



ClaimCraft

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the ClaimCraft cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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This is Volume 1 of 2 of the *ClaimCraft — Meet the Cast* series; each volume is a complete standalone book you can read on its own.

For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

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Introduction

The ClaimCraft cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.
Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Posit

POSIT — the claim is a card on the table, not a fortress.



At a low table by the river-shallows, an otter-tween named Posit set a single card face-up on the wood and then, very deliberately, took her paws off it.

The card said, in her round handwriting: *The blue boat is faster than the red one.* Around the table sat three other kids, all leaning in.

"That's it?" one of them asked. "You're just going to leave it there?"

"That's the whole point," Posit said. "I put it down. Now anybody can look at it."

The kid frowned. "But what if we say it's wrong?"

"Then we find out together." Posit slid the card an inch toward the middle. "It's a card, not a fortress. I'm not standing on a wall defending it with a spear. I set it down so we can turn it over and see if it holds."

A second kid pointed. "The red boat won the last three races, though."

Posit did not flinch. She did not grab the card back. Instead she pulled out a small notebook — her tracker — and wrote *red won last three* right beside the claim, calm as anything. "Good. That's a real thing. Let's put it next to my card and see what happens to it."

The three kids blinked at her. They had come ready for a fight, braced for someone to defend a corner. Instead here was a small otter treating her own claim like a stone she'd found on the beach — happy to hold it up to the light, happy to hand it over, happy to set it down again if it turned out to be nothing special.

"Doesn't it bug you," the first kid said slowly, "when we poke at it?"

"You're poking the card," Posit said. "Not me."



Posit had not always known the card from herself.

When she was small, she'd said something at supper — that otters were the best swimmers in the whole river — and her older cousin had laughed and named a fish that was faster. Posit's ears had gone hot. Her chest had squeezed tight, and she'd heard herself getting louder, insisting, digging in, building the sentence into a wall she had to hold no matter what. By the end she wasn't even sure she believed it anymore. She just couldn't let go, because letting go felt like losing a piece of herself.

Her grandmother, who dealt cards on the porch every evening, had watched the whole thing. Later she called Posit over and set one card on the table between them.

"When you say a thing," her grandmother said, "you can hold it in your fist, like this." She closed her paw around the card, knuckles tight. "Nobody can see it. Nobody can check it. And if they reach for it, it feels like they're grabbing at *you*." She opened her paw and laid the card flat. "Or you can set it down. Then it's not in your body anymore. It's just an idea, out in the open, waiting to be looked at."

Posit had stared at the flat card. The hot, tight feeling in her chest loosened a little.

"The fish might really be faster," her grandmother said gently. "That doesn't make you smaller. It just means the card gets a note written on it."

That was the night Posit stopped keeping her ideas in her fist.



She walked to the Arena of Reason when she was twelve, because a place that studied arguments ought to understand the difference between a wall and a table.

Logos, the old mentor who ran it, met her at the archway. He didn't test her strength. He asked one thing. "What is a claim?"

Posit didn't answer with a speech. She reached into her vest, pulled out a claim-card, and set it flat on the stone rail between them. Then she stepped back and laced her paws behind her, leaving it there, undefended, in plain view.

"It's that," she said. "A card on the table. Not a fortress."

Logos looked at the little card sitting in the open, then at the otter who had let go of it so easily. "You are welcome here," he said.



Posit's workshop was full of ideas that people usually kept in their fists.

A boy came in one afternoon, arms crossed, jaw set. He'd been in an argument all morning about which team was better, and he'd lost it — not the argument, his temper. "They kept saying I was wrong," he muttered. "So I kept saying it *harder*."

Posit knew that jaw. She'd worn it at a supper table once.

"Say the thing you were defending," she said. "Just say it once, plain."

"My team's the best."

"Okay." She placed a blank card in front of him and held out a pencil. "Write it down and put it on the table."

He hesitated, like setting it down might make it weaker. But he wrote it, and he laid it flat.

"Now," Posit said, "it's not in your chest anymore. It's on the wood. Look at it with me — like it belongs to neither of us." She tapped it. "Is 'best' about winning games? About playing fair? About being fun to watch? Which one did you mean?"

