

Let Me Help You

# Sell Your Homework

12-Week Course of Study:

*24 Ways to Write  
What You Think*

*Lesson 2*

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR  
PRAISE ARTICLES  
JUDGMENTAL ARTICLES  
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT LIBEL?**

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# A LETTER TO THE EDITOR WHEN YOU WANT TO REACT

**Editors, like new mothers, are delighted when you say something, anything, about their product.**

**But unlike** the gushing mother with the unusually ugly baby, editors aren't interested in non-compliments like "My, that is a baby!"

They want you to call a spade a spade.

Do you agree?

Do you disagree?

Say so.

One magazine editor I worked with was delighted when 800 people canceled their subscriptions. They had read our material and they reacted.

He knew another 800 readers would quickly take their place—and he was right. Many readers like it when a magazine takes a stand even if it is a reactionary one.

**But editors** are happy when you take issue with what they print because it shows them that someone out there is

reading and thinking about what they publish.

Are you?

If you're not, you should be.

Your daily newspaper is full of controversial material. When a judge makes a decision, when a politician speaks, when a union strikes, when a teacher spansks a child—there are thousands of opportunities for people—for YOU—to react.

You can write about a specific article you like or don't like: Remember, get right to the point.

Editors are protective of every line of space.

**Editor:**

**I commend you for your editorial dealing with euthanasia and abortion.**

Or you can write about an advertisement:

**Editor:**

**I am writing concerning the adver-**

tising supplement in a recent issue that dealt with . . .

You can write about the impression you received when you read a specific article:

**Editor:**

**I believe that the general tone of your columnist's article on Montebello puts down the residents of this suburb.**

You can write for yourself—speaking in your own behalf:

**Editor:**

**I sincerely appreciated the insight of your editorial dealing with our governor's remarks concerning the terminally ill.**

Or you can speak for your neighborhood, city or state:

**Editor:**

**The entire city deeply regrets the loss of life of the teen-ager in the high-speed chase of the motorcyclist.**

You may take issue with commonly accepted beliefs:

**Editor:**

**With the help of the ever-fearful, we have been led to believe that the Soviet military is a highly developed machine and a constant threat. Some have been brainwashed into believing that KGB agents have pene-**

**trated every level of government. The biggest joke is that some actually believe we could expect a Soviet invasion some day.**

And you may take issue with those who take issue:

**Editor:**

**In response to a letter in your editorial page from a professor at City College. . . .**

Or:

**Editor:**

**I must agree with the views expressed by Jerry Mendel in his letter on March 25.**

Or:

**Editor:**

**The guy who wrote you that the biggest joke is that we can expect a Soviet invasion some day has not been thinking clearly. True, they pose no threat today. But we have no guarantee about some tomorrow.**

So, it's a no-holds-barred kind of arena for what you have to say. Editors ask only that you follow guidelines.

To help them, you should type or print your letter.

And you must sign it. Unsigned letters will not be published. You should even include your phone number in case they want to verify that you your-

self actually wrote it.

**Maximum length** should be 250 words. Short letters, obviously, will be given preference.

And be prepared to have the letter edited. Editors won't change what you have to say. They'll only clarify how you say it. If you've misspelled words, they'll correct them. If your whole letter is one sentence, they'll make it more readable. They will help your letter come across with its best foot forward.

**But your letter** must have a best foot. You can read an article and react from gut level. Many writers of letters to editors do no more than that. And there's nothing wrong with that.

If that's going to be your method, then you simply need to follow the basic structure of writing such a letter:

**1) In your first paragraph** identify your topic.

If you are responding to an article, say so.

If you are responding to someone's letter, say so.

If you are giving your opinion about something that didn't even appear in the paper, say so.

**Editor:**

**I would like to call attention to "National Nursing Home Week" that begins Monday.**

**Editor:**

**May has been declared Older**

**Americans month. There are 25.5 million Americans 65 years of age or older—and America now has the richest talent pool of able older citizens that any nation has ever produced.**

**Editor:**

**I am a freshman at City College and the third runner-up in the Miss Our Town pageant. I am interested in entering the Miss Strawberry Festival Pageant. . . .**

**My sponsor's fee is \$150. If any area merchants or residents would be interested in contributing any amount as my sponsor, please contact me as soon as possible.**

**Editor:**

**If you want to see the prettiest thing in Ourtown, go downtown and look at the sunken garden by the First Colony Life Insurance Co. building in the 700 block of Main Street. It is pretty year-round, but this is the loveliest season.**

**2) In your second paragraph** present what you think:

**I agree with Mr. Rubin on one point:**

**Forced prayer does not belong in the public schools. But voluntary prayer does.**

**Or:**

**It is time to end the criticisms be-**

ing thrown at the president for decisions he has made. He has access to information not available to the public and should be allowed to call shots without the ignorant squealing.

Or:

I see little difference between the thinking of pornography readers and rapists.

Or:

I am again convinced by such contradictions that American society is very confused and has little understanding of “value.” Life is valuable.

Or:

It occurred to me while I watched the show that most people don’t know what to do if they think or know they have cancer.

Present what you think and then tell why you think it. Support it with facts from your own reasoning or from your research or from your own background. Like:

Historians have noted that every arms race throughout history has ended in a war.

Or:

The freedom-loving patriot, Patrick Henry, said: “The great object is that every man be armed . . . eve-

ryone who is able to have a gun.”

That great Virginian Thomas Jefferson promised: “No free man shall ever be disbarred the use of firearms within his own land.”

On the other hand, the ruthless national socialist, Adolph Hitler, declared: “The most foolish mistake we could possibly make would be to allow the subject races to carry arms. History shows that all conquerors who have allowed their subjects to carry arms have prepared their own downfall by so doing.”

Or expand on what you have written:

On the other hand, this decision by the court causes a modern day dilemma. If the death of Emily Carter is a “reckless disregard for human life,” then what are we going to call the deaths of more than 1 million babies in America each year? How does our legal system dare to be so inconsistent?

Or:

But, as a group, people over 65 are subject to many personal and environmental stresses—physical and mental impairment, loss of spouse and peers, lowered income and lessened productivity. Some are limited in major activity because of chronic ill-health. The narrowing of personal relations creates loneliness, thus elderly persons often experience a sense of diminished social status and a

**drop in self-esteem.**

Or continue your narrative:

**My mother-in-law was admitted to the Westminster-Canterbury Health Care Center in very poor health last year. All the many days and weeks of loving care she received restored her physical health and she is now 91 years old.**

Or:

**Among a few letters from relatives, I also received a Christmas card and a box of candy from people I did not know. I spent the weekend worrying over these mysterious names, but could not place a name with a face.**

**The scenario continued into the next week. Each mail call brought more cards and presents from fellow Ourtowners. My shipmates, although quite amazed, could not resist some lighthearted teasing.**

**The mystery was solved about a week before Christmas. One card explained that my name and address had appeared in the daily newspaper because I was a serviceman. They, like others, wanted to show their appreciation by bringing a little of Ourtown to me in Alaska.**

**3) End with a strong conclusion. It may be advice to others:**

**Please don't walk or ride bikes on the edge of icy highways. Don't**

**stand around a stalled or wrecked car. Anticipate what could happen when an unsuspecting motorist suddenly comes on the scene.**

It may be a salute:

**We wish to convey a bravo to the maestro and the fine musicians, along with a request for more of the same.**

It may end with a lament:

**It must be disheartening to be truly thankful but to have no one to thank.**

It may end with a warning:

**Beware! This World Court talk is World Government mentality.**

End with an analysis:

**The question is not one of justice, but upbringing and sovereignty. Who has the right to be the Daddy? Modern statisticians say that all belongs to Caesar, even your children. Mothers and fathers are allowed to be such only as long as they follow the state's program.**

**Dr. Smith and others are not quibbling over minor issues, but over the principle of the sanctity of the family. He and others refuse to give their children to Moloch—even if he does control the education department of our state.**

You may enjoin the editor to do his job better:

**Would you care to try again and be realistic and truthful in your report on Montebello, or do you prefer lopsided, stilted journalism as your label?**

Or:

**Do your duty, Mr. Editor. Give us area women the facts about which doctors are performing the abortions.**

Or:

**I would hope that in the future you would report the facts more accurately. I believe you owe it to your readers.**

Or summarize what you've just written about:

**These facts show us that the governor is in far better shape than four years ago. Responsible and self-respecting voters will not fail to re-elect him and to elect a far more conservative Congress.**

Or give a call to action:

**May we have sense enough to stop the "progress" our honorable senator mentioned lest today's abortionists become tomorrow's unwanted non-persons.**

Or: preach

**We must be careful not to project our own deficiencies upon God. The ultimate idolatry is to deify our own prejudices and the ultimate blasphemy is to try to deny to God the freedom to do what we do not like or understand.**

**Again, there is absolutely nothing wrong with reacting to an article from your own experience or background or understanding or gut reaction to an issue. But there is much to be said about sharpening your analytical skills so that you are able to cut through pre-tense and fog and soft-soap with a hot knife.**

It's important that you practice looking for evidence whenever someone says that white is white. Is he saying that because that is his opinion or is he supporting that with documentation? Is he giving facts or merely his interpretation? Does he have statistics? The statements of experts? Cases in point? Examples? Chapter and verse?

**What is his theme statement?** Some call it his controlling idea. It usually occurs near the second paragraph of the article or immediately after the introductory material of an article—if you are considering a feature article. And so many articles in newspapers these days are features. Television gives the news; newspapers give the background and often the reasoning behind the news.

If you want to write a really influential letter to an editor, learn to summarize the article you're reacting to.



What has it said?

**Where did** the writer get his information?

How clearly has he presented his opinion?

Where is he vague?

Where is he vulnerable?

Is all the evidence in?

Are his sources still current?

Are they credible?

(Just because a source has been a Secretary of Agriculture on a President's cabinet does not make him an authority on irrigating corn or feeding pigs or storing eggs.)

**Does the supporting material strengthen the case?**

Is the argument valid?

Are there logical fallacies?

Has any basic research been omitted?

Are there holes in the argument?

Good letters to the editor reflect good judgment, carefully weighed. You may agree with part of a news commentary and disagree with another part.

Say so.

And support what you say with as good an argument as you can offer. Other good thinkers will be measuring what you write.

Define your terms.

Illustrate your points.

Raise important questions.

Criticize superficial thinking, gaping assumptions and weak logic.

**But don't let all** of the above keep you from responding if you don't have

time to do your research and analysis. It's important that good men speak up—and good women.

This world has gotten by with too much because the good have not wanted to get involved.

People with principles have written off the unprincipled as beyond help. By so doing, they've permitted humanism to become the common philosophy of life.

**When salt** loses its savor, God says it is time to throw it out.

What do you think about the following article?

Write a "letter to the editor" about it:

**Group says death penalty is a 'premeditated killing'**

**RICHMOND (AP) - The death penalty, a "ritual of final revenge," should be abolished in Virginia and other states that allow it, a coalition opposed to capital punishment urged Thursday.**

**Since the U.S. Supreme Court allowed states to resume executions in 1977, "the murder rate has not declined . . . nor do citizens feel safer," David Hindman, chairman of Virginians against the Death Penalty, said at a news conference.**

**Hindman appeared with about a half-dozen other opponents of capital punishment, including Del. J. Samuel Glasscock, D-Suffolk, who was one of the witnesses at a Virginia execution.**

A state-imposed death sentence “is a killing; it is a premeditated killing,” Glasscock said.

“We should not use it unless it is absolutely effective,” he said, adding that capital punishment has not been proven effective in combating crime.

“It does not make us safer and it reduces our concern for humanity.”

The coalition chose the day designated by the President as a National Day of Prayer to urge that such punishments be abolished.

“There is no conclusive evidence that the death penalty deters crime,” Hindman said in a prepared statement. “There is some evidence that imposition of this sentence has contributed to the cycle of violence.

“The murderer creates victims. To his or her violence, the state adds violence by victimizing the criminal, the families, and the state employees who must execute the sentence,” he said.

