

PHL137 Semester 1 Notes

Arguments: involve a process of reasoning, or inference, and the attempt by one person to convince another or others of some claim by providing evidence.

Does passage attempt to convince an audience of some claim, by providing reasons for believing it?

Components of Arguments

- Conclusion: the point the arguer is trying to convince you of
- Premises: the pieces of evidence offered to convince you of a conclusion.
- Indicator Words: words and phrases which often appear in arguments, which function as cues to alert you to the presence of an argument in a passage, and to help identify its premises and conclusion.
 - Conclusions: signalled by 'therefore' or 'so'
 - Premises: signalled by 'because' or 'since'

a) You needn't worry about the dangers of nuclear energy, because much stricter safety precautions have been implemented since the Chernobyl disaster.

Arguments v non-arguments

Various indicator words and components of arguments including the identification of premises and conclusions are also used in *Explanations*, *Descriptions*, and *Summaries*.

Explanation: looks like an argument and can appear to have a similar structure by providing reasons for a claim or statement with the same use of indicator words. Explanations however intend to explain why or how something is the case or to elaborate on some stated claim. Attempts to inform you more deeply, usually of something the audience already accepts.

Does the passage attempt to inform an audience about *why* some claim is true, or how some claim is true?

Principle of Charity: when you interpret a passage, you should try to be fair to the authors intentions and interpret the passage in the way that makes the most sense.

Descriptions: descriptions may look like arguments as they both introduce details about a central topic or claim and often many use many similar indicator words. An important difference however is that descriptions aren't intended to persuade anyone, rather give an audience a better understanding through either language or images.

Does the passage attempt to give an audience a better or deeper understanding of *what* something is like, or *how* something is done?