

## Objections

Lecture notes

Teachers commonly complain that students readily accept any defensible opinion as true, rather than considering various viewpoints or possible objections to accepted ideas. These notes, and the worksheets that accompany them, are designed to help overcome this tendency to see only one point of view. They are also helping in preparing students for argument mapping, where careful consideration of objections to claims is important.

Objections raise consideration as to why a claim may not be true.

### **Part I: distinguishing between denials and objections.**

Mere denials are not objections in any serious sense. Denials merely state the opposite of a claim. Objections present some reason for believing that the claim may not be true.

Students should work with the "Denials And Objections" worksheets to learn to distinguish first between a mere denial, and an objection (which carries some premise of support with it). These worksheets contain an assertion, followed by either a simple denial, or a legitimate objection.

### **Part II: discerning kinds of objections.**

After students learn to distinguish between denials and objections, they should learn to identify what kind of objection is made. This will be important later (during argument mapping) when students evaluate claims. Some time should be given to explaining and using these objections. Consider, for example, that a single counterexample may invalidate a claim, while lack of evidence may be cause for skepticism, but not outright rejection of a claim.

Examples follow, after which time students may practice with the "Kinds of Objections" worksheet.

There are five kinds of objections to claims:

- Contrary evidence (data or multiple cases).
- Lack of a necessary connection.
- Counterexample (single case).
- Lack of evidence.
- Objections of consideration:
  - Moral objections
  - Financial objections
  - Gender objections
  - Legal objections (including rights)
  - Social objections

- Cultural objections
- Environmental objections
- General impact objections
- Violations of tradition
- Functional objections
- General impact objections
- Objections based on bias

Here are some examples of objections to claims. Have students discern which kind of objection each is.

**Claim:** Taft College should undertake a reconstruction program.

**Objection:** Taft College should not undertake a reconstruction program because it would be too expensive. [**Objection of consideration: financial**]

**Objection:** Taft College should not undertake a reconstruction program because it would cause too many inconveniences. [**Objection of consideration: impact**]

**Quote:** "I never had any doubt about it [The Bible] being of divine origin. And to those who... doubt it, I would like to have them point out to me any similar collection of writings that have lasted for as many thousands of years and is still the best seller worldwide. It had to be of divine origin." From: Ronald Regan.

**Claim:** The Bible is of divine origin because no other book is as old and remains a bestseller.

**Objection:** There are other books that are older and are bestsellers. [**Contrary evidence**]

**Objection:** Popularity (being a bestseller) does not indicate necessarily divine inspiration. [**Necessary connection**]

**Objection:** Age of writings does not guarantee that they were divinely inspired. [**Necessary connection**]

**Claim:** Good health is the secret to a long life.

**Objection:** Many healthy people die young. [**Contrary evidence**]

**Objection:** Many people who abuse their health live many years. [**Contrary evidence**]

**Objection:** Studies indicate that genetic determinants are the most important factors in determining lifespan. [**Contrary evidence**]

**Objection:** James Fixx was in extraordinarily good health and was quite young when he died of a heart attack. [**Counterexample**]

**Quote:** "Free trade will be good for this country. The reason is patently clear. Isn't it obvious that unrestricted commercial relations will bestow on all sections of this nation the benefits which result when there is an unimpeded flow of goods between countries?" From: With Good Reason by S. Morris Engel.

**Claim:** Free trade is good for the country.

**Objection:** Free trade does not automatically benefit a country. [**Necessary connection**]

**Objection:** No data is presented to support this claim. [**Lack of evidence**]

**Objection:** No one has proven or confirmed that free trade is always good for the country. [**Lack of evidence**]

### **Part III: creating objections.**

In order to argue properly, it is essential to be able to think of objections to claims, whether those claims are your own, or someone else's. Students should do the "Creating Objections" worksheet to think of as many objections as possible to the claims being made. Students should include what kind of objection each is.