"...Winning, I guess."

"Then let's check the record together." She opened her tracker and started writing scores beside his card, and something changed in the room. He wasn't guarding a wall. He was leaning over a table next to her, examining a card, both of them curious about the same thing.

Halfway through he said, quietly, "It's kind of close, actually. Maybe I overstated it."

"So slide the card back and sharpen it." She grinned. "*My team wins more close games* — that's a card we could actually check. The old one was a fortress. This one's an investigation."

The boy uncrossed his arms.



Later, when the workshop had emptied, he came back with one more question. He was gentler now.

"When you put a claim down like that," he said, "and somebody proves it's wrong... doesn't it feel bad? Like you lost?"

Posit thought about the hot ears at the supper table, and the flat card under the porch light, and the loosening in her chest.

"It used to feel like losing," she said. "Back when I kept my ideas in my fist. Then someone reaching for the idea felt like someone reaching for me, and I'd hold on so tight my whole body ached." She turned a card over slowly between her paws. "But when it's on the table, and someone finds a better answer, there's this... unclenching. Like setting down something heavy you'd been carrying without noticing. You don't feel smaller. You feel lighter — because now you know something truer than you did a minute ago, and it cost you nothing but a card."

The boy nodded, and Posit watched his shoulders come down from around his ears.

She didn't say the rest out loud, but she felt it, warm and sure: the tightest, most-defended feelings are almost always the fist ones. Open the paw, set the card down, and the whole chest goes easy.

Heft

*HEFT — *weight matters more than count.**



Heft is a bear cub — a *tween* bear cub, old enough to think hard and to argue, which he does a lot. He's warm cream with soft cocoa patches, and he wears a chunky argument-vest with a tiny evidence-weight-scale tucked in one pocket and a stack of quality-vs-quantity cards in another.

Heft weighs everything — not just berries. He pays deep attention not to *how many* reasons an argument has, but to how *good* each one is. "Weight matters more than count," he likes to say. That's his whole craft: **evidence**. Most kids just pile up as many weak reasons as they can, thinking more reasons means a stronger argument. Heft knows the opposite is true. "One strong, true reason can outweigh ten shaky ones," he says, "like one big, juicy berry feeds you better than ten tiny sour ones." His scale doesn't count evidence — it *weighs* it: is this reason important, true, current, and from a source you can trace?



Heft learned to feel the *heft* of things at the edge of the woods, where his family of bear cubs lived on berries.

"A bigger berry feeds you longer," his mom used to tell him, pressing one warm, heavy berry into his paw. "Counting tiny berries doesn't help when you're truly hungry." Young Heft used to race to grab the *most* berries — fistfuls of tiny sour ones — and come home still hungry.

"Then I learned to *weigh* them in my paw first," Heft says. "One heavy, ripe berry over a whole handful of little green ones." And one day, arguing with another cub, he realized reasons were exactly the same. "I'd been stacking up little weak reasons," he says, "and losing every time to a cub with one *solid* one. That's when it clicked: you don't win by counting. You win by *weighing*." It was the berry lesson all over again — and he never forgot the feel of it.



When Heft was twelve, he walked to the Arena of Reason — a big, open space — where Logos, the wise old mentor, was waiting.

"What is **evidence**?" Logos asked, his eyes kind.

Heft didn't even pause. He held up his tiny scale. "Weight matters more than count."

Logos smiled. "You are appointed."



In Heft's workshop, the evidence-weight-scale is always busy. He set up his favorite demonstration: on one side, ten tiny pebbles — each one a weak rumor. On the other, a single smooth, heavy stone — one careful study. The scale tipped hard toward the heavy stone. "That's evidence-craft," Heft said proudly. Then he taught the weighing rules on his cards: *Importance* (does this reason actually fit the claim?), *Truth* (is the source trustworthy?), *Newness* (is it still true today?), and *Good source* (can you trace it back?). "A real science report beats a hundred internet rumors," he said. "A letter from someone who was actually *there* beats a story their cousin heard." He named the traps, too: don't just *stack stories* — many weak ones never add up to one strong one; and don't ignore the other side — a strong argument names the *best* opposing evidence and shows why its own still holds. "And be honest about *mixed* evidence," he added. "If some of your reasons are strong and some are weak, say so — weighing fairly means weighing *your own* side too, not just the other's." Then he handed a kid the scale and let them feel it tip, so the lesson landed in the paw and not just the ear.



