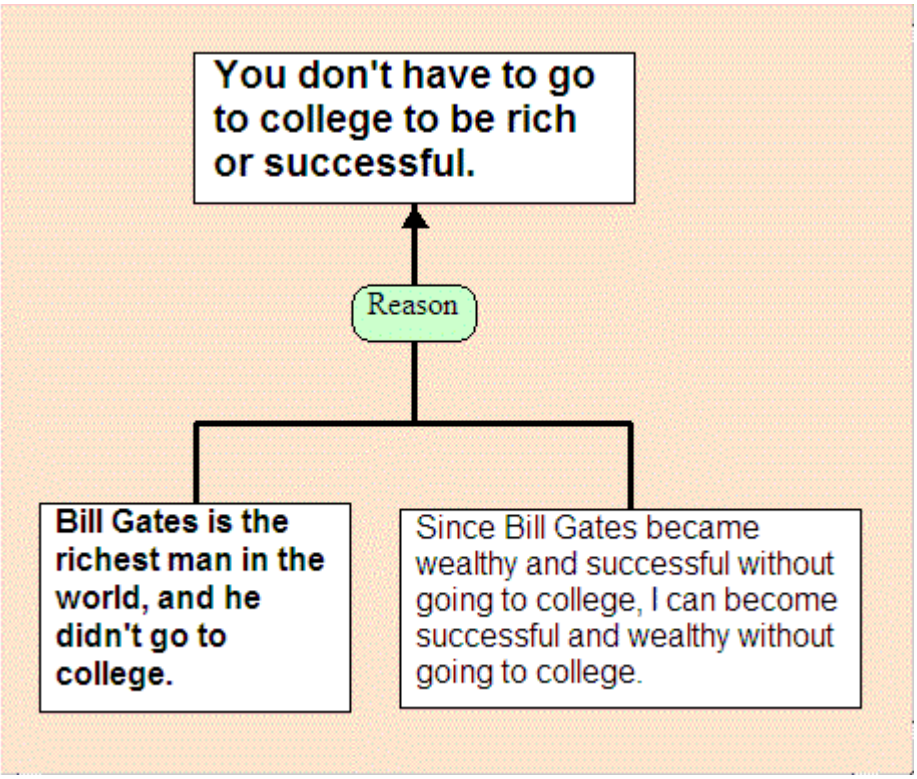
Inferences From Example

Inferences from example are *generalizations*. They claim that what is true of an individual case is true of many cases. Usually, people will not claim that what is true of one case is true of all cases; however, they will claim that what is true of one case is true of other cases. Very often, this kind of reasoning translates into a justification for actions.

A common complaint from teachers is that students take a single example justify an action or to prove the truth of something larger. An example of this is: "Bill Gates is the richest man in the world, and he never went to college!" The conclusion to be drawn is that one need not go to college in order to succeed or to get rich.

One can see better how this argument is structured by mapping it:



As you can see, the weakness of this argument lies in the misapplication of an analogy: as Bill Gates is, so am I. Including an objection in the map clarifies the mistaken analogy.

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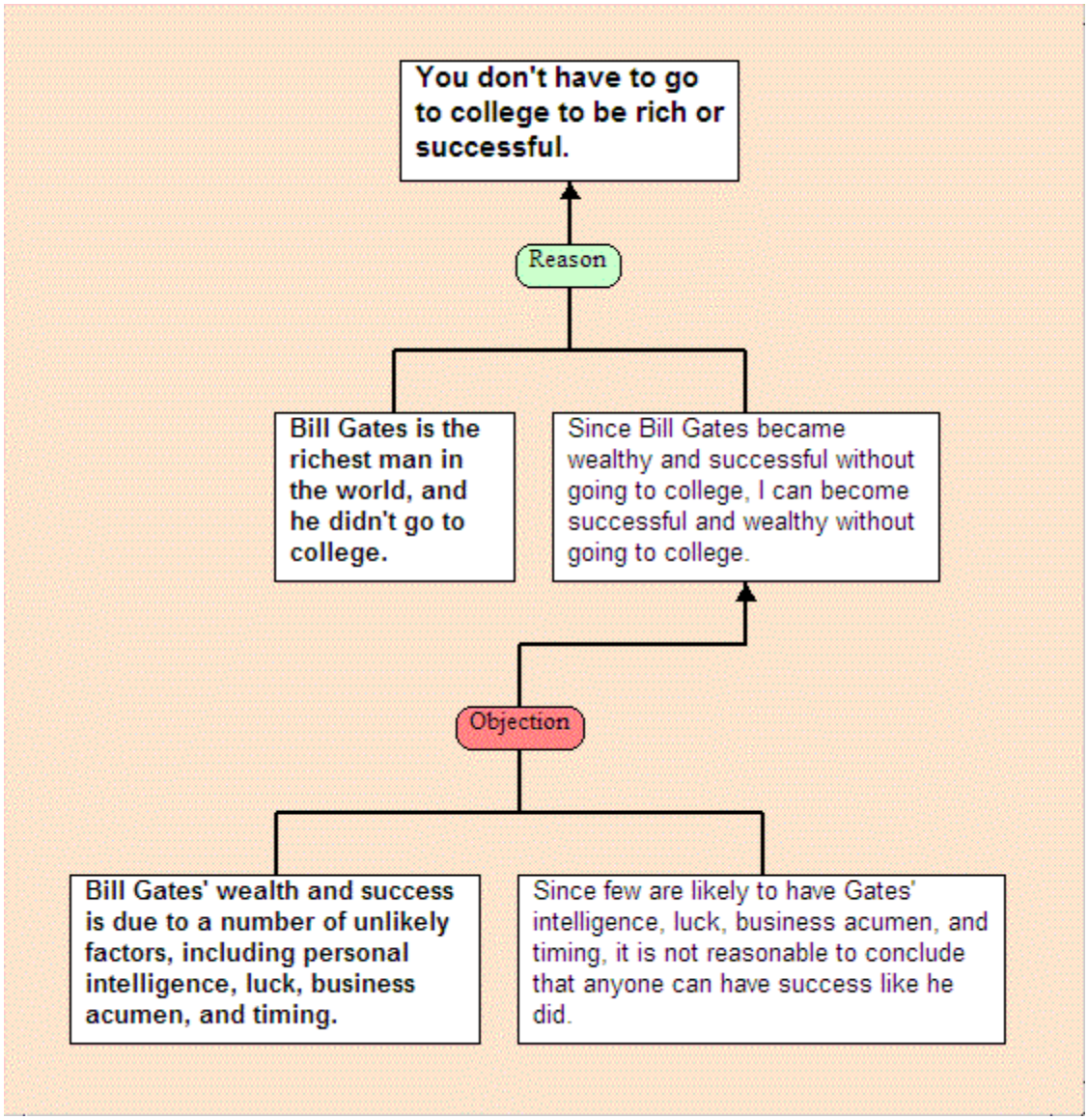

