

**English Composition V & VI: Refutation and
Confirmation Stages**

Exercises for argumentative essays

By

James A. Selby
9601 W. 97th
Overland Park, KS 66212
913-541-1789
jimselby@everestkc.net

Composition Curriculum

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Progymnasmata: Stage Five and Six

Refutation and Confirmation

Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 4
Definition of terms	Page 12
Teaching Procedure	Page 15
Grading Sheet for Refutation	Page 15
Grading Sheet for Confirmation	Page 17
Lesson 1: Refutation of Giufà and the Judge	Page 19
Lesson 2: Confirmation of Giufà and the Judge	Page 34
Lesson 3: Refutation of Chico and the Crane	Page 41
Lesson 4: Confirmation of Chico and the Crane	Page 56
Lesson 5: Refutation of Daedalus and Icarus	Page 70
Lesson 6: Confirmation of Daedalus and Icarus	Page 82
Lesson 7: Refutation of Andrew Jackson &The Battle of New Orleans	Page
93	

Lesson 8: Confirmation of Andrew Jackson and the Battle of New Orleans	Page
110	
Lesson 9: Refutation the Story of William Tell	Page 123
Lesson 10: Confirmation of the Story of William Tell	Page 134
Lesson 11: Refutation of George Washington & the Apple Tree	Page 144
Lesson 12: Confirmation of the Story of George Washington	Page 161
Lesson 13: Refutation of the Rose	Page 181
Lesson 14: Confirmation of the Rose	Page 193
Lesson 15: Refutation of Andreas Hofer	Page 204
Lesson 16: Confirmation of Andreas Hofer	Page 219
Appendix A: Figures of description	Page 234

Introduction: Refutation and Confirmation

These two sets of exercises, Refutation and Confirmation, would correspond to an argumentative essay in modern composition theory. The students are learning how to structure their thought and, hence, their communication process when given the task of arguing for or against an idea, thought, chain of events, method or story. The categories of development or paragraphs that make up these essays are essential elements in the rhetorical process (identified as heads of purpose in later stages) that must become second nature in the mental processes of our students. The art of Grammar instructs us to use of both imitation and repetition in our quest to master facts. This essay form, taught through the following exercises, must be repeated week after week for at least a full semester and then a wise faculty will integrate this form along with the others as they are learned into weekly in-class essays across the curriculum in order to ensure continued mastery.

Aphthonius writes the following on the **Refutation**:

Refutation is the overturning of some given fact. One should use refutation not on things that are perfectly obvious, nor on those that are completely impossible, but on intermediate matters.

Those engaged in refutation must first discredit those who make the assertion, then add an exposition of the matter, and use the following heads: unclarity, implausibility, and in addition impossibility, inconsistency, impropriety; and adduce finally inexpediency.

This preliminary exercise includes within itself the whole force of the art.

And then **Confirmation**:

Confirmation is the securing of some given fact. One should use confirmation not on things that are perfectly obvious, nor on those that are completely impossible, but on intermediate matters.

Those engaged in confirmation should reverse the procedure of refutation and first speak in praise of those who make the assertion, setting out the exposition piecemeal and using the opposite heads: clarity instead of unclarity, plausibility instead of implausibility, possibility instead of impossibility, consistency instead of inconsistency, propriety instead of impropriety, expediency instead of inexpediency.

This exercise includes the whole force of the art.

Aphthonius does not explain the heads but does give an example of both the Refutation exercise and the Confirmation exercise that the students are to imitate. We have included Aphthonius' model for Refutation below. We then divide the model into heads with comments. We repeat that process with the Confirmation before proceeding to the teaching procedures.

Refutation: the story of Daphne is improbable

It is pointless to contradict the poets, but they themselves provoke us to contradict them by first inventing such stories about the gods. Is it not absurd that they should have had no respect for

the gods, while we have respect for the poets? For my part, I am pained when any of the gods is treated with contempt, but especially Apollo, whom they themselves have made the patron of their own art; for such are the tales they have told about Apollo's Daphne.