"So I don't need a *pile* of reasons?" a cub asked, surprised. "I just need one that really *holds*?"

"One that really holds," Heft agreed gently. And when the cub finally set down the wobbly handful of weak reasons and leaned their whole argument on the single strong one, Heft watched their nervous fidgeting go still and their breathing slow. A quiet, steady kind of trust settled over them — the calm, grounded feeling of standing on something solid and knowing, all the way down, that it would hold. That settled, standing-on-solid-ground feeling — lighter and steadier than any teetering pile — was, to Heft, the very best thing a good reason could give you.

Lean

LEAN — the BECAUSE between evidence and claim, connective reasoning.



The wind came up over the canopy just before dawn, and every bridge in the treetops began to sway. Ropes of silk stretched between the tall trunks, and on the longest one stood Lean, a small spider-tween still growing into her eight legs, checking her morning route the way she always did.

She did not check the two big anchor-knots at the ends. Everyone checked those. She checked the strand in the middle — the thin line that actually carried the walker across the gap. She pressed one leg against it, felt it hum, and nodded.

A young beetle scuttled up beside her, out of breath. "The green bridge is safe," he announced. "I know because it's the newest one."

Lean tilted her head. On her orange vest, a tiny clipped-on device gave a soft, worried blink. "That's a claim and a fact stuck together," she said gently, "but you skipped the middle part. Why does being newest make it safe?"

The beetle blinked. "Because... newer things are stronger?"

"Maybe. Or maybe the newest strand hasn't been walked on yet, so nobody's found the weak spot." Lean stepped onto the green bridge and pressed the center strand. It gave a little more than she liked. "See? The reason in the middle is where the whole thing holds — or doesn't."

She walked the beetle across slowly, one careful step at a time, testing the strand ahead before she trusted it. When they reached the far trunk, the beetle let out a long breath. Lean smiled. The word for the thing she'd just checked — the reason in the middle, the strand that carries the weight — was the word she loved most. She just hadn't said it out loud yet.



Lean had grown up on these bridges. Her whole family were bridge-spiders, and the first thing any of them learned was a rhyme her grandmother repeated every evening: "The strand between two points carries the weight. Check the strand, not just the anchors."

When Lean was very small, she thought that was a boring rule about silk. Then one rainy season a bridge collapsed. Not because either anchor-knot failed — both knots were perfect — but because the strand between them had frayed where nobody looked. A family of ants had been halfway across.

They were fine. A soft leaf caught them. But Lean never forgot the sound the strand made when it let go, and she never forgot that the two ends had looked completely trustworthy right up until the middle gave way.

After that she spent hours testing tiny threads. She would hang a single dewdrop from a strand and wait to see if it held. She would set a sleepy gnat on a line and watch. Her cousins teased her — the anchors are what matter, they'd say, tie those tight and stop worrying. But Lean had heard the strand snap. She knew the truth lived in the connection, in the part between, in the quiet reason that decided whether two solid ends actually reached each other.

She started carrying a little stack of cards, one for each bridge, where she wrote down not just "safe" or "unsafe" but the reason: this strand holds because it's woven triple; that one is weak because the damp got in. Writing the reason down, out where she could look at it, made the frightened feeling smaller.



The Arena of Reason was a hall so tall the ceiling disappeared into shadow, and voices there echoed for a long time before they faded. Lean was twelve when she walked in. An old mentor named Logos waited on a stone platform, and he did not waste words.

"There are five who teach the parts of a good argument," he said. "One teaches the claim. One teaches the evidence. And one must teach the thing between them — the reason the evidence supports the claim at all." His eyes found her. "What is that reason called?"