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Inferences from examples #1

"My father got cancer and he prayed every day and he eventually got better. The doctors were amazed."

Use an argument map to state the implied conclusion and the underlying reasoning.

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Inferences from examples #1 Answer

"My father got cancer and he prayed every day and he eventually got better. The doctors were amazed."

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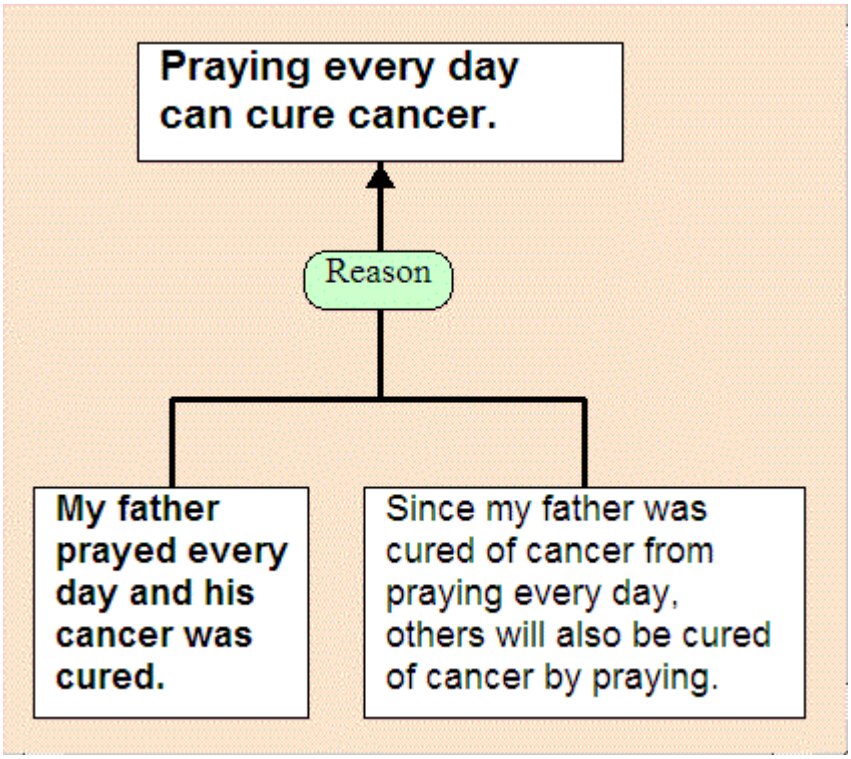

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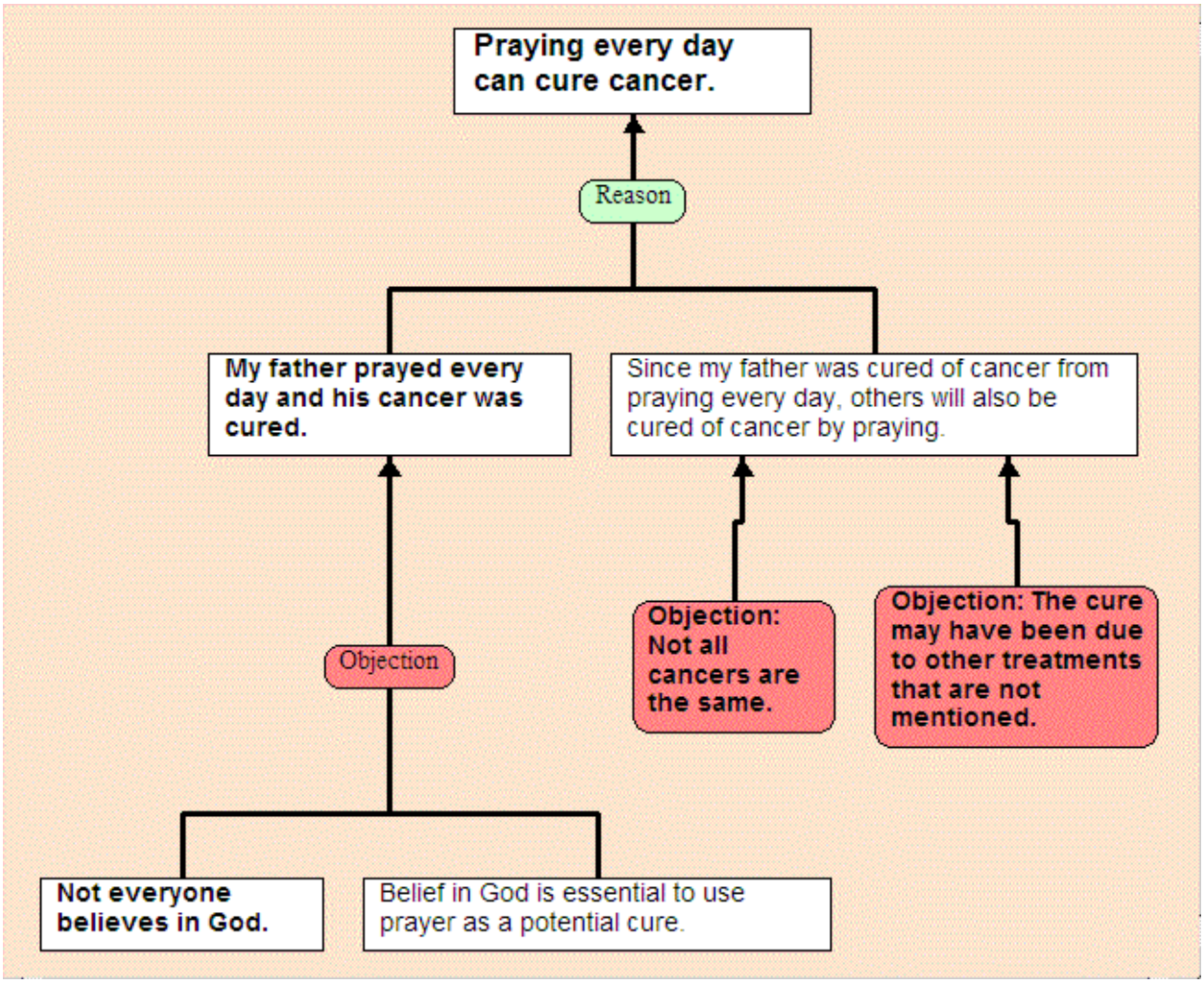
The argument map with an objection included might look like this:



