

is advancing. Thus, she might begin with details about the NATO bombing of Belgrade to create an argument about the value of international organizations using military intervention. She is using the knowledge the audience already accepts to create an argument to move the audience to accept her claim.

Although public arguments must by their nature begin with public knowledge, at their best they do not end there. One of the greatest values of public debate is that debaters offer audiences new information and new perspectives that audience members then add to their own knowledge. Debaters learn as much as they can about the subject they are debating, and much of what they learn they communicate to the audience, which becomes more educated and more discerning as a result. While a debater might use the audience's general knowledge about NATO's bombing of Belgrade to convince them that military intervention is an appropriate tool, a better debater will conduct extensive research to learn more about that example and others to improve his ability to persuade the audience of the claim. Even if audience members do not change their positions, public debates inform and educate democratic societies and thereby deepen and make more knowledgeable subsequent citizen decisions.

Although a debate may begin with public knowledge, arguments may become increasingly more technical as they proceed. Debaters may cross the line between the public and technical spheres, moving from information more familiar to a universal audience toward information usually shared only in technical arenas. The goal of argument in these technical arenas, especially in the sciences and social sciences, is the creation of knowledge, which requires in-depth and precise understanding of scientific concepts, theories, and processes. These requirements often result in arguments that can be understood only by experts, who often use a specialized vocabulary. Thus, technical argument tends to isolate arguers within their respective fields. A public debate may mean using the knowledge created in technical fields as evidence for public argument. For instance, the technical, scientific community created knowledge about the causes of global warming that subsequently became evidence supporting arguments in the public arena. Debaters must learn to incorporate different information and deliver it from one sphere to another.

In summary, evidence in public argument consists of knowledge generally available to the public plus knowledge produced by technical fields. A skilled debater starts with knowledge already available to the audience, then supplements that public knowledge with information gleaned from more technical or scientific sources. An excellent debater must accurately translate technical information into forms understandable to general audiences without losing the meaning of that information. Skilled public debaters must also make the effort not only to understand evidence created in specialized communities but also to meticulously and fairly translate that evidence into words and concepts a more general (public) audience can understand.

REASON

If evidence is the starting point of argument, reasoning is the process a debater uses to connect evidence to a claim. The debater starts with selected evidence and then uses a process of reasoning to connect the evidence to a claim. In this manner, she attempts to convince the audience to believe in the claim to the same