



ClaimCraft

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

Copyright & License

© 2026 Spark & Anvil (501(c)(3) public charity). Chapter text and illustrations licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. App software © Spark & Anvil — all rights reserved. Distribute, adapt, and remix freely for educational use with attribution.

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.

Spark & Anvil is a 501(c)(3) public charity. All apps free forever; no ads; no tracking; no in-app purchases.

spark-and-anvil.com

This is Volume 2 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.

Contents

- [Copyright & License](#)
- [Contents](#)
- [Introduction](#)
- [Gloss](#)
- [Footing](#)
- [Temper](#)
- [Temper and the Claim That Was Too Big to Hold](#)
- [Onus](#)
- [Grant](#)
 - [About Spark & Anvil](#)
 - [More chapter books from Spark & Anvil](#)
 - [Methodology](#)
 - [License](#)

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*

Gloss

GLOSS — agree on what the key words mean first; many fights are really about words.



In the debate club's back room, an owl named Gloss watched two friends nearly come to tears over whether their group's new game was "fair."

"It's totally fair — everyone gets the same number of turns!" insisted the first.

"It is NOT fair — the youngest players can't reach the top shelf where the good pieces are!" cried the second.

They glared, sure the other was being ridiculous. Gloss gently stepped between them.

"Stop a moment. You're not actually disagreeing yet. You're each using the word *fair* to mean a different thing. You—" a wing toward the first "—mean *fair as same rules for everyone*. And you—" a wing toward the second "—mean *fair as everyone can actually take part*. Both are real meanings of the word. You've spent ten minutes fighting about the game when the whole tangle was one slippery word. Say what you each mean by *fair*, out loud, and then — *then* — you can have the real conversation."

The two friends blinked. "...Oh," said the first. "I didn't know you meant *that*."



Have you ever argued hard with someone and then realized you actually meant the same thing? How did that mix-up feel?

Gloss had learned this from a friendship that nearly broke over a single undefined word.

As a young owl, Gloss had once accused a close friend of not being "loyal," and the friend had been wounded and furious, and they'd stopped speaking for a whole miserable week. Only later did they untangle it: by *loyal*, Gloss had meant *tell me the hard truth even when it stings*. The friend had understood *loyal* as *always take my side, no matter what*. They had wanted the *same* thing — a real friendship — and had hurt each other badly, for days, over two different meanings hiding inside one word neither had bothered to define.

Sitting alone that week, Gloss felt the particular ache of a fight that never needed to happen — not a real disagreement, just two people talking past each other through a word they'd each quietly filled with something different. *So many arguments aren't about the world at all*, Gloss realized. *They're about a word, worn like a mask over two different ideas*. From then on, before any hard conversation, Gloss learned to ask the small, powerful question: *when you say that word — what do you mean by it?*



Gloss flew to the ClaimCraft academy, a little dictionary tucked under one wing.

Logos, the mentor who guided the club's reasoners, met Gloss and asked the question. "What is a definition's job?"

Gloss set the dictionary down but didn't open it. "Its job isn't to find the *one true meaning* — words hold many. Its job is to get everyone in *this* conversation using the key word the *same* way, just for now, so we can actually reach the thing underneath. A definition is a handshake before the debate: *here's what I'll mean by this word; do you mean the same?* Skip the handshake, and you'll argue for an hour about a word instead of a minute about the truth."

Logos nodded slowly at the wisdom of the handshake. "You are appointed."



In Gloss's study, a young ferret rolled their eyes, impatient.

"Gloss, this is so *slow*. If I have to stop and define every word before I can say anything, I'll never get to make my point! Isn't this just fussy word-games?"

Gloss slid the little dictionary aside — deliberately not needing it.

"I understand why it feels fussy, so hear the real point: you don't define *every* word. You define the *one or two* the whole disagreement turns on — the *fair*, the *loyal*, the word both sides keep leaning on while meaning different things. That's not word-games. That's the opposite: it's how you get to the *real* argument faster, instead of wrestling a slippery word for an hour. And watch for the sneaky move where someone shifts a word's meaning halfway through — starts with *fair* meaning one thing, ends with it meaning another. Pin the key word down once, together, and hold it still. Then you can finally disagree about something that actually matters."

The ferret's eye-roll slowed into thought. "So it's not about being fussy. It's about not wasting the fight on a word."

"Not wasting the fight on a word," Gloss agreed. "Save your energy for the real thing."



Think of a word you and a friend use differently — like "fair" or "cool." What happens when you finally say what you each mean?

The ferret went quiet, turning the idea over.

