Reasoning Under Pressure

Analyze how weak reasoning shapes a local policy debate.

11.T.T.3.b "Explain and analyze the impact of logical fallacies in a variety of texts. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four claims that use weak reasoning to push a conclusion. Next to each claim, write a short note about how it could influence an audience.

The Riverton Bike-Lane Debate

1. At Monday's Riverton council meeting, members will consider a pilot that would add protected bike lanes to two downtown streets. A campaign flyer urges residents to reject the plan. "Either we keep every parking space, or local stores will close," it states. On the back, the flyer prints a photo of an empty storefront from last winter. The meeting packet, available online, lists three design options. One option keeps delivery loading zones and changes only a few parking spaces. Several shop owners have not publicly stated a position.

2. In a neighborhood social-media post, a resident writes, "Councilmember Dana Ortiz is a clueless cyclist who probably cannot read a budget, so ignore her support for the pilot." The post also describes one Saturday when the writer could not find a parking space near a bakery and says bike lanes always make downtown visits impossible. A construction festival had closed part of that block that day. In the comment thread, readers repeat the claims and argue about Ortiz's character. No commenter discusses the three design options in the meeting packet.

3. During a call-in radio segment, a host says, "Most callers oppose the lanes, so the town has already decided." He adds that if the council paints even one lane, it will soon ban cars from Main Street, and families will leave Riverton. The segment includes six callers. One caller asks about crash records and delivery access. The host changes the subject to a restaurant owner's fear that regular customers will complain. The council's public hearing is scheduled for Thursday, and no final vote has occurred.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What logical fallacy appears in the flyer's claim that Riverton must keep every parking space or local stores will close? Explain how this claim could affect residents' view of the proposal.

2. How does the social-media post's statement about Councilmember Ortiz affect the argument about bike lanes? Name the fallacy and analyze its impact.

3. Why is the writer's single Saturday parking experience weak support for the claim that bike lanes always make downtown visits impossible?

4. Analyze the host's two claims that most callers oppose the lanes and that one bike lane will lead to a car ban and families leaving Riverton. What fallacies are used, and how could they influence listeners?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a school or community decision. Write a four-sentence mini-post that includes one intentional logical fallacy. In sentence 3, name the fallacy, and in sentence 4, explain how it could influence readers or weaken decision making.

ANSWER KEY

Reasoning Under Pressure

GRADE 11 · 11.T.T.3.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four claims that use weak reasoning to push a conclusion. Next to each claim, write a short note about how it could influence an audience. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What logical fallacy appears in the flyer's claim that Riverton must keep every parking space or local stores will close? Explain how this claim could affect residents' view of the proposal.	**It is a false dilemma. It presents only two extreme choices and hides other design options, which may make residents believe compromise is impossible.**
2	How does the social-media post's statement about Councilmember Ortiz affect the argument about bike lanes? Name the fallacy and analyze its impact.	**It is an ad hominem attack. It directs attention to Ortiz's character instead of her reasons or the policy, which can bias readers without evaluating the proposal.**
3	Why is the writer's single Saturday parking experience weak support for the claim that bike lanes always make downtown visits impossible?	**It is a hasty generalization based on one event. The construction festival also affected that day, so the experience cannot support a claim about all downtown visits.**
4	Analyze the host's two claims that most callers oppose the lanes and that one bike lane will lead to a car ban and families leaving Riverton. What fallacies are used, and how could they influence listeners?	**The first is an appeal to popularity based on a small, unrepresentative group of callers. The second is a slippery-slope fallacy. Together, they can make listeners feel the decision is settled and fear extreme results without sufficient evidence.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The school should reject the proposal to replace paper notices with a family app. If the school starts using an app, students will soon never speak to teachers face-to-face. This is a slippery-slope fallacy. It may frighten readers by predicting an extreme outcome without evidence that the first change would cause it.

Accept equivalent fallacy labels and analyses that accurately connect the reasoning to its likely effect on an audience. For Part 3, accept any relevant community or school issue if the student includes four sentences, identifies a genuine fallacy, and explains its impact.