Daphne, they say, was the offspring of Earth and Ladon, and excelling others in beauty she made the Pythian her lover. Loving her, he pursued her; pursuing her, he did not catch her, but Earth received her daughter and gave forth a flower bearing the same name as the maiden. He crowned himself with her in her new form, and the plant is displayed as a crown at the Pythian tripod because of his desire for the mortal maiden, and the shoot is made a token of his art. Such are the tales they tell; it is easy to put them to the test as follows.

Daphne was the offspring of Earth and Ladon: what proof does she have of her birth? She was human; theirs is a different nature. How did Ladon have intercourse with Earth? Flooding her with his waters? Then all rivers can be called Earth's husbands, since all flood her. And if a human came forth from a river, then a river can come from humans; for descendants disclose their ancestry. What do they call a marriage of river and earth? A wedding is for sentient beings, of whom the earth is not one. So either Daphne must be classed among streams or Ladon must be reckoned a man.

But let it be so; let us grant to the poets that Daphne was the child of Earth and Ladon. When the girl was born, by whom was she raised? For even if I grant the birth, the rearing is impossible. Where did the girl live? 'By Zeus, with her father.' What human can live in a river? The father would not have noticed whether he was drowning her in his waters or rearing her in his streams. 'But the girl lived beneath the earth with her mother.' Then she was hidden from view; and if she was hidden there was no one to observe her. When a girl's beauty is concealed, love has no beginning.

If you will, let us grant this too to the poets. How did a god love and belie his nature by falling in love? Love is the most burdensome of all things, and it is impious to ascribe the worst evils to the gods. For if the gods are subject to all diseases, how will they differ from mortals? But if they bear love, which is worst of all, why are they free from the rest when they bear the most grievous? But his nature does not know passion, nor was the Pythian seen as a lover.

When the Pythian was chasing the girl, how did he come second to a mortal? Men excel women; do women, then, outclass gods? Does what is lesser among mortals overcome gods?

Why did the mother receive her daughter when she fled? Is marriage a worthless thing? Then how did she herself become a mother? Or a good thing? Then why did she deprive her daughter of what is fine? Either she was not a mother or, if she was, she is to be reckoned a poor one.

Why did Earth act in conflict with her own deeds? She displeased the Pythian by saving her daughter; did she then try to please him by bringing her back? She should not have tried to please if she wanted to displease.

Why was the god crowned with laurel at the tripods? The shoot was a symbol of pleasure, but the power of prophecy is a sign of virtue; how then did the Pythian connect what by nature cannot be joined? What? Was the cause mortal, the passion immortal?

Let there be an end to the poets, lest I seem to be decrying them.

Refutation: the story of Daphne is improbable

Discredit:

It is pointless to contradict the poets, but they themselves provoke us to contradict them by first inventing such stories about the gods. Is it not absurd that they should have had no respect for the gods, while we have respect for the poets? For my part, I am pained when any of the gods is treated with contempt, but especially Apollo, whom they themselves have made the patron of their own art; for such are the tales they have told about Apollo's Daphne.

Exposition of matter:

Daphne, they say, was the offspring of Earth and Ladon, and excelling others in beauty she made the Pythian her lover. Loving her, he pursued her; pursuing her, he did not catch her, but Earth received her daughter and gave forth a flower bearing the same name as the maiden. He crowned himself with her in her new form, and the plant is displayed as a crown at the Pythian tripod because of his desire for the mortal maiden, and the shoot is made a token of his art. Such are the tales they tell; it is easy to put them to the test as follows.

Who: Daphne, Earth, Ladon, and Apollo (the Pythian)

What: Daphne sought to escape Apollo's desire

When: Long, long ago

Where: On earth

How: Mother Earth turned Daphne into a flower

Why: To explain why the flower named after Daphne is used on the Pythian tripod

The exposition paragraph is a narrative paragraph that is a precise of the facts being refuted. Notice the use of *effictio* (*excelling others in beauty*) and *ethopoeia* (*because of his desire for the mortal maiden*). The student will use the six narrative questions to construct the paragraph. Though brevity is important we will continue to require students to use figures of description in order to further develop the skill of engaging the imagination of the reader.

