
OPEN EDUCATION RESOURCE TEXTBOOK REVIEWS

Review of *Arguing using critical thinking*

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Martenev, J. (2020). *Arguing using critical thinking*. Academic Senate for California Community Colleges.

After debating about a subject that was essential to all parties involved, people retreat to their own spaces and begin to reflect on how the conflict could have ended better. Some of them begin to say to themselves that they should have said a word or two differently, while others find themselves thinking that they should have avoided the commotion by remaining silent. Returning to places where they will communicate with others, these people begin to wonder what they need to do the next time they encounter a conflict. For individuals who are wanting to learn skills that will be effective in conflict resolution, this textbook serves as one of the projects that teach readers strategies that will help them in resolving differences with others. Through twelve chapters, Martenev (2020) discusses how readers may present their viewpoints with confidence during conflict resolution by referring to critical thinking foundations. Readers will progress through lessons where they learn why people argue, concepts that are seen during debates, and the history of critical thinking.

In Chapter 1, Martenev defines conflict as a state of opposition that naturally occurs in everyone's lives because each person has different goals and expectations (p. 1.2.1). Building on

the definition, Marteney shows different types of conflicts and various ways that people engage with conflict. Humans argue with each other due to the topic of a subject, miscommunication, and personality differences (p. 1.3.1). Therefore, learning different styles of communication is essential because each person has their way of thinking and handling a problem. Communication style differences further show why people win and lose debates because they create different results in each situation. To identify why various methods of communication exist, Marteney moves on to discuss the definition of communication in Chapter 2. He presents an overview of why communication is continuous and imperfect by going over the communication model, distinguishing verbal and nonverbal communication, and how language shapes human perception (p. 2.2.1-2.13.4). A key takeaway for readers here is messages are often exchanged nonverbally, and languages change in every generation as new words are invented. Therefore, answers will vary on how everyone interprets what is said in each situation, which further leads to show why conflicts occur naturally. After talking about the foundations of conflict, communication, and critical thinking, Marteney introduces his readers to strategies that are used in argumentation. He discusses how people respond to arguments, stay focused during debates, analyze points made by others while arguing, how to present evidence well, and how to evaluate conclusions.

Starting in Chapter 3, Marteney talks about how people disagree with others by going over concepts and examples. Readers will see in this chapter how people hone their skills in providing a thoughtful response if they must disagree with others. Initially, everyone argues with others in their childhood by engaging in name-calling when a conflict starts, then they start developing ways to use counter-arguments when others present points they don't agree with (p. 3.4.1). But understanding how to formulate counter arguments can be a steep learning curve because it needs to be backed up by clear evidence. Thereby, to address what one may do in

crafting arguments that show alternative viewpoints, Marteney introduces his readers to the Toulmin model. He explains that using the Toulmin model approach will require one to effectively evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of another person's argument by analyzing the claim, grounds, warrant, backing, rebuttals, and qualifiers (p. 3.6.1). With several concepts holding the Toulmin model together, individuals need to learn each concept embedded in this approach step by step if they want to successfully use it during a debate.

For the next few chapters, Marteney breaks down the components inside the Toulmin model. In Chapter 4, he explains that speakers who want to partake in a constructive conflict resolution must clearly define a claim when they start a debate, then present the burden of proof, burden of presumption, and burden of rebuttal (p. 4.2.1, 4.5.1). It is important here that all parties involved understand that defining a claim is the most essential step before presenting their arguments. This is because a claim is a defined statement that challenges the status-quo, arguable for both pro and con sides, and is accepted or rejected by all debaters at the conclusion of debate (p. 4.2.1-4.3.2). In the following three chapters, Marteney unpacks more details of practices and strategies in argumentation. Moving into Chapter 5, readers learn that critical thinkers need to make cases that support their position on a claim by identifying inferences, assumptions, and issues that are relevant to the subject of their claim (p. 5.2.1-5.8.1). Progressing to Chapter 6, readers will see how much evidence is needed to construct an argument, what speakers may do to evaluate sources used for evidence, and how they may use evidence to support their claim (p. 6.2.1-6.5.3). In Chapter 7, Marteney presents a lesson on what makes an argument illogical as he discusses types of reasoning and fallacies (p. 7.3.1-7.4.3). By uncovering the terms in the Toulmin model, Marteney informs his readers that successful debaters will clearly define, organize, and support their arguments when they resolve conflicts.

Now presenting the final details of what debaters may do to increase their knowledge of argumentation, Marteney goes over the foundations of critical thinking. Chapter 8 covers the practices of argumentation during Ancient Greece, elements of rhetoric, and why conflict resolution is contingent on a critical thinker's ability to show a valid position in their argument instead of the truth (p. 8.2.1, 8.3.1, 8.8.1). Chapter 9 shows that speakers need to identify the attitudes, biases, interests, and needs of their audience if they want to successfully create an argument to persuade others (p. 9.9.1). Chapter 10 addresses the issue of how humans must make a decision on which argument to side with, and they will decide based on the facts that are presented or using their feelings (p. 10.1.1, 10.10.2). Marteney then closes his textbook as he elaborates what people could do to improve their critical-decision making skills. Chapter 11 teaches the readers that people are influenced by their beliefs when they take sides during an argument, so they need to become more open-minded if they want to successfully resolve conflicts (p. 11.1.1-11.7.2). Chapter 12 explains how debaters may teach themselves to be great critical thinkers by understanding knowledge, literacy, and thinking (p. 12.1.1-12.9.1). In conclusion, this textbook shows that everyone has the potential to become great debaters who use excellent critical thinking skills to construct persuasive arguments.

In addressing limitations in Marteney's textbook, it can provide more examples of how critical thinking concepts apply to what people experience in their daily lives, and provide questions that assess a reader's knowledge. There could be more detailed explanations of how people handled conflicts that arose due to money spending, politics, personal interests, etc. For example, how might a person persuade his or her friends to cut their time or spending on food, gasoline, clothes, and leisure activities? What do critical thinkers do when they persuade their family and friends to change their opinion regarding topics such as voting, military actions, social activism,

prison reforms, and environmental protection? Each chapter of Marteney's textbook could add short quizzes, where readers define concepts from the readings, and apply them to real life scenarios. Also, testimony of how leaders in professional occupations used critical decision making skills to help their teams could be added. Despite its limitations, the overall work of Marteney's textbook provides foundational knowledge to students who want to learn how to be a great speaker who can persuade others effectively.

Marteney's textbook possesses its strengths by serving as a textbook that is designed for readers who are wanting to learn why people debate, how successful debaters construct their arguments, and see that critical thinking skills required for successful debaters can be learned. Most importantly, this work presents an alternative viewpoint to a traditionally established idea of argumentation and debate. As Marteney emphasizes, the subject of argumentation is not about winning an argument, but about learning how people may successfully resolve different opinions during a decision-making process. Therefore, this textbook contributes to the Communication Studies scholarship by presenting the knowledge and skills to readers who want to understand a larger picture of why argumentation and debate classes are important. Applying Marteney's points into their previous debates, students and teachers will discover new methods they can use when they need to confidently negotiate ideas with others, instead of creating a commotion that is unresolvable. Perhaps, reading this textbook will help readers feel more content, confident, and comfortable with the decision that comes at the conclusion of their next debate.