Why We Think That

Trace how explanations and messages shape attitudes.

P.7.2 "Explain how perceptions and attitudes develop, including attribution theory, fundamental attribution error, actor-observer bias, self-serving bias, central vs. peripheral route of persuasion, and cognitive dissonance."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline explanations for people's behavior and circle situation details that might change a judgment. Write C or P beside each flyer to show whether it invites careful thought or relies on a quick cue.

A Late Arrival and Two Flyers

1. At the school food drive, Jordan arrives ten minutes late. Lena calls him careless, although a stalled bus delayed him. Attribution theory studies how people explain behavior through personal traits or situations. Lena's focus on his character, while missing the bus delay, shows the fundamental attribution error. Jordan says the delay explains his lateness but claims Lena was late last week because she is disorganized. This contrast between explaining your own actions with circumstances and someone else's with traits is actor-observer bias. After their team wins a contest, Jordan credits his leadership; after it loses, he blames confusing rules. That pattern is self-serving bias.

2. The team wants students to support a new lunch compost bin. One flyer explains that food scraps can become compost and lists how many bags of trash the school might avoid each week. Students who weigh that claim and ask about the estimate use the central route of persuasion, which depends on careful thought about reasons. Another flyer shows a popular basketball captain smiling beside the bin but gives no facts. Students swayed by the captain's image use the peripheral route, responding to a cue rather than the proposal's merits. Both routes can shape attitudes, but the strength of the reasoning differs.

3. Lena says composting matters, yet she throws an apple core into the trash when the compost bin is across the cafeteria. Cognitive dissonance is the discomfort that can arise when actions and beliefs conflict. To ease it, Lena might move the core to the bin next time, or tell herself that one core makes no difference. Meanwhile, she remembers Jordan's late arrival more clearly than the bus delay. Her impression of him may last even after she learns what happened. Noticing the explanations we favor, and checking the evidence behind persuasive messages, can help us question how perceptions and attitudes take shape.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do Lena's judgment about Jordan's lateness and Jordan's judgment about Lena's lateness show the fundamental attribution error and actor-observer bias? Use the bus delay in your answer.

2. How does Jordan explain the contest result differently when his team wins and when it loses? What bias does this show?

3. Which compost flyer invites the central route of persuasion, and which relies on a peripheral cue? Explain how each might affect a student's attitude.

4. Why might Lena feel cognitive dissonance after throwing away the apple core? Explain two ways she could ease it.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a school policy other than composting. In five sentences, describe a student's belief and conflicting action, explain two different ways the student could ease the resulting cognitive dissonance, and give both a central-route reason and a peripheral-route cue that might persuade students to support the policy.

Why We Think That

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline explanations for people's behavior and circle situation details that might change a judgment. Write C or P beside each flyer to show whether it invites careful thought or relies on a quick cue. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do Lena's judgment about Jordan's lateness and Jordan's judgment about Lena's lateness show the fundamental attribution error and actor-observer bias? Use the bus delay in your answer.	**Lena blames Jordan's character instead of considering his stalled bus, showing the fundamental attribution error. Jordan explains his own lateness with the bus delay but blames Lena's lateness on a trait, showing actor-observer bias.**
2	How does Jordan explain the contest result differently when his team wins and when it loses? What bias does this show?	**He credits his leadership for a win but blames confusing rules for a loss. This is self-serving bias.**
3	Which compost flyer invites the central route of persuasion, and which relies on a peripheral cue? Explain how each might affect a student's attitude.	**The flyer with the trash estimate invites careful evaluation through the central route. The flyer with the popular captain relies on a peripheral cue that might make students favor the bin without weighing evidence.**
4	Why might Lena feel cognitive dissonance after throwing away the apple core? Explain two ways she could ease it.	**Her action conflicts with her belief that composting matters. She could put food scraps in the compost bin next time or tell herself that one core makes no difference.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Nia believes the school should save electricity, but she leaves the classroom lights on after everyone leaves. She could ease her discomfort by turning the lights off when she leaves next time. She could also tell herself that one classroom uses little electricity. A message estimating how much electricity the school could save would offer a central-route reason to support an energy-saving policy. A poster showing a popular student switching off the lights would provide a peripheral-route cue.

Accept equivalent explanations that distinguish traits from situations, careful evaluation from reliance on a cue, and changing an action from justifying it. For Part 3, the policy must differ from composting, and the response must contain five sentences addressing every requested element.