Unclarity:

Daphne was the offspring of Earth and Ladon: what proof does she have of her birth? She was human; theirs is a different nature. How did Ladon have intercourse with Earth? Flooding her with his waters? Then all rivers can be called Earth's husbands, since all flood her. And if a human came forth from a river, then a river can come from humans; for descendants disclose their ancestry. What do they call a marriage of river and earth? A wedding is for sentient beings, of whom the earth is not one. So either Daphne must be classed among streams or Ladon must be reckoned a man.

Men argue ideas in six categories. These headings, as Aphthonius states, are the full force of the art. We will slightly redefine three of these six heads of purpose in Common topic but the basic approach to refuting or confirming remains the same. Arguing that an idea is clear or unclear is the first heading to be tackled. The material to which we apply the heading is arbitrary to the process. We want the students to be forcing their minds to think along these lines of argument. If the material were the focus students would be less conscious of the categories and therefore the exercises would be less valuable as a teaching tool. The argument rests in the

lack of clarity relative to the marriage and offspring of Earth and Ladon (a river). The process of conception is unclear both for the single river Ladon and then for all rivers on earth. It is unclear why humans would not give birth to rivers if this story is true. The use of the work marriage is unclear when applied to river and earth. Finally, the distinction between Daphne and Ladon is muddled and unclear.

Implausible:

But let it be so; let us grant to the poets that Daphne was the child of Earth and Ladon. When the girl was born, by whom was she raised? For even if I grant the birth, the rearing is implausible. Where did the girl live? 'By Zeus, with her father.' What human can live in a river? The father would not have noticed whether he was drowning her in his waters or rearing her in his streams. 'But the girl lived beneath the earth with her mother.' Then she was hidden from view; and if she was hidden there was no one to observe her. When a girl's beauty is concealed, love has no beginning.

Here observe he is not arguing such an event is impossible but rather unlikely or implausible. Daphne would likely have drowned if her father raised her. If her mother had raised her she would never have been seen which means that Apollo could not have loved her having never seen her.

Impossible:

If you will, let us grant this too to the poets. How did a god love and belie his nature by falling in love? Love is the most burdensome of all things, and it is impious to ascribe the worst evils to the gods. For if the gods are subject to all diseases, how will they differ from mortals? But if they bear love, which is worst of all, why are they free from the rest when they bear the most grievous? But his nature does not know passion, nor was the Pythian seen as a lover. When the Pythian was chasing the girl, how did he come second to a mortal? Men excel women; do women, then, outclass gods? Does what is lesser among mortals overcome gods?

Aphthonius argues it is impossible for gods to love because love is an evil and a disease, and only mortals are subject to disease. Further it is impossible that a god would lose a foot race to a mortal woman.

Inconsistent:

Why did the mother receive her daughter when she fled? Is marriage a worthless thing? Then how did she herself become a mother? Or a good thing? Then why did she deprive her daughter of what is fine? Either she was not a mother or, if she was, she is to be reckoned a poor one.

The argument lies in the inconsistency of a mother who acts in such a way as to destroy the institution of marriage when it was marriage itself that allowed her to have a daughter in the first place. Marriage would be a good all mothers would desire for their daughters and therefore to undermine the institution is inconsistent.

Improper:

Why did Earth act in conflict with her own deeds? She displeased the Pythian by saving her daughter; did she then try to please him by bringing her back? She should not have tried to please if she wanted to displease.

We are tempted to consider this argument as another example of inconsistency. However, the issue is framed as one of integrity rather than consistency. As an issue of personal integrity Earth is being two-faced in first displeasing Apollo and then turning around and attempting to appease the Pythian. This act then becomes an issue of honor, or dishonor, and, therefore, improper on the part of earth. An improper act on the part of Earth is unthinkable and so disproves the narrative.

Inexpedient:

Why was the god crowned with laurel at the tripods? The shoot was a symbol of pleasure, but the power of prophecy is a sign of virtue; how then did the Pythian connect what by nature cannot be joined? What? Was the cause mortal, the passion immortal?

