

## Worksheet 5: Argumentation and Persuasion

### **What is Argumentation?**

Argumentation is *not* just having an argument. Unlike many arguments, which are emotional and heated, argumentation is the use of crystal clear thinking – logic – and evidence to convince a person to adopt a particular opinion.

### **What is Persuasion?**

If, while trying to prove their point, a person uses emotional language and dramatic appeals to beliefs and values, they are using persuasion. Persuasion is used to motivate a person to adopt an opinion and then take action.

### **Argumentation + Persuasion = A Convincing Case!**

Because people respond rationally and emotionally to situations, argumentation and persuasion are usually combined. For example, suppose you want to convince your neighbors to use public transportation. You might begin by *arguing* that using public transportation saves money on gas and car maintenance and also cuts down on pollution. Such an argument, supported by documented facts and figures, would help convince money and environmentally-conscious people. However, to convince stressed-out commuters, you might also *persuade* people to consider letting someone else drive while they relax. To do this, you would use emotional appeals and positive language. For example:

“Think how pleasant it would be to simply step on the subway and breeze through the morning paper or even catch a few moments of precious sleep rather than battle vicious gridlock for two hour each day.”

### **How to Construct a Winning Case**

The ancient Greeks, who developed our basic concepts of logic (sensible thought), isolated three factors that make a good argument: *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*.

- **Logos** is the use of evidence such as facts, statistics and examples to support your point. For example, if you are trying to convince someone that California needs to put more money towards education and less into the construction of prisons, you would tell them that California is first in the nation in prison spending and 41<sup>st</sup> in education spending. Of course, this is why approximately 80% of all public schools are in need of repair, let alone more credentialed teacher and current textbooks.
- **Pathos** is the emotional power of language that appeals to the reader’s needs, values and attitudes. A writer often relies on pathos to motivate their reader to take some type of emotion. Consider the following pitches for a man’s cologne:

*Brawn: Experience the power. Bold, yet subtle. Clean. Masculine. The scent for a man who’s in charge.*

Words such as bold, power, and in charge, appeal to those qualities many men want to cultivate, so they will be motivated to buy this product. Like an advertisement, you must use emotional words and phrases to strengthen your message. If you believe in legalization of marijuana, you might use words such as *liberty*, *herb*, and *responsibility*. If you favor the criminalization of marijuana, you would use words such as *menace*, *narcotic* and *irresponsible*.

- **Ethos** is credibility or reliability. You cannot expect people to accept your viewpoint unless they believe that you know what you are talking about! For example, “Four out of five dentists recommend using BRITE toothpaste.” After all, dentists should know! Another way to appear trustworthy is by presenting a logical, reasoned argument that takes opposing viewpoints into account. Also, do not rely too much upon emotion or else you may lose credibility with your audience.