

Argumentation

Everything's an Argument-Chapter 1

What is an argument?

Arguments are based on a CLAIM. A CLAIM is a belief. A belief is a person's point of view.

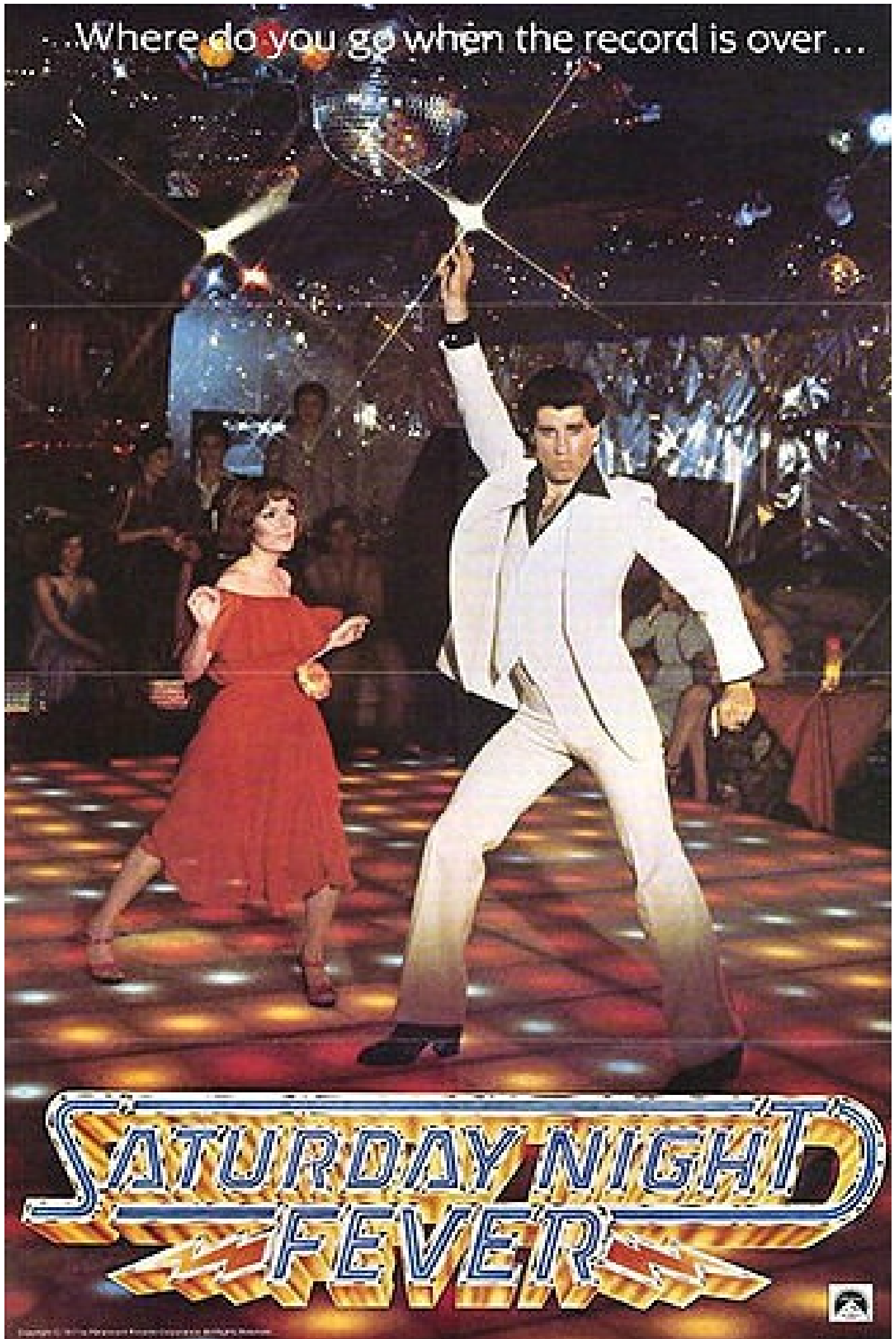
Beliefs and claims are based on evidence. Something as simple as a paper clip could spark a belief concerning homework, organizational skills, the cost of supplies, the waste of precious metals or plastic production, or the unnecessary need of back-to-school shopping.

Arguments do not have to be controversial or the infamous "hot topics". Actually, those topics should be avoided because they could evoke strong emotions and could provoke a fight--or worse--loss of the audience.