In the Pythian temple the tripod acts as an instrument of prophecy. Prophecy is divine and a sign of virtue. The narrative suggests that the flower that Daphne become now rests atop the virtuous tripod. However, the flower or shoot is now a symbol of pleasure or more accurately, debauchery and licentiousness. This commingling of symbols and signs is not helpful to the purpose of the gods that argues against the validity of the tale.

Epilogue:

Let there be an end to the poets, lest I seem to be decrying them.

Again, as in the Chreia and Maxim exercises, a brief close of one or possibly two sentences is required.

Confirmation Here

Definition of terms

Action—corresponds to the narrative question“what?”

Agent—corresponds to the narrative question“who?”

Analogy—resemblance of relations or attributes as a ground of reasoning. A figure identifying similarities found in dissimilar ideas.

Anecdote--a concise reminiscence aptly referring to some person. It is called anecdote [*chreia*] because it is useful [*chreiôdes*].

Cause—1) corresponds to the narrative question“why?” 2) a heading in the Chreia

"Chreia" (from the Greek *chreiodes*, "useful") is "a brief reminiscence referring to some person in a pithy form for the purpose of edification." It takes the form of an anecdote that reports either a saying, an edifying action, or both.

Definitions Here

Teaching Procedure

1. Read to the students Aphthonius' introduction. Explain these lessons are exercises and they are learning how to think about two sides of an issue. This ability does not imply that truth is relative but does imply that people think about issues differently. If our students are to be effective communicators they must be able to understand how and what other people think. This skill does not come naturally and must be taught through imitation and repetition.
2. Do not define or explain the terms in Aphthonius' second paragraph at this point but rather make clear the structure of the essay. Understanding the ideas of the essay will come as the students work through the examples.
3. Explain that any refutation or confirmation, i.e. an argument, can be outlined using the categories or skills learned in these two stages.
4. Read the first paragraph of Aphthonius' Refutation, "The story of Daphne is Improbable." The teacher may read or have one of the students read.
5. ...

Eleven More Steps Here

Grading Sheet for Refutation

Student:

Refutation Title:

Points

Discredit: _____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Exposition of matter (Narrative): _____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Unclear: _____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Implausibility: _____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Impossibility: _____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Inconsistency: _____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Impropriety: _____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Inexpediency: _____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Epilogue: _____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Oral Presentation _____/10

Total _____/100

Comments:

Grading Sheet for Confirmation

Student:

Date:

Confirmation Title:

Points

Credit:

_____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Clarity:

_____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Plausibility:

_____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Possibility:

_____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Consistency:

_____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Propriety:

_____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Expediency: _____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Epilogue: _____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Oral Presentation _____/10

Persuasiveness _____/10

Total _____/100

Comments:

Lesson 1: Refutation of Giufà and the Judge (Five days)

Goal: To equip each student with all the skills necessary to effectively communicate through written composition and to prepare them for Rhetoric.

Purpose: To master the fifth stage of the Progymnasmata, Refutation, by learning, understanding and utilizing the nine steps of constructing the argumentative essay.

To review the skills mastered in Narrative, Fable, Chreia and Maxim.

Objectives:

- Students will listen and read along as the teacher reads the matter to be refuted.
- Students will develop an introductory paragraph that discredits the author.
- Students will develop a paragraph that sets out an exposition or reduced narrative of the matter using the six narrative questions and at least one figure of description.
- Students will develop a paragraph that adduces unclarity.
- Students will develop a paragraph that adduces implausibility.
- Students will develop a paragraph that adduces impossibility.
- Students will develop a paragraph that adduces inconsistency.
- Students will develop a paragraph that adduces impropriety.
- Students will develop a paragraph that adduces finally inexpediency.
- Students will correctly conclude with a brief Epilogue or conclusion.
- Students will vary figures of anemographia.

Aphthonius defines Refutation in the following manner:

“Refutation is the overturning of some given fact. One should use refutation not on things that are perfectly obvious, nor on those that are completely impossible, but on intermediate matters.

Those engaged in refutation must first discredit those who make the assertion, then add an exposition of the matter, and use the following heads: unclarity, implausibility, and in addition impossibility, inconsistency, impropriety; and adduce finally inexpediency.