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Inferences from example #2

Find the *generalization* in this passage and create an argument map.

"Growing role of emotion in jury verdicts" by Mark Sappenfield, in the *Christian Science Monitor*, Wednesday, December 15, 2004, p. 2.

"Since they reached their decision earlier this week to recommend the death penalty for Scott Peterson, the jurors in this trial have made it clear that there was no single piece of evidence that made up their minds—either to convict or to condemn him to death. Yet, time and time again, several have returned to one crucial point: Throughout the trial, Peterson never showed the slightest hint of grief, remorse, or sadness. They are comments that set the legal world on edge. To be sure, juries have always watched defendants during their trials—reading meaning into every tic and tantrum. But with so little solid evidence in the Peterson case, his demeanor seems to have played an unusually prominent role in the jury's decision. Although the high profile of the Peterson trial makes it unique in many ways, legal experts worry that the emphasis on emotion here reveals a more fundamental shift in juries nationwide…"

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Inferences from example #2 Answer

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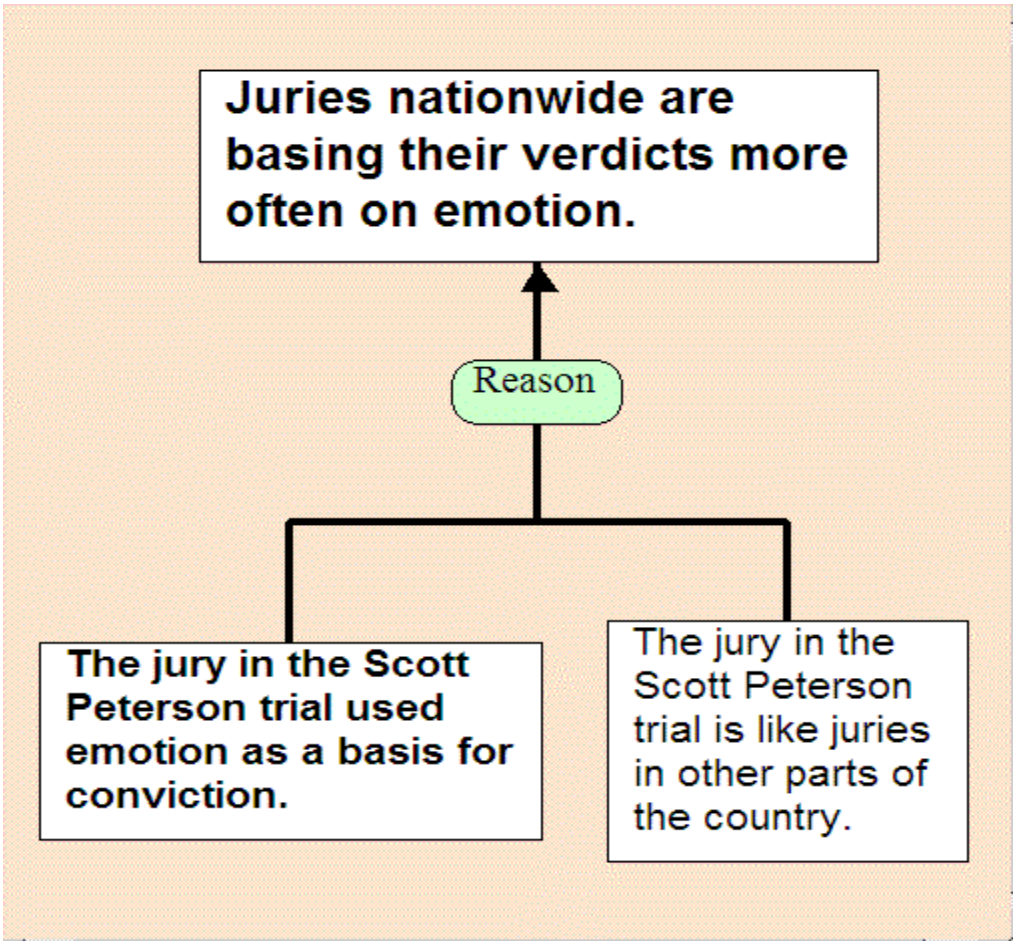