Among those speaking at the news conference were Sheila Crowley of the Richmond branch of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, based in Philadelphia; Marie Deans of Victims’ Families for Reconciliation, an organization of the families of murder victims; the Rev. James C. Griffin, associate pastor of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart here and the Catholic chaplain at the State Penitentiary; Rabbi Beverly J. Lerner of Richmond; and Judy Goldberg of

the Virginia office of the American Civil Liberties Union.

That article contains a logical fallacy. Find it and include it in your letter to the editor.

Don’t try to cover the world with one letter. You’ve got one shot. Aim for the vitals. Write simply, using words everyone understands.

Don’t write more than 250 words—generally.

Do show that you’ve done your homework and that you think.

Don’t react hysterically.

Do write while the issue is in the news.

Do comb carefully through your letter to make sure that every word is spelled correctly. Paragraph frequently. Editors like the white space indents bring to a newspaper column.

Do be courteous.

Remember you are a Berean, one who tests by the Word of God what people say and do. Although we cannot insist that the unsaved live by biblical principles, we can expose them to what the Bible and the Judeo-Christian ethic say that is relative to the point.

What do you think about this next one? Write a “letter to the editor.”

Bible that  
resembles  
novel issued

VIRGINIA BEACH (AP) – Trying

to dispel the idea that Bible reading is just for “Moral Majority-types, goody-two-shoes or fanatics,” the Christian Broadcasting Network is issuing a new version that resembles a novel.

“Basically, the Bible doesn’t have a very good image in America,” said Jeff Jarrett, marketing manager for the Virginia Beach-based religious network. “Some people think it is irrelevant or boring, and we want to change that perception.”

CBN’s answer is “The Book” – a paraphrased, modern-English version of the Bible that costs \$9.95 and is debuting this week for test marketing in southeastern Virginia, Milwaukee, Nashville, Providence, R.I., Portland, Ore., Kansas City and Oklahoma City.

The network plans to launch a multimillion-dollar ad campaign Saturday with billboards, bumper stickers, window decals and radio and television spots encouraging people in the seven test markets to “Read the Book.”

“The Book” will be sold in grocery stores, discount houses and drug stores, as well as Christian and general interest bookstores, Jarrett said.

In a recent letter to supporters, the Rev. M. G. “Pat” Robertson, founder of CBN, called efforts to market a new version of the world’s all-time best-selling book the “most crucial challenge CBN has ever faced.”

He asked supporters to send the

network \$100 or more to help finance the book’s promotional campaign.

CBN executives decided to market “The Book” after network polls showed that more than 100 million Americans do not read the Bible and do not think highly of people who do read it, Jarrett said.

Many of those polled disdained regular Bible readers as “conservative, Moral Majority-types, goody-two-shoes or fanatics,” he said.

One key to the potential appeal of “The Book” is that it is written in everyday language, Jarrett said.

For example, in “The Book,” I Corinthians chapter 12, verses 8-10, says of the Holy Spirit:

“He gives a word of special wisdom to some, and supernatural knowledge to others.

“He gives the gift of extraordinary faith to some, and to others the power to heal the sick or do other wonderful miracles.

“To some he gives the ability to prophesy and to others the ability to distinguish between spirits.

“Some can speak in different kinds of tongues and others are given the ability to interpret what was said.”

In the King James version of the Bible, the same verses read:

“For to one is given by the Spirit a word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge—by the same Spirit;

**“To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the Spirit;**

**“To another the working of miracles; to another prophesy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers (meaning diverse) kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.”**

Is CBN doing 100 million Americans a service by printing this “new version that resembles a novel?”

Would you send in \$100 to help finance the promotional campaign?

\$10?

\$1?

Comment on this next one in a “letter to the editor”:

## **Crowd watches as woman killed**

**NEWPORT NEWS (AP) – A crowd of about 20 people looked on as a deaf woman was fatally stabbed on a busy city street, but “nobody moved to help” her, says a truck driver who passed by and tried to break up the attack.**

**“I just couldn’t understand why people were just standing around and looking,” James Greene said Wednesday, a day after 41-year-old Virginia Price died with what police said were about 20 stab wounds.**

**A 39-year-old construction worker, James L. Forbes, was arrested**

**Wednesday and charged with murder. He was being held without bond in the Newport News city jail, police said.**

**Greene said he was passing through the city’s East End, an area of urban renewal projects and middle-class neighborhoods, at about 3 p.m. when he spotted the struggle from a distance.**

**“It looked like they were wrestling,” said Greene, a veteran of the Army Special Forces. “It looked like he was hitting her with his fists, but then I saw the knife. That’s when I parked my truck.”**

**Greene, who is from nearby Hampton, said he grabbed an ax handle from the truck, ran to the pair and pounded the attacker squarely in the back near the neck.**

**“He just stood straight up like a grizzly bear. I thought I’d killed him the way I hit him, but it didn’t seem to faze him one bit,” said Greene.**

**Then, he said, the attacker reached into his coat pocket.**

**“I tried my best but I thought he was going for a gun so I just backed off of him. I don’t mind helping people, but I don’t want to get shot in the process,” Greene said.**

**The attacker backed off and two or three other men chased him, but he got away, Greene said. Another man called police.**

**“Nobody moved to help the woman,” he added.**

**Police said they have interviewed about 10 witnesses but have been**

unable to identify the others, several of whom were children.

“I didn’t sleep well last night,” said Thomas Parker, the man who summoned the police. “I thought, maybe, I could have done more than I did.”

“It happens frequently that people stand around, watch a crime and don’t intervene,” said Sgt. James Ledford, a police spokesman.

Police declined to comment on what prompted the attack or whether drugs played any role.

Several psychologists attempted to explain the phenomenon of the crowd’s passivity, which Dr. Bruce Holberg said it is known among sociologists as “Bystander Intervention Problem.”

“There’s a diffusion of responsibility in a crowd,” Holberg said. “The larger the group, the less likely anyone will be to intervene.”

Some witnesses struggle with themselves for having turned their backs, said Dr. William Reiss, al-

though the reactions can “range from passive detachment – forgetting it in the morning – to finding events so distasteful that the person represses it.”

“People are genuinely frightened when they witness something like that. That’s the feeling I would have,” said Dr. Joseph Laasen, director of Riverside Hospital’s mental health center.

One East End resident, who asked not to be identified, said, “I can understand why they (the bystanders) were afraid. You don’t fool around with junkies. They can hurt you.”

Should Thomas Parker have done more than he did?

Was the East End resident right to say that “you don’t fool around with junkies?”

What would YOU have done?

Write what YOU think!

# AN ARTICLE OF PRAISE WHEN YOU WANT TO CONGRATULATE

## Remember cabbage patch dolls?

The style of the following editorial from the “Indianapolis Star” of Indianapolis, Indiana, shows a writer at work who has chosen his words.

He likes hard g’s and hard c’s and k’s. He uses “agog” and “gaggle,” “kingdom” and “captive,” “uncomely” and “freckled and “bonkers.”

His sentences are generally short.

The longer ones sport participles, adverb and adjective clauses, and infinitive phrases.

He’s given to parallelism: “freckled and pudgy of cheek.”

He likes words in series.

He says they “do nothing . . . They don’t . . . They don’t . . . They don’t . . . They don’t even . . .”

And he follows that with “The dolls just sit there.”

Watch him at work:

**Merchants are agog and baffled by the Cabbage Patch kids, a gaggle of**

homely little dolls that have stormed the kingdom of children and taken it captive.

**They are a wondrously uncomely bunch – floppy of limb, freckled and pudgy of cheek and with hair, when it’s there, that would drive a Hollywood stylist bonkers.**

**Shorn of electronic pretense, they do nothing.**

**They don’t cry.**

**They don’t walk.**

**They don’t wet their pants.**

**They don’t even have a change of clothing much less the wardrobes-for-every-occasion that are demanded by many of their more elegant peers.**

**The dolls just sit there, waiting for someone to claim them, to cuddle their soft, graceless shapes, to give and receive love.**

**After a decade of producing slick, brittle beauties, toymakers have once again remembered what it was like to be a child.**

We don’t often find hard-bitten edi-

tors writing notes of praise to merchants in the community, but it can and occasionally does happen.

On the next three pages are articles from the daily newspaper that should afford you an opportunity to render praise.

Choose two of them and write editorials comparable to the one above.

Permissive schools with low standards have been the bane of many communities. Now here we have a turn-around.

Speak up if you think what they're doing here is praiseworthy.

Be specific.

Be colorful.

Get to the point with an initial retelling of the situation. Then say what you think is good and worthy of community notice.

Summarize your viewpoint with a good positive closing statement of praise.

## School promotion standards toughened

**TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) – Two years after school officials were accused of racism for imposing a strict student promotion policy, the standards have been toughened even further – but more and more black students are now making the grade.**

**“We’re operating on the posture that every student can learn, and we’re going about the business of trying to see that this is done,” said**

**superintendent Thomas E. Ingram, whose school system includes 10,600 students.**

**The standards, which apply to grades 1-8, established specific criteria, such as scores on standardized tests and reading levels, that the students had to meet to be promoted.**

**After the standards were imposed the first year, 1,071 pupils, most of them black, were left behind.**

**Distressed black parents and black leaders protested, some staging an 18-day sit-in at the school board’s office.**

**The protesters left after the school board agreed to meet with interested parents and to re-evaluate any student whose parent requested it. Six students were promoted after these conferences.**

**Some parents also filed suit claiming that 23.6 percent of the black children in grades 1-5 were denied promotion, while only 5.8 percent of white children were held back.**

**But the courts – including the 11<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals last January – ruled in favor of the school system, saying that adequate notice was given and that most of the students involved were so far behind in their studies that a few more months’ notice would not have mattered.**

**The standards were made slightly tougher for the next year, as both the tests and subject matter were made more difficult. Despite that, Ingram said, the number of those retained was cut to 556, “and we’re hoping to**

improve on that this spring.”

Ingram said the improvement is based on the tougher standards and an after-hours tutoring program in which teachers’ overtime is paid for by contributions from individuals, churches and community groups.

Lest you have what we call “writer resistance,” remember, writing your opinion forces you to think through an issue and then to come up with a reasonable solution.

You may then transform that into a column or a letter to the editor. But the analysis will do you well from a craftsmanship point of view.

Now, we have another move to applaud. People want to hold politicians accountable for what they say. Surely you have a word of praise for a fantasy like this:

## Libel law could bar candidates from office

From AP reports

**SACRAMENTO, Calif. - Lying about one’s political rival may soon be risky business in California, where voters will decide in a few weeks on a “political death penalty” amendment that would bar from public office any candidates who libel their opponents.**

**The measure is Proposition 70,**

**formally titled the “Campaign Libel Law Proposition” on the statewide June 5 presidential primary ballot.**

**Its principal provisions would amend the state constitution to disqualify from any federal, state or local office any person who defeated a campaign opponent by committing libel or slander.**

**Opponents don’t see the measure as that straightforward or effective.**

**A court must determine that the libelous or slanderous statement in question was “a major contributing cause” of the defeat of the losing candidate.**

**These next people will be dear to the heart of every conservative.**

As you tell their story, use third person (he, she, it, they). Many people think opinion articles should use second person (you) or first person (we, us, our). Rarely will you need to use “I” because the whole article expresses your opinion.

State what you have to say as fact.

Don’t weaken it by writing, “I think.”

**Candidates should be held accountable for the things they say in public.**

**I think candidates should be held accountable for the things they say in public.**

The first statement is far stronger.



Occasionally you may feel the need to speak for the community, as in: “We shouldn’t let this opportunity slip past us. These people deserve all the help we can give them.”

If you were to say, “You go take them some blankets and some hot coffee,” the reader would more than likely throw the words back in your teeth with a “Let’s see you go do it first.”