This preliminary exercise includes within itself the whole force of the art.”

He then goes on to give the following example of Refutation:

Aphthonius' Model for imitation

Refutation: the story of Daphne is improbable

Discredit:

It is pointless to contradict the poets, but they themselves provoke us to contradict them by first inventing such stories about the gods. Is it not absurd that they should have had no respect for the gods, while we have respect for the poets? For my part, I am pained when any of the gods is treated with contempt, but especially Apollo, whom they themselves have made the patron of their own art; for such are the tales they have told about Apollo's Daphne.

Exposition of matter:

Daphne, they say, was the offspring of Earth and Ladon, and excelling others in beauty she made the Pythian her lover. Loving her, he pursued her; pursuing her, he did not catch her, but Earth received her daughter and gave forth a flower bearing the same name as the maiden. He crowned himself with her in her new form, and the plant is displayed as a crown at the Pythian tripod because of his desire for the mortal maiden, and the shoot is made a token of his art. Such are the tales they tell; it is easy to put them to the test as follows.

Unclarity:

Daphne was the offspring of Earth and Ladon: what proof does she have of her birth? She was human; theirs is a different nature. How did Ladon have intercourse with Earth? Flooding her with his waters? Then all rivers can be called Earth's husbands, since all flood her. And if a human came forth from a river, then a river can come from humans; for descendants disclose their ancestry. What do they call a marriage of river and earth? A wedding is for sentient beings, of whom the earth is not one. So either Daphne must be classed among streams or Ladon must be reckoned a man.

Implausible:

But let it be so; let us grant to the poets that Daphne was the child of Earth and Ladon. When the girl was born, by whom was she raised? For even if I grant the birth, the rearing is impossible. Where did the girl live? 'By Zeus, with her father.' What human can live in a river? The father would not have noticed whether he was drowning her in his waters or rearing her in his streams. 'But the girl lived beneath the earth with her mother.' Then she was hidden from view; and if she was hidden there was no one to observe her. When a girl's beauty is concealed, love has no beginning.

Impossible:

If you will, let us grant this too to the poets. How did a god love and belie his nature by falling in love? Love is the most burdensome of all things, and it is impious to ascribe the worst evils to the gods. For if the gods are subject to all diseases, how will they differ from mortals? But if they bear love, which is worst of all, why are they free from the rest when they bear the most grievous? But his nature does not know passion, nor was the Pythian seen as a lover. When the Pythian was chasing the girl, how did he come second to a mortal? Men excel women; do women, then, outclass gods? Does what is lesser among mortals overcome gods?

Inconsistent:

Why did the mother receive her daughter when she fled? Is marriage a worthless thing? Then how did she herself become a mother? Or a good thing? Then why did she deprive her daughter of what is fine? Either she was not a mother or, if she was, she is to be reckoned a poor one.

Improper:

Why did Earth act in conflict with her own deeds? She displeased the Pythian by saving her daughter; did she then try to please him by bringing her back? She should not have tried to please if she wanted to displease.

Inexpedient:

Why was the god crowned with laurel at the tripods? The shoot was a symbol of pleasure, but the power of prophecy is a sign of virtue; how then did the Pythian connect what by nature cannot be joined? What? Was the cause mortal, the passion immortal?

Epilogue:

Let there be an end to the poets, lest I seem to be decrying them.

Giufà and the Judge (Italy)

One day Giufà went out to gather herbs, and it was night before he returned. On his way back the moon rose through the clouds, and Giufà sat down on a stone and watched the moon appear and disappear behind the clouds, and he exclaimed constantly, "It appears, it appears! It sets, it sets!"

Now there were near the way some thieves who were skinning a calf which they had stolen, and when they heard, "It appears, it sets!" they feared that the officers of justice were coming, so they ran away and left the meat.

When Giufà saw the thieves running away, he went to see what it was and found the calf skinned. He took his knife and cut off flesh enough to fill his sack and went home. When he arrived there his mother asked him why he came so late. He said it was because he was bringing some meat which she was to sell the next day, and the money was to be kept for him. The next day his mother sent him into the country and sold the meat.