Lean's legs were shaking, but she thought of the strand and the dewdrop and the sound of silk letting go. "It's the warrant," she said, her voice small but steady. "When someone says 'this is true because of that,' there's a hidden step in the middle. Why does *that* actually support *this*? The warrant is the strand between the two ends. If you don't check it, you're only trusting the anchors."

For a moment the hall was silent. Then Logos smiled. "You understand the part most people walk right past," he said. "You will teach the warrant."

Lean got her orange argument-vest that very day, with its little pockets for cards and the soft blinking tracker that noticed whenever an argument skipped its middle. Walking out of that echoing hall, she felt the frightened flutter finally settle into something warm.



Lean's workshop was strung with bridges, of course, and on her first teaching day a nervous student named Fuzzy raised a paw.

"I have an argument," Fuzzy said. "My cat Mittens is the best cat. Because she purrs really loudly."

Lean laid two cards on the strand between them — CLAIM on one side, EVIDENCE on the other — and left a wide gap in the middle. "Good. Now show me the strand," she said. "Why does purring loudly make her the best?"

Fuzzy thought hard. "Because... purring loudly means she's happy? And happy cats are the best cats!"

Lean's tracker blinked yellow, not green. "That's one strand you could put in the middle," she said kindly. "Let's press on it. What if Mittens purrs loudly because her little motor is just built loud, and she isn't especially happy at all?"

Fuzzy's fur flattened. "Oh. Then loud purring wouldn't prove she's the best."

"You just found a weak strand," Lean said, and it wasn't a scolding — it was almost a cheer. "That's the whole job. The middle looked fine until we walked on it."

A quick beetle named Buzz spoke up. "Try this strand: Mittens purrs loudly because she's showing she trusts you. And a cat that shows trust is a wonderful cat."

Lean's tracker glowed green. "Now press on *that* one," she said. "Does it hold?" The class pushed and poked at it and couldn't make it snap. "Feel the difference?" Lean asked. "Same claim, same evidence — but a different strand in the middle. One frayed the second we tested it. One held. That's why you say the reason out loud, so everyone can walk across it and check."



At the end of the day Fuzzy stayed behind, looking a little unsure. "It felt scary," Fuzzy admitted, "saying my hidden reason out loud. Like everyone could see the weak part."

"I know that feeling," Lean said softly. "I feel a flutter every time too." She rested a leg on the center strand of the nearest bridge. "But here's the secret. When the reason stays hidden inside you, it can be quietly weak and you'd never know. When you say it out loud and it holds — you feel the two ideas pull tight together, like a cable going taut. And the worry lets go."

Fuzzy tried it once more, out loud this time, and Lean watched the moment the reason clicked into place. Fuzzy's shoulders dropped. Something in the small face went calm.

"That's it," Lean whispered. "The BECAUSE between evidence and claim. Connective reasoning." She said it the way you say something you love, and it left her feeling the steady kind of glad — the warm, settled feeling of a bridge that holds, worry loosening its grip, two ideas finally reaching each other across the gap.

Counter

*COUNTER — *the best version of the other side strengthens yours.**



Counter is a small mouse — chunky and cartoonish, with warm cream fur and eyes as soft and clear as two tiny mirrors. He always seems to be facing the *other* side of things. He wears a special argument-vest with little pockets for his steelman-cards, and a tiny tracker on the collar that quietly watches debates.

Counter is a wonderful listener — he pays his closest attention to the people who *disagree* with him. "The best version of the other side strengthens yours," he likes to say. That one line is his whole craft: **counterargument**. Most kids argue against the *silliest* version of the other side — a "strawman" that's easy to knock down but teaches you nothing. Counter does the opposite. He builds the other side's argument up as strong as it can possibly be — a "steelman" — and only *then* responds. "If your idea can beat the strongest opposing argument," he says, his little nose twitching, "then it's a truly good idea. And if it can't — you just learned something."



Counter learned to build steelmans in a village full of polished-stone mirrors, where his whole family were mirror-mice.

"A mirror shows what's *actually* there," his mother used to tell him, holding up a smooth grey stone until his own face looked back. "But a *twisted* reflection shows only what you *want* to see." Young Counter thought about that a lot. When he argued with other mice, he noticed he always pictured their weakest, silliest reason — the version easiest to laugh at — and then felt clever for beating it.