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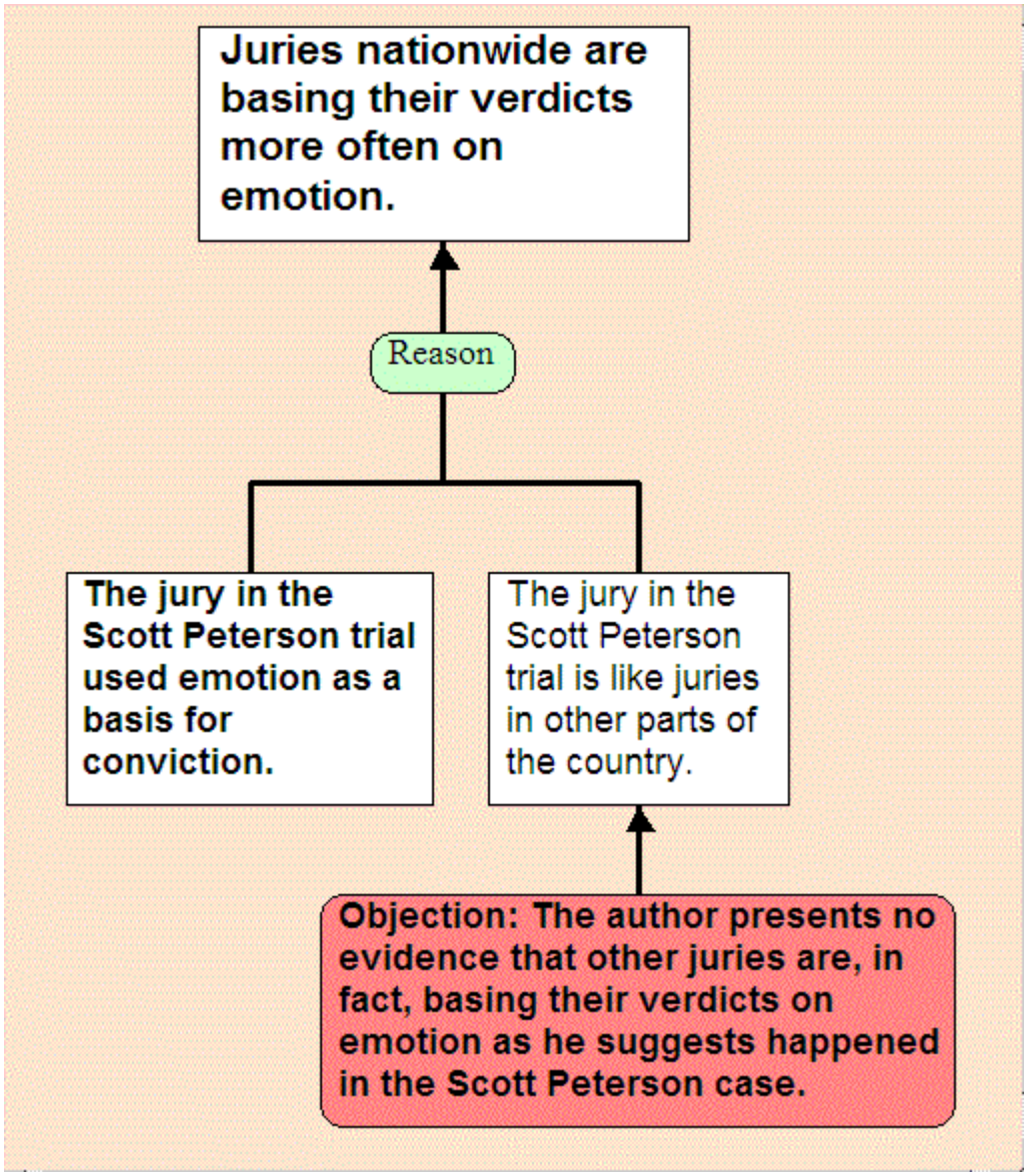
The argument map with an objection included might look like this:



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Inferences from example #3

Find the *generalization* in this passage and create an argument map.

Sure, I use steroids. If you know how to control them, everything should be fine. After all, you need them for a competitive edge. Jason Giambi and Ken Caminiti used steroids and they both won the Most Valuable Player Award.

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Inferences from example #3 Answer

Find the *generalization* in this passage and create an argument map.

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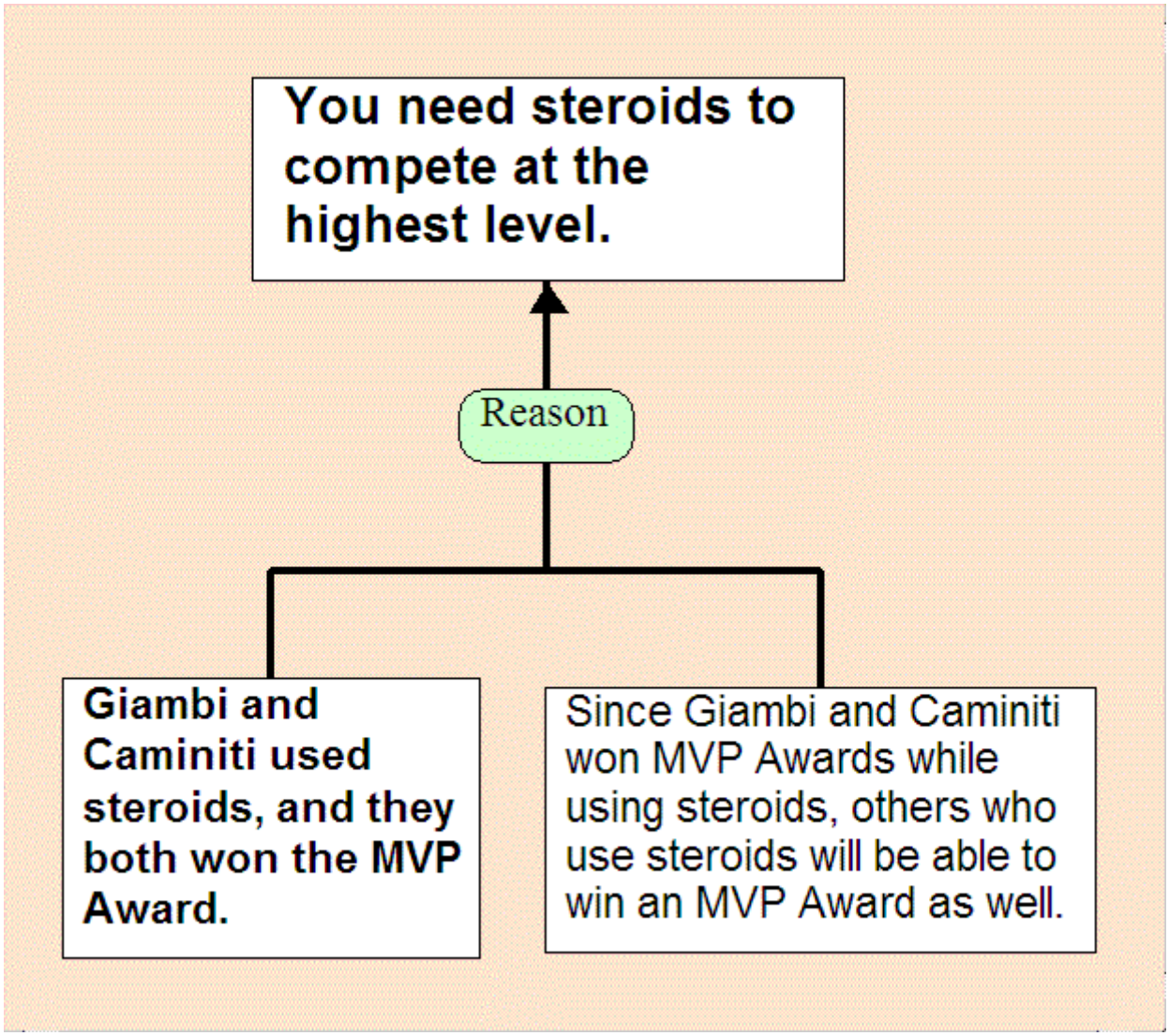