In the evening Giufà returned and asked his mother, "Did you sell the meat?"

"Yes, I sold it to the flies on credit."

"When will they give you the money?"

"When they get it."

A week passed, and the flies brought no money, so Giufà went to the judge and said to him, "Sir, I want justice. I sold the flies meat on credit, and they have not come to pay me."

The judge said, "I pronounce this sentence on them: Wherever you see them, you may kill them."

Just then a fly lighted on the judge's nose, and Giufà dealt it such a blow that he broke the judge's head.

Develop the heads sentence by sentence or point by point from the narrative. The exercise directs the students to consider a fact in one of six particular ways (unclarity, implausibility, impossibility, inconsistency, impropriety, and inexpediency). We could actually argue any of the facts from any of these heads. However, the exercise disciplines the student to consistently think in an orderly manner in order to develop an argument—in the first case refutation and next week confirmation. By maintaining the same order for the same facts the student learns to consider at least two sides of an argument. Below are the heads with the sentences and following these is an example of a Refutation essay of The Rose.

Develop the appropriate argument for each of the following thoughts from the story reminding your students this is an exercise and a discipline that will become quite natural in time. They must trust the process.

Unclarity:

One day Giufà went out to gather herbs, and it was night before he returned. On his way back the moon rose through the clouds, and Giufà sat down on a stone and watched the moon appear and disappear behind the clouds, and he exclaimed constantly, "It appears, it appears! It sets, it sets!"

Implausibility:

Now there were near the way some thieves who were skinning a calf which they had stolen, and when they heard, "It appears, it sets!" they feared that the officers of justice were coming, so they ran away and left the meat.

Impossibility:

When Giufà saw the thieves running away, he went to see what it was and found the calf skinned. He took his knife and cut off flesh enough to fill his sack and went home. When he arrived there his mother asked him why he came so late. He said it was because he was bringing some meat which she was to sell the next day, and the money was to be kept for him. The next day his mother sent him into the country and sold the meat.

Inconsistency:

In the evening Giufà returned and asked his mother, "Did you sell the meat?"

"Yes, I sold it to the flies on credit."

"When will they give you the money?"

"When they get it."

Impropriety:

A week passed, and the flies brought no money, so Giufà went to the judge and said to him, "Sir, I want justice. I sold the flies meat on credit, and they have not come to pay me."

The judge said, "I pronounce this sentence on them: Wherever you see them, you may kill them."

Inexpediency:

Just then a fly lighted on the judge's nose, and Giufà dealt it such a blow that he broke the judge's head.

Epilogue:

Contemporary Model:

Introduction: Discredit the author

Those men who have been gifted with the ability to tell wonderful stories should be honored rather than abused. However, when such talent is used to tell falsehoods for the sake of gain honest men cannot stand idly by. When lies masquerade as truth, lovers of truth must raise the hue and cry. Such false tales as these should be brought to an end and all good men must act in their destruction.

Exposition of matter (Narrative):

Agent(s) (who) ___ Giufà, thieves, the Judge, his mother, and the fly_____

Action (what) ___Giufà finds meat, his mother deceives him, he goes to court against the flies, the judge ridicules him and is punished.____

Time (when) ___In the past_____

Place (where) ___A village in Italy_____

Manner (how) ___the experiences of a half-wit_____

Cause (why) ___foolish behavior leads to bad ends_____

The agents in this tall tale include Giufà, his mother, some thieves, a Judge, and a fly. Giufà was out one night and stumbled upon some thieves. They mistook him for the police and ran. Upon investigating, Giufà discovered the carcass of a cow and helped himself to a satchel full of meat. Returning home he told his mother to sell the meat at market the next day and give him the money. His mother sold the meat but kept the money and told her half-wit son that the flies bought the goods and would pay Giufà later, when they had the money. After a few days Giufà became impatient and went to court to charge the flies. The Judge, thinking to have some fun with such a fool told Giufà that the flies were guilty and that whenever Giufà saw a fly he could kill it. Unfortunately for the Judge, as he completed his pronouncement a fly landed on his nose and without hesitation Giufà struck the fly with such force that he broke the Judge's head.

