The Field Guide Approach to Teaching Argument Analysis

AAPT session, APA Eastern Division, Philadelphia
December 28, 2014

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objective:

Help students become competent consumers of the full range of arguments found across the disciplines.
the standard content:

What's in our “introduction to logic” or “critical thinking” textbooks?
typical activities:

What are we asking students to do in order to learn the skills of argument identification and evaluation?

“Criticize the following arguments in light of the material presented in this section…”  
----Hurley

“Each of the following passages contains a fallacy of relevance. Determine the fallacy that best fits each case…”  
---Baronett

“Identify the moral arguments in each passage…”  
---Baronett

“Identify the fallacies of presumption, ambiguity, and grammatical analogy committed by the following arguments…”  
---Hurley
Figure 1. Diagrams depicted from two pairs of problems categorized by novices as similar and samples of three novices' explanations for their similarity are provided. Problem numbers given represent chapter, followed by problem number from Halliday and Resnick (1974).

Figure 2. Diagrams depicted from pairs of problems categorized by experts as similar and samples of three experts' explanations for their similarity are provided. Problem numbers given represent chapter, followed by problem number from Halliday and Resnick (1974).
learning objectives

classify problems based on appropriate tools for solution

assessment

instructional strategies

make the *entire* classification process explicit

the field guide approach:

a new way to model the expert process

http://www.arborday.org/trees/whattree/index.cfm

http://www.mycokey.com/newMycoKeySite/MycoKeyIdentQuick.html
Photo from
Does the tree have leaves that are flat and thin and generally shed annually?

**CLUE:** These trees are called *BROADLEAF*, a tree with leaves that are flat, thin and generally shed annually most are *DECIDUOUS* (shedding all leaves annually) and bear a variety of fruit and flowers.

Yes

Are the SIMPLE leaves OPPOSITE (2 or 3 leaves that are directly across from each other on the same twig)?

Yes - OR -

Are the leaves not fan-shaped?

Yes

Are the leaves entire, mitten-shaped, or 3-LOBED all on the same small tree or shrub?

Yes

The Tree is a

**Sassafras**

**SASSAFRAS ALBIDUM**

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Field guides and argument analysis

a keyed guide makes explicit which features of an argument experts use to classify

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