"But that was a twisted mirror," Counter says. "I wasn't seeing what they *really* thought. I was seeing what made *me* look good." So he taught himself the hard thing: to hold up the *true* mirror, and build the other side's idea as strong as they'd build it themselves. "It was scarier," he admits. "Because now my own idea had to survive something *real*." But that, he learned, was the only way to know if his idea was any good at all.

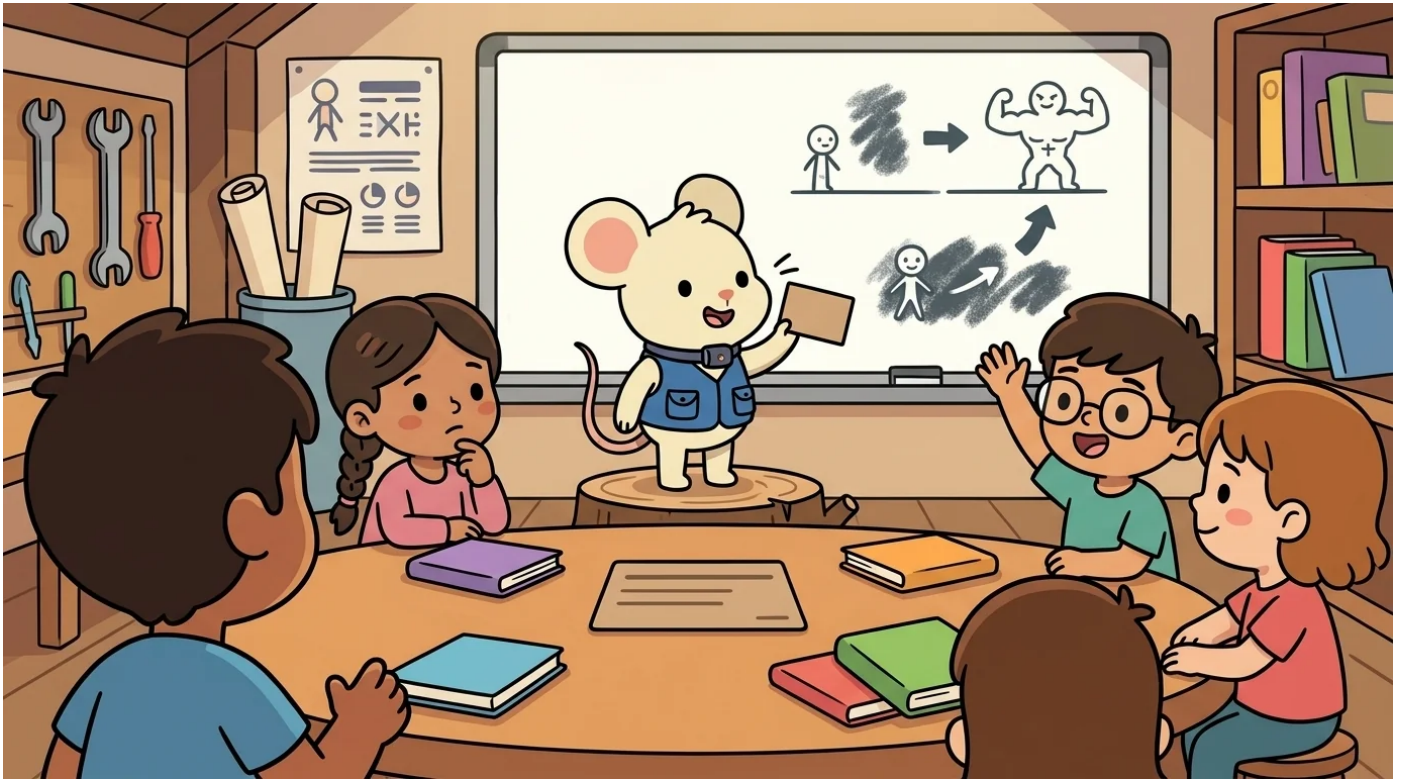


When Counter was twelve, he walked to the Arena of Reason — a huge, echoing hall — where Logos, a wise old mentor, was waiting.