*Dines on tortillas, peanut butter*

## Family refuses welfare, pitches tent

**CHICAGO (AP) - Bill Grove and his wife and young son are broke, but they woke up Wednesday morning with the kind of view of Lake Michigan and the city’s magnificent skyline that costs some of their neighbors \$1,000 a month.**

**They also were cold and wet—but proud.**

**The family, with nowhere else to go, pitched a tent in a public park that allows fishermen to set up shelters. Just to make it legal, Grove tosses a baitless fishing line into the lake every few hours.**

**“I’ve never been on welfare, and I’m not about to be now,” said Grove, 25, who is out of work. While their 5-by-6-foot canvas home has its drawbacks, he said, “This beats sitting down there in the Department of Human Services.”**

**Grove, his wife Barbara, and their**

**9-year-old son Sid lunched Tuesday on tortillas and peanut butter. Supper was a can of pork and beans.**

**“We were cold and starved last night,” Grove said, “but today looks like a better story.”**

**He was referring to donations of money and food and offers of apartments and jobs from people who read about the family’s plight in the Chicago Tribune.**

**“People just come by, many of them won’t even say their name or anything, and offer to help,” Grove said.**

**He said the family had received “a few hundred dollars . . . and more food than we can eat in a week – and it’s still coming.**

**“I never expected it. I didn’t ask for it. But I’m grateful,” he said, adding that his wife and son were looking forward to spending Wednesday night in “a cheap hotel where we can shower and have a hot meal—the first since Sunday.”**

**For two days, the family had camped just beyond the waves of Montrose Harbor on the city’s North Side. Two nights before that, he said, they stayed at a camp ground near Kankakee and the Indiana border.**

**Until last week, the family stayed with relatives. Grove said they moved out when his brother-in-law became ill.**

**“I called the Park District, and they said as long as we were fishing and weren’t permanent, we could**

pitch our tent,” he said.

**In order to “go by the book,” Grove was throwing his line out where trout and salmon are biting. No luck though; fish do not usually bite on empty hooks.**

**Grove, a former quality control worker, has been out of full-time work since June. He said his most recent part-time job was cutting Christmas trees in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.**

**He said he planned to take an apartment that had been offered in exchange for “a little work around the place,” and would consider the recent job offers, one of which was selling matches.**

**“There was never any doubt that everything would have worked out, regardless,” he said.**

**Which is why he couldn’t take seriously one of the family’s Wednesday visitors – a truck from the Department of Human Services that pulled up to offer help.**

**“I started laughing,” Grove said. “You know, if I would have called them to begin with, it would have taken four miles of paperwork and a week for them to find a place for us anyway.”**

**You don’t write an opinion column in five minutes. The serious writer must think and write and revise and think again. He should never be really content with his final product—although there just does come a time**

when the presses roll. Then, looking back over the printed piece, the writer judges what he could have done differently—or better—and educates himself in the process.

He must ask himself:

Have I written clearly?

Did I write what I wanted to say?

Is my first sentence provocative?

Is my structure sound?

Is my reasoning logical?

Have I struck a responsive chord in the reader?

Have I considered him to be a living, thinking person or have I merely written to a blank piece of paper?

**And, finally, have I made my point?**

No, there’s one more question that’s imperative to ask:

“Have I been brief?”

Nothing is less read than a long editorial.

But if it must be long, use some brighteners—some all-cap words, perhaps, or some dingbats—those black filled-in circles or squares printers call “bullets.” Let them set off several reasons or a succession of points you want to make.

Use the asterisk on your keyboard—or two dashes.

Indent, then put the asterisk, then space once or twice.

- Some bold face the first word or two of every third or fourth paragraph, being careful not to put a bold-faced word closer than three paragraphs from the end (in

newspaper writing). The secret is to put your cursor where you want the bullet to go.

- The computer automatically shoves your words to the right.
- Never use just one bullet. You must have two or more because you are emphasizing a series of points.
- Do put a line of space before and after your series of bullets.

**Some writers** use subheads—two or three centered words to break up the long columns. Word your subhead with the essential point of the section that will follow.

Here, again, if you can include a verb, the subhead will be more interesting. Some writers use a noun followed by a prepositional phrase as in “Head of the Class.”

Notice, the nouns are capitalized; the internal article and preposition are not. When the article (a, an, the) is the first word of the subhead (or title), it is capitalized, as in:

## The Way to Go

**Some put** each of a series of questions on a successive line as in column two on the previous page. It throws white space into the column and makes that section easy to read.

If you want to break up a series of points you are making, use what we call dingbats or bullets as I’ve already mentioned.

The computer recipe in Word is **format>bullets and numbering** and then you click on the design you want to use. Here are several points to remember:

The points you are making then stand out in the reader’s mind. They will also be easier for him to find if he wants to refer to them again.

Make copies of and use the chart on the next page to record your sales. Have a chart for each kind of article you write.

It can prove to the Internal Revenue Service, if those folks want to question your tax statement, that you are a professional writer and that your writing expenses are ones that you may legitimately deduct.

Make copies of this sheet to keep track of every article you write and send out.

ITEM                      DATE SENT                      PUBLICATION                      RESULT


# AN ARTICLE OF JUDGMENT WHEN YOU DON'T AGREE

**Righteous indignation is never passe.**

**The papers** are full of articles reporting about fools who have rushed in where they don't belong and of saints that have trod on toes as they have gone marching in.

Congress is perfectly capable of making an appropriation you violently disagree with. The Supreme Court may drive you wild with a judgment that legalizes something you cannot abide.

The IRS, your local water commission, teachers in your community school may all make decisions that go against your grain.

**Good! It's time to speak up.**

How do you do it?

You could do what Eugene Meyer did in the same situation. He bought the *Washington Post* newspaper in 1933.

Although he had had no newspaper experience of his own, he knew what he wanted to say and he knew what he wanted a newspaper to be. He gave new direction to his editorial page.

**“The newspaper's duty is to its readers and to the public at large, and not to the private interests of its owner.”**

He also believed:

**“The first mission of a newspaper is to tell the truth as nearly as the truth may be ascertained.”**

**He gave** his editorial staff freedom to range far and wide to comment on matters of genuine public interest.

He insisted that each writer must keep up-to-date because changing events throw new lights on preconceived notions.

His absolute was to tell the truth. His own thoughtful, well-researched, well-written editorial was to bring that truth to bear on the reader.

Eugene Meyer stated the opinion writer's mission.

But writers need a recipe for writing articles that stand in judgment and make government, institutions and individuals stand accountable for their words and actions.

**Try this method:**

First, you retell the situation that has caused your frenzy.

Then start putting your pins in, letting daylight and common sense clear the atmosphere.

Call a spade a spade.

But be careful not to libel anyone.

If someone has acted in public or on behalf of the public, the public has a right to stand in judgment.

Then end your opinion column with a short sentence that summarizes your viewpoint.

Look at this editorial—again on Cabbage Patch dolls—this one from the “Arizona Republic” newspaper out of Phoenix:

**Pardon us if we seem unmoved by the complaint of one Martin Branson, who was an adopted child, who says he and other adopted children are so offended and hurt by the Cabbage Patch dolls craze that only \$100 million will cure their hurt.**

**Branson has filed suit seeking the \$100 million damages for himself**

**and other adoptees and a permanent injunction against the maker of the Cabbage Patch Kids, Coleco Industries, from selling the dolls with adoption papers.**

**Adopted people are being held up to humiliation and ridicule by the Cabbage Patch dolls advertising, he claims.**

**It's curious how those of Branson's state of mind usually can be assuaged with money. Or maybe it's not so curious at all, since it costs him only a few bucks to file a suit that might net him some nuisance money at this expensive time of the year.**

**Branson's hurt would have more credibility if, say, he also would file suit to prevent publishers of children's books from ever again repeating the tale that storks bring babies.**

**Being brought into this world dangling from the beak of a stork is what you call real humiliation.**

**The writer identifies the problem,** indicating at the outset what his tone will be throughout. He is unmoved, he says. Then in the first two paragraphs he simply tells about the situation that has aroused his indignation.

In paragraph three, he quotes the plaintiff by using an indirect quote (no quotation marks).

In paragraph four, he makes his first real judgment. What he says strikes right to the heart of the suit and attributes to the plaintiff something more

than grief and hurt because “all adopted people have been humiliated.”

**Then the writer turns away** from the immediate case to suggest an alternative suit which, by inference, is equally ridiculous.

In seven sentences he has driven his stake. The reader knows his opinion exactly. There’s white heat here. And art!

**The writer has under-written**, meaning he has not used heart-wrenching words to rouse you to fury. He’s written factually and simply and without apology. The style is conversational, particularly when he writes, “It’s curious . . . Or maybe it’s not so curious at all, since . . . .”

Pick two of the three articles that follow and pin someone or something to the wall.

**Don’t forget** to outline your article before you start to write. Have three sections: the beginning, the middle and the end.

Outlining helps you organize your thoughts before you begin to express them.

You may wish to put several sub-points under each main one.

And don’t forget to use quotation marks if you take words from the given article.

You don’t need quotes if you summarize in your own words.

Do be careful not to slander anyone with whom you disagree. The offended party can take you to court and strip you of your life’s savings.

## Woman may lose home because she couldn’t read

**CARROLLTON, Texas (AP) – An illiterate widow whose ramshackle home came to be worth more than \$500,000 as this suburb grew now stands to lose her property because of an 18-year-old agreement with a contractor who said she didn’t pay him promptly for fixing a leaky roof.**

**Callie Wallace, 75, who cannot read or write, says she barely remembers signing the document in 1966 that deeded over her house and five acres of land to the contractor Virgil Whatley.**

**Whatley maintains that Mrs. Wallace knew what she was doing and says he did nothing wrong. He plans to sell the land for \$600,000.**

**“If the Lord could come down here and speak, He’d say I’ve been cheated,” said Mrs. Wallace, a tiny woman with thick horn-rimmed glasses. “There’s always somebody messin’ with colored people. Like buzzards they always want something for nothing.”**

**In March 1965, she hired Whatley to fix her roof and signed what he said was a contract requiring her to pay the \$3,500 bill within 90 days.**

**According to Jeff Shore, her attorney, Mrs. Wallace made payments to a bank, but when she didn’t pay the total on time,**

Whatley returned the next year with another man and falsely claimed that the bank would foreclose on her property if she didn't sign a contract calling for \$45-a-month payments to him.

She said that over the years, she has paid Whatley \$9,000 in \$45 payments that she thought were for the repairs. Whatley said the payments were for rent, and said he hadn't misrepresented the contract.

Shore filed suit Friday in Dallas County District Court, contending Whatley cheated her out of the property. He said the lawsuit should keep the unidentified buyer from closing on the \$600,000 sale.

"You have to realize that this was an illiterate, black woman . . . and two white men come to her house and say they (the bank) will foreclose on her if she doesn't sign the paper and then tell her not to tell anyone," Shore said.

And/or write what you think about this one:

## Town bans TV viewing for a month

FARMINGTON, Conn. (AP) – School board Chairman William Colton is a football fan, but he blacked out the playoffs at his

house Sunday because of a town-wide resolution to turn off TV sets for a month.

Colton and other residents in this affluent Hartford suburb of 16,700 people are being urged to join a "TV Turnoff" campaign promoted by the Farmington Library Council through public schools.

Library council President Nancy Desalvo said the month-long campaign was started Tuesday to encourage alternatives to TV viewing – such as games, hobbies, reading and old-fashioned conversation.

The first big test came Sunday when armchair quarterbacks faced the prospect of skipping the National Football League playoffs determining the two Super Bowl teams.

"I am an avid football fan. It's the only sport I really follow," said Colton. "But I will not watch them (the playoffs). I will listen to them on the radio, though. I don't think that will violate the spirit" of the ban.

Promoters of the turnoff campaign say their long-term goal is more selectivity and less habit about what TV viewers watch.

But resident Salvatore Faiella, whose household endorses the turn-off, selectively turned on his television set as kickoff time approached for the Washington Redskins vs. the San Francisco 49ers.

"People are still going to watch



the news and their one or two favorite programs,” Faiella said. “It’s changed me to the respect that I’m conscious of what I’m watching. Now, I look at the TV Guide and if there’s a real good program I want to watch, I’m going to watch it.”

Stacey Rosen, 14, said her classmates had mixed feelings about the ban. “To most kids, it’s kind of half and half. But there are more kids that will watch TV” this month, she said.

“I haven’t made any stand on it,” said Stella Neves, whose two daughters are the only kids on the block without cable TV. “People have a right to watch as much television as they choose, but if they’re stupid enough to watch ‘Dukes of Hazard,’ they’re welcome to it.”