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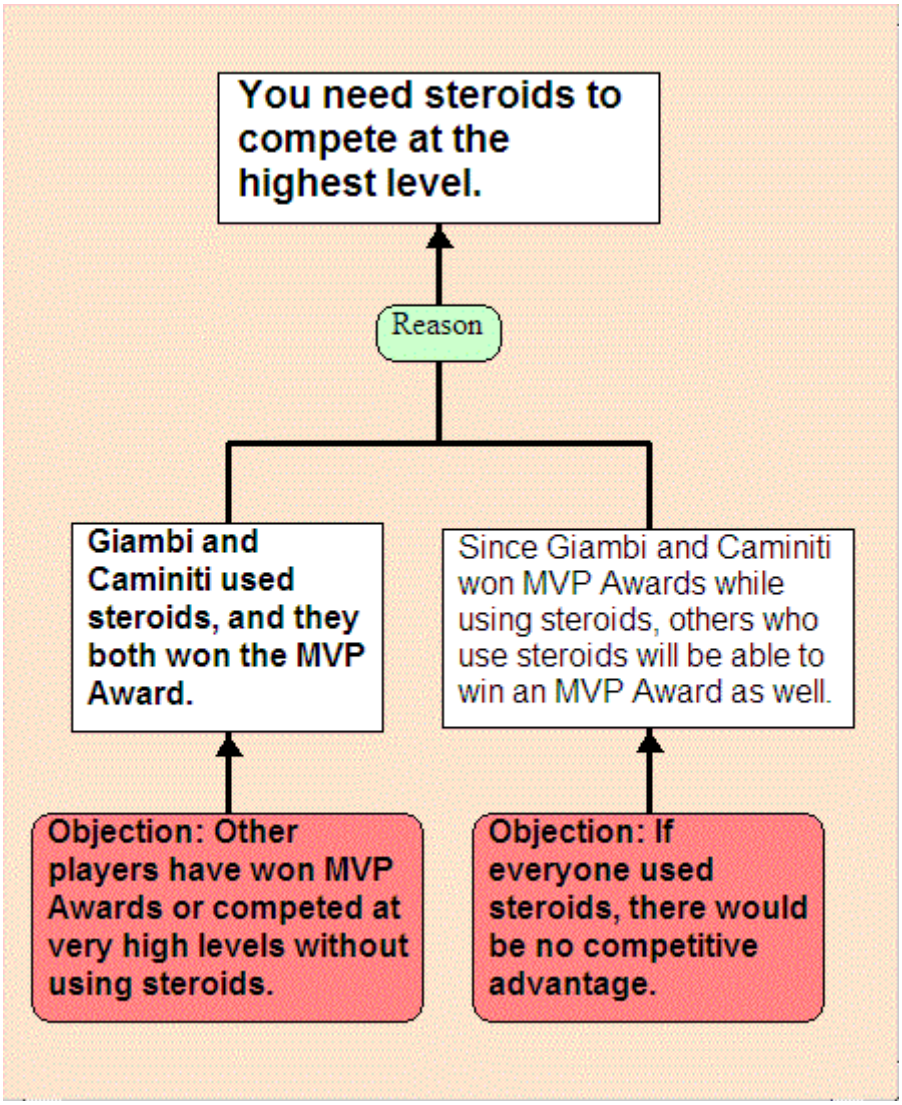
The argument map with an objection included might look like this:



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Inferences from example #4

Find the *generalization* in this passage and create an argument map.

She has four children. The two daughters were absolute angels. They were really sweet and they were good students. They never cause any problems. But her two sons were nothing but trouble.

