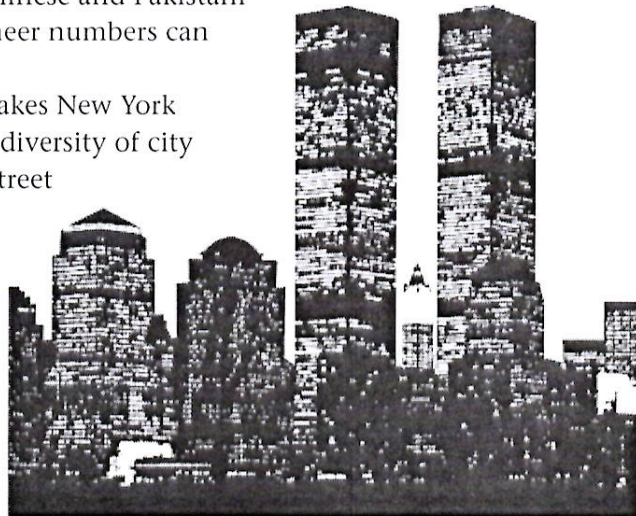


Lesson 15: Identifying Argument and Counter-Argument

The purpose of some passages, most often nonfiction, is to persuade the reader to see things the author's way. Persuasive passages contain a clear **argument**—a position or stance that the author is defending. In many cases, the author also anticipates and addresses points that may be made *against* the argument. These points make up the **counter-argument**.

DIRECTIONS: Read the passage by Sarah Bisby, a resident of New York City. As you read, try to identify the author's argument. Then answer the questions that follow this passage.

- 1 I used to think I was a small-town girl. I grew up in a little town situated in a beautiful, spacious little hamlet, a world of rolling hills and lush trees. It was a peaceful place where you didn't have to lock the doors, where you knew all the neighbors, where you could fall asleep to the sounds of crickets.
- 2 As a child, I would hear my neighbors talk about city life with hushed voices. The very mention of "New York City" struck fear into our hearts. Everyone knew it was an impersonal and dangerous place full of crime, grime, and crowds.
- 3 But as chance would have it, I won a scholarship to study and live in that terrifying place. I considered refusing the scholarship, but then decided to investigate the "big, bad city." This move turned out to be the best decision I ever made.
- 4 Some things took time to get used to—the noise of the garbage trucks, the honking, the endless stream of cars and pedestrians, and so on. In New York, you always feel like you're competing for space. The constant exposure to people can be tiring. People are everywhere, streaming by you in endless variety—thin and fat, tall and short, people chattering in Chinese and Pakistani and Sudanese and Spanish. The sheer numbers can make you dizzy.
- 5 But the people are also what makes New York wonderful. I've grown to love the diversity of city culture. Now I can step onto the street and find Ethiopian food and Chinese food and Portuguese food, all within a five-minute walk. The density of population means that there are always a thousand things going on—art exhibits, sports events, musicals, plays. In New York, it's almost impossible to feel bored.



Focus Lessons



- 7 Now I am convinced that all people born in small towns should live at least part of their lives in a big city. Living in the city makes you more independent, gutsy, and open minded. City life may be difficult, but it also opens your eyes to a world of opportunities and puts you in contact with people who share your ambitions.
- 8 When I return to my hometown, my friends ask, "So when are you coming home?" I shake my head and say, "When I start getting bored." That is not likely to happen for a long, long time.

1. What is the argument of this essay? Explain it in one or two sentences.

2. Identify the counter-argument and the paragraphs that contain it.

3. Why do you think the author spends so much time describing the negative aspects of city life? Explain your answer.
