

## Argument Mapping 7: From Prose to Argument Maps

Now we're finally getting somewhere! Be sure to review Tutorials #1-#5 to make sure you understand the basic of argument mapping – these will be fundamental to how we discuss the readings in class.

We've had a sampling so far, but now we want to look a bit more systematically at how to combine the building blocks, the simple arguments we find in texts, into larger, more complex, webs of arguments (sometimes called chains of argument). This is where argument maps really start to pay off, because they help us to visualize the often-complex relationships between various claims, reasons and counter-claims that are made in prose writing.

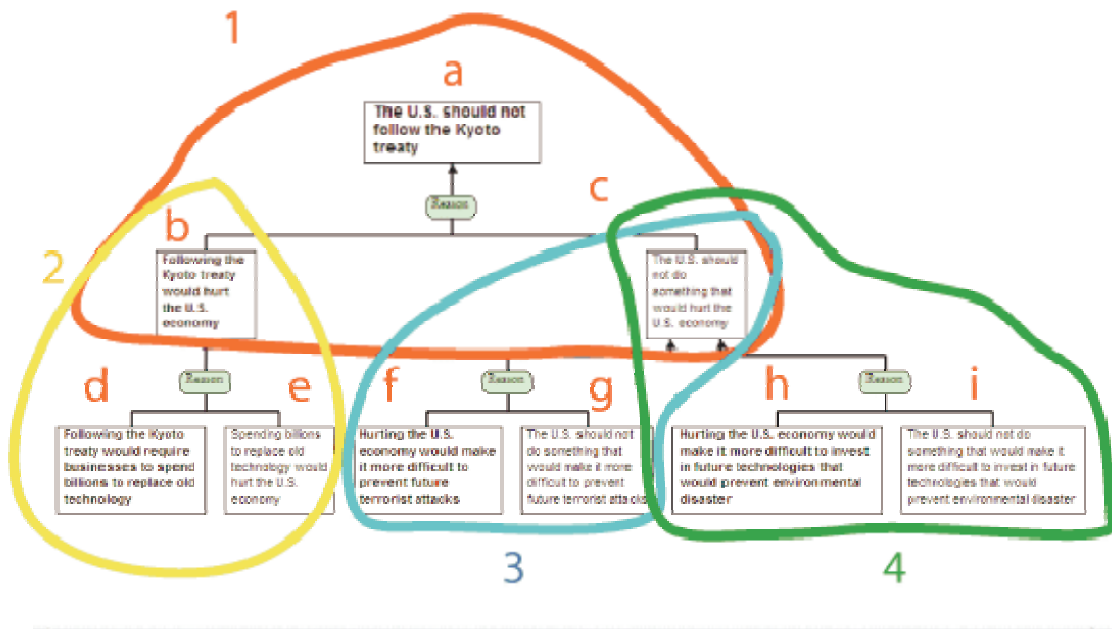
Recall that a simple argument is a claim with a single reason. As you have seen, we connect these building blocks of simple arguments together into chains and webs of larger arguments, being certain to follow the rules we've discussed before (answer AQ, RR, HH). If we are making our own argument, it's usually a rather easy task once we figure out what the claim is and what the reasons are. On the other hand, reading other people's prose and converting them into argument maps is a much more challenging task. There are so many permutations that we really do need to map them out to understand and follow them fully. And we cannot make a solid assessment of an idea until we truly understand what the argument for it is. Since all arguments have at least some unstated assumptions, we also need to do some mental work figuring out not only which reasons go with which claims, but to uncover their unstated assumptions. This can be challenging when there are a dozen claims in a single argument and several times as many reasons – we'll see examples of these in our readings.

In general, there are two basic ways to figure out which reasons go with which claims:

- 1) Use logic (i.e. follow AQ, RR, HH rules).
- 2) Use indicator words provided by the author.

### 1) Use logic

We've already discussed (in Tutorial #4) how to use AQ, RR and HH, and it's the same applying it to larger arguments. You have to always remember, though, to break the larger argument up into multiple simple arguments, and apply the logic rules to each of these simple arguments. Here's a reprise of a map from Tutorial #4:



We’ve added lower-case letters to each box for ease of use, a-i. There are four simple arguments comprising this larger argument: 1) a-b-c, 2) b-d-e, 3) c-f-g, 4) c-h-i. You apply AQ, RR and HH to each of these four separately.

The difficulty in trying to understand someone else’s argument is oftentimes that we don’t always know that b and c are working together to form evidence for a, and so on. If you were simply given a bulleted list of the statements a through i all jumbled up and had to put them together (like a giant reasoning jigsaw puzzle), you would have no choice but to identify the terms in each statement and then find two matching statements that would fulfill the AQ, RR and HH rules. Does ‘a’ share a term with ‘b’? with c? d? e? f? g? h? i? Does b share a term with c? with d? and so on. It is definitely doable, but it takes a fair amount of work.

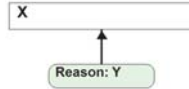
2) Indicator words

Even without argument maps, there are subtle ways in which we can make sense of someone else’s argument. Fortunately we usually don’t have to spend so much time working through all the possible permutations, since authors try to help us with the language they use and the way they organize their prose. From our years of schooling we know to look for conclusions (i.e. main claims) at the beginning and end of essays, and we know that it is common to organize paragraphs (and sections) similarly, with the first sentence (often called a topic sentence) frequently serving to tell the reader what the rest of the paragraph will be about, with the end of the paragraph summarizing or concluding. We know, that is to say, to start by looking for conclusions at the beginning/end of prose and we expect the evidence to be in the middle somewhere. We should keep these common organization schemes in mind as we are reading.