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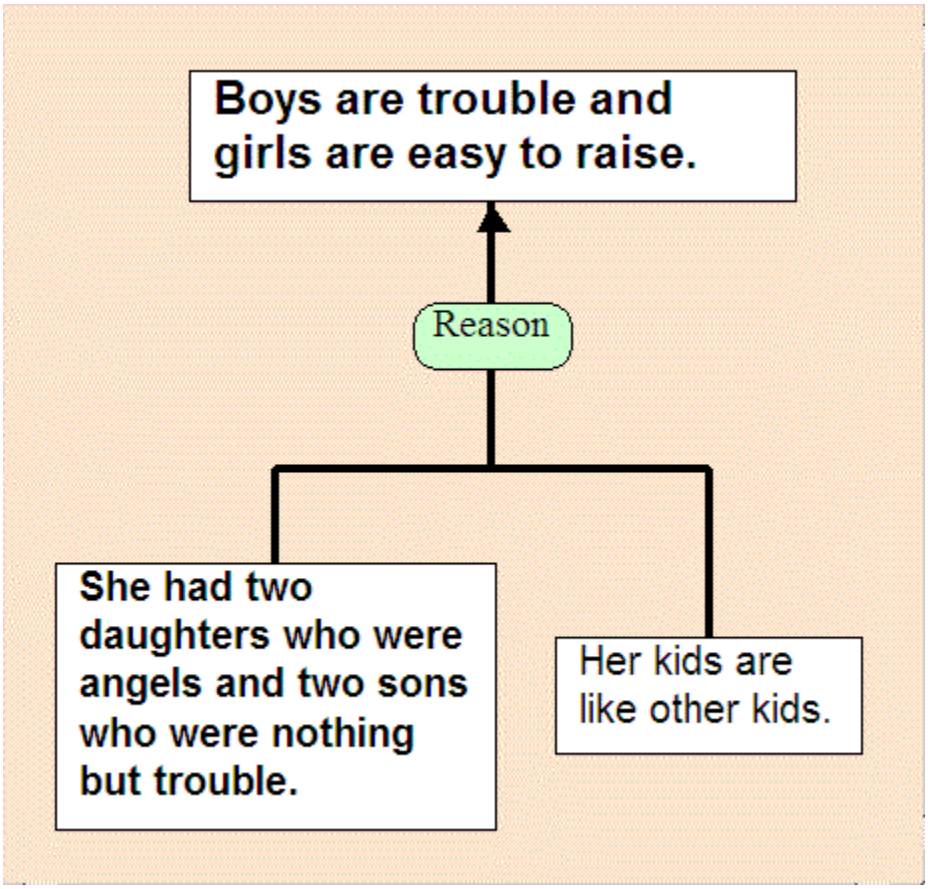
Inferences from example #4 Answer

Find the *generalization* in this passage and create an argument map.

She has four children. The two daughters were absolute angels. They were really sweet and they were good students. They never cause any problems. But her two sons were nothing but trouble.



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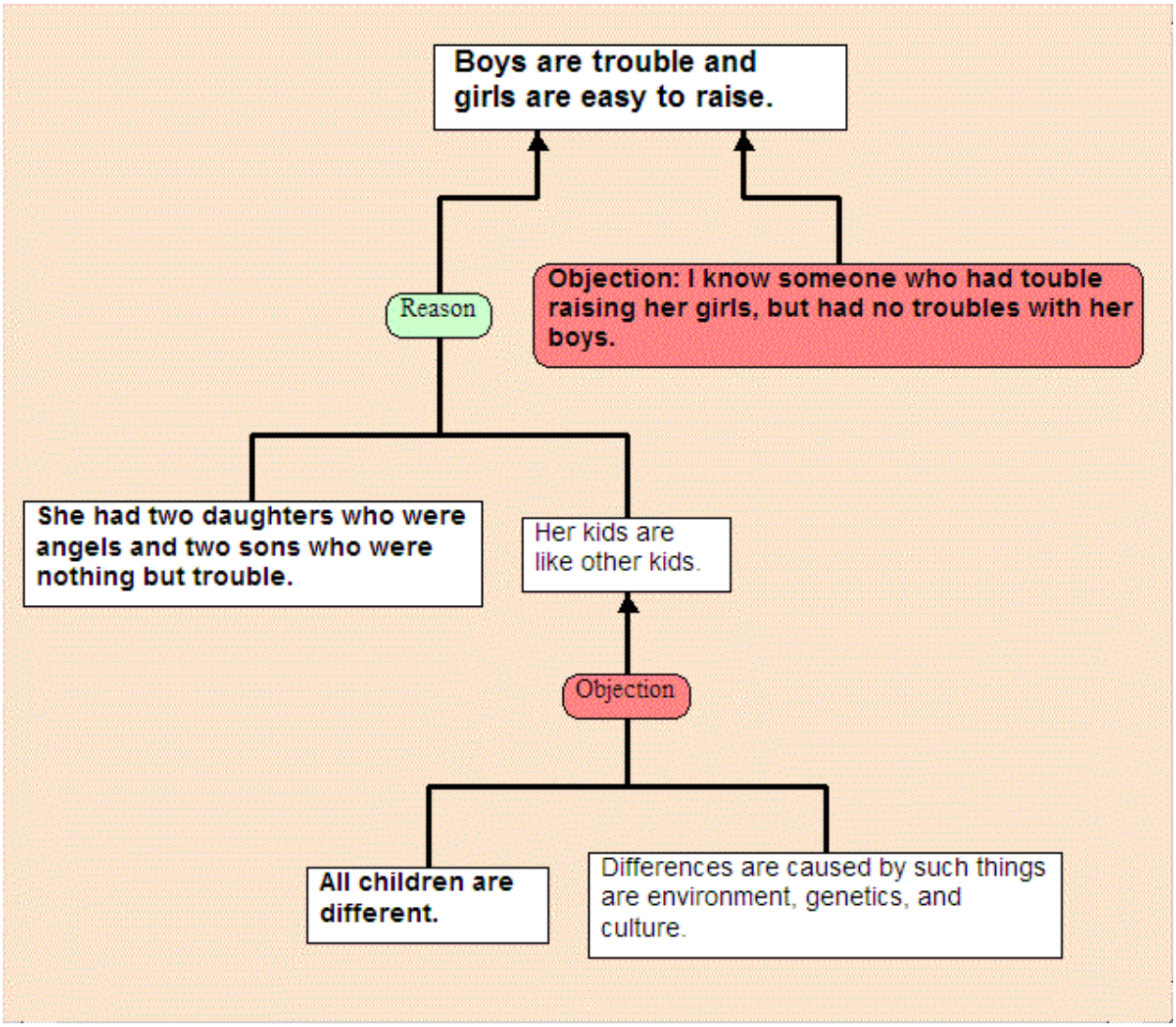
The argument map with an objection included might look like this:



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Inferences from example #5

Find the *generalization* in this passage and create an argument map.

She is a really tough teacher. I know six or seven people who failed her class. I can't afford an "F" in a class; I'm taking someone else.