As Simple as This...

Creating arguments is not rocket science. Not even brain surgery. They can arise out of something as simple as this:

...Where do you go when the record is over...



SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER



What possible arguments could be made about this movie? If you have not seen this movie, look at the poster and era the movie represents. Devise three possible arguments (claims/beliefs): personal, social/historical, cultural.

Check this out...

Sometimes an argument can come from a simple quote in an article:

The film is the first example of cross-media marketing, with the tie-in soundtrack's single being used to help promote the film before its release and the film popularizing the entire soundtrack after its release. The film also showcased aspects of the music, the dancing, and the subculture surrounding the disco era: symphony-orchestrated melodies; haute couture styles of clothing; pre-AIDS sexual promiscuity; and graceful choreography.

What arguments can be made from the first sentence?

What about the second sentence? How many arguments can be made?

What I saw before...

Gaudy clothing, tacky dancing, bad acting. I mean, come on! Who would willingly wear this?





Not only that, but what about the dancing? Yikes. Disco? And this is supposedly "...graceful choreography" with a "...popular soundtrack"?



Did I see break dancing?

Wait a second...

What about this dance scene?



Is that The Macarena????????? And The Electric Slide????????? And The Cha Cha Slide????
Breakdancing?????!!!!????? What the heck is a "Disco Duck"?

Whoa. Wait a second. Suddenly I had an argument forming. If this movie debuted in 1977
and these popular dances began in the 1980s to present, then the author's claim is coming

true: Saturday Night Fever is the epitome of American culture and the forerunner for many dance moves we have today. AND it was "...graceful..."

Hold the boat!!!!

The impact of this movie is forever cemented in our culture:



The movie I despised (because my husband likes it and turns it on every time it is on TV) does have deep cultural and historical implications. And, the movie is based on an article in New York Night Life magazine. Nik Cohn visited the Odyssey 2001 night club and reported this new night life of the 1970s.

So, what does this mean? Other than spending two hours online searching for evidence to support a CLAIM/BELIEF, I realized something as simple as a quote and a scene in a movie helped me create an argument. I see this 1977 polyester-filled microcosm alive in our culture. My claim? Saturday Night Fever is the epitome of American culture--as American as platform shoes, skin-tight polyester bell-bottomed leisure suit pants, and a heaping helping of Hustle pie.

Keep in mind arguments are a person's CLAIM/BELIEF. The audience does not have to agree with the writer. All an arguer desires is for the audience to be OPEN to the claim/belief.







Still think this movie is not important?

Although people see this movie as "tacky" and "outdated," its importance is "Stayin' Alive" in our culture.

Types Of Arguments

Arguments are created for many reasons.

1. To convince;
2. To persuade (DO NOT DO THIS...EVER);
3. To inform;
4. To explore;
5. To make decisions; and/or
6. To meditate.

Types of Arguments

When people hear the word argument, many assume some type of fighting is involved. That is false. Arguments should enlighten. Arguments should invite people to read a claim/belief.

Also, many people think argumentation is the end-all be-all rhetorical mode. Actually, FIVE types of arguments exist. The catch? A writer should start with the first argument and work his/her way from there.

1. Argument of Fact.
2. Argument of Definition.
3. Argument of Evaluation.

4. Argument of Cause/Effect.

5. Argument of Proposal.

An argument of fact is the basic argument. An argument of definition includes an argument of fact. An argument of evaluation includes an argument of fact and definition. An argument of cause/effect has facts, definitions, and evaluations. And the piece de resistance--the Proposal Argument--contains the previous four arguments. One cannot simply write a proposal argument without writing the other four first.

Why people write arguments.

Always consider the context and reason behind the argument. Why did the writer write this? What are the motivations? What does he/she want to achieve?

Always be aware of who is reading the argument. In my previous argument about SNF, I missed three important aspects of the movie: drugs, racism, and sex. I chose not to address these for a reason: I do not want to offend anyone. I chose the "safe" path with this topic.

Appeals to Audiences

Aristotle recognized three ways to appeal to audiences: these are called argumentative appeals. Ethos, logos, and pathos are appeals arguers use to connect with the audience.

Alongside these three appeals emerges a recently recognized appeal: kairos. These appeals will be discussed in future Tackks. As for now, let's end the introduction with the the Respond exercise on page 28. For each item, create three possible arguments. If you are unfamiliar with the item, research it.

Remember, everything's an argument.