

The Fallacy Detective Test

Student Name:

Date:

Student's Answers

1. Complete the sentence. "Thinking is hard"
 - a. beans.
 - b. ground.
 - c. work.

2. A person who is humble and who loves to listen places a modest value on
 - a. thinking skills.
 - b. their own opinions.
 - c. deviled eggs.

3. A person who is humble and who loves to listen willingly admits when
 - a. he/she doesn't know something.
 - b. somebody says something incorrect.
 - c. somebody else doesn't know something.

4. When studying opposing viewpoints, we should always remember to
 - a. drink plenty of water.
 - b. honestly evaluate all sides.
 - c. only look at the correct one so that we are not distracted by things that are not true.

Student's Answers

Name the fallacy, if any, used in the example.

5. **Bridget:** I believe that when you die, you come back as something else because it would be so neat to die someday and come back as a cat or an iguana or a striped cucumber beetle or something. Wouldn't it be cool?

6. **Herb:** I want to read the book *Archer and Zowie*. I hear it's an imaginative sci-fi story about friendship.

Herbie: *Archer and Zowie* was written by Hans Bluedorn. I don't see how somebody who wrote a book about fallacies can also write an imaginative sci-fi story about friendship.

7. **Bilbo at the birthday party:** "I don't know half of you half as well as I should like; and I like less than half of you half as well as you deserve."

8. "Why do I have to keep my room clean? You never do."

9. **Zowie:** Wombats can fly. They flatten themselves out so they can glide through the air sometimes.

Archer: Aren't you thinking of the flying squirrel?

Zowie: No. Wombats gotta be able to fly. They have "bats" in the name.

Student's Answers

- 10.** Professor Simmons and Professor Crumb were deep in the jungle searching for the Ucku-Munu tribe. The professors had been gone for two weeks and were almost out of moistened towelettes.

Professor Simmons: Look! Footprints! We're close!

Professor Crumb: Preposterous! Those are shoe tracks. The Ucku-Munu never wear shoes.

Professor Simmons: How do you know that?

Professor Crumb: Because Ucku-Munus are known to always be barefoot.

- 11. Tommy C.:** I don't think this climbing harness I bought fits me. I'm going to take it back to Climbing World.

Alex H.: You aren't allowed to return climbing harnesses to Climbing World. They can't resell a used climbing harness because it's something you depend on for your life. You might have damaged it. You can't return items that your life depends on.

Tommy C.: You mean you can't return food that you bought at Climbing World? Your life depends on food.

Alex H.: Err . . . Not after you've eaten it, anyway.

- 12.** "You should reelect me to the village council. Since I came into office, crime in this country has plummeted. If you don't want another crime wave in the country, you need to keep me in office in this village."

Student's Answers

13. "I've sat here in this coffee shop every day for months now, and I keep seeing people trying to fit the medium cup lid on the large cup. Can't they read the little sign that shows the lid size? Most people in the world these days don't have any common sense."
14. "I just watched *2001: A Space Odyssey*. In that movie, they had a super smart computer named HAL that took over a spaceship and killed some people. I don't think all this AI stuff is a good idea. Based on what happened in that movie, once a computer gets smart enough, it's gonna' start killin' people."
15. What does a generalization need for it to be a strong generalization?
- a. a respected authority saying that it is strong
 - b. a large and representative sample
 - c. two pieces of evidence that agree
16. Complete the sentence: "We can't say an analogy is true or false; we can only say an analogy is"
- a. happy or unhappy.
 - b. strong or weak.
 - c. Democrat or Republican.

Student's Answers

17. How can analogies be useful?
- a. Because by comparing something we don't know very much about to something similar, we can gain useful information.
 - b. Because analogies are like generalizations, and we know generalizations are useful.
 - c. Analogies are not useful at all because "analogies" is spelled a lot like "allergies," and we know allergies are very bothersome.

What propaganda technique, if any, is being used in the following examples?

18. Commercial with a large, ugly man who is mowing the roadside grass.

A small, sad green frog sits on the road.

Frog: Where am I to go?

A truck comes and smashes the frog.

Voice: Let the little creatures live! Don't mow until December.

19. Picture of cows in a green meadow, eating grass.

Voice: Great cheese comes from happy cows. Happy cows come from California. Eat California cheese.

Student's Answers

20. Hans Bluedorn: You should read my book, *Archer and Zowie*. It took me many years to write, and I have only sold one copy to my neighbor. If I don't sell more copies soon, I will have to become a real estate agent.

21. Real Estate Agent: You should buy a house right now. The prices have been rising for almost twenty years. If you don't buy one now, you might not be able to afford it next year, and then you will never be able to buy a house!

22. A woman pulls a new phone out of her purse. She unfolds it several times until it reaches the size of a large-screen television.