Vincent Rogers, professor of education at the University of Connecticut, said he is “personally skeptical” about the merits of going cold-turkey on television for a month.

“With any plan of that kind, it’s all or nothing,” said Rogers. “‘*Nicholas Nickleby*’ was on TV for four nights. What are you going to do, not watch that? That’d be stupid.”

The town hired Rogers last fall to study what Farmington’s 2,500 school children do in their spare time.

Officials hope Rogers’ data will help improve the school curriculum.

School Superintendent William Streich said homework assignments

need to be improved. Families should be more involved in learning, and reading programs should be encouraged outside school.

He said studies indicate 30 percent of families with 6<sup>th</sup> grade children are “total TV families who have the television on all afternoon, during dinner time and later.”

And/or this one:

## Son sues father over injuries

**RUSTBURG** - A Lynchburg man is suing his father for \$50,000 in damages, claiming he was trampled by three horses on his father’s property in July.

James C. Scott, whose address couldn’t be learned, filed a negligence suit in Campbell County Circuit Court last week against his father, Giles H. Scott of Route 2, Lynchburg.

The suit said the incident occurred in July when James Scott agreed to care for his father’s three horses while the elder Scott was out of town.

When James Scott attempted to move the horses from one pasture to another, one of the horses stomped him and caused the two other horses to collide with him, the suit said. The incident occurred on Virginia 680 near U.S. 501.

James Scott suffered numerous

**broken bones, cuts and bruises, the suit said.**

**The suit claims that the elder Scott acted negligently by allowing his son to care for an “extremely dangerous, volatile (and) skittish” horse without warning him of the horse’s disposition.**

**Giles Scott could not be reached for comment.**

**Just like a restaurant’s soup** of the day, an opinion article should be fresh, hot and tasty.

Readers can’t resist it if it’s up-to-the-minute and really dealing with today’s problems. Nothing turns a reader off faster than cold soup.

You may think one day doesn’t matter, that as long as you get your opinion to the editor within a week or even a couple of days, your local editor will be interested. You may think that because it takes about that long for a news item to get home and lodge in the thinking of the reader or TV viewer.

**But you’re wrong.** When your average reader goes to work the next day, he wants answers. He wants his newspaper to give him viewpoints he hadn’t thought of himself. He wants to be able to speak knowledgeably about the matter at the office.

Now, the average non-professional writer will never have the chance to write editorials for a daily newspaper. He might get the chance as a visiting columnist with a weekly paper if the editor likes what he has to say.

What to do?

Think like an editorial writer. He comes. He sees. He wants to conquer, meaning he wants to correct what’s wrong and point out new directions that will make those corrections stick.

**You can do that.**

But a free-lance writer with something to say must be Johnny-on-the-spot. He must get his thoughts down quickly, cleanly and appealingly just as if he were the resident newspaper staff member who must do the same.

You have a better chance of being printed if your article is on the editor’s desk when he arrives the next morning. It gets there because you have delivered it in person the night before. So you live up-state. Call to see if your editor accepts timely opinion pieces on e-mail.

**If he does, your foot’s in the door.**

Now, all you have to do is read the newspaper and react. Outline your argument so you don’t ramble. Glean out the “be verbs” (be, is, am, are, was, were, being, been) and unnecessary prepositional phrases. Remember, write tight.

But because you are not on the staff, you must submit your work as a column—an opinion column.

**Give it a kicker**—a name like “As I See It.” That will go on top and to the left margin of the article you write.

Drop down one double space under the kicker, indent, and give your article a headline. Be sure to include a verb.

The editorial/column must be aimed at the reader. It must follow an outline so that it moves tellingly from point to point. It must state the problem, explain the problem, bring it clearly into focus and then answer it.

**Have numbers** of prisoners been escaping from death-row in your state penitentiary?

Say so.

Tell how they've gotten away (briefly).

Tell whose fault you believe it is and advise what can be done about it.

Obviously, if the guards have been lax, they are at fault.

But if their laxity has been prison policy because the governor or state legislature has required that prisoners must be treated with greater leniency, then the editorial/column writer knows what to write about to bring the problem into focus and then to answer it.

**But you, as the opinion writer,** must be a thinker and a reader.

You must be a Sherlock Holmes—a deducer.

You must be an independent thinker.

You must be willing to buck the crowd and go in new directions.

You must know principles of righteousness and truth if you are going to hold the public and public institutions responsible.

You would do well to read great stretches of the Bible. You would do yourself a greater service if you were

to become a student of the Book.

Know your language (including spelling and punctuation) well so that your sentences read in the language of the people. But not in the "slanguage." Also, don't trust "spell-check."

**You would do well to** put your conclusion first so the hurried reader will know your opinion at once.

Even when you are writing about politics and government, quotes attract interest and give you authority.

Editors and readers like it when you can bring in the opinions of legitimate authorities to back up what you think. Just don't make your first sentence a quote.

Your writing should have a high verb/verbal content, short sentences, parallels, quotes, questions, contrasts, and, occasionally, similes.

**Editors know the average reader** will skip the editorial page and head for the sports section and the comics. In order to hook readers, editors like good headlines. Many like to write their own. But since most editors are strapped for time, they will appreciate your putting a headline at the beginning of your letter. Readers must be caught and the headline is the hook. Have it be the essential thrust of your opinion. Make sure it includes a verb in active voice and, if possible, in present tense.

**Naturally,** the minute I lay down a rule, I come up with an exception. I wrote the following article of judg-

ment for Moody magazine when I was senior editor.

I could have titled it, “Whatever Is Happening to the Evangelical?” to get the verb in present tense. But the article shows that evangelicals have been sitting on their hands. This headline needed the past tense to express shock.

## Whatever Happened to the Evangelical?

By Dick Bohrer

Could it be that ours is a generation more wicked than any other that has lived upon earth?

By comparison, the Crusaders, Inquisitors, even the Nazis were minor leaguers. They destroyed children and adults committed to an ideology. We destroy the unborn.

Dr. C. Everett Koop estimates that Japan has destroyed fifty million pre-born children since abortion was legalized there in 1948. And the epic has spread around the world.

The United States Supreme Court has given women the right to abortion on demand, making the casual destruction of the unborn the law of the land. Since 1973, eight million American babies have died pre-born.

(Note: This article appeared in the May 1980 issue (p. 21) of “Moody Monthly” magazine.)

**Advocates of abortion call it an American freedom—the women’s right to privacy and free choice.**

**We rightly wring our national hands over the plight of fifty-three hostages in Teheran, but think little of the more than three hundred thousand Americans aborted in the womb during the same number of days.**

**Evangelicalism as a whole has uttered no real outcry. We’ve organized no protest.**

**Do we need more time to think abortion through? Isn’t seven years long enough?**

**Do we think abortion is a Catholic issue—not ours?**

**Do we think abortion is all right in cases of rape, incest, and saving the life of the mother because that is what some evangelical leaders tell us?**

**We cannot let others do our thinking for us.**

**We cannot let the sophisticated outrage of abortionists intimidate us into keeping quiet. They would have us keep out of politics and leave their laws alone.**

**We cannot continue to walk daintily on the other side of the road. God holds us accountable. If not “of” the world, we are certainly “in” the world.**

**Have we been walking in the counsel of the ungodly, believing that a fetus is just tissue, that women have the right to choose**

whether they will bear their child, when we should have been out, crying the judgment of God against our Nineveh?

Have we been standing in the way of sinners, priding ourselves that “we are not as other men,” when we should be on our knees, beating our breasts that God be merciful to us, the sinners?

Have we been sitting, Lot-like, in the seats of the scornful, in the gates of our individual Sodoms, quite at home, quite unruffled, even critical of those who are so easily alarmed about—babies?

If the blood of Abel—one innocent adult—cried out to God from the ground, how much more eight million babies since 1973?

The outrage should be all ours. This is not a merely social issue. This is life and death.

God in righteous judgment will require innocent blood of our hands and take us away as a nation unless we repent (2 Sam. 4:11).

We cannot excuse ourselves and say, “Oh, but I didn’t know. . . . It never occurred to me that . . . If I’d had any idea . . .”

God does not excuse the ignorant and the indifferent (Prov. 24:11-12). He will render to every man ac-

ording to his works.

Christ told the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:15-17), “I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot. . . . So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.”

Surely, Laodicea is now.

The Catholics have called abortion, “The Silent Holocaust.”

The deeper horror is the silence of the evangelical.

Now, **opinion writing** is great training for the person who thinks. It helps you hone your razor like old-time barbers used their strap.

But don’t stop at thinking.

Write!

You don’t like how the new pastor is changing everything?

Write him a letter.

Send a copy to each elder and deacon or board member.

Get like-minded others to do the same.

A letter has power.

Don’t just complain.

Back up what you say with reasons, verses, statistics.

Show that Bereans are thinkers.

And prayers.

# WHAT'S THIS ABOUT LIBEL AND FAULTY THINKING? CAN'T WE CALL A SPADE A SPADE AND MAKE THOSE DIGGING AT US REGRET THEY EVER TOOK US ON?

**You hear their whispers.** They tell about lawyers who pour over Letter to the Editor columns, looking for business. Has someone in voicing his outrage harmed a reputation, held someone up for ridicule, attacked his private life and character and/or undermined the public's trust in him?

Libel is false and unprivileged (unprotected) publication by writing, printing, picture, effigy, or other fixed representation to the eye, which exposes any person to hatred, contempt, ridicule, or obloquy (abusive, defamatory language), or which causes him to be shunned or avoided, or which has a tendency to injure him in his occupation.

**So you write what you think** and you send it to an editor. Need you fear lawyers and litigation? Normally, no. The courts allow the public fair comment. Opinions expressed in the public interest—no matter how critical—are protected. Justice Powell in *Gertz v. Welch* wrote: “Under the First Amendment there is no such thing as a false idea. However pernicious an opinion may seem, we depend for its correction not on the conscience of judges and juries, but on the competition of other ideas.”

**No two people ever agree.** That's the fun of speaking up. We can correct misrepresentations of fact. We can explode faulty reasoning. We can

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scold those who threaten morality. Fair comment is free to roam where it will.

Do you dislike a product? a book? a play? a performance? a decision? an appointment? go for the jugular if you feel that is essential.

A **ladies trio**, 85 years ago, sued the “Des Moines Leader” newspaper. It had printed:

**“Effie is an old jade of 50 summers, Jessie is a frisky filly of 40, and Addie, the flower of the family, a capering monstrosity of 35. Their long skinny arms, equipped with talons at the extremities, swung mechanically, and anon waved frantically at the suffering audience. The mouths of their rancid features opened like caverns, and sounds like the wailing of damned souls issued there from. They pranced around the stage with a motion that suggested a cross between the *danse dulventre* and fox trot—strange creatures with painted faces and hideous mien. Effie is spavined, Addie is stringhalt, and Jessie, the only one who showed her stockings, has legs with calves as classic in their outlines as the curves of a broom handle.”**

The judge threw the case out of court. He considered the review of a public performance fair comment. Again, if what you write is your opin-

ion, your “it seems to me” statement, it’s called fair comment.

**Now, common sense has some things to say.** It stands to reason that your case will stand firmer if you include your facts in what you write. But, here again, be careful. You may know that a local restaurant is using cat food for beef in its Mexican tamales—you counted the 47 cans in the garbage or you waited tables there or you cooked there. What do you do with your facts? Probably you should report them to the Better Business Bureau and forget writing them up for publication.

**You see, even though you may have** no malice (and it is difficult to prove malice), you may be charged with a reckless disregard of the truth. You would ruin that business if the public learned from you that there was cat food afoot. The owner would have grounds for suit if your letter to the editor revealed that information. In law, there are facts and interpretations of facts.

You have firmer ground to stand on if you know your facts are true and if you can document them—write them down, stating time and place and participants along with a “he said” and “she said” report. If a suit could be the result, take pictures of the 47 cans or whatever. The more proof you have to back up your charge, the better position you have in a court of law.

**But if your aunt's** sister-in-law's next-door neighbor's cousin was the source of your information and you never talked personally to the person you are accusing or never went to investigate the matter yourself, you're on shaky ground. You are not as likely to get into trouble if you say that, to you, those tamales taste like they have cat food in them. Still, that's touchy. Why not say there's a flavor you can't identify that turns you off.