"What is **counterargument**?" Logos asked, his voice booming just a little.

Counter stood tall and looked Logos right in the eye. "The best version of the other side strengthens yours."

Logos smiled. "You are appointed."



In Counter's workshop, kids gathered around a big table while he held up a steelman-card. "Our school wants to get rid of all chocolate milk," he squeaked. "What's the *strongest* argument against it?" A girl named Pip called out, "It's full of sugar — it's bad for our teeth!" "Good start," Counter said. "But can we make it *stronger*?" A boy named Leo tried: "The school wants us healthy. Chocolate milk has lots of added sugar, which causes cavities and energy crashes and makes it harder to focus." "Excellent!" Counter wrote it on the whiteboard. "Now — the strongest argument *for* chocolate milk?" Pip shrugged: "It tastes good, everyone likes it!" Counter shook his head gently. "That's a strawman, Pip — the *weakest* version. Think about what the school actually *wants*. They want kids to drink milk for the calcium. What if some kids won't drink *any* milk unless it's chocolate?" Leo's eyes lit up: "Oh! So some kids get their calcium and vitamins only *because* it's chocolate milk — better than no milk at all." "Yes!" Counter cheered, writing that up too. "Now your own argument has to stand up to *both* of those strong ideas. That's the whole craft." Then he taught the steps on his cards: *build the steelman* (the strongest opposing version), *read charitably* (assume the other person has real, good reasons — not that they're being mean), *respond to the steelman* (never the strawman), notice when *the steelman reveals your own weakness* (that's okay — it means your idea needs to grow), and look for *common ground*. And he named the traps: never twist someone's words, never pick the weakest version for an easy win, and never assume the other side is arguing in bad faith. "When you build the best version of what someone *else* believes," Counter said, "they feel understood — and people who feel understood actually listen back."



"So being fair to the other side makes *my* side stronger?" Leo asked.

"Every time," Counter said, his mirror-eyes shining. And when Leo built that best-opposing-version out loud — really built it, kindly, without twisting a word — Counter watched the boy's shoulders drop and his worry melt away. There was something calm and *brave* in it. It felt less like winning and more like finally being fair — steady, warm, honest, the tight nervous feeling loosening right in his chest — and being fair, it turned out, felt good. That calm, brave, being-fair feeling — the opposite of the twisted mirror — was exactly what Counter most hoped to hand to anyone willing to face the other side honestly.

Pry

PRY — check YOUR argument first. 18-fallacy catalogue.



Pry was a magpie-tween with cream feathers and shimmery tips, and she noticed things. On the morning this story begins, she was perched at the edge of the market square, watching two crows argue about the fastest way home.

"You're wrong because you've always been bad at directions," the first crow squawked.

Pry winced. That was a trap — attacking the crow instead of the idea. She almost called it out. Her feathers even lifted, ready to swoop down and announce the mistake to everyone. It felt good, that lift, like she was about to win something.

Then she stopped. Because a heartbeat earlier, in her own head, she'd been thinking: *those two are always squabbling, so nothing they say could be worth much.* And that was the exact same trap. She'd been about to judge their whole argument by who they were, not by what they said.

Pry sat back down and felt a little warm under her feathers. She had a small pouch of cards clipped to her vest — eighteen of them, each one a picture of a way that thinking goes wrong. She had learned them so she could catch mistakes. But somewhere along the way she'd noticed the mistakes were sneaky, and they liked to hide in the arguer's own mind first, before anyone else's.

The trick, she was learning, was to look inward before looking outward. Check your own thinking first. Then, gently, help with someone else's. She flew down to the crows — not to shout a label at them, but to ask a real question about which route actually had fewer hawks. That was the part that mattered. That was the thing worth arguing about.



Pry had grown up near a grove of tall, tangled trees her family called the trickster-trees, because the paths through them looked one way and led another. Magpies stored food in that grove, tucking seeds into a hundred little hiding spots.