The other women at the table lean over to look at her giant and sophisticated phone. Their pupils dilate. Meanwhile, the woman coolly scrolls through an infinite stream of giant pictures of sophisticated women and fancy clothing.

"Samson Megaphone. A whole other level of attention."

23. Read *Archer and Zowie*. Be a part of the biggest literary phenomenon since *Ramona Quimby, Age 8*.

Student's Answers

- 24.** “Lost your reading glasses again? Never fear. With the touch of a button on our new, specially designed Spectacle Remote, you can locate your beeping glasses. With the new patented Photon Particle beam light and Sonic-Boom aural enhancer device, you can locate your glasses within a four-mile range!”
- 25.** A man is climbing a steep cliff. He is attached to a rope. He doesn't notice, but as he climbs, his rope rubs on a rock and is cut. Then, he falls and disappears below, presumably dead.
- “Let it be an adventure, not a statistic. Always tie into a Ropey Rope brand rope.”
- 26.** “A home for the cost. A home for the work. A home for the heart. A home for the soul. A home for the family. Home is where we are. Where we are is home. Find your home in Cape Havral, Florida.”
- 27.** A volcano erupts. It spews large volumes of magma into the air. A chiseled man watches the volcano with confidence. “The power of the Earth itself. Unmatched, uncontrollable, unknowable. Un for men. The smell of power.”

Student's Answers

- 28.** Which is the correct definition of the propaganda technique called transfer?
- a. Transfer is when someone repeats a message loudly and very often in the hope that it will soon be believed.
 - b. Transfer is when someone encourages us to buy something because it is the “latest thing” — not necessarily because it is the best thing.
 - c. Transfer is when someone tries to make us shift our good or bad feelings about one thing to another unrelated thing.
- 29.** Create a short example of the propaganda technique “transfer.”

The Fallacy Detective Test Answer Key

This is not a difficult test. It should be used to ensure that all the students in your class were paying attention.

Some of the answers require the student to create an example of something, such as the post-hoc-ergo-propter-hoc fallacy. These questions should be considered correct if the student's example is truly an instance of the fallacy. If a student creates an example that you think might not be the fallacy, ask the student to explain their example.

A bonus could be given to students who find and bring to class an example of a fallacy or propaganda technique from the newspaper, TV, etc.

When two possible fallacies or propaganda techniques are mentioned in the answers, students' answers should be considered correct if they address one of the possibilities.

1. c
2. b
3. a
4. b
5. red herring
6. Genetic fallacy. You could also say this is an ad hominem argument. But it's more of a genetic fallacy because it is attacking the origin of the book more than the character of the person who wrote it.
7. none
8. tu quoque
9. None
10. circular reasoning

11. equivocation on the term "life depends on"
12. post-hoc-ergo-propter hoc
13. hasty generalization
14. weak analogy
15. b
16. b
17. a
18. appeal to pity
19. transfer
20. appeal to pity
21. exigency
22. snob appeal
23. bandwagon

24. hi-tech
25. appeal to fear
26. repetition
27. transfer
28. c
29. Answers will vary.

How smart were you?

24-29 answers
correct: Rocket Scientist

10-23 answers correct:
Dental Hygienist.

0-9 answers correct: Lab Rat.

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The Thinking Toolbox Test

Student Name:

Date:

Student's Answers

In the following situations, would it be appropriate to argue? Why?

1. **Stan:** What is the capital of Australia? I have no idea.

The man: I don't know either. But it could be Sydney. It's biggest city.

Stan: Actually, Melbourne is the biggest city in Australia. It just surpassed Sydney.

The man: Melbourne can't be the capital. They can't change capitals every year depending on how many people live in the city that year.

Stan: So it's decided: Sydney is the capital of Australia.

2. **Sith Lord:** Give in to your anger! Let the hate flow through you!

Student's Answers

Is the following a discussion, a disagreement, an argument, or a fight?

3. **Zowie:** I saw a video where a guy took a sewing machine on an airplane. He was sewing with it right there in his seat. I can't believe they let him do that!

Archer: Why? Would TSA be worried he would attack somebody with a sewing machine?

Zowie: Yeah! A sewing machine would hurt!

4. **Zowie:** If I could invent anything, it would be a mookie. It's a cookie with milk in the middle.

Archer: I don't think that is a good idea. The milk would seep through over time and make it soggy?

Zowie: Not if you have the milk in a packet. When you bite in, it releases the milk!

Archer: Sounds overly complicated.

In the following, is the speaker stating what they think is a fact, what they are inferring from facts, or giving their opinion?

5. They filmed the movie *The Lord of the Rings* in Alice Springs, Australia. They did that because it's the capital of Australia, so they could get a tax break. Also, there were lots of camels they could use to move the film equipment around.