Use euphemisms. Imply dirt but say it with rose petals.

**Don't imply you know something** bad about someone and then not say it. Sometimes not saying something is worse than saying it. "Of course, we all wonder why Jane Doe left town and didn't graduate with her class" could be devastating.

Also, if you call someone a nasty something and don't give his name, he can sue if people surrounding the circumstances know whom you meant.

**Watch invasion of privacy**—the unwarranted exposure of that which is considered to be private. A woman may have had an illegitimate child years ago. It's not your privilege to bring it up and reveal it. Truth is no defense against an invasion of privacy charge.

Never write your opinion in order to hurt someone. If your malice can be proved, you're in trouble.

Now, in expressing an opinion, sometimes, someone may be hurt—incidentally. Poor reviews have closed Broadway shows and thrown a lot of people out of work. You can't let that compromise your honest opinion, however.

Write what you think.

**So someone wrote a lousy book** or didn't do his homework or spouted off the top of his head. Say so. But don't go after the author's personal morality or integrity. Don't hurt anyone's standing socially. Don't criticize his family or his business character or his morals.

Remember, the names mentioned in news stories are more than merely names. They are the identities of real people who have feelings and reputations.

Take issue with what they've said and with what they've done, but don't defame them.

**Realize also, that this author** is no attorney. He's a writing teacher who wants to be held harmless for teaching you how to write your opinions. He doesn't want you to call him in the middle of the night inviting him to come visit you in jail.

But he does want to free you to express your opinions. You have every right to say what you think.

He just doesn't want you to yell "FIRE!" in a crowded theater.

But countless people, particularly



politicians and journalists and anchormen on TV do. They want you to get riled up. You'll sit up and listen through the commercials and maybe go buy the products advertised. Politicians want you to vote them, not their opponent, into power; and they use words to their own distinct advantage.

Now they may not slander a rival, but a clever use of logical fallacies no one recognizes will do the trick.

You, in equipping yourself to write compellingly what you think, must master your recognition of logical fallacies. You win every argument, you score every point when you reveal logical fallacies you recognize.

Readers and listeners respect clear thinking logic. Your ability to point it out and defuse the vicious accusations of the "bad guys" will boost the respect you earn from editors and the public.

**Candidates by putting emphasis** on the wrong word when they speak about an opponent can create a totally false impression. This fallacy is:

### **The fallacy of accent.**

Take the sentence, "Good girls don't kiss."

Our accent naturally falls on GOOD when we read this statement.

But the sentence is ambiguous because we don't know if the author meant that it is the bad girls who kiss or if the good girls don't kiss—they do something worse.

### **The fallacy of accident**

This is also called a *non-sequitor* or a false conclusion. It makes a judgment by generalizing when the evidence doesn't really support the conclusion.

Take the sentence, "A girl who kisses like that is going to ruin the reputation of our school." How one girl kisses is going to ruin the reputation of a whole school?

This will also appear as "A candidate who believes a thing like that is going to ruin the economy of the whole state or he is going to bring our nation to its knees."

Again, it's a generalizing judgment when the evidence doesn't support the conclusion.

### **Ad Hominem**

A favorite of many candidates on the defense will attack the person, the opponent himself, rather than responding to his opinion or his accusation or his argument. This fallacy is called an ad hominem (HOM-mi-nem).

Take the sentence, You say, "Cindi, would you kiss any boy who asked you?" She says, "You're disgusting! You're despicable!" She has attacked you rather than answering the question.

### **The fallacy of amphibole**

This one (am-FIB-o-lee) muddies the water by creating an ambiguity that arises because of where we place

words in our sentence.

Try the statement, "He wants in the worst way to meet Cindi." This becomes questionable when we write, "He wants to meet Cindi in the worst way." The meaning is confused because we don't know what the writer meant. The worst way? Doing what?

### **Appeal to authority.**

This gives an article credibility because we're appealing to a trusted figure, an authority of recognized expertise.

"Sigmund Freud said good girls don't kiss." By basing our statement on a recognized authority, we gain credibility.

Manufacturers naming their product or corporation, wanting to be known for dignity and respect and longevity, will identify their institution using the name of George Washington or Benjamin Franklin or Thomas Jefferson or one of the other fathers of our country.

They will also use celebrities on TV commercials to lend validity to their product. They will also put actors in white coats so they look like doctors. The trusting among us say "Well, if a doctor believes that, it must be true." Or if Leilani Stumpf uses that toothpaste . . .

### **Appeal to fear**

This is sometimes called the SLIPPERY SLOPE. It is the argument that raises dread when no kind

of substantial reason has been given to prove something is bad.

Take the sentence, "Everybody knows what you get when you kiss HER!"

Everybody knows what?

This propels readers to leap to a decision and make a judgment or take an action when no legitimate evidence has been given.

### **Appeal to inertia.**

Why change things? What's always been should always be.

"We've never believed a word Cindi said before, so why should we start now?" This argues that we should leave things alone and not try to change anything. We've always believed this. We've always done it this way. What was good enough before is good enough now.

"Sunday School is never mentioned in the Bible so why should we think we should have one in our church?"

Brushing your teeth or taking a shower bath is never mentioned in the Bible. Do we discount them as well?

### **Appeal to pity**

This one is commonly used to gain a desired end by appealing to peoples' heartstrings.

"This poor orphan child has never been held and kissed. Send only \$18 a week and we'll . . ."

Authors of such appeals hope to dull the critical faculties of the potential giver by arousing pity. Politicians

use this method to get votes or financial support.

"I hoed weeds in our cornfield until I was 12, trying to earn enough money to go to high school. Why, I didn't have a suit of clothes of my own until I was . . ."

### **Appeal to pride.**

This is an attempt to gain a desired end by appealing to peoples' patriotism or loyalty to a certain heritage or belief.

"Americans have always helped the poor and downtrodden. Everyone will know you are a good American if you help us meet the needs of Rashida, this lovely, very dedicated Christian Indian young lady" about whom you know very little.

Politicians will tell you that good Americans will support the bill their party is putting forward in Congress.

### **Appeal to respect**

This one is offered by one who wants to gain credibility by appealing to a respected source.

"If it's good enough for Lincoln, it's good enough for me."

Voters will quote the leader of the party just as students often believe things because a respected professor does. "If Dr. King has thought this out, it must be right."

"The Mount Vernon Council of Outraged Males declares women is poison!" is a college type slogan wherein a group of guys will adopt

names associated with the pilgrims and early America to imply they've been around for a long, long time and have a right for respect from everyone on campus.

New financial and insurance companies often adopt such names in an effort to capture the respect and integrity of the source and convince the public they have been in business a long, long time. In doing so, they have attached themselves to a heritage and an authority and a reputation for honesty for which they may have no real right.

### **Appeal to restlessness**

A person using this one tries to gain credibility by asking us to discard the old and adopt the new.

"Who wants to kiss Cindi? Amelia is here!"

The fact that something is new doesn't automatically prove it's better. Where's the evidence?

### **Appeal to illegitimate authority**

People who want to gain credibility for their convictions will cite the views of an insignificant source or of a group too big to poll. Or they will assume the name, values, reputation of a respected source when that source either is no legitimate authority in this matter at all or he has no claim to be one.

People say, "A great majority of Americans believe abortion is a woman's right to choose." They have not polled that great majority. Prob-

bly, more Americans believe that a woman's right to choose ends with the choice of the person she elects to sleep with.

### **Post hoc ergo propter hoc**

This means "after this, therefore because of this." It assumes that one thing is the result of a certain cause when it most likely is not.

"I knew that Cindi would kiss me because I used a red toothbrush Saturday."

Or "Twenty-two American boys died in the war because this man voted to send them there."

How often this charge is made in political campaigns!

### **Argument from ignorance**

A person commits this one when he holds that a statement is true until it is proved false or that it is false until it is proved true.

"Good girls never kiss."

The force of conviction will thud when the speaker/writer holds to an argument he has not proved. We can't argue a murderer is innocent just because he says he is. The one who argues from ignorance has not done his homework and can be trapped by a thinking writer who has.

### **Begging the question**

This one is also called **argument in a circle**. It is used to prove something by restating it.

"Kissing is injurious because it

hurts the girl who does it."

This says kissing is bad because it is bad.

The restatement of the assertion becomes the reason given for accepting the assertion. Repetition is not evidence.

### **Common practice**

Someone using common practice (also called **Bandwagon**) claims that since everybody's doing it, it therefore is all right.

"All girls kiss."

"All politicians lie."

The argument substantiates nothing.

The appeal to popularity (50 million Frenchmen can't be wrong) uses numbers of users to prove something has value when that's no proof at all.

### **Composition**

This fallacy attributes to the whole the characteristics of a part.

"Cindi is the typical girl. She'll kiss any boy who comes along."

Since we can kiss Cindi, we wrongly conclude we can kiss all girls.

### **Concealed evidence**

This presents only facts that support one's viewpoint while ignoring the facts that don't.

"Cindi is a good girl. No one's ever seen her kissing boys."

The fact given supports the viewpoint.

But the fact given may not be the whole story at all.

### **Division**

This is fallacious because it attributes to the parts the characteristics of the whole.

“Since every woman will lie about her age and her weight and her experience kissing men, you can’t trust Cindi.”

The characteristics of the whole do not automatically become the characteristics of each part.

### **The fallacy of equivocation**

This means not using the precise meaning of important words in an argument.

“Kissing is natural for Cindi.”

What does that mean? She doesn’t have to try? Her lips are permanently pursed? Kissing is a way of life? When his words are not immediately clear and precise, a candidate can be guilty of equivocation.

### **False analogy**

This is drawing a conclusion on the strength of a false comparison with similar but trivial situations.

“It’s all right for me to kiss Cindi because the Bible says to greet one another with a holy kiss.”

It is wrong to use the Bible to justify kissing Cindi when the passage referred to has nothing to do with romantic kissing. When a candidate justifies a practice or belief by basing it on a reference that has little to do with the case in point, that is drawing a false analogy.

### **False dilemma**

This one is also called **polarization**. It limits a person’s choices by posing either/or or all-or-nothing alternatives when several other alternatives could be offered. The technique is used to rouse high emotions in the reader/listener. It is an effective tool of rabble-rousers.

“Either we get Cindi out of our school system now or a whole generation of boys will be ruined.”

“The United States must either eliminate AIDS or be eliminated by AIDS.”

There are other alternatives.

### **Guilt by association**

This is jumping to conclusions because of appearances.

“I know Cindi will be easy to kiss because the girls she goes around with are known for kissing on first dates.”

When we judge a person only on the basis of her friends, her habits, her haunts, we’re judging a book by its cover rather than making an honest assessment.

### **Hasty conclusion**

Sometimes called “generalization,” this one has folk leaping to a conclusion based on insufficient evidence.

“A girl who won’t kiss will become an old maid.”

Candidates use this to cast blame on their opponents.

“Anyone who would do (or not do) this, can’t be trusted with the privilege of office.”

### **Rationalization**

This fallacy is also called **self-delusion**. It means blaming someone or something or some event when in truth what happened is our own fault.

“If she hadn’t worn white sox, I wouldn’t have tried to kiss her.”

“It’s in my genes to act like this. Therefore what I did isn’t really my fault.”

These 25 logical fallacies will become sharp arrows in your opinion writing and debate quiver because the people who use them don’t realize they are falling into a trap when they use them.

Those of you who recognize them can be the first to send an arrow through their balloon as you reveal the fallacious thinking behind the argument of your opponent.

**You would do yourself a favor** to master these fallacies and figures of speech. You will find them occurring again and again as members of the media—verbal and visual—propagandize the nation into believing righteousness is obsolete here.

And, should the persecution of Christians come and you be dragged before a raging judge and prosecuting attorney, your ability to see through flawed thinking might save someone’s life, if not your own. Don’t laugh. That day could come, and it could come soon.

Marvin Olasky in a special edition of *World* magazine in May 2002,

nailed what is happening as “serious religious believers of all types” are being singled out as bigots and threats to the preservation of modern society. His article is called, “The Greatest Spin Ever Sold.”

