the following in your presentation:

- the background and context of the issue
- your overarching contention
- your key supporting arguments, offering specific, reputable evidence in support of each one.

THE POWER OF AN IDEA

Originality and individuality are powerful weapons when it comes to persuasion. More than anything else, it is important to have an idea of value to share.

SOURCE 4 ‘Ideas are the most powerful force shaping human culture.’ Chris Anderson, TED Curator
2.3c Your turn

1 Someone who knows about the power of an original idea is Chris Anderson, the head of TED, a not-for-profit organisation that provides idea-based talks watched around 1.5 million times per day by people around the world. Anderson has shared his own thoughts about what all great TED Talks have in common, in a video uploaded to the TED website in 2016.

Find and watch Anderson’s video ‘TED’s secret to great public speaking’ and answer the following questions.

a Anderson asserts that an idea is the essential success factor in a TED Talk. How does he define an idea?

b Anderson explains that our ideas work together to establish our world view. What metaphor does Anderson use to help describe what is created by our individual ideas? Why is this an appropriate metaphor?

c According to Anderson, why are ideas ‘the most powerful force shaping human culture’? What does this tell you about what you need to consider when developing a spoken or written argument of your own?

d Account for Anderson’s four rules for great public speaking and summarise the reason why each rule is important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULE</th>
<th>REASON WHY IT IS IMPORTANT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</table>
ARGUMENT STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

When authors create persuasive texts, they can use many different approaches. An effectively structured point of view often has an introduction or orientation, with a clear contention and carefully sequenced supporting arguments and evidence, as well as a conclusion.

However, there are many other structural options available to authors. They might open with an emotional appeal to ‘hook’ the audience before moving on to a rational and evidence-based case with key arguments and evidence. Or, they might adopt a humorous or satirical approach in order to consistently critique, and in this way undermine, an idea or person. Another author might choose to bookend a piece with an anecdote designed to personalise the issue and make the facts more appealing, or to offer a ‘problems and solutions’ approach.

Good writing is often about manipulating established conventions rather than following them without question, but it is always useful to consider the structure of the argumentative approach. Establishing a plan for your own persuasive writing is critical.

Whatever the approach, there is often a multitude of purposes at play beyond the obvious intention of convincing the audience of the contention. An author might also aim to:

- embarrass a rival
- undermine an opposing viewpoint
- entertain the audience by making them laugh
- shock people into a new awareness of a particular problem
- infuriate or enrage the audience about a particular event.

In order to achieve these purposes, authors think carefully about the most effective structure for their argument. Ideas and language do not function separately – they mesh together to create an overall impact, which can be carefully manipulated with thoughtful planning.

For example, an author hoping to convince her readers that the Australian Government’s desire to have greater access to our online data, for purposes of national security, might choose to structure her argument in the following way:

1. Open with a humorous anecdote about her online activities, to appeal to readers by making them reflect on their own digital habits.
2. Transition suddenly to describe the frightening case of an unsuspecting mother being incorrectly targeted by US authorities because they misinterpreted her online activity.
3. Compare this illustrative example to our own privacy protections in Australia, as a means of implying our ‘superior’ laws about accessing online data.
4. Conclude with a serious appeal to personal rights and liberties, as a means of cementing support for the status quo.

This particular sequence of arguments and language strategies works precisely because it is carefully planned and considered in terms of how the various stages of the argument work, in conjunction with one another, to establish a cumulative effect on the target audience.
MODELS OF ARGUMENTATION

As illustrative examples of carefully structured argumentation, consider two well-established methods familiar to many people accustomed to arguing a point of view: the Aristotelian and the Rogerian models. Each offers an excellent method of structuring and developing an argument. They are certainly not the only options, but they are worth considering because they are so commonly used or adapted by authors.

The Aristotelian (classical) model

The classical approach to a well-constructed argument was devised by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. His method is commonly used in persuasive argument, even to this day. The Aristotelian model relies on the use of ethos, logos and pathos appeals:

- **ethos**: an appeal that relies on the credibility or authority of the writer/speaker
- **logos**: an appeal to logic, supported by valid and relevant evidence
- **pathos**: an appeal to emotions – motivating an audience through the emotional quality of the language and ideas.