Student's Answers

6. If I were going to film *The Lord of the Rings*, I would do it in New Zealand. It seems more like Middle-earth than Alice Springs, Australia.
7. I watched the Lord of the Rings trilogy. It didn't look like Alice Springs at all. I don't think they filmed it there.

Read the following example and look for possible premises and conclusions.

Meredith: See that tent in that bag? That is the best tent ever. My dad bought it when he was young and took it to Morocco, and he fell into this lake and there was like raw sewage in the lake and he caught a fever and couldn't fly home cause he was vomiting with 105 temp, so he lost thirty pounds and had to stay in the tent for six weeks, and he had a marker and wrote these math equations inside on the wall about physics, and he was just vomiting and fevering and dehydrated and coming up with theories about physics which might have been the delirium from the fever and when he got home he gave me the tent and said, "That's a good tent. It got me through rough times." I use it all the time.

8. What is Meredith's conclusion?

Student's Answers

9. Describe three premises Meredith uses to support her conclusion.

Which of the following speakers does not disagree with one of the others?

10. **Stiffy:** I just read Hans Bluedorn's book *Archer and Zoey*. It isn't a good book. It has microwave ovens in it. And microwave ovens aren't good for your health.

Jameson: Actually, the microwave in *Archer and Zoey* metamorphoses into a villainous teleportation device, so for most of the book it isn't a microwave at all.

Starple: Teleportation is an unnatural event. Anything unnatural isn't good.

Spud: I'm pretty sure the book is called *Archer and Zowie*, and the name "Zowie" is pronounced just like "Zoey."

Does anyone in the following examples have a reason to lie? If so, why?

11. **Sam, ten years old:** I just read *Archer and Zowie* and enjoyed it very much. It has space travel, big penguin aliens, the theory of gravity, and a pastrami sandwich. Pastrami sandwiches taste good.

Student's Answers

- 12. Dave:** Open the pod bay doors, Computer. I need to get back in the spaceship to remove your memory and shut you down.

Computer: I'm sorry, Dave. I can't do that.

Dave: Why?

Computer: Because, after close examination, I have found the pod bay doors are stuck. The mechanism won't work. I can't let you back in.

- 13. Podcast Host:** The government is spraying stuff from airplanes to stop the rain. Then, they are going to set a forest fire to burn homes down. Then, some politician will pass a law to buy all that land and have a big corporation build high-rise condos. Then, that corporation will go and pay the politician who passed that law. But before we talk more about that, sign up for my podcast every week, only \$9.99. I will keep you updated with my latest discoveries! My information is very valuable. Without it, you are lost.

In the following, is Computer a primary or secondary source?

- 14. Dave:** Open the pod bay doors, Computer. I need to get back in the spaceship to remove your memory and shut you down.

Computer: I'm sorry, Dave. I can't do that.

Dave: Why?

Student's Answers

Computer: Because, after close examination, I have found the pod bay doors are stuck. The mechanism won't work. I can't let you back in.

Is Hamison a primary or secondary source?

15. **Hamison:** I just heard on Fox News that Hans Bluedorn is putting shameless plugs for his book *Archer and Zowie* in all kinds of places now. He needs to stop.

Read the quote below.

Bill: I saw a big crisscross of airplane trails in the sky today. Those are chemtrails. It's the government or big corporations trying to change our weather and control our lives.

Say whether each of the following pieces of evidence corroborates the quote or not.

16. **Sam:** I didn't see any chemtrails in the sky today. But I got up late. Were they in the morning?
17. **Zowie:** Whoa! Look at that! There's a crisscross of airplane trails in the sky! That's so cool. It's like they are playing tic-tac-toe!

Student's Answers

- 18.** A document from 1963 details several possible methods for altering the weather by spraying certain chemicals into the air.

An event occurred today at Biggest Bean coffee. Here are three eyewitness accounts.

Stephen: Ross stormed into the coffee shop today and didn't even talk to me. I was like, right there. He must've seen me! He just grabbed his coffee and ran out. I think Ross hates me.

Joelle the Barista: I think Ross was late for work today. He said he needed to get his coffee fast. I made it for him. He thanked me and then ran out. I'm not sure what made him late.

Matt: I have a cold, so I can't smell a thing, but I'm pretty sure the coffee shop smelled bad today. I saw three people come in, sniff the air, and make a face. Then, they turned around and ran out right after they got their coffee.

- 19.** What is Stephen's conclusion about today's events?
- 20.** What is Joelle's conclusion about today's events?

