

Explicit examples of logical fallacies in

Love is a Fallacy by Max Shulman

Foundations – Part of the Easy Peasy All-in-One Homeschool

A dicto simpliciter ("an argument based on an unqualified generalization") - the example given in the story is: **Exercise is good. Therefore everybody should exercise.**

Hasty generalization (or "fallacy of insufficient sample") - example given in the story is

"You can speak French, I can't speak French, Petey Burch can't speak French. I must therefore conclude that nobody at the University of Minnesota can speak French." If most of the people the author (Dobie Gillis) knows cannot speak French he concludes that no one at the college can speak French. OR "My dear," I said, favoring her with a smile, "we have now spent five evenings together. We have gotten along, splendidly. It is clear that we are well matched."

Post hoc ergo propter hoc ("after it, therefore because of it", or "confusing coincidental relationships with cause") - from the story:

"Let's not take Bill on our picnic. Every time we take him out with us, it rains."

Contradictory Premises ("self-contradiction") - from the story:

I do not see the contradictory premise in this story. The main contradiction would be that the author (Dobie Gillis) begins the story believing that love is logical and can be won through logic. However, the end of the story proves that love is not logical and Dobie's original belief was a fallacy.

Ad Misericordiam ("appeal to pity") - example given in the story:

"A man applies for a job. When the boss asks him what his qualifications are, he replies the he has wife and six children at home, the wife is a helpless cripple, the children have nothing to eat, no clothes to wear, no shoes on their feet, there are no beds in the house, no coal in the cellar, and winter is coming." OR "Polly, I love you. You are the whole world to me, and the moon and

the stars and the constellations of outer space. Please, my darling, say that you will go steady with me, for if you will not, life will be meaningless. I will languish. I will refuse my meals. I will wander the face of the earth, a shambling, hollow-eyed hulk."

False Analogy - example from the text:

"Students should be allowed to look at their textbooks during examinations. After all, surgeons have X-rays to guide them during an operation, lawyers have briefs to guide them during a trial, and carpenters have blueprints to guide them when they are building a house. Why then, shouldn't students be allowed to look at their textbooks during an examination?" OR "My dear," I said, patting her hand in a tolerant manner, "five dates is plenty. After all, you don't have to eat a whole cake to know it's good."

Argumentum ad speculum ("hypothesis contrary to fact") - from the text:

"If Madame Curie had not happened to leave a photographic plate in a drawer with a chunk of pitchblende, the world today would not know about radium." OR "If I hadn't come along you never would have learned about fallacies." This the author (Dobie Gillis) says to Polly.

Poisoning the Well - (a specialization of *ad hominem*) - from the story:

"Two men are having a debate. The first one gets up and says, 'My opponent is a notorious liar. You can't believe a word that he is going to say.'" OR "You can't go with him, Polly. He's a liar. He's a cheat. He's a rat."

Implicit Fallacies

Red herring ("wild goose chase") - from the text (hint: Look to the story for the chase, but what at the end makes it a "wild goose" chase):

The author (Dobie Gillis) wants to change Polly so she is an acceptable mate for him. Therefore he spends five dates training her and then expresses his love for her. However, from the beginning of the story the author gives his roommate, Petey, a raccoon coat, which in the end is what attracts Polly to Petey. The author (Dobie Gillis) never had a chance with Polly from the beginning. (This is an example of a wild goose chase but a Red Herring is actually a change of subject within an argument).

False premise- For this fallacy, we must look to the tale itself. (hint: How does the narrator make an initial logical fallacy in his pursuit of Polly?)

The author (Dobie Gillis) assumes that any woman would want a man like him; “a brilliant student, a tremendous intellectual, a man with an assured future”. However, Polly only wants a man with a raccoon coat and therefore she chooses Petey even though she did not know she was presented with a choice from the beginning. He assumes that love is logical when, in fact, it is not.

Below, illustrate one of the fallacies from the short story: