

Educational Thomassons

Developing Arguments Against Them

1. Identify the educational Thomasson your group will be arguing against:

Standardized Testing

2. Who will have opinions about this Thomasson? As a group, brainstorm a list of people who would bring different perspectives about the Thomasson. You should list **at least five** different roles/perspectives.

Student involved in standardized testing, 11th grade teacher who administers the SAT, Administrators, College Board, Parents who have to pay for the test

3. In the chart below, list the five roles/perspectives you will consider when constructing an argument against the Thomasson. Each of you should take on a different role/perspective. Create a list of reasons your role would argue against the Thomasson.

Role	Argument Points/Premises
Student involved in standardized testing	Students may argue that standardized tests are not a good representation of work ethic which is important in succeeding in school/life. They may also argue that they cause too much stress during a year that is already the most stressful since students are preparing for life after graduation. Although some argue that standardized tests represent a student's knowledge, GPA is a much better representation of gained knowledge over time. Additionally, there is barely any writing in the SAT. Students who are more creative may be hindered.
11th grade teacher who administers the SAT	11th grade teachers may be against this Thomasson because test prep and dedicating an entire school day to administer the test will take away from teaching their students their own content. Teacher's also witness their students stress about their potential bad performance on the test. Also, students may spend more time studying/worrying about the standardized test instead of focusing on their current school work.
Administrators	Administrators may think tests are an easy and convenient way to show student knowledge, but it isn't as effective as continuous work and projects would be. Standardized tests lighten the load on the teachers they supervise but it's detrimental to students. A one-size-fits-all approach can be biased in a certain direction and inflexible however.
College Board	College Board would support this Thomasson because they are the ones who created it (specifically the SAT). In their minds, this is the most encompassing way to judge the abilities and intelligence of students because it addresses all content areas. College admissions would be a free for all without test scores because there would be less factors to determine their ability without it (i.e. just grades, extracurriculars, and an essay). College Board also profits from standardized testing; this is their main concern at the end of the day.
Parents who have to pay for the test	Parents could be against standardized testing because they may not be able to afford test-prep courses, testing, or retakes. Some parents may support standardized testing if their child is a good test taker and can afford test-prepping courses. Also, if the child performs well they can get into a good college.

4. Examine the arguments/premises from each perspective. As a group, compose an argument that you would present to someone who has the power to change the Thomasson.

Audience (person who has the power to make the change): Secretary of Education

Argument: Many students, teachers, administrators, and parents feel that standardized testing is not a good representation of a child's skills, knowledge, and overall work ethic. At face value, this type of testing implies that there is a "standard" type of student. There are many students who feel the SAT is too stressful during a time where students are beginning to prepare for life after high school. Additionally, students who excel in electives or prefer more creative fields will not be able to showcase their unique skills and knowledge. Some may argue that the SAT does represent a student's work ethic, since many people spend months preparing for the test. However, a couple months does not compare to the years of learning that occur throughout high school; GPA is a much better representation of gained knowledge, application, and work ethic. Additionally, many families cannot afford to pay for hours of training and tutoring, which perpetuates the inequalities that exist in our schools.

5. Examine the argument and look for logical fallacies in the argument. Highlight the fallacies you see in the chart below. Under the highlighted areas, make notes in red about where you see the fallacies in the argument and why they are fallacies.

