ENTHYMEME

What is It? | How Do I Use It? | But Why?

What is an Enthymeme?

The informal method of reasoning typical of rhetorical discourse. The enthymeme is sometimes defined as a "truncated syllogism" since either the major or minor premise found in that more formal method of reasoning is left implied. The enthymeme typically occurs as a conclusion coupled with a reason.

WHAT ARE THE PARTS OF THE ENTHYMEME?

A enthymeme is made up of an issue question, commonly made up of a variation of the term WATCO; What are the consequences of. . ? , a claim, a secondary clause (also called the Because Clause), and an Implicit Assumption.

Why?

An enthymeme gives you the tools to examine the validity of an argument.

How do I do This Thing?

We start by identifying the unspoken beliefs and assumptions of the audience. If you can identify those you are on the way to building an effective and persuasive enthymeme.

Then examine your issue question. This stems from the WATCO acronym: What Are The Consequences Of. . .

Issue Question: What are the consequences of A on B?

Now Evaluate: Are the A and B terms clearly defined and specific? Does the question appeal to anyone; that is, who is the intended audience?

Claim: A V1 (verb one) B.

Now Evaluate: Are the and B terms the same as in the issue question? Does the claim answer the issue question? Is the verb active and transitive (A verb that takes an object)? Is the claim initially unacceptable to the audience?

B/C Clause (The Because Clause): A' (a form of the A term) V2 (verb two) C.

Now Evaluate: Is the A' term the same as or an acceptable redefinition of the A term? Is the C term sufficiently different from the B term? Is the C term Specific? Is the new verb active and transitive? Is the verb specific? Is the B/C clause reasonable, probable, or likely to the intended audience? (This clause should acceptable to the audience)

Implicit Assumption: Whatever Verb2 C also Verb1 B.

Now Evaluate: Is the implicit assumption immediately acceptable to the intended audience?

How to Use the Enthymeme:

There are many different ways to address any issue. But at the heart of any good argument is an examination of the deeply help beliefs or unspoken assumptions of your audience. You may not be able to persuade them to completely reverse their opinion, but if you base your argument on the implicit assumptions with which your audience agrees, you will find your arguments are much more effective and persuasive. Examining an enthymeme is the first step to creating a plan of persuasion. You can use an enthymeme to;

- Structure a discussion,

- Discover and shape claims,

- arrange the key components of an argument.

"As a [rhetorical] tool, the enthymeme enables us to become conscious both of the processes of thought that are inherent in reasoned discourse and of the organic connections that exist among those processes, the process of writing a paper, and the final structure of that paper. In other words, there is an organic connection between talking about something and writing about it... we can learn to think through how our discussions shape how we read and how we write... 'reasoned discourse' can productively lead to close reading and intelligent writing". Emmel.

Examples, Please!!

What a tangled web we weave. . . Even children's books use enthymemes! Consider *Charlotte's Web*:

The sheep is trying to convince Templeton the rat to go to the dump for a newspaper clipping to supply Charlotte the amazing spider with words to save Wilbur's life.

WATCO/ Issue Question: What is the effect of Templeton going to the dump for a newspaper clipping on Templeton's quality of life?

Claim: Templeton going to the dump for a newspaper clipping (A) will preserve (V1) Templeton's life (B).

Because Clause: Templeton helping to save Wilbur (A') ensures (V2) a trough full of food (C).

Implicit Assumption: Whatever ensures (V2) a trough full of food (C) also will preserve (V1) Templeton's life (B).

How about another? This time from *Harry Potter*;

WATCO/Issue Question: What are the consequences of Snape protecting Harry Potter (A) on Snape's Happiness?

Claim: Protecting Harry Potter (A) ensures (V1) Snape's happiness (B).

Because Clause: Helping Dumbledore protect Harry Potter (A') preserves (V2) Lilly Potter's memory (C).

Implicit Assumption: Whatever preserves (V2) Lilly Potter's memory (C) also ensures (V1) Snape's happiness (B).

(Why? The assumption is that Snape was in love with Lilly Potter)