He says,

**Since last Sept. 11, (2001) liberal and neo-conservative pundits have responded to the Islamic terrorist threat by indulging in broad religious profiling. With Osama bin Laden labeled an “Islamic Fundamentalist,” pundits have been telling us not just that he, his associates, and other radical Muslims are threats. Instead *The New York Times* and its disciples would have us believe that conservative Christians are major threats to domestic tranquility.**

In a sidebar titled, “How to Respond,” he writes the following:

**For three reasons we cannot ignore the general and public attacks on fundamentalists and others.**

*\* The first is self-preservation.*

**Theologically conservative Christians fall into camps with names like evangelical, reformed, charismatic, fundamentalist, and others.**

**When those in many of these groups hear media attacks on “fundamentalists” and “Christian Taliban,” the tendency is to think, “They’re not talking about me,” so why become involved?**

But in the eyes of many secular liberals, all Bible-believing Christians are fundamentalists; and we do the cause of Christ no good by saying, "I don't know those people."

Pundits, who pour boiling tar on fundamentalists today and get away with it, will assault biblical evangelicals tomorrow. To paraphrase a well-known saying about Nazi tactics:

"They came for the Jews, but I was not a Jew; they came for the \_\_\_\_\_, but I was not one of them; finally they came for me, and there was no one left to defend me."

We should know that if the enemies of Christianity undermine fundamentalists today, they will move on to other groups soon.

*\* The second reason is preservation of the downtrodden. . . .*

If Christians face verbal attack here, those in other parts of the world such as in Indonesia or the southern part of Sudan, can expect sticks, stones, and more broken bones.

Scorn of Christianity in the salons also hurts the poor domestically. When wars on poverty redline Christianity, they typically turn left toward soft-hearted handouts or right toward hard-headed harshness.

Christianity is a religion that emphasizes grace for those who have repented; those who do not understand living by grace prefer a

works-oriented religion where we get out of our practice exactly what we put into it.

That commonly leaves most of the poor, who have not put in enough either in passive receptivity or active frustration.

*\*The third reason is national preservation.*

If it becomes generally accepted that any strong belief is a problem because those who have it are potential Bin Ladens, America's spiritual reserves of strength will be depleted.

We can live on the fumes of Sept. 11 anger for a while, but America's best defense against terrorism in the long run is a faith strong enough to stand against it. We can't beat something with nothing; in a war that could last for decades, the United States needs strong Bible-based belief.

Andrew Sullivan is right to note that Americans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century grabbed onto the possibility of freedom for all religious faiths. President John Tyler, in a letter dated July 10, 1843, wrote that "the Mohammedan, if he wills to come among us, would have the privilege guaranteed to him by the Constitution to worship according to the Koran. . . . The Hebrew persecuted and down trodden in other regions takes up his abode among us with none to make him afraid."

But focus on what Tyler was pro-

**posing: not the equality of the graveyard with all religious beliefs left six feet under, but equality in action with all religions able to speak freely of their beliefs.**

**Religions that have ritual at their core and contend that others will be changed by the performance of those rites, regardless of mental state, are potentially dangerous—but Christianity is not a religion like that.**

**The road to dictatorship in the United States is paved with lack of religious belief, for tens of millions with holes in their souls will be ready to follow a charismatic figure who promises relief.**

**The best protectors of liberty are those who have strong beliefs along with a sense of *coram deo*—living in the presence of God—that keeps us from going to all lengths to accomplish goals.**

**We don't need to dominate the broadcast media to get our message out, because "the heavens declare the glory of God." We don't need to execute political enemies, because our Lord says vengeance is His. We don't dare to pretend to be gods, because we know that the true God of heaven and earth is not mocked.**

**All we need is a level playing field and God's grace.**

**A remedy? Christians need to watch what is happening, look for the reasons behind it, measure them against God's Word and then write**

what they think.

The chapters that follow, some light, some heavy, do not ask you to write sermons. They want you to learn to respond to life in all sorts of situations.

Remember, thinking and writing isn't enough. You must put the paper in an envelope, seal it, address it, apply a stamp, and then MAIL IT. You do the world no good if you put what you write in a desk drawer.

It's time to take a stand for righteousness and to speak up!

Now you may think the list of fallacies is a lesson in "wood, hay and stubble," but clever writers can even take dry subjects like logical fallacies and turn them into clever fiction.

As a change of pace and as an illustration of what you too can do, here is Max Shulman's *Love is a Fallacy*, a short story full of fun and surprises (reprinted by permission of the Harold Matson Co., Inc., © 1951 by Max Schulman, renewed 1979). May it give you ideas you can use.

**Cool was I and logical. Keen, calculating, perspicacious, acute, and astute—I was all of these. My brain was as powerful as a dynamo, as precise as a chemist's scales, as penetrating as a scalpel. And—think of it!—I was only eighteen.**

**It is not often that one so young has such a giant intellect. Take, for example, Petey Bellows, my roommate at the university. Same age,**



same background, but dumb as an ox. A nice enough fellow, you understand, but nothing upstairs. Emotional type. Unstable. Impressionable. Worst of all, a faddist. Fads, I submit are the very negation of reason. To be swept up in every new craze that comes along, to surrender yourself to idiocy just because everybody else is doing it—this, to me, is the acme of mindlessness. Not, however, to Petey.

One afternoon I found Petey lying on his bed with an expression of such distress on his face that I immediately diagnosed appendicitis. “Don’t move,” I said. “Don’t take a laxative. I’ll get a doctor.”

“Raccoon,” he mumbled thickly.

“Raccoon?” I said, pausing in my flight.

“I want a raccoon coat,” he wailed.

I perceived that his trouble was not physical, but mental. “Why do you want a raccoon coat?”

“I should have known it,” he cried, pounding his temples. “I should have known they’d come back when the Charleston came back. Like a fool I spent all my money for textbooks, and now I can’t get a raccoon coat.”

“Can you mean,” I said incredulously, “that people are actually wearing raccoon coats again?”

“All the Big Men on Campus are wearing them. Where’ve you been?”

“In the library,” I said, naming a place not frequented by Big Men on Campus.

He leaped from the bed and paced the room. “I’ve got to have a raccoon coat,” he said passionately. “I’ve got to!”

“Petey, why? Look at it rationally. Raccoon coats are unsanitary. They shed. They smell bad. They weigh too much. They’re unsightly. They—”

“You don’t understand,” he interrupted impatiently. “It’s the thing to do. Don’t you want to be in the swim?”

“No,” I said truthfully.

“Well, I do,” he declared. “I’d give anything for a raccoon coat. Anything!”

My brain, that precision instrument, slipped into high gear. “Anything?” I asked, looking at him narrowly.

“Anything,” he affirmed in ringing tones.

I stroked my chin thoughtfully. It so happened that I knew where to get my hands on a raccoon coat. My father had had one in his undergraduate days; it lay now in a trunk in the attic back home. It also happened that Petey had something I wanted. He didn’t *have* it exactly, but at least he had first rights on it. I refer to his girl, Polly Espy.

I had long coveted Polly Espy. Let me emphasize that my desire for this young woman was not emo-

tional in nature. She was, to be sure, a girl who excited the emotions, but I was not one to let my heart rule my mind. I wanted Polly for a shrewdly calculated, entirely cerebral reason.

I was a freshman in law school. In a few years I would be out in practice. I was well aware of the importance of the right kind of wife in furthering a lawyer's career. The successful lawyers I had observed were almost without exception, married to beautiful, gracious, intelligent women. With one omission, Polly fitted these specifications perfectly.

Beautiful she was. She was not yet of pin-up proportions, but I felt sure that time would supply the lack. She already had the makings.

Gracious she was. By gracious I mean full of graces. She had an erectness of carriage, an ease of bearing, a poise that clearly indicated the best of breeding. At table, her manners were exquisite. I had seen her at the Kozy Kampus Korner eating the specialty of the house—a sandwich that contained scraps of pot roast, gravy, chopped nuts, and a dipper of sauerkraut—without even getting her fingers moist.

Intelligent she was not. In fact, she veered in the opposite direction. But I believed that under my guidance she would smarten up. At any rate, it was worth a try. It is, after

all, easier to make a beautiful dumb girl smart than to make an ugly smart girl beautiful.

“Petey,” I said, “are you in love with Polly Espey?”

“I think she's a keen kid,” he replied, “but I don't know if you'd call it love. Why?”

“Do you,” I asked, “have any kind of formal arrangements with her? I mean are you going steady or anything like that?”

“No. We see each other quite a bit, but we both have other dates. Why?”

“Is there,” I asked, “any other man for whom she has a particular fondness?”

“Not that I know of. Why?”

I nodded with satisfaction. “In other words, if you were out of the picture, the field would be open. Is that right?”

“I guess so. What are you getting at?”

“Nothing, nothing,” I said innocently and took my suitcase out of the closet.

“Where you going?” asked Petey.

“Home for the week end.” I threw a few things into the bag.

“Listen,” he said, clutching my arm eagerly, “while you're home, you couldn't get some money from your old man, could you, and lend it to me so I can buy a raccoon coat?”

“I may do better than that,” I said with a mysterious wink and closed my bag and left.

“Look,” I said to Petey when I got back Monday morning. I threw open the suitcase and revealed the huge, hairy, gamy object that my father had worn in his Stutz Bearcat in 1925.

“Holy Toledo!” said Petey reverently. He plunged his hands into the raccoon coat and then his face. “Holy Toledo!” he repeated fifteen or twenty times.

“Would you like it?” I asked.

“Oh yes!” he cried, clutching the greasy pelt to him. Then a canny look came into his eyes. “What do you want for it?”

“Your girl,” I said, mincing no words.

“Polly?” he said in a horrified whisper. “You want Polly?”

“That’s right.”

He flung the coat from him. “Never,” he said stoutly.

I shrugged. “Okay. If you don’t want to be in the swim, I guess it’s your business.”

I sat down in a chair and pretended to read a book, but out of the corner of my eye I kept watching Petey. He was a torn man. First he looked at the coat with the expression of a waif at a bakery window. Then he turned away and set his jaw resolutely. Then he looked back at the coat, with even more longing in his face. Then he turned away, but with not so much resolution this time. Back and forth his head swiveled, desire waxing, reso-

lution waning. Finally, he didn’t turn away at all; he just stood and stared with mad lust at the coat.

“It isn’t as though I was in love with Polly,” he said thickly. “Or going steady or anything like that.”

“That’s right,” I murmured.

“What’s Polly to me, or me to Polly?”

“Not a thing,” said I.

“It’s just been a casual kick—just a few laughs, that’s all.”

“Try on the coat,” said I.

He complied. The coat bunched high over his ears and dropped all the way down to his shoe tops. He looked like a mound of dead raccoons. “Fits fine,” he said happily.

I rose from my chair. “Is it a deal?” I asked, extending my hand.

He swallowed. “It’s a deal,” he said and shook my hand.

I had my first date with Polly the following evening. This was in the nature of a survey; I wanted to find out just how much work I had to do to get her mind up to the standard I required. I took her first to dinner. “Gee, that was a delish dinner,” she said as we left the restaurant. Then I took her to a movie. “Gee, that was a marvy movie,” she said as we left the theater. And then I took her home. “Gee, I had a sensaysh time,” she said as she bade me good night.

I went back to my room with a heavy heart. I had gravely underestimated the size of my task. This girl’s lack of information was terri-

fyng. Nor would it be enough merely to supply her with information. First she had to be taught to *think*. This loomed as a project of no small dimensions and at first I was tempted to give her back to Petey. But then I got to thinking about her abundant physical charms and about the way she entered a room and the way she handled a knife and fork, and I decided to make an effort.

I went about it, as in all things, systematically. I gave her a course in logic. It happened that I, as a law student, was taking a course in logic myself, so I had all the facts at my finger tips.

"Polly," I said to her when I picked her up on our next date, "tonight we are going over to the Knoll and talk."

"Oo, terrific," she replied. One thing I will say for this girl: you would go far to find another so agreeable.

We went to the Knoll, the campus trysting place, and we sat down under an old oak, and she looked at me expectantly.

"What are we going to talk about?" she asked.

"Logic."

She thought this over for a minute and decided she liked it. "Magnif," she said.

"Logic," I said, clearing my throat, "is the science of thinking. Before we can think correctly, we

must first learn to recognize the common fallacies of logic. These we will take up tonight."

"Wow-dow!" she cried, clapping her hands delightedly.

I winced but went bravely on. "First let us examine the fallacy called *Dicto Simpliciter*."

"By all means," she urged, batting her lashes eagerly.

"*Dicto Simpliciter* means an argument based on an unqualified generalization. For example: Exercise is good. Therefore everybody should exercise."

"I agree," said Polly earnestly. "I mean exercise is wonderful. I mean it builds the body and everything."

"Polly," I said gently, "the argument is a fallacy. *Exercise is good* is an unqualified generalization. For instance, if you have heart disease, exercise is bad, not good. Many people are ordered by their doctors *not* to exercise. You must *qualify* the generalization. You must say exercise is *usually* good, or exercise is good *for most people*. Otherwise you have committed a *Dicto Simpliciter*. Do you see?"

"No," she confessed. "But this is marvy. Do more! Do more!"

"It will be better if you stop tugging at my sleeve," I told her, and when she desisted, I continued. "Next we take up a fallacy called *Hasty Generalization*. Listen carefully. You can't speak French. I can't speak French. Petey Bellows

can't speak French. I must therefore conclude that nobody at the University of Minnesota can speak French."

"Really?" said Polly, amazed. "Nobody?"

I hid my exasperation. "Polly, it's a fallacy. The generalization is reached too hastily. There are too few instances to support such a conclusion."

"Know any more fallacies?" she asked breathlessly. "This is more fun than dancing even."

I fought off a wave of despair. I was getting nowhere with this girl, absolutely nowhere. Still, I am nothing if not persistent. I continued. "Next comes Post Hoc. Listen to this: Let's not take Bill on our picnic. Every time we take him out with us, it rains."

"I know somebody just like that," she exclaimed. "A girl back home—Eula Becker, her name is. It never fails. Every single time we take her on a picnic—"

"Polly," I said sharply, "it's a fallacy. Eula Becker doesn't *cause* the rain. She has no connection with the rain. You are guilty of Post Hoc if you blame Eula Becker."

"I'll never do it again," she promised contritely. "Are you mad at me?"

I sighed. "No, Polly, I'm not mad."

"Then tell me some more fallacies."

"All right. Let's try Contradictory Premises."

"Yes, let's," she chirped, blinking her eyes happily.

I frowned, but went ahead. "Here's an example of Contradictory Premises: If God can do anything, can He make a stone so heavy that He won't be able to lift it?"

"Of course," she replied promptly.

"But if He can do anything, He can lift the stone," I pointed out.

"Yeah," she said thoughtfully. "Well, then I guess He can't make the stone."

"But He can do anything," I reminded her.

She scratched her pretty empty head. "I'm all confused," she said.

"Of course you are. Because when the premises of an argument contradict each other, there can be no argument. If there is an irresistible force, there can be no immovable object. If there is an immovable object, there can be no irresistible force. Get it?"

"Tell me some more of this keen stuff," she said eagerly.

I consulted my watch. "I think we'd better call it a night. I'll take you home now, and you go over all the things you've learned. We'll have another session tomorrow night."

I deposited her at the girls' dormitory, where she assured me that she had had a perfectly terrific eve-

ning, and I went glumly home to my room. Petey lay snoring in his bed, the raccoon coat huddled like a great hairy beast at his feet. For a moment I considered waking him and telling him that he could have his girl back. It seemed clear that my project was doomed to failure. The girl simply had a logic-proof head.

But then I reconsidered. I had wasted one evening. I might as well waste another. Who knew? Maybe somewhere in the extinct crater of her mind a few embers still smoldered. Maybe somehow I could fan them into flame. Admittedly, it was not a prospect fraught with hope, but I decided to give it one more try.

Seated under the oak the next evening, I said, "Our first fallacy tonight is called *Ad Misericordiam*."

She quivered with delight.

"Listen closely," I said. "A man applies for a job. When the boss asks him what his qualifications are, he replies that he has a wife and six children at home, the wife is a helpless cripple, the children have nothing to eat, no clothes to wear, no shoes on their feet, there are no beds in the house, no coal in the cellar, and winter is coming."

A tear rolled down each of Polly's pink cheeks. "Oh, this is awful, awful," she sobbed. "Have you got a handkerchief?" she blubbered.

I handed her a handkerchief and tried to keep from screaming while she wiped her eyes. "Next," I said in a carefully controlled tone, "we will discuss *False Analogy*. Here is an example: Students should be allowed to look at their textbook during examinations. After all, surgeons have X rays to guide them during an operation, lawyers have briefs to guide them during a trial, carpenters have blueprints to guide them when they are building a house. Why, then, shouldn't students be allowed to look at their textbooks during an examination?"

"There now," she said enthusiastically, "is the most marvy idea I've heard in years."

"Polly," I said testily, "the argument is all wrong. Doctors, lawyers, and carpenters aren't taking a test to see how much they have learned, but students are. The situations are altogether different, and you can't make an analogy between them."

"I still think it's a good idea," said Polly.

"Nuts," I muttered. Doggedly I pressed on. "Next we'll try *Hypothesis Contrary to Fact*."

"Sounds yummy," was Polly's reaction.

"Listen: If Madame Curie had not happened to leave a photographic plate in a drawer with a chunk of pitchblende, the world today would not know about radium."

"True, true," said Polly, nodding

her head.” Did you see the movie? Oh, it just knocked me out. That Walter Pidgeon is so dreamy. I mean he fractures me.”

“If you can forget Mr. Pidgeon for a moment,” I said coldly, “I would like to point out that the statement is a fallacy. Maybe Madame Curie would have discovered radium at some later date. Maybe somebody else would have discovered it. Maybe any number of things would have happened. You can’t start with a hypothesis that is not true and then draw any supportable conclusions from it.”

“They ought to put Walter Pidgeon in more pictures,” said Polly. “I hardly ever see him any more.”

One more chance, I decided. But just one more. There is a limit to what flesh and blood can bear. “The next fallacy is called Poisoning the Well.”

“How cute!” she gurgled.

“Two men are having a debate. The first one gets up and says, ‘My opponent is a notorious liar. You can’t believe a word that he is going to say.’ . . . Now, Polly, think. Think hard. What’s wrong?”

I watched her closely as she knit her creamy brow in concentration. Suddenly a glimmer of intelligence—the first I had seen—came into her eyes.

“It’s not fair,” she said with indignation. “It’s not a bit fair. What chance has the second man got if

the first man calls him a liar before he even begins talking?”

“Right!” I cried exultant. “One hundred per cent right. It’s not fair. The first man has *poisoned the well* before anybody could drink from it. He has hamstrung his opponent before he could even start. . . . Polly, I’m proud of you.”

“Pshaw,” she murmured, blushing with pleasure.

“You see, my dear, these things aren’t so hard. All you have to do is concentrate. Think—examine—evaluate. Come now, let’s review everything we have learned.”

“Fire away,” she said with an airy wave of her hand.

Heartened by the knowledge that Polly was not altogether a cretin, I began a long, patient review of all I had told her. Over and over and over again I cited instances, pointed out flaws, kept hammering away without letup. It was like digging a tunnel. At first everything was work, sweat, and darkness. I had no idea when I would reach the light or even *if* I would. But I persisted. I pounded and clawed and scraped, and finally I was rewarded. I saw a chink of light. And then the chink got bigger and the sun came pouring in and all was bright.

Five grueling nights this took, but it was worth it. I had made a logician out of Polly; I had taught her to think. My job was done. She was worthy of me at last. She was a fit

wife for me, a proper hostess for my many mansions, a suitable mother for my well-heeled children.

It must not be thought that I was without love for this girl. Quite the contrary. Just as Pygmalion loved the perfect woman he had fashioned, so I loved mine. I decided to acquaint her with my feelings at our very next meeting. The time had come to change our relationship from academic to romantic.

"Polly," I said when next we sat beneath our oak, "tonight we will not discuss fallacies."

"Aw, gee," she said, disappointed.

"My dear," I said, favoring her with a smile, "we have now spent five evenings together. We have gotten along splendidly. It is clear that we are well matched."

"Hasty Generalization," said Polly brightly.

"I beg your pardon," said I.

"Hasty Generalization," she repeated. "How can you say that we are well matched on the basis of only five dates?"

I chuckled with amusement. The dear child had learned her lessons well. "My dear," I said, patting her hand in a tolerant manner, "five dates is plenty. After all, you don't have to eat a whole cake to know that it's good."

"False Analogy," said Polly promptly. "I'm not a cake. I'm a girl."

I chuckled with somewhat less amusement. The dear child had

learned her lessons perhaps too well. I decided to change tactics. Obviously the best approach was a simple, strong, direct declaration of love. I paused for a moment while my massive brain chose the proper words. Then I began:

"Polly, I love you. You are the whole world to me, and the moon and the stars and the constellations of outer space. Please, my darling, say that you will go steady with me, for if you will not, life will be meaningless. I will languish. I will refuse my meals. I will wander the face of the earth, a shambling, hollow-eyed hulk."

There, I thought, folding my arms, that ought to do it.

"Ad Misericordiam," said Polly.

I ground my teeth. I was not Pygmalion; I was Frankenstein, and my monster had me by the throat. Frantically I fought back the tide of panic surging through me. At all costs I had to keep cool.

"Well, Polly," I said, forcing a smile, "you certainly have learned your fallacies."

"You're so right," she said with a vigorous nod.

"And who taught them to you, Polly?"

"You did."

"That's right. So you do owe me something, don't you, my dear? If I hadn't come along you never would have learned about fallacies."

"Hypothesis Contrary to Fact,"



she said instantly.

I dashed perspiration from my brow. "Polly," I croaked, "you mustn't take all these things so literally. I mean this is just classroom stuff. You know that the things you learn in school don't have anything to do with life."

"Dicto Simpliciter," she said, wagging her finger at me playfully.

That did it. I leaped to my feet, bellowing like a bull. "Will you or will you not go steady with me?"

"I will not," she replied.

"Why not?" I demanded.

"Because this afternoon I promised Petey Bellows that I would go steady with him."

I reeled back, overcome with the infamy of it. After he promised, after he made a deal, after he shook my hand! "The rat!" I shrieked, kicking up great chunks of turf. "You can't go with him, Polly. He's a liar. He's a cheat. He's a rat."

"Poisoning the Well," said Polly, "and stop shouting. I think shouting must be a fallacy too."

With an immense effort of will, I modulated my voice. "All right," I said. "You're a logician. Let's look at this thing logically. How could you choose Petey Bellows over me? Look at me—a brilliant student, a tremendous intellectual, a man with an assured future. Look at Petey—a knothed, a jitterbug, a guy who'll never know where his next meal is coming from. Can you give me one

logical reason why you should go steady with Petey Bellows?"

"I certainly can," declared Polly. "He's got a raccoon coat."

That story shows logical fallacies at work and reinforces the meanings of the fallacies as well as their usefulness in ordinary life, if not romance.

Did you catch the irony in the title, "Love is a fallacy"?

Also did you learn that writers can turn even material you'd find in a textbook on logic into an amusing short story.

The young man had a series of problems which he thought he was solving with the brilliance he found within himself, only to discover that all his decisions were fatal and he himself turned out to be the fool.

But seriously, you would do yourself a favor to master these flaws in the thought process. You will find them occurring again and again as you attempt to witness to unbelievers about salvation by grace alone, "not of works lest any man should boast."

And, again, should persecution come and you be dragged before a raging judge and prosecuting attorney, your ability to see through flawed thinking might save someone's life, if not your own.

As you go through the following exercises, look for logical fallacies. And, as you monitor and analyze the speeches and articles in the media, hold their authors to high standards of

clarity, fairness and truth.

Now, there's more to the vocabulary of speech and writing.

You need to keep the following in mind as well—terms and techniques that are used and some of them misused by many influential people who should know better:

### **Simile:**

We use this to emphasize a comparison by the use of the words "like" or "as" Peter gives us five together as babes . . . as lively stones. . . as strangers and pilgrims . . . as the servants of God . . . as sheep going astray (I Peter 2:5, 11, 16, 25).

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water . . . The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away" (Psalm 1:3,4).

### **Metaphor:**

This is stating a comparison without "like" or "as," presuming on the reader to know in what particular the objects are alike. "All flesh IS grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field" (Isaiah 40:6). (Interestingly the same comparison is made in I Peter 1:24 using a simile: "For all flesh is AS grass, and all the glory of man AS the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away").

"And the tongue IS a fire, a world of iniquity (James 3:6).

"Ye ARE the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13).

"And Jesus said unto them, I AM the bread of life" (John 6:35).

### **Personification:**

When things are given the characteristics of persons. "They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (Judges 5:20).

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10).

"But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" (Matthew 6:3)

### **Anthropomorphism:**

Ascribing human characteristics to God (ascribing human emotions to Him is called Anthropopathy). "Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt" (Isaiah 19:1).

"And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it sustained Him" (Isaiah 59:16).

### **Paradox:**

A statement which appears to contradict itself, but in fact, does not. "For even that which was made glorious had no glory. . . While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. . . . As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 3:10; 4:18; 6:10).

### **Irony:**

Expressing a thought in such a way that the opposite meaning is implied. “Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked” (I Kings 18:27).

“No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you” (Job 12:2).

“It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem” (Luke 13:33).

### **Hyperbole:**

Using exaggeration to heighten the impact. “Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him” (John 12:19).

“All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt” (Exodus 8:17).

“The cries are great and walled up to heaven” (Deut. 1:28).

“Every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss” (Judges 20:16).

### **Metonymy:**

Where something directly related to an object is used for the object itself.

“Two nations are in the womb” (Genesis 25:23).

“Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace” (I Kings 2:6).

“Neither shall the sword go through your land” (Leviticus 26:6).

Closely related to metonymy is **synecdoche**, where a part is substi-

tuted for the whole.

### **Idiom:**

An expression peculiar to a particular biblical custom or language which cannot be understood except in that culture. “He kept him as the apple of his eye” (Deut. 32:10). “Give us a nail in his holy place” (Ezra 9:8). “Thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head” (Romans 12:20).

### **Euphemism:**

Where one word or phrase replaces another for delicacy’s sake, or for other reasons. “Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah” (2 Kings 3:11). “Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber” (Judges 3:24—he was going potty). “Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid” (Ruth 3:9).

### **Ellipsis:**

Where a gap is purposely left in a sentence. “He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude” (Matt. 14:19). Obviously, Jesus did not give the disciples to the multitude; the words “gave the loaves” are implied after the second “disciples.” This omission gives the impression that Jesus was the giver; the twelve were only instruments. In some prose, the ellipsis is marked with three periods (. . .).

### **Chiasmic (crossways) Order:**

Where a series of phrases are arranged so the first phrase answers the last, the second answers the second last, etc. See Romans 11:33-36).

### **Polysyndeton:**

The repeated use of *and* in a series to emphasize the extent of the list. See Genesis 1 (at least 100x); 2 Pet. 1:5-7; Luke 15:11-32).

### **Asyndeton:**

This is the opposite effect; where the *ands* are left out of a list to speed the reader over it.

(From "UPLOOK" magazine, April 1997.)

**You would do** yourself a favor to master these fallacies and figures of speech. You will find them occurring again and again as members of the media—verbal and visual—propagandize the nation into believing righteousness is obsolete here.

And, should the persecution of Christians come and you be dragged before a raging judge and prosecuting attorney, your ability to see through flawed thinking might save someone's life, if not your own. Don't laugh. That day could come, and it could come soon.

Marvin Olasky in a special edition of World magazine in May 2002, nailed what is happening as "serious religious believers of all types" are being singled out as bigots and threats to the preservation of modern society.

His article is called, "The Greatest Spin Ever Sold."

He says,

**Since last Sept. 11, (2001) liberal and neo-conservative pundits have responded to the Islamic terrorist threat by indulging in broad religious profiling. With Osama bin Laden labeled an "Islamic Fundamentalist," pundits have been telling us not just that he, his associates, and other radical Muslims are threats. Instead *The New York Times* and its disciples would have us believe that conservative Christians are major threats to domestic tranquility.**

In a sidebar titled, "How to Respond," he writes the following:

**For three reasons we cannot ignore the general and public attacks on fundamentalists and others.**

**\* *The first is self-preservation.***

**Theologically conservative Christians fall into camps with names like evangelical, reformed, charismatic, fundamentalist, and others.**

**When those in many of these groups hear media attacks on "fundamentalists" and "Christian Taliban," the tendency is to think, "They're not talking about me," so why become involved?**

**But in the eyes of many secular liberals, all Bible-believing Christians are fundamentalists; and we do the cause of Christ no good by saying, "I**

don't know those people.”

Pundits, who pour boiling tar on fundamentalists today and get away with it, will assault biblical evangelicals tomorrow. To paraphrase a well-known saying about Nazi tactics:

“They came for the Jews, but I was not a Jew; they came for the \_\_\_\_\_, but I was not one of them; finally they came for me, and there was no one left to defend me.”

We should know that if the enemies of Christianity undermine fundamentalists today, they will move on to other groups soon.

*\* The second reason is preservation of the downtrodden. . . .*

If Christians face verbal attack here, those in other parts of the world such as in Indonesia or the southern part of Sudan, can expect sticks, stones, and more broken bones.

Scorn of Christianity in the salons also hurts the poor domestically. When wars on poverty redline Christianity, they typically turn left toward soft-hearted handouts or right toward hard-headed harshness.

Christianity is a religion that emphasizes grace for those who have repented; those who do not understand living by grace prefer a works-oriented religion where we get out of our practice exactly what we put into it.

That commonly leaves most of the poor, who have not put in enough

either in passive receptivity or active frustration.

*\*The third reason is national preservation.*

If it becomes generally accepted that any strong belief is a problem because those who have it are potential bin Ladens, America's spiritual reserves of strength will be depleted.

We can live on the fumes of Sept. 11 anger for a while, but America's best defense against terrorism in the long run is a faith strong enough to stand against it. We can't beat something with nothing; in a war that could last for decades, the United States needs strong Bible-based belief.

Andrew Sullivan is right to note that Americans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century grabbed onto the possibility of freedom for all religious faiths. President John Tyler, in a letter dated July 10, 1843, wrote that “the Mohammedan, if he will to come among us, would have the privilege guaranteed to him by the Constitution to worship according to the Koran. . . . The Hebrew persecuted and down trodden in other regions takes up his abode among us with none to make him afraid.”

But focus on what Tyler was proposing: not the equality of the graveyard with all religious beliefs left six feet under, but equality in action with all religions able to speak freely of their beliefs.

Religions that have ritual at their core and contend that others will be changed by the performance of those rites, regardless of mental state, are potentially dangerous—but Christianity is not a religion like that.

The road to dictatorship in the United States is paved with lack of religious belief, for tens of millions with holes in their souls will be ready to follow a charismatic figure who promises relief.

The best protectors of liberty are those who have strong beliefs along with a sense of *coram deo*—living in the presence of God—that keeps us from going to all lengths to accomplish goals.

We don't need to dominate the broadcast media to get our message out, because "the heavens declare the glory of God." We don't need to execute political enemies, because our Lord says vengeance is His. We

don't dare to pretend to be gods, because we know that the true God of heaven and earth is not mocked.

All we need is a level playing field and God's grace.

A remedy? Christians need to watch what is happening, look for the reasons behind it, measure them against God's Word and then write what they think.

The chapters that follow, some light, some heavy, do not ask you to write sermons. They want you to learn to respond to life in all sorts of situations.

Remember, thinking and writing isn't enough. You must put the paper in an envelope, seal it, address it, apply a stamp, and then MAIL IT. You do the world no good if you put what you write in a desk drawer. It's time to take a stand for righteousness and to speak up!

# TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES

above all	conversely	inclusive
accordingly	do you think	in conclusion
actually		indeed
adjacent to		in effect
after all	equally important	in fact
afterward(s)		in general
again	finally	in my opinion
all in all	first	in other words
also	first of all	in reality
and so on	for all that	in short
anyway	for example	in summation
apparently	for the most part	instead
as a matter of fact	for this purpose	in the first place
as a result	for the time being	in the meantime
as a rule	fortunately	in truth
as I have said	frankly	in turn
as I have implied	further	it is said
as I see it	furthermore	it is true
as it happens		it must be admitted
as it were	generally speaking	
as you know		last of all
at any rate	hence	lastly
at best	however	later on
as has been noted		likewise
at last	I believe	
at least	I feel sure	meanwhile
although this may be true	I think	more or less
	immediately	moreover
	if any	mainly
besides	if necessary	
best of all	in addition (to)	naturally
better yet	in any case	next
by chance	in any event	nevertheless
by the way	in any way	needless to say
certainly	in brief	no
consequently	incidentally	no doubt

notwithstanding  
not only that  
nonetheless  
now

obviously  
occasionally  
of course  
of necessity  
oftener than not  
on the contrary  
on the other hand  
on the whole  
opposite to  
ordinarily  
originally  
on the opposite page  
or the like  
otherwise  
over all

perhaps  
personally  
previously

respectively

say  
secondly  
similarly  
so  
so far  
so to speak  
strange to say  
still  
strictly speaking  
strange as it seems  
surely

that is  
that is to say  
then  
theoretically  
therefore  
thereupon  
third(ly)  
though  
thus  
to begin with  
to be sure

too  
to repeat  
to this end  
to say the least  
to tell the truth  
to sum up  
to this end  
true enough  
  
unfortunately  
  
well  
whereas  
wherefore  
whereupon  
without doubt  
with this object  
with this view in mind

yes  
yet

\* \* \* \* \*



## Adjectives, adjective phrases and adjective clauses

Adjectives are words that don't know whether they are coming or going. Good journalism downplays the use of adjectives, saying they clutter sentences with description not needed. Good English says adjectives are essential to tell **which, what kind of, how many, whose, place where, time when, reason why.**

Professional writers quoted in this book deftly handled adjectives. The feature writer needs them to create vivid scenes in the mind of the reader.

Knowing this, we need to rehearse a few easy rules regarding adjectives.

\* **Single word adjectives** usually come before the noun or pronoun they describe. Lovely Becky. Lovely Anna. Handsome Peter. Athletic William.

\* **When they follow a linking verb** (BE Family: be, is, am, are, was, were, being, been)(BRAGS Family: Become, Remain, Appear, Grow, Seem)(SENSE Family: look, smell, taste, feel, sound), they follow the word they describe. She is lovely. She seems lovely. She looks lovely. She grew lovely.

**Prepositional phrases are either adjective phrases or adverbial phrases.** They don't have to contain an adjective or an adverb to be that kind of phrase. It is the phrase as a

whole that acts as an adjective to tell **which, what kind of, how many or whose** or as an adverb to answer the five adverb questions: **where, when, why, how, how much.**

Adjectives may be clauses that also tell **which, what kind of, how many and whose.**

But as clauses, they are locked into place behind the noun they describe (or modify—same thing).

Punctuating them is a snap.

1) **If you know the identity**, the actual name of the noun you are describing with a clause, you do use a comma to separate the noun from the clause. The clause is “nonessential” when you know the identity of the noun it modifies.

**Leilani Stumpf, who chews her gum with mouth wide open, sits in the front row in news writing class.**

2) **If you do not know the identity** of the noun, you do not use commas. The clause is “essential” to help you identify the noun you are writing about.

**The girl who chews her gum with her mouth wide open sits in the front row of class.**

We don't know the identity of the girl. We need the clause to identify her, to tell which girl sits in the front row.

That's it in a nutshell. But remember, adjective clauses always follow the noun they modify.

Adverbs answer the questions **where, when, why, how, how much**. They are mobile and can occur anywhere in the sentence—beginning, middle, end.

The same thing is true of adverb phrases. When they introduce a sentence, they are usually followed by a comma.

Adverb clauses are as mobile as the single adverb words.

**When they begin a sentence**, they are followed by a comma.

They, when they appear in the middle of a sentence, have a comma fore and aft.

They do not follow a comma when they appear at the end of a sentence.

*That's all there is to punctuating adjectives and adverbs.*