The Rogerian model

The Rogerian model is based on Carl Rogers’s work in psychotherapy, which aims to find consensus, or common ground, with opponents. When writers use this approach, they strive to find common ground with those who oppose their view. This fair-minded approach presents a balanced exploration of all aspects of a debate and accepts that people may disagree with elements of it. The Rogerian model is less argumentative than the classical model, but there are benefits to pursuing a measured approach, particularly when it comes to sensitive debates, for example those around abortion or sexuality.

SOURCE 5 Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE)
The following table gives an overview of the structure of the Aristotelian and Rogerian models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARISTOTELIAN (CLASSICAL)</th>
<th>ROGERIAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong> – capture audience’s attention, introduce issue</td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong> – state problem to be resolved, raise possibility of positive change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement of background</strong> – supply context, give audience necessary backstory</td>
<td><strong>Summarise opposing views</strong> – neutrally state opposition’s perspective; show non-judgmental fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proposition</strong> – state contention (thesis), outline major points to follow</td>
<td><strong>Statement of understanding</strong> – accept that, at times, opposing views are valid; show when, why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proof</strong> – present reasons, supporting claims and evidence; explain and justify assumptions</td>
<td><strong>Statement of position</strong> – state your personal position after showing consideration for opposing views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Refutation</strong> – anticipate and rebut opposing views; demonstrate thorough consideration of issue</td>
<td><strong>Statement of contexts</strong> – explain why and in what context your position makes sense; acknowledge people won’t always agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong> – summarise most important points; make final appeal to audience’s values, emotions</td>
<td><strong>Statement of benefits</strong> – appeal to self-interest of opponents by showing how they might benefit from your position</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE 6**

**DOES MARIJUANA USE REALLY CAUSE PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS?**

Alex Berenson says the drug causes ‘sharp increases in murders and aggravated assaults’. As scientists, we find his claims misinformed and reckless.

**By Carl L Hart and Charles Ksir**

Does marijuana cause psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia, and do associated symptoms like paranoia lead to violent crimes? That’s what writer Alex Berenson is claiming. As part of his new book promotion, Berenson published a New York Times op-ed that also blames the drug for ‘sharp increases in murders and aggravated assaults’ purportedly observed in some states that allow adult recreational marijuana use.

Does marijuana cause psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia?

As scientists with a combined 70-plus years of drug education and research on psychoactive substances, we find Berenson’s assertions to be misinformed and reckless.

It is true that people diagnosed with psychosis are more likely to report current or prior use of marijuana than people without psychosis. The easy conclusion to draw from that is that marijuana
use caused an increased risk of psychosis, and it is that easy answer that Berenson has seized upon. However, this ignores evidence that psychotic behavior is also associated with higher rates of tobacco use, and with the use of stimulants and opioids. Do all these things ‘cause’ psychosis, or is there another, more likely answer? In our many decades of college teaching, one of the most important things we have tried to impart to our students is the distinction between correlation (two things are statistically associated) and causation (one thing causes another). For example, the wearing of light clothing is more likely during the same months as higher sales of ice-cream, but we do not believe that either causes the other.

In our extensive 2016 review of the literature we concluded that those individuals who are susceptible to developing psychosis (which usually does not appear until around the age of 20) are also susceptible to other forms of problem behavior, including poor school performance, lying, stealing and early and heavy use of various substances, including marijuana. Many of these behaviors appear earlier in development, but the fact that one thing occurs before another also is not proof of causation. (One of the standard logical fallacies taught in logic classes: after this, therefore because of this.) It is also worth noting that 10-fold increases in marijuana use in the UK from the 1970s to the 2000s were not associated with an increase in rates of psychosis over this same period, further evidence that changes in cannabis use in the general population are unlikely to contribute to changes in psychosis.