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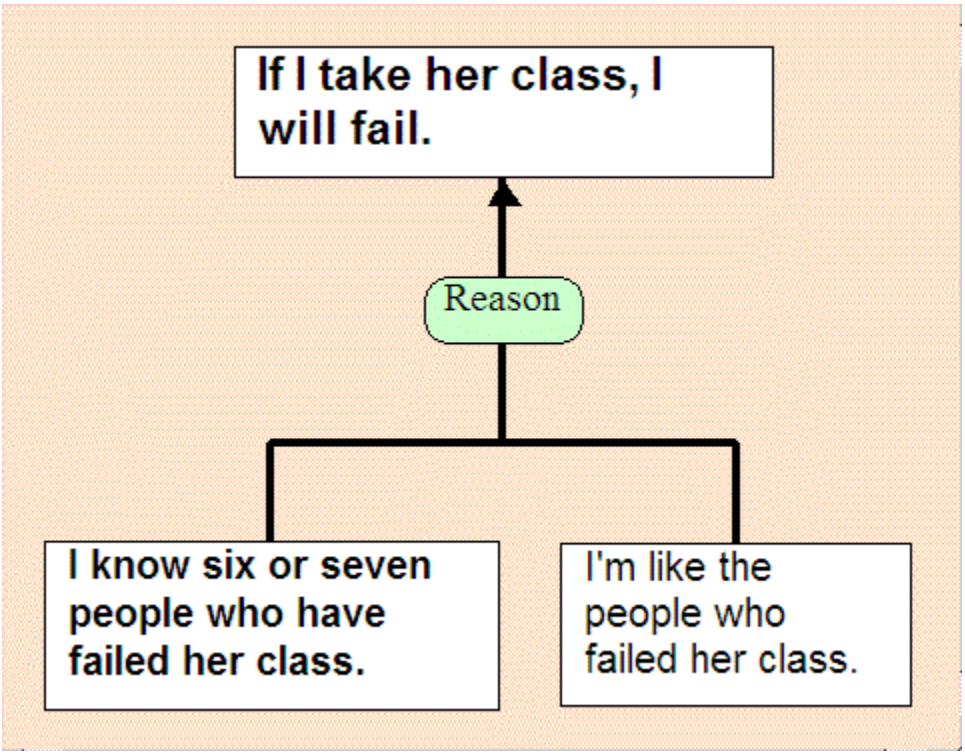
Inferences from example #5 Answer

Find the *generalization* in this passage and create an argument map.

She is a really tough teacher. I know six or seven people who failed her class. I can't afford an "F" in a class; I'm taking someone else.



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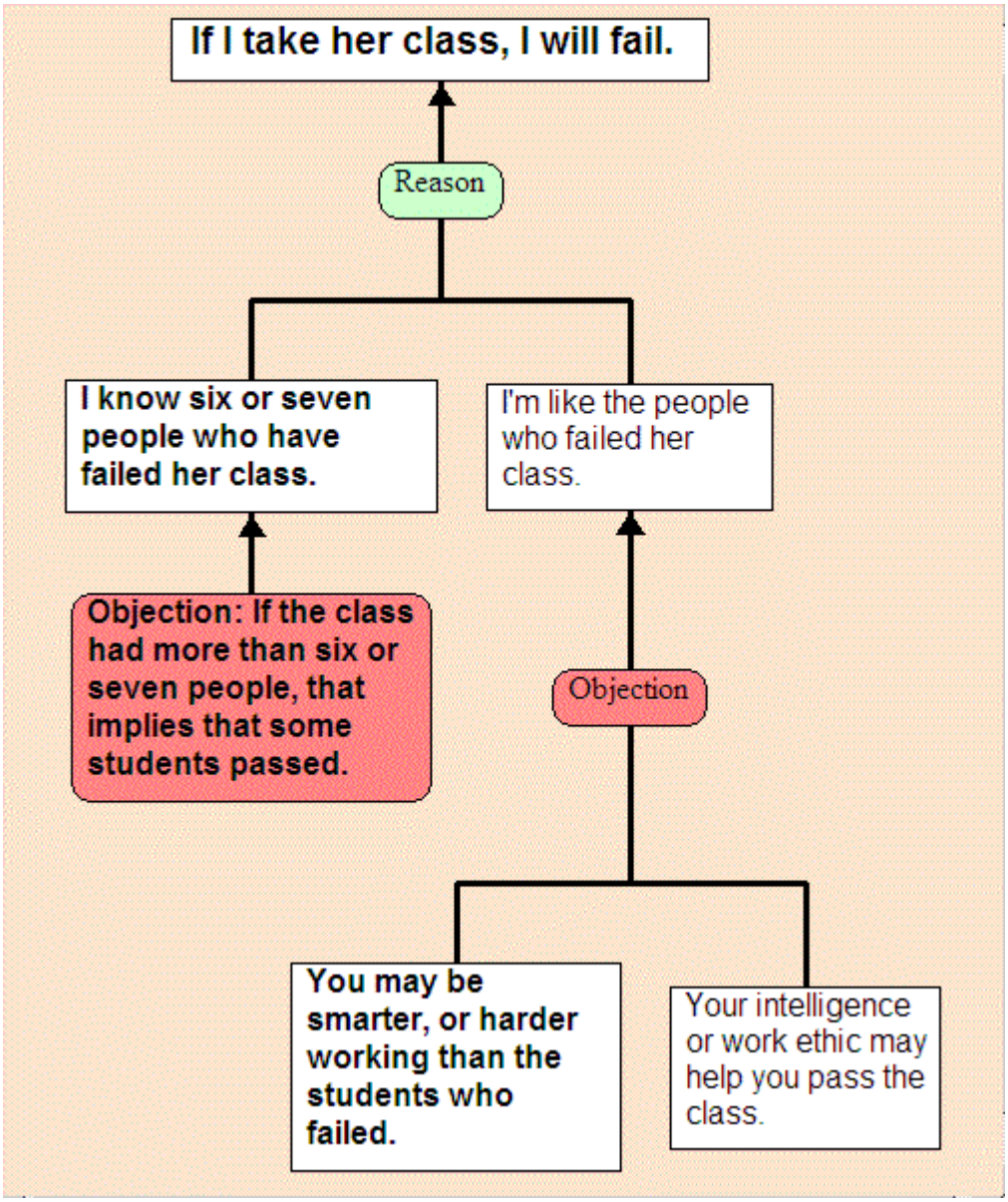
The argument map with an objection included might look like this:



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Inferences from example #6

Find the *generalization* in this passage and create an argument map.