Assuming an author wants their argument to be understood clearly (a prerequisite to convincing the reader), the author will also use a wide variety of indicator words and

phrases to explicitly tell the reader how their various statements fit into their broader argument. We already look for these intuitively whenever we read. We briefly mentioned indicator words in Tutorial #3, and they are a great help to us as readers. They are also a good indication of how good of a writer we are – making ourselves understood requires giving our readers signposts to help them along. Indicators words are one type of signpost that we use.

An example we've seen already: a writer makes it clear that Y is a reason to believe X by saying “X *because* Y.” Given the definition of the word ‘because’, we know that the author intended an argument to be mapped like this (assuming it is an argument at all, and not an explanation):



By definition, the author *cannot* mean X is evidence to believe Y, or he would have reversed it, writing “Y *because* X.”

There are many other such indicator words that alert the reader how the next bit of information will relate to the previous bit. All of the following are different ways to make the same argument: that John is a good quarterback based on the fact (i.e. for the reason) that he threw 39 touchdowns.

R(eason) <i>therefore</i> C(laim)	John threw 39 touchdowns. Therefore John is a good quarterback
R <i>so</i> C	John threw 39 touchdowns so John is a good quarterback
R <i>hence</i> C	John threw 39 touchdowns hence John is a good quarterback
R <i>thus</i> C	John threw 39 touchdowns thus John is a good quarterback
R <i>consequently</i> C	John threw 39 touchdowns, consequently John is a good quarterback
R <i>which proves</i> C	John threw 39 touchdowns, which proves that John is a good quarterback
From R <i>we can conclude</i> C	From the fact that John threw 39 touchdowns, we can conclude that he is a good quarterback
R <i>implies</i> C	The fact that John threw 39 touchdowns implies that John is a good quarterback
R <i>suggests</i> C	The fact that John threw 39 touchdowns suggests that John is a good quarterback
From R <i>it follows</i> C	From the fact that John threw 39 touchdowns, it follows that John is a good quarterback
R <i>demonstrates</i> C	The fact that John threw 39 touchdowns demonstrates that John is a good quarterback
C <i>being that</i> R	John is a good quarterback, being that he threw 39 touchdowns

<i>R as a result C</i>	John threw 39 touchdowns. As a result, John is a good quarterback
<i>R accordingly C</i>	John threw 39 touchdowns. Accordingly, he is a good quarterback

All of these indicators are used to tell us that R is the reason to believe the claim C.

Of course things can become more complicated when a claim and the reason to believe that claim are not in the same sentence, or even in adjacent sentences. Hence we often have difficulty reconstructing another person's argument. These indicator words do, nonetheless, help us understand more of their argument than we would otherwise, so we need to keep a close eye out for such clues as we read.

Objections are also indicated by their own words. We see them indicated by:

<i>C(claim) yet O(bjection)</i> (Reasons to support the objection will follow)	Person X argues that following the Kyoto treaty would hurt the U.S. economy, yet this is not actually true.
<i>C but O</i>	Person X argues that following the Kyoto treaty would hurt the U.S. economy, but this is not really true.
<i>C disagree O</i>	Person X argues that following the Kyoto treaty would hurt the U.S. economy. I disagree, since [reason for objection follows]
<i>C however O</i>	Person X argues that following the Kyoto treaty would hurt the U.S. economy. However, this is not actually true.
<i>C on the other hand O</i>	Some argue that following the Kyoto treaty would hurt the U.S. economy. On the other hand, [reason for objection follows].
<i>C nevertheless O</i>	Person X argues that following the Kyoto treaty would hurt the U.S. economy. Nevertheless, [reason for objection follows].
<i>C nonetheless O</i>	Person X argues that following the Kyoto treaty would hurt the U.S. economy. Nonetheless, [reason for objection follows].
<i>C still O</i>	Person X argues that following the Kyoto treaty would hurt the U.S. economy. Still, [reason for objection follows].
<i>C all the same O</i>	Person X argues that following the Kyoto treaty would hurt the U.S. economy. All the same, [reason for objection follows].
<i>C even so O</i>	Person X argues that following the Kyoto treaty would hurt the U.S. economy. Even so, [reason for objection follows].

<i>despite</i> C, O	Despite the fact that person X argues that following the Kyoto treaty would hurt the U.S. economy, [reason for objection follows].
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If parts of an argument do not include such indicator words and you are uncertain as to their purpose, try substituting your own indicators words and see which makes the best sense. Asking the Assertibility Question serves the same purpose.

There are a few other indicator words and phrases that do not necessarily indicate a specific *part* of an argument, but work instead to indicate transitions within the argument – that the argument is shifting from one claim (or reason) to another, or from a claim to its objection, and so on. These are words like: *also, and, further, furthermore*. Other words – like *to begin, first, firstly, second, finally, lastly...* – help us keep track of more complex arguments with multiple claims and reasons.

Even with such indicator words, decoding an argument in prose is not always an easy task. Doing so, we quickly appreciate how much easier it would be if everyone used argument maps. We'll get plenty of practice doing this over the course of the term.

### KEY POINTS

Two tools can help you identify the role of specific statements in an argument:

- Logic – particularly AQ, RR and HH
- Indicator words – which is an author's way of telling you how the various parts of his argument fit together. Some words/phrase indicate what is the reason and what is the claim, while others indicate an upcoming objection to an existing claim or reason.