Slippery Slope: This is a conclusion based on the premise that if A happens, then eventually through a series of small steps, through B, C,..., X, Y, Z will happen, too, basically equating A and Z. So, if we don't want Z to occur, A must not be allowed to occur either. <i>Example:</i> If we ban Hummers because they are bad for the environment, eventually the government will ban all cars, so we should not ban Hummers.	Hasty Generalization: This is a conclusion based on insufficient or biased evidence. In other words, you are rushing to a conclusion before you have all the relevant facts. <i>Example:</i> Even though it's only the first day, I can tell this is going to be a boring course. We see this fallacy in the claim that GPA is better than standardized testing. Both are stressful and points based, which is the main issue of standardized testing. We need some way to monitor knowledge and	Post hoc ergo propter hoc: This is a conclusion that assumes that if 'A' occurred after 'B' then 'B' must have caused 'A.' <i>Example:</i> I drank bottled water and now I am sick, so the water must have made me sick.	Genetic Fallacy: This conclusion is based on an argument that the origins of a person, idea, institute, or theory determine its character, nature, or worth. <i>Example:</i> The Volkswagen Beetle is an evil car because it was originally designed by Hitler's army.	Begging the Claim: The conclusion that the writer should prove is validated within the claim. <i>Example:</i> Filthy and polluting coal should be banned. some may argue that the SAT does represent a student's work ethic, since many people spend months preparing for the test. We said later in the text that this doesn't compare with the years it takes to earn good grades in high school. We also said that the other issue with this is that many families can't
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	progress, though. Got any other ideas?			afford to pay for this type of preparation.
Circular Argument: This restates the argument rather than actually proving it. <i>Example:</i> George Bush is a good communicator because he speaks effectively. We see this fallacy in the claim that GPA is better than standardized testing. You basically chose a different standard-style grading.	Either/or: This is a conclusion that oversimplifies the argument by reducing it to only two sides or choices. <i>Example:</i> We can either stop using cars or destroy the earth.	Ad hominem: This is an attack on the character of a person rather than his or her opinions or arguments. <i>Example:</i> Green Peace's strategies aren't effective because they are all dirty, lazy hippies.	Ad populum/Bandwagon Appeal: This is an appeal that presents what most people, or a group of people think, in order to persuade one to think the same way. Getting on the bandwagon is one such instance of an ad populum appeal. <i>Example:</i> If you were a true American you would support the rights of people to choose whatever vehicle they want. "Many students, teachers, administrators, and parents feel..." this is just saying that since they feel this way you should too.	Red Herring: This is a diversionary tactic that avoids the key issues, often by avoiding opposing arguments rather than addressing them. <i>Example:</i> The level of mercury in seafood may be unsafe, but what will fishers do to support their families? "Additionally, many families cannot afford to pay for hours of training and tutoring, which perpetuates the inequalities that exist in our schools." This is avoiding the key issue by diverting the blame onto the families This is not asserting blame on the families, it is a fact that low

				income households will have a hard time providing extra money for tutors and SAT classes. Instead, we're asserting blame on the schools for creating a test that obviously gives an advantage to middle and upper class families.
Straw Man: This move oversimplifies an opponent's viewpoint and then attacks that hollow argument. <i>Example:</i> People who don't support the proposed state minimum wage increase hate the poor. Additionally, students who excel in electives or prefer more creative fields will not be able to showcase	Moral Equivalence: This fallacy compares minor misdeeds with major atrocities, suggesting that both are equally immoral. <i>Example:</i> That parking attendant who gave me a ticket is as bad as Hitler.			

their unique skills and knowledge				
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6. Copy and paste your previous argument below. Using the feedback from above, make changes to the argument. Indicate those changes **in red**.

Many students, teachers, administrators, and parents feel that standardized testing is not a good representation of a child's skills, knowledge, and overall work ethic. **These individuals are three of the most common positions within the school and their opinions should in turn be highly valued and considered.** At face value, this type of testing implies that there is a "standard" type of student. There are many students who feel the SAT is too stressful during a time where students are beginning to prepare for life after high school. Additionally, students who excel in electives or prefer more creative fields will not be able to showcase their unique skills and knowledge, **considering that the only content areas included are math, reading, and writing.** Some may argue that the SAT does represent a student's work ethic, since many people spend months preparing for the test. However, a couple months does not compare to the years of learning that occur throughout high school; GPA is a much better representation of gained knowledge, application, and work ethic. Additionally, many families cannot afford to pay for hours of training and tutoring, which perpetuates the inequalities that exist in our schools. **We should not punish students who are lower income and not able to afford test prep courses, compared to wealthier peers who have that advantage.** The idea of standardized testing is that it is fair, but this is just one of the many examples of the inequity in the system.