Evidence from research tells us that aggression and violence are highly unlikely outcomes of marijuana use. Based on our own laboratory research, during which we have given thousands of doses of marijuana to people – carefully studying their brain, behavioral, cognitive and social responses – we have never seen a research participant become violent or aggressive while under the influence of the drug, as Berenson alleges. The main effects of smoking marijuana are contentment, relaxation, sedation, euphoria and increased hunger. Still, very high THC concentrations can cause mild paranoia, visual and/or auditory distortions, but even these effects are rare and usually seen only in very inexperienced users.

There is a broader point that needs to be made. In the 1930s, numerous media reports exaggerated the connection between marijuana use by black people and violent crimes. During congressional hearings concerning regulation of the drug, Harry J Anslinger, commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, declared: ‘Marijuana is the most violence-causing drug in the history of mankind.’ He was compelling. But unfortunately, these fabrications were used to justify racial discrimination and to facilitate passage of the Marijuana Tax Act in 1937, which essentially banned the drug. As we see, the Reefer madness rhetoric of the past has not just evaporated; it continued and has evolved, reinventing itself perhaps even more powerfully today.

There have been several recent cases during which police officers cited the fictitious dangers posed by cannabis to justify their deadly actions. Philando Castile, of St. Paul, Minnesota, in 2016; Michael Brown, of Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014; and Keith Lamont Scott, of Charlotte, North Carolina, in 2016 were all killed by police who used some version of this bogus defense. Ramarley Graham, Trayvon Martin, Rumain Brisbon and Sandra Bland all also had their lives cut short as a result of an interaction with law enforcement (or a proxy) initiated under the pretence of marijuana use suspicion.

Back in the 1930s, when there were virtually no scientific data on marijuana, ignorant and racist officials publicized exaggerated anecdotal accounts of its harms and were believed. Almost 90 years and hundreds of studies later, there is no excuse for these exaggerations or the inappropriate conclusions drawn by Berenson. Neither account has any place in serious discussions of science or public policy – which means Berenson doesn’t, either.

Carl L Hart is the chairman and Ziff professor of psychology and psychiatry at Columbia University and author of High Price: A Neuroscientist’s Journey of Self-Discovery that Challenges Everything You Know About Drugs and Society. Charles Ksir is professor emeritus of psychology and Neuroscience at the University of Wyoming and author of Drugs, Society and Human Behavior.

The Guardian, 20 January 2019
2.4a Your turn

1. Work with a partner. Take it in turns to speak about an issue of interest using both the Aristotelian and the Rogerian methods of argument. Speak for 2–3 minutes, without substantial preparation.
   a. Which method was easier to follow? Why?

2. Read the opinion piece in Source 6, written by two professors of psychology on the issue of whether or not marijuana use causes psychotic disorders, and answer these questions.
   a. Work with a partner. Paragraph by paragraph, identify some of the key stages of either the Aristotelian or Rogerian models of argumentation exhibited in this piece. Annotate the text to indicate these stages.
   b. Which model does this text seem to most closely reflect? Justify your decision with evidence.
   c. Do any of the stages of this model appear to be missing? Discuss with a partner and then as a class.
   d. Draft an opinion piece offering your own opinion on whether or not marijuana should be legalised and regulated, as is the case with alcohol and tobacco. Plan your piece using either the Aristotelian or Rogerian model of argumentation, varying the model to suit your personal style and purposes.
CONSIDER THE ‘WHOLE PACKAGE’: CONTEXT, PURPOSE, AUDIENCE, FORM

The structure and development of an argument was noted in Chapter 1, based on the interplay of context, purpose, audience and form. A newspaper editorial for an audience of business enthusiasts is, necessarily, shaped and sequenced entirely differently to a website advertisement for a gap year product. The editorial would likely rely on a version of either the Aristotelian or Rogerian models, or another structured approach, to uphold the newspaper’s reputation for intellectual rigour. The website advertisement has far more creative flexibility; it

SOURCE 7

Displays images of happy young adults in exotic locations to appeal to Year 12 students who are feeling ‘trapped’ by their studies.

Includes some ‘satisfied customer’ testimony to accompany these photographs, to convince the target audience of the validity and benefits of the product from the perspective of people similar to the target audience.