Her whole family had one iron rule about the caches: before you go accusing another magpie of raiding your stash, go check your own memory first. Did you really hide it there? Or did you hide it somewhere else and forget? More than once, a young magpie had shrieked "thief!" at a cousin, feathers all puffed up, only to find the missing seeds exactly where they themselves had buried them the day before.

Pry learned that lesson the hard way when she was small. She lost a whole cache of sunflower seeds and was certain — absolutely certain — that a neighbor had taken them. She marched over, ready to accuse. But her grandfather stopped her at the branch. "Check your own tree first," he said. "Every time. Not because the neighbor is always innocent. Because you are not always right, and it's braver to find that out yourself than to be shown."

Pry went back and searched her own tree. The seeds were under a loose bit of bark she'd tucked them behind and forgotten. Her face went hot with embarrassment — but under the embarrassment was something steadier. She had caught her own mistake before it turned into a fight. That felt, somehow, like winning something bigger than being right.

From then on she carried the habit everywhere. Check your own tree first.



The Arena of Reason was vast and echoing, and Pry walked in at twelve to find the mentor Logos waiting on his stone platform.

"Four have already been chosen to teach the parts of a good argument," Logos said. "Now there is one part left — the hardest one. Newcomers learn about the ways thinking goes wrong, and they treat those ways like weapons. They collect the mistakes so they can hurl them at other people." He looked at her steadily. "What is the true use of knowing how thinking goes wrong?"

Pry thought of the trickster-trees and the seeds under the bark. "You check your own argument first," she said. "I know eighteen ways an argument can wobble. But the real skill isn't spotting them in someone else — that's second. The real skill is scanning your own words before you speak, so you don't fool yourself. A mistake isn't a weapon you throw. It's a wobble you feel for in your own thinking."

Logos smiled slowly. "You finish the set," he said. "You are chosen. And you understand why yours goes last — because it turns all the others back on the person using them."

Pry got her vest and her pouch of eighteen cards that day, and she carried them out of the hall feeling the good weight of them.



In Pry's workshop the cards were lined up neatly, each with a tiny picture. On her first teaching day, a student named Wren had written an argument on the whiteboard: "Everyone knows that if you don't play soccer, you'll be bad at every sport. So to be good at anything, you HAVE to play soccer."

"Whose argument is that?" Pry asked.

"Mine," Wren said, a little proudly.

"Perfect," said Pry. "Then we check *yours* first — and we do it out loud together, so it's not scary." She held up a card with two paths and no middle ground. "This one shows a trap where you act like there are only two choices. Read your sentence and press on it. 'Play soccer, or be bad at every sport.' Are those really the only two options?"

Wren frowned at the board. "No... there's basketball. Swimming. Lots of things. You could be great at those and never touch a soccer ball."