Unclarity:

One day Giufà went out to gather herbs, and it was night before he returned. On his way back the moon rose through the clouds, and Giufà sat down on a stone and watched the moon appear and disappear behind the clouds, and he exclaimed constantly, "It appears, it appears! It sets, it sets!"

Everyone, even such as Giufa, would surely have noticed the sun going down let alone the twilight. How could anyone be surprised by night? Further, Giufa is not psychotic he is purportedly simply half-witted. Why would Giufa sit by himself on stone and cry out to no one that the moon was appearing or setting?

Implausibility:

Now there were near the way some thieves who were skinning a calf which they had stolen, and when they heard, "It appears, it sets!" they feared that the officers of justice were coming, so they ran away and left the meat.

Though it may have been possible the thieves would confuse Giufa's words, "It appears, it sets!" with the police it is highly unlikely. Police shout things like, "Put up your hands," or "stop where you are," not, "It appears, it sets!"

Impossibility:

When Giufà saw the thieves running away, he went to see what it was and found the calf skinned. He took his knife and cut off flesh enough to fill his sack and went home. When he arrived there his mother asked him why he came so late. He said it was because he was bringing some meat which she was to sell the next day, and the money was to be kept for him. The next day his mother sent him into the country and sold the meat.

Giufa had been out gathering herbs all day. His sack would already be filled with the valuable plants. The story purports that Giufa had either not filled his sack through the entire day's work or he dumped out the hard earned wages of the day in order to stash away some of the skinned calf. Such a turn of events is simply not possible. Even if it was conceivable such a half wit as Giufa would not have been able to think quickly enough on his feet to consider all the steps necessary for his gain on short notice in this manner.

Inconsistency:

*In the evening Giufà returned and asked his mother, "Did you sell the meat?"
"Yes, I sold it to the flies on credit."
"When will they give you the money?"
"When they get it."*

A person who had thought quickly enough to dump out his herbs and fill his back with beef could not then be so stupid as to believe such a ridiculous take as told by his mother. Insects do not use money and even a half-wit life Giufa would know that.

Impropriety:

A week passed, and the flies brought no money, so Giufà went to the judge and said to him, "Sir, I want justice. I sold the flies meat on credit, and they have not come to pay me."

The judge said, "I pronounce this sentence on them: Wherever you see them, you may kill them."

That a judge would act in such a facetious manner is without propriety. An officer of the court could not so belittle his own institution with such a judgement as to make it ridiculous in this manner. This type of behavior borders on the scandalous and judges are not in the habit of creating scandals.

Inexpediency:

Just then a fly lighted on the judge's nose, and Giufà dealt it such a blow that he broke the judge's head.

This supposed action on the part of Giufa defies reason. Even a half-wit knows that to strike an august person such as a judge would lead to severe punishment. Giufa has nothing to gain by such an action and everything to lose. The striking of the judge could simply not have taken place as told in this far-fetched story.

Epilogue:

Let us bring to an end the attack on this story. Clearly this tall tale has been fabricated without regard to truth.

Worksheet

Aphthonius' Model for imitation

Refutation: the story of Daphne is improbable

Discredit:

It is pointless to contradict the poets, but they themselves provoke us to contradict them by first inventing such stories about the gods. Is it not absurd that they should have had no respect for the gods, while we have respect for the poets? For my part, I am pained when any of the gods is treated with contempt, but especially Apollo, whom they themselves have made the patron of their own art; for such are the tales they have told about Apollo's Daphne.

Exposition of matter:

Daphne, they say, was the offspring of Earth and Ladon, and excelling others in beauty she made the Pythian her lover. Loving her, he pursued her; pursuing her, he did not catch her, but Earth received her daughter and gave forth a flower bearing the same name as the maiden. He crowned himself with her in her new form, and the plant is displayed as a crown at the Pythian tripod because of his desire for the mortal maiden, and the shoot is made a token of his art. Such are the tales they tell; it is easy to put them to the test as follows.

