

Sample CLA 30-Minute-Break-An-Argument Prompts

The CLA break-an-argument prompt requires students to critique an argument by discussing how well reasoned they find it; they must do so by considering the soundness of the argument's logic (rather than agree or disagree with the position presented).

Example 1: The following is from an editorial in the Midvale Observer, a local newspaper. "Ever since the 1950s, when television sets began to appear in the average home, the rate of crimes committed by teenagers in the country of Alta has steadily increased. This increase in teenage crime parallels the increase in violence shown on television. According to several national studies, even very young children who watch a great number of television shows featuring violent scenes display more violent behavior within their home environment than do children who do not watch violent shows. Furthermore, in a survey conducted by the Observer, over 90 percent of the respondents were parents who indicated that primetime television programs between 7 and 9 p.m. should show less violence. Therefore, in order to lower the rate of teenage crime in Alta, television viewers should demand that television programmers reduce the amount of violence shown during prime time." (University of Missouri, St. Louis)

Example 2: The University of Claria is generally considered one of the best universities in the world because of its instructors' reputation, which is based primarily on the extensive research and publishing record of certain faculty members. In addition, several faculty members are internationally renowned as leaders in their fields. For example, many of the English Department's faculty members are regularly invited to teach at universities in other countries. Furthermore, two recent graduates of the physics department have gone on to become candidates for the Nobel Prize in Physics. And 75 percent of the students are able to find employment after graduating. Therefore, because of the reputation of its faculty, the University of Claria should be the obvious choice for anyone seeking a quality education.(SUNY College at Oneota)

Example 3: A well-respected professional journal with a readership that includes elementary school principals recently published the results of a two-year study on childhood obesity. (Obese individuals are usually considered to be those who are 20 percent above their recommended weight for height and age.) This study sampled 50 schoolchildren, ages 5–11, from Smith Elementary School. A fast food restaurant opened near the school just before the study began. After two years, students who remained in the sample group were more likely to be overweight relative to the national average. Based on this study, the principal of Jones Elementary School decided to confront her school's obesity problem by opposing any fast food restaurant openings near her school. (Ford Policy Forum for the Future of Higher Education, 2008)

Example 4: The number of marriages that end in separation or divorce is growing steadily. A disproportional number of them are from June weddings. Because June weddings are so culturally desirable, they are often preceded by long engagements as the couples wait until the summer months. The number of divorces increases with each passing year, and the latest statistics indicate that more than 1 out of 3 marriages will end in divorce. With the deck stacked against "forever more" it is best to take every step possible from joining the pool of divorcees. Therefore, it is sage advice to young couples to shorten their engagements and choose a month other than June for a wedding.