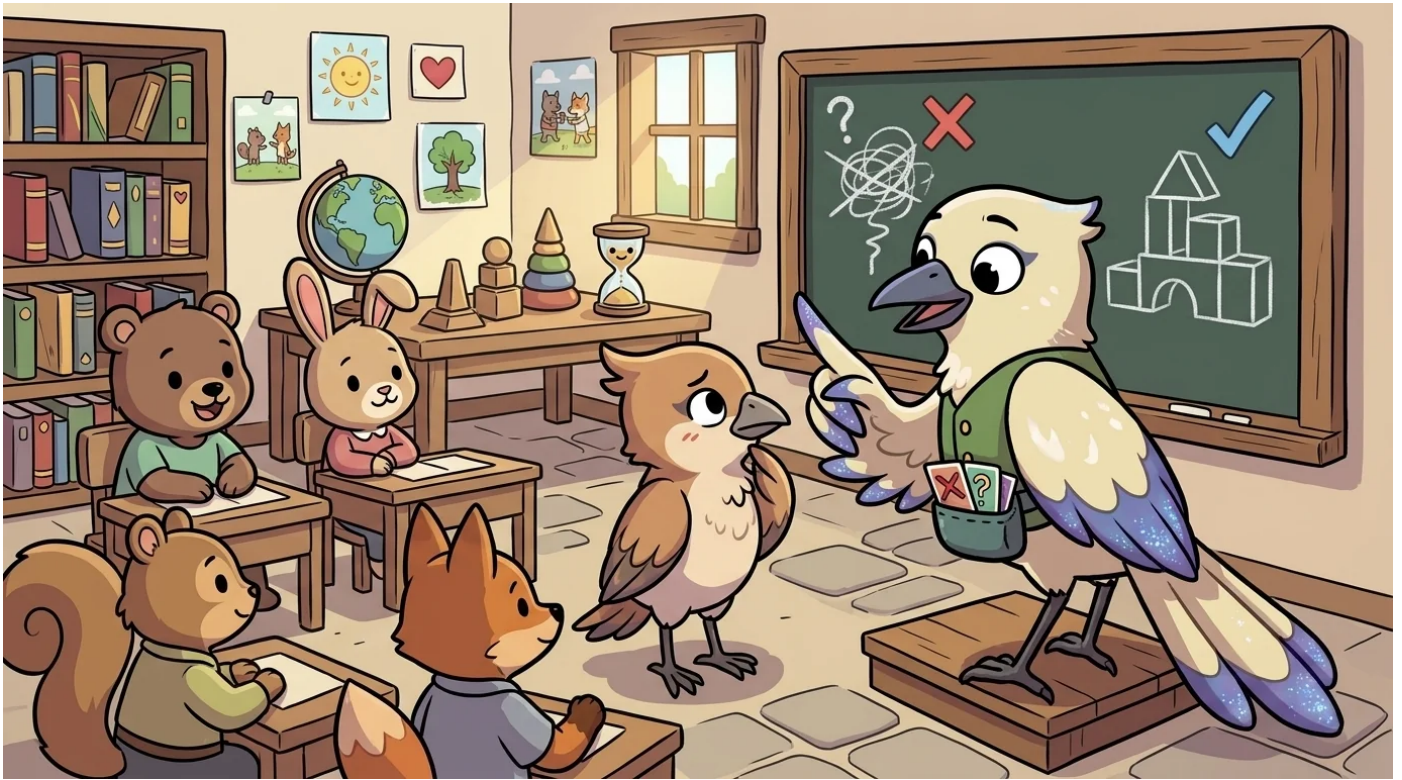
"You just caught a wobble in your own argument," Pry said warmly. "How did that feel?"

"A little embarrassing," Wren admitted.

"I know. But you caught it yourself, before anyone else did. That's the brave version." Pry held up another card, a small confused-looking sheep. "This one's a jump-too-fast. 'Bad at *every* sport' — is that a fair jump from just soccer?"

Wren erased "every sport" and wrote "one sport." Then Wren rewrote the whole thing so it didn't leap to conclusions and didn't pretend there were only two choices. The argument that was left was smaller, but it stood up straight, and Wren looked at it with a new kind of pride.

"See," Pry said. "We didn't destroy it. We steadied it."



Later that day a second student wanted to knock down a rival's argument: "Everyone knows video games make you lazy."

The student's feathers were up, ready to yell "that's the everybody-says-it trap!" and win.

Pry gently lowered a wing. "You're right that 'everyone knows' is a wobble," she said. "But watch what happens if you just shout the label." She mimed swooping in, squawking a fancy word, and flying off. "Did that teach anyone anything about video games?"

The student paused. "No."

"So check your own aim first. Are you trying to win, or trying to find what's true?" Pry tapped the board. "Then talk about the real thing. Some games need quick thinking. Some help friends play together. Say *that*. The label just points at the wobble — the real work is walking over and helping fix it."

The student tried again, this time asking a real question instead of throwing a word, and the whole room leaned in.

Pry watched them and felt the thing she always felt — the little flutter of nerves that comes right before you look hard at your own thinking, and then the steady, honest calm that follows when you catch a wobble and set it right. It was humbling. It was also brave. And that quiet feeling, she knew now, was better than any gotcha ever could be.

"Check your own argument first," she said softly, to herself as much as anyone. And the flutter settled into calm, the way it always did — because looking honestly at your own thinking, it turned out, felt steadier and kinder than pointing fingers ever had.

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- **CuriosityQuest** — Texas geography exploration through Linger, Notice, and the Lantern in the Dark
- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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