Unclarity:

Daphne was the offspring of Earth and Ladon: what proof does she have of her birth? She was human; theirs is a different nature. How did Ladon have intercourse with Earth? Flooding her with his waters? Then all rivers can be called Earth's husbands, since all flood her. And if a human came forth from a river, then a river can come from humans; for descendants disclose their ancestry. What do they call a marriage of river and earth? A wedding is for sentient beings, of whom the earth is not one. So either Daphne must be classed among streams or Ladon must be reckoned a man.

Implausible:

But let it be so; let us grant to the poets that Daphne was the child of Earth and Ladon. When the girl was born, by whom was she raised? For even if I grant the birth, the rearing is impossible. Where did the girl live? 'By Zeus, with her father.' What human can live in a river? The father would not have noticed whether he was drowning her in his waters or rearing her in his streams. 'But the girl lived beneath the earth with her mother.' Then she was hidden from view; and if she was hidden there was no one to observe her. When a girl's beauty is concealed, love has no beginning.

Impossible:

If you will, let us grant this too to the poets. How did a god love and belie his nature by falling in love? Love is the most burdensome of all things, and it is impious to ascribe the worst evils to the gods. For if the gods are subject to all diseases, how will they differ from mortals? But if they bear love, which is worst of all, why are they free from the rest when they bear the

most grievous? But his nature does not know passion, nor was the Pythian seen as a lover. When the Pythian was chasing the girl, how did he come second to a mortal? Men excel women; do women, then, outclass gods? Does what is lesser among mortals overcome gods?

Inconsistent:

Why did the mother receive her daughter when she fled? Is marriage a worthless thing? Then how did she herself become a mother? Or a good thing? Then why did she deprive her daughter of what is fine? Either she was not a mother or, if she was, she is to be reckoned a poor one.

Improper:

Why did Earth act in conflict with her own deeds? She displeased the Pythian by saving her daughter; did she then try to please him by bringing her back? She should not have tried to please if she wanted to displease.

Inexpedient:

Why was the god crowned with laurel at the tripods? The shoot was a symbol of pleasure, but the power of prophecy is a sign of virtue; how then did the Pythian connect what by nature cannot be joined? What? Was the cause mortal, the passion immortal?

Epilogue:

Let there be an end to the poets, lest I seem to be decrying them.

Worksheet

Giufà and the Judge (Italy)

One day Giufà went out to gather herbs, and it was night before he returned. On his way back the moon rose through the clouds, and Giufà sat down on a stone and watched the moon appear and disappear behind the clouds, and he exclaimed constantly, "It appears, it appears! It sets, it sets!"

Now there were near the way some thieves who were skinning a calf which they had stolen, and when they heard, "It appears, it sets!" they feared that the officers of justice were coming, so they ran away and left the meat.

When Giufà saw the thieves running away, he went to see what it was and found the calf skinned. He took his knife and cut off flesh enough to fill his sack and went home. When he arrived there his mother asked him why he came so late. He said it was because he was bringing some meat which she was to sell the next day, and the money was to be kept for him. The next day his mother sent him into the country and sold the meat.

In the evening Giufà returned and asked his mother, "Did you sell the meat?"

"Yes, I sold it to the flies on credit."

"When will they give you the money?"

"When they get it."

A week passed, and the flies brought no money, so Giufà went to the judge and said to him, "Sir, I want justice. I sold the flies meat on credit, and they have not come to pay me."

The judge said, "I pronounce this sentence on them: Wherever you see them, you may kill them."

Just then a fly lighted on the judge's nose, and Giufà dealt it such a blow that he broke the judge's head.

Outline of Essay

Discredit:

Exposition of matter (Narrative):

Agent(s) (who) _____

Action (what) _____

Time (when) _____

Place (where) _____

Manner (how) _____

Cause (why) _____

Unclarity:

One day Giufà went out to gather herbs, and it was night before he returned. On his way back the moon rose through the clouds, and Giufà sat down on a stone and watched the moon appear and disappear behind the clouds, and he exclaimed constantly, "It appears, it appears! It sets, it sets!"

Implausibility:

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Epilogue: