

Answers: Logical Fallacies Practice Quiz

ENGLISH 1102 / 03, 07 & 10 *œ* KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY *œ* FALL 2005 *œ* MR. HAGIN

1. Rap and hip-hop artists have low moral standards.

BEST ANSWER

STEREOTYPE: This statement groups these musicians together without appreciating their individuality (or their differences from those artists who may live renegade lifestyles). Sure, many entertainers set bad moral examples, but many of your favorite artists are devoted parents, highly educated citizens, and even ordained ministers.

ALTERNATE ANSWER:

OVERGENERALIZATION: A stereotype is a kind of overgeneralization. Be sure to identify the problem more specifically to receive full credit on the final exam.

2. We all know how great Kennesaw State University is. Since I am a KSU student, then I must be great too!

BEST ANSWER

DIVISION: A great whole does not necessarily mean that every part is great as well. This student could be the worst student on campus, both in terms of grades and personality. He might be soiling KSU's reputation, so he cannot claim to be great just because he attends a great school.

The Unabomber taught math at my alma mater, the University of Michigan. Just because this school is annually ranked in the top 20 in most academic category does not make Ted Kaczynski a "great person" too.

ALTERNATE ANSWER:

- ▶ I can also accept **OVERSIMPLIFIED CAUSE/ONLY REASON** because this student does not seem to be able to separate good parts from bad.
- ▶ **STEREOTYPING** also occurs because he assumes the qualities of others pertain to himself.
- ▶ A **HASTY GENERALIZATION** occurs because he jumps to a poor conclusion about himself based on an assumption about his school.
- ▶ Also, an **OVERGENERALIZATION** exists here because he combines qualities of others together to make a statement about himself, regardless of his own impact on the school's quality.

NOTE: A **COMPOSITION** fallacy is the opposite of the **division** fallacy. If you selected this answer, your thinking went down the right road, but you were driving in the wrong lane.

3. If we can send a man to the moon and communicate with him while he is there, then surely we can learn to communicate better with one another here in our own country.

 **BEST ANSWER**

FALSE ANALOGY: This statement assumes that space communication technology is analogous to interpersonal communication. NASA must have clear communication channels to its astronauts to ensure their survival and success; however, the skills necessary for a husband and wife to settle a dispute are quite different than the skills needed to pilot a spacecraft. The astronauts and the people at NASA are all scientists and trained professionals who share the same goals, and thereby automatically receptive to the communications from the other. Any two married people may not share the same goals, which can complicate their communication with each other.

ALTERNATE ANSWER:

OVERGENERALIZATION: This answer misses the main problem (**false analogy**) but recognizes that the two types of communication are being forced together through the false analogy. Recognizing the faulty analogy, however, is more important.

4. Ford is an American-made car. I owned a Ford, and it broke down all the time. American-made cars are not very good.

 **BEST ANSWER**

HASTY GENERALIZATION: This car owner jumps to conclusions about all American cars. All American-made cars are not Fords, so he cannot assume that one bad Ford makes all Fords bad vehicles, and certainly not all US models either. There is a lemon in every batch, so how does this person know that her car is a representative sample of the other models? If the driver were to seek additional evidence that suggests that her model is poorly designed or built, then she can be more confident that her conclusion is valid. If *Consumer Reports* ranks her car last in quality, and if the dealership is filled with hundreds of repairs on this model, then she knows that maybe Ford Motor Company has to make better cars before she decides to buy another. This customer has a right to be angry, and also the right to legal recompense, but **hasty generalizations** will not win her any arguments in court.

ALTERNATE ANSWER:

An **OVERGENERALIZATION** also occurs because the driver places equal blame on other "American-made" cars, such as General Motors, Chrysler, and Jeep. Her bigger problem here, however, is jumping to conclusions in the first place.

5. Mary Anne Warren, a pro-life advocate, once used this analysis in an anti-abortion argument:

- “1) It is wrong to kill innocent human beings.
- 2) Fetuses are innocent human beings.
- 3) Therefore, it is wrong to kill fetuses.”