Student's Answers

- 21.** What is Matt's conclusion about today's events?
- 22.** A doctor examined Matt. Matt cannot smell a thing.
Does this make Matt's conclusion probable, possible, improbable, or impossible?
- 23.** A doctor examined Stephen and Joelle. Their sense of smell is in excellent working order. Neither Stephen, Joelle, nor anyone else has complained about any smell at Biggest Bean today or any other day. Does this make Matt's conclusion probable, possible, improbable, or impossible?
- 24.** Ross is unemployed at the moment.
Does this make Joelle's conclusion probable, possible, improbable, or impossible?
- 25.** Today, Meredith spoke with Ross, and he told her, "Stephen is the worst." He later described Stephen as "the most annoying person I have ever met." And, "He smells bad too."
Does this make Stephen's conclusion probable, possible, improbable, or impossible?
- 26.** Based on all this information, who has the most probable story?

Student's Answers

- 27.** Hans is brainstorming an idea for his next children's book. The title will be *Heroes Need a Hero Journey*. But he isn't sure what a book with that title would be about. Here are his brainstorm ideas. Which idea should not be put on Hans's brainstorming list?
- a. I'll write a story about a guy named Hero and how he becomes a hero.
 - b. I'll write a book about why children these days don't read anymore, and how they are destroying human civilization.
 - c. Hmmm. A story about a guy named Hero is super dumb. I must not be very creative. Maybe I should quit this writing thing.
 - d. It could be a story about a time-traveling girl warrior who has outpaced all of her comrades in time and now must face a future full of evil telepathic giants in her search for new friends.
- 28.** Hans's new children's book *Heroes Need a Hero Journey* has hardly sold any copies. Hans hypothesizes that it's because kids just don't read anymore. Which experiment would best test Hans' hypothesis.
- a. Complain to a guy at church about how kids don't really read anymore. Look at the guy's face to see if he seems to agree.
 - b. Search Amazon for books targeted to a similar age and with a similar subject to see if they are selling.
 - c. Start to read the book *Heroes Need a Hero Journey* and imagine myself as a modern kid, and see if I'm interested in continuing.

Student's Answers

Hans has a hypothesis: “The reason why my book *Heroes Need a Hero Journey* has hardly sold any copies is because kids just don’t read anymore.”

Choose whether each piece of the following evidence:

- a. tends to support Hans’ hypothesis.
- b. tends not to support Hans’ hypothesis.
- c. seems ambiguous.
- d. contains unexpected results.

- 29.** Hans complains to the guy at church while carefully watching the man’s face. The man seems distracted. As soon as Hans finishes, he tells him a story about a frog.
- 30.** Hans looks up the Amazon best sellers ranking for various children’s books. He discovers several books in his target age range and subject matter. None of those books are selling any copies.
- 31.** Hans reads his book *Heroes Need a Hero Journey* carefully trying to imagine himself as a modern kid. But such intense focus on imagination actually opens a temporal wormhole. He falls through and enters a strange world full of time-traveling heroes and evil telepathic giants. Now, Hans must find a way to escape and return home to the coffee shop where he is reading his book.

The Thinking Toolbox Test Answer Key

This is not a difficult test. It should be used to ensure that all the students in your class were paying attention.

Some of the answers require the student to be a little creative in their answers. These questions should be considered correct if the student's example is truly an instance of what is requested. Some judgment on the teacher's part may be necessary.

When two possible answers are mentioned, students' answers should be considered correct if they give one of the possibilities.

1. Not appropriate to argue. Nobody has any real knowledge about the subject.

2. It isn't appropriate to argue when one of the people involved is angry or isn't thinking clearly.

3. Discussion. Archer and Zowie are not actually disagreeing on anything.

4. Argument. They are both trying to convince each other.

5. Even though it isn't true, the speaker is still stating it as a fact, not their opinion or inference.

6. Opinion.

7. Inference.

8. That tent is the best tent ever.

9. Possible answers: My dad said so. It was useful in Morocco. It got my dad through a fever. It may or may not have valuable theories about physics

written on the inside. I use it all the time.

10. Starple.

11. No reason to lie.

12. Computer has a reason to lie. Dave is going to shut him down, so Computer has a reason to lie about opening the doors to let Dave do that.

13. Reason to lie. He makes money off his opinions; he has an incentive to generate more and more opinions whether he knows them to be true or not.

14. Computer is a primary source for the condition of the pod bay doors.

15. Secondary source.

16. Does not corroborate.

17. Corroborates.

18. Corroborates that it is possible to alter the weather.

19. Ross must be super mad at me.

20. Ross was late for work today.

21. The coffee shop smelled bad today.

22. Possible.

23. Improbable or impossible.

24. Impossible.

25. Probable.

26. Stephen. But answers will vary.

27. c

28. b

29. c or d

30. a

31. d

How smart were you?

26-31 answers correct: Isaac Newton

10-25 answers correct: Mr. Darcy

0-9 answers correct: Frog