

Evaluating arguments is the process of making a judgment about how persuasive an idea is, based on information, standards, or criteria.

You evaluate arguments when you

- choose what to do when one friend wants to go to a movie and one friend wants to go to a concert
- decide which of two classes to take when you have good reasons to take either class
- decide whether you agree with a persuasive essay that you read about a current event
- vote for a dancer, singer, or other performer in a television competition

Evaluating Arguments

Cluster 1 page 15

You will be evaluating the arguments of several writers on the interpretation of the First Amendment.

Cluster Question: How would society be different without the First Amendment?

Directions: In Cluster 1 you will be reading about the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment. On the next screen, you can see how one reader evaluated a passage from the selection by Anthony Lewis. You can then evaluate the passage from a Supreme Court oral argument.

First Evaluation:

“Thoughts That We Hate,” by Anthony Lewis

In the catalog of hateful or offensive expression, burning a flag is surely less dangerous than most other examples: anti-Semitic ravings in a Munich beer hall, say, or preaching to young Muslims in England that they should become suicide bombers. (One worshipper who heard such sermons, Richard Reid, tried unsuccessfully to blow up an airliner with a bomb in his shoe.)

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First Evaluation, *continued*:

“Thoughts That We Hate,” by Anthony Lewis

In 1994 broadcasts on a radio station in Rwanda urged Hutus, who were a majority of the population, to kill Tutsis, the minority, and moderate-minded Hutus. A massacre followed, and more than 500,000 people were killed. Years later a Tutsi-led government forbade political parties to appeal to group identity, and public statements promoting “divisionism” were outlawed. Should we in America who have avoided such tragedies tell Rwandans that it is wrong for them thus to limit freedom of speech?

Issue to Evaluate	Evaluation of Facts, Opinions, and Reasoning in Selection 1
Facts	Richard Reid heard a sermon urging young Muslims to become suicide bombers and tried to blow up an airplane. Radio broadcasts urged Hutus to kill Tutsis in Rwanda, and they did. Now public statements promoting divisions between people are outlawed.

Issue to Evaluate	Evaluation of Facts, Opinions, and Reasoning in Selection 1
Facts	Richard Reid heard a sermon urging young Muslims to become suicide bombers and tried to blow up an airplane. Radio broadcasts urged Hutus to kill Tutsis in Rwanda, and they did. Now public statements promoting divisions between people are outlawed.
Opinions	Flag burning is less dangerous than most other hateful or offensive expression.

Issue to Evaluate	Evaluation of Facts, Opinions, and Reasoning in Selection 1
Facts	Richard Reid heard a sermon urging young Muslims to become suicide bombers and tried to blow up an airplane. Radio broadcasts urged Hutus to kill Tutsis in Rwanda, and they did. Now public statements promoting divisions between people are outlawed.
Opinions	Flag burning is less dangerous than most other hateful or offensive expression.
Reasoning	Is it so bad to limit freedom of speech when it can lead to such bad results?

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After evaluating the facts, opinions, and reasoning, try to express the implications of your evaluation.

Issue to Evaluate	Evaluation of Facts, Opinions, and Reasoning in Selection 1
Implications	Since the United States hasn't experienced the kinds of horrors to the same degree as Rwanda or World War II Europe, we shouldn't be so quick to condemn governments for wanting to restrict hate speech.

Second Evaluation (your chance to practice):

“Are Violent Video Games Protected as Free Speech?”

Supreme Court Oral Arguments

When this Court . . . crafted a rule of law that permits States to regulate a minor’s access to [potentially harmful adult] material outside the presence of a parent, it did so for two fundamental reasons that are equally applicable this morning in this case.

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Second Evaluation, *continued*:

“Are Violent Video Games Protected as Free Speech?”

Supreme Court Oral Arguments

First, this rule permits parents’ claim to authority in their own household to direct the upbringing and the development of their children; and, secondly, this rule promotes the States’ independent interest in helping parents protect the well-being of children in those instances when parents cannot be present.

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Second Evaluation, *continued*:

“Are Violent Video Games Protected as Free Speech?”

Supreme Court Oral Arguments

So this morning, California asks this Court to adopt a rule of law that permits States to restrict minors’ ability to purchase deviant, violent video games that the legislature has determined can be harmful to the development and the upbringing [of children].

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Issue to Evaluate	Evaluation of Facts, Opinions, and Reasoning in Selection 2
Facts	What facts do you note?

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Issue to Evaluate	Evaluation of Facts, Opinions, and Reasoning in Selection 2
Facts	Possible Response: The court crafted a rule that permits States to regulate, outside the presence of a parent, a minor's access to adult material that may be harmful.

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Issue to Evaluate	Evaluation of Facts, Opinions, and Reasoning in Selection 2
Facts	Possible Response: The court crafted a rule that permits States to regulate, outside the presence of a parent, a minor's access to adult material that may be harmful.
Opinions	What opinions do you note?

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Issue to Evaluate	Evaluation of Facts, Opinions, and Reasoning in Selection 2
Facts	Possible Response: The court crafted a rule that permits States to regulate, outside the presence of a parent, a minor's access to adult material that may be harmful.
Opinions	Possible Response: The State has a duty to protect children from harmful material when parents are not present. This rule should be put into law.

Issue to Evaluate	Evaluation of Facts, Opinions, and Reasoning in Selection 2
Facts	Possible Response: The court crafted a rule that permits States to regulate, outside the presence of a parent, a minor's access to adult material that may be harmful.
Opinions	Possible Response: The State has a duty to protect children from harmful material when parents are not present. This rule should be put into law.
Reasoning	What is an example of the author's reasoning?

Issue to Evaluate	Evaluation of Facts, Opinions, and Reasoning in Selection 2
Facts	Possible Response: The court crafted a rule that permits States to regulate, outside the presence of a parent, a minor's access to adult material that may be harmful.
Opinions	Possible Response: The State has a duty to protect children from harmful material when parents are not present. This rule should be put into law.
Reasoning	Possible Response: The rule gives parents authority over the development of their children in their own household but also allows the State to protect the well-being of children when parents are not present.

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After evaluating the facts, opinions, and reasoning, try to express the implications of your evaluation.

Issue to Evaluate	Evaluation of Facts, Opinions, and Reasoning in Selection 2
Implications	What are some possible implications?

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After evaluating the facts, opinions, and reasoning, try to express the implications of your evaluation.

Issue to Evaluate	Evaluation of Facts, Opinions, and Reasoning in Selection 2
Implications	Possible Response: The State should be allowed to interfere with what minors are exposed to if their parents are not available to do so.