 **CAUTION!**

The following explanation does not imply that a pro-life position is invalid. Rather, the specific diction of the premises is logically problematic.

 **BEST ANSWER**

EQUIVOCATION: The words “innocent” and “human being” are being used two different ways in this **sylogism** (three-step argument). Sure, all fetuses are *innocent* because they have never had an opportunity to commit a wrongdoing; however, older children (and adults) are responsible for making intelligent choices. All fetuses are innocent, but all adults are not, since they must often achieve this status through conscious behavior. Adults and fetuses can be innocent, but in two very different ways.

Also, what exactly is a “human being”? Sure, fetuses are human and will one day grow to become a child born into the world, but are fetuses equal to full-grown humans? The term may be used two different ways, based on slippery definitions. A sprout is not an oak tree, and an egg is not a chicken. The law treats children differently based on their more limited cognitive abilities. Therefore, why should a fetus be equated with an adult if born children follow different expectations and guidelines? Is it fully human?

ALTERNATE ANSWER:

- ▶ To assume that a fetus has equal status to a fully developed human is **DISTORTION**. If they are equal in every way, then should fetuses be given driver’s licenses and voting rights (and adults should crawl into the fetal position 24-hour a day)? Most would agree that we should always protect human life at all stages of development, but we should recognize the differences in these steps of life as well.
- ▶ Usually, fetuses are referred to as “babies” in these emotionally charged arguments, which further distorts it through the use of **LOADED LANGUAGE**.
- ▶ Using words like “innocent” and “human” appeals to people’s emotions, generating an **APPEAL TO PITY** (or other emotional appeals).
- ▶ These terms are not completely interchangeable, therefore creating a **FALSE ANALOGY** when placed in the syllogism.
- ▶ Since selected facts favorable to the arguer are used, one could detect **SLANTING**, **SIMPLE SPEECH**, and an **OVERSIMPLIFIED CAUSE** at work here too. The issue is far too complex to boil it down to simple, sweeping statements. Sometimes, abortions are necessary to save the mother’s life or to save the other, healthier twin. Doctors are charged with the Hippocratic Oath, which demands that they do everything possible to save human life, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

NOTE: The argument is NOT an example of a **non sequitur** because the conclusion is valid (the premises, however, are presented with bias).

6. Our school football team had a winning record this year because the coach introduced a strict weight-training program for his players last summer. Before this program, we had ten consecutive losing seasons.

 **BEST ANSWER**

ONLY REASON: The speaker assumes that the weight-training program has been the only (or the main) reason for the team's dramatic turnaround. This statement leaves out other possible reasons for improvement, such as better players, more experience, easier schedule, etc.

ALTERNATE ANSWER:

By assuming that only one cause is responsible without any proof, the reason could indeed be found to be false, yielding a **FALSE CAUSE FALLACY**.

7. This is from an advertisement for the Apple Computer Corporation: ". . . [I]f you ask [your children] which personal computer they're using, chances are they'll say an Apple II. It's the leading computer in education. And one of the most popular computers in the larger world. Nearly 3,000,000 Apple IIs are helping people in virtually every field of human endeavor."

 **BEST ANSWER**

BANDWAGON: This is a classic bandwagon appeal in an advertising campaign. Just because Apple has popularity does not mean that they ensure quality. In the 1980's, Apple Macintosh computers became the standard in schools because that was their target audience. Therefore, more children had experience using Apples than PC's because of marketing strategy, not due to quality. The business world, however, almost exclusively used IBM-based technology (except in the graphic arts where Macs were more suited). Notice that Dell, Compaq, and Gateway can make similar claims today — because they are popular, they must be better.

 **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

Rules for Writers contains many references to logical fallacies. Refer to this source to read alternate descriptions of these terms.

 Refer to **Hacker: 47a (358-366)**

 **ONLINE SUPPORT**

Visit dozens of websites that can assist you with logical fallacies.

▶ <http://ksuweb.kennesaw.edu/~shagin/CRC>