Jerry failed Math class twice. Then he decided to use the tutoring center every day after class. I guess they really helped him a lot because he passed the class.

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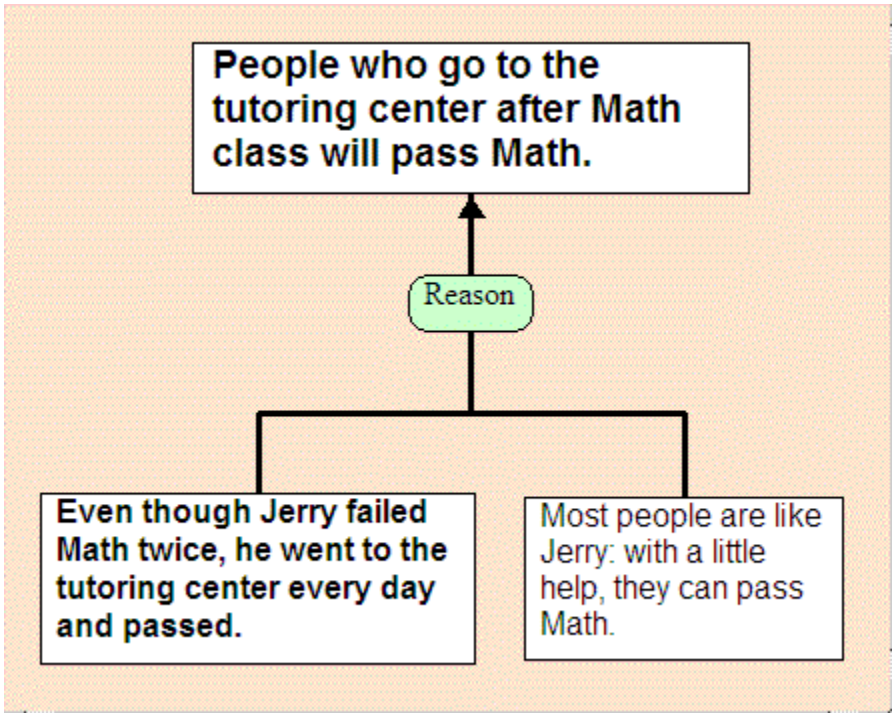
Inferences from example #6

Find the *generalization* in this passage and create an argument map.

Jerry failed Math class twice. Then he decided to use the tutoring center every day after class. I guess they really helped him a lot because he passed the class.

Explanation: Despite following a pattern similar to those in previous examples, this generalization seems more likely to be true. Perhaps the reason for this is because the generalization seems justifiable that one who receives tutoring help is more likely to pass a class. In truth, the fact that Jerry passed Math after going to the tutoring center does not justify the conclusion that those who go to the tutoring center will pass class.



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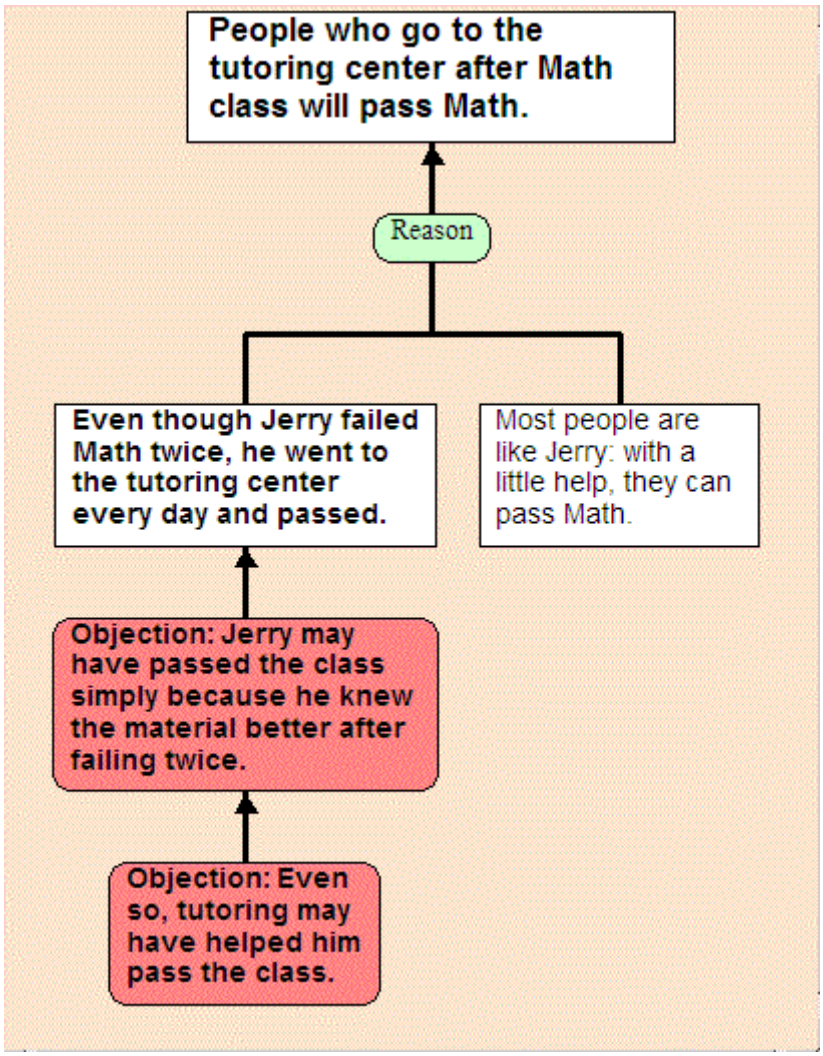
The argument map with an objection included might look like this. Note that the objections to the reasons presented seem overly skeptical. (I have included an objection to an objection).



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