Makes an appeal to a sense of adventure to capitalise on this enthusiasm.

Uses flattery and exaggeration to generate enthusiasm and motivation in potential new customers.

Appeals to a sense of anxiety about employment prospects.

Deepens this sense of anxiety by focusing on the current challenges young people face in the job market. Uses economic data to deepen the sense of concern or anxiety about the future.

Expand your horizons – get that all important life experience

No doubt you’ve heard older siblings or other young adults talk about the employment difficulties they face as an enthusiastic, but inexperienced, jobseeker. And in Australia’s current economic climate – where economists warn we are in a technical recession and face a deepening of our current skills shortage – uncertain employees are sitting tight in their current positions rather than re-entering the market. As a consequence it is getting harder for school leavers to secure employment. Melbourne Institute employment specialist Mark Wooden told The Age newspaper in February of this year that ‘it is to be expected that employment of teenagers falls during recessions... Young people don’t come with skills, they have to acquire them.’ In the same article it was reported that ‘youth unemployment has risen from 15.8% to 16.5% over the past year.’ ‘Jobs growth strong but not for the young’ – February 11, The Age

This is where the gap year comes in: spend a year overseas getting the best work experience available, add the details to your CV upon your return, and... suddenly you’re more employable. You’ve read Hayley’s ringing endorsement above, now consider this: she is currently working part time as an education assistant in Queensland whilst undertaking study to become a fully qualified teacher of secondary English and TESOL. When she finishes her course she is heading back overseas to help establish an English language school in the impoverished northeast Thai district of Tha Rae. After that? Well, the world’s her oyster really. All thanks to the gap year.
would likely engage with informality and visual aids, and the ‘argument’ would be driven more by an advertising model based on creating a need and appealing to values or emotions.

Part of your work in this Area of Study involves:

- carefully scrutinising the overall shape and direction of an author’s argument
- explaining how and why a text is structured as it is
- analysing how the various arguments, stages or approaches work together to achieve a persuasive whole.

Consider this example of a web-based infomercial selling gap-year opportunities, which illustrates how argument and language features work together.

Strategically follows this with more expert testimony from a satisfied customer talking about how their gap year made them more employable. This alleviates a potential client’s unemployment concerns and sells the travel product as a ‘solution’ to joblessness.

Juxtaposes ‘slaving away at a university course’ with ‘soaking up Vitamin D in the great outdoors’ to heighten the unattractiveness of the stay-at-home option.

Complements the earlier focus on self-interest with more-benevolent benefits.

Closes with a number of tempting hyperlinks, which uses imperatives - ‘Sign up’, ‘Read’, ‘Contact us’ - to capitalise on all of the strategies outlined above.
‘Very High’ scoring sample analysis

Introduction
In the middle of the 2011 school year, when many VCE students are starting to think about
the world beyond their final exams, Australian gap year company ‘AllAbroad’ posted a
webpage information sheet on their website in order to promote its ‘ultimate gap year
experience’ to students and parents alike. The company argues the merits of a gap year in
an enthusiastic sales pitch, seeking to convince future school-leavers and their families
that a year overseas can be good for both the resume and the soul, offering as it does both
real-world experience and the opportunity for ‘invaluable and rewarding acts of charity’.
Ultimately the ‘AllAbroad’ team hopes to convince this audience that their particular gap
year product is the only one worth purchasing, and the page’s glossy, feel-good language
adopts the hyperbolic approach of the advertising industry – complete with testimonies
from satisfied customers – in its hard sell of an apparently ‘amazing experience’.

Body paragraph 1
By opening the page with upbeat testimony from a previous customer above the company’s
own official introduction, the AllAbroad team hopes to validate the authenticity of
the product being sold. The speech bubble accentuates the fact that the opinion comes
directly from the mouth of someone beyond the company itself, which works to validate
or authenticate the product in the eyes of potentially sceptical students and parents. This
authenticity is furthered through the inclusion of the photograph itself, which ensures that
visitors to the site see Hayley as a ‘real person’ rather than a construction by a private
business. Hayley’s enthusiastic tone – ‘What an amazing experience’ – and the focus on the
exotic details of a trip where she visited ‘remote magical jungles’ and rode ‘a tuk-tuk’ further
validate the idea of a gap year as a viable option and establish the product as a genuine
prospect rather than a scam or manipulative advertisement. Hayley’s smiling face conveys
a sense of joy which seeks to tap into students’ own desires for a fun-filled post-Year 12 life,
and her informal tone positions students to feel engaged with the prospect on their own level;
her instruction ‘Guys… get out there’ amounts to a casual imperative which urges young
people to take a leap into the unknown, and her emphatic conclusion which characterises the
trip as ‘the smartest decision’ works to dispel concerns about the possible risks involved in
such a bold venture. All of this positivity from a satisfied customer establishes the platform
from which the company’s own official introduction directly underneath can be launched
with more authority, and the enthusiastic tone of the company’s opening – ‘Congratulations,
and welcome Abroad’, capitalises on Hayley’s relaxed approach whilst also punning on
the company’s name to establish the all-important brand. Altogether these introductory
elements are designed to seduce prospective customers to ‘read on’ and consider the
product in more detail in the paragraphs which follow.

Body paragraph (topic sentence only)
The section of the website focused on ‘life experience’ taps into student anxieties about
insecure job prospects, painting the gap year as a secure alternative.
[...]

Body paragraph 3 (topic sentence only)
Having established the employment benefits provided by their product, the company
consolidates the appeal of the gap year by shifting the focus onto the personal and
moral rewards they claim are on offer.
[...]
2.4b Your turn

1 Now, read Source 7, which is the Section C component of the Year 12 English practice exam – a mock-up of a webpage by Australian Gap Year company AllAbroad – and answer the questions.

   a Why do you think the page opens with a testimonial from a previous gap year customer, rather than information from the AllAbroad company itself? (Think about the purpose of the webpage, and the target audience.)

   b This opening testimony is followed by a word of ‘Congratulations’ from the company itself, which claims that, simply by visiting the website, the visitor has ‘taken the first step towards achieving the dream of a lifetime’. Explain the argument strategy from the company: what idea have they conveyed here, and how has it positioned the audience in terms of their perception of the gap year?

   c Reread the ‘Expand your horizons’ section. Why do you think the company included the paragraph about the ‘technical recession’ before the paragraph on how a gap year can make a person more employable, and then returned to ‘Hayley’, from the opening testimony? Explain carefully, in terms of the logic of this ordering of ideas.

   d Reread the final two sections of the webpage: ‘Make new friends…’, and ‘Help others. Feel good about yourself’. Write 2–3 sentences to explain:

      i why the details are presented in this order
      ii how the argument stages work cumulatively to establish an overall impact.
2 Now, read the ‘Very High’ scoring sample analysis of the AllAbroad website in Source 8, and answer these questions.

a To establish a sense of good-quality introduction writing in an analysis task, annotate the introduction to explain what each sentence is doing.

b Highlight the specific arguments or ideas identified in the introduction, then compare with a partner and the whole class. Why is it important to include this information in the introduction?

c Work with a partner. Explain which parts of the three topic sentences, in **bold**, help to show this student’s awareness of (1) the author’s key arguments and (2) the significance of the ordering and development of these arguments.

d Look at all of the **underlined phrases**. What do they have in common, and what does this tell you about one of the key indicators of a ‘Very High’ scoring analysis in this Area of Study?

e Working with a partner, carefully reread the first body paragraph and annotate each sentence to explain its focus. Then write a summary of what you would consider to be the key elements of a good analysis in this Area of Study.

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**FOR THE TEACHER**

Check your obook assess for the following additional resources for this chapter:

- **Answers**
  - Answers to the *Your turn* tasks in this chapter

- **Teacher notes**
  - Useful notes and advice for teaching this chapter, including syllabus links

- **assess quiz**
  - An interactive auto-correcting multiple-choice quiz to test student comprehension
It all starts here

Your next steps

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