"My brother and I fight about who's 'messy' all the time," the ferret admitted. "But I think I mean *leaves stuff on the floor* and he means *doesn't organize the shelves*. We're both messy by the other one's meaning and neither of us knew it." The ferret half-laughed. "We could've skipped a hundred fights."

"That right there is the gift of it," Gloss said warmly. "That small, bright relief of *oh — we were never really fighting, we were just missing each other through a word*. Defining the key term doesn't make you a pedant. It's a kind of respect — it says *I want to understand the real you, not the mask a word put on you*. And there's a lovely calm on the other side of it, when the fake fight falls away and you can finally talk about what's true." Gloss nudged the little dictionary toward the ferret. "Go ask someone what they *mean* by a word you keep fighting about. Watch the fake fight disappear."

The ferret took the dictionary, felt the quiet relief of a hundred un-needed fights melting away, and went to ask their brother what *messy* really meant.

Footing

FOOTING — every argument stands on unstated assumptions; surface them and check if they hold.



At the community forum, a mole named Footing listened as the debate club argued heatedly about whether the town should hold its festival in the morning or the evening. Voices rose. Nobody was budging.

Footing tapped the floor softly. "Before you keep fighting about *when* — can I ask what you're both standing on? You're both assuming the festival has to happen in a *single* block of time. Nobody said that. Nobody checked it. It's the floor under this whole argument, and no one's looked at it."

The room went quiet.

"That's what an assumption is," Footing said. "The thing an argument quietly stands on without saying so. Morning-people and evening-people were fighting on the same unchecked floor — *it must be one block* — and the moment you look at the floor instead of the furniture, a whole door opens: what if it's morning AND evening? The real disagreement was hiding *underneath* the one you were having."



Have you ever been sure about something and then found out the thing you'd assumed underneath it wasn't true? How did that feel?

Footing had learned to check the floor after a conclusion collapsed under one.

As a young mole, Footing had once argued, carefully and confidently, that the club should cancel its outdoor meeting because "it always rains on meeting day." Footing built a whole tidy case on it — where to move, how to reschedule, who to tell. And it was a good case, except for one thing: the floor it stood on, *it always rains*, was simply not true. Footing had remembered the two rainy meetings vividly and quietly forgotten the six sunny ones. The entire careful argument had been built on an assumption never once dug up and looked at.

Standing in the sunshine on a meeting day that did not rain, Footing felt the particular embarrassment of a strong argument resting on soft ground — not wrong in its logic, just wrong in what it took for granted. *The reasoning can be perfect*, Footing understood, *and still fall, if the floor beneath it won't hold*. From then on, before trusting any argument — especially a convincing one — Footing learned to dig down past the words to the unspoken *everybody knows* underneath, and give it a good, honest stomp.



Footling tunneled up at the ClaimCraft academy, dust on both paws from checking foundations.

Logos, the mentor, met Footling and asked the question. "What is an assumption?"

Footling pointed down, not up. "It's the part of an argument nobody says out loud because it feels too obvious to mention — the floor holding the whole thing up. Most arguments have several. My job isn't to knock them down; it's to *dig them up and look*. Some floors are solid and we build on happily. Some are soft, and the whole argument sinks the moment you name them. You can't know which until you surface the assumption and give it a stomp."

Logos gave a slow, grounded nod. "You are appointed."



In Footing's burrow-study, a young sparrow fretted, feathers ruffled.

"Footing, if I have to question *every* hidden assumption, won't I end up trusting *nothing*? Isn't that just how people become cranks who believe the world is a lie?"

Footing settled the sparrow gently on solid ground.

"That's the exact trap to avoid, so let me be careful. Surfacing an assumption is not the same as *rejecting* it. When I dig up a floor and stomp it, most of the time it holds — and then I trust it *more*, because now I've actually checked instead of just hoping. Digging isn't distrust; it's the opposite of both blind belief and blind doubt. The crank stomps every floor and declares them all rotten. The gullible one never stomps at all. The good reasoner stomps, *looks honestly at what the stomp shows*, and keeps the floors that hold. You're not learning to believe nothing. You're learning to know *which* ground is solid — so you can build on it with confidence."

The sparrow's feathers smoothed. "So checking the floor is how I get to trust it, not how I lose it."

"Checking is how trust becomes earned," Footing said. "That's the sturdiest kind."



Think of a time noticing a hidden "everybody knows" actually changed your mind. What did that surprise feel like?

The sparrow thought, and something behind the worry opened up.

"Everyone in my class 'knew' the new kid was stuck-up because they never talked," the sparrow said slowly. "Then someone actually asked, and it turned out they were just really shy and scared. The whole 'everybody knows' was just... a floor nobody had checked." The sparrow looked down. "I feel bad we all stood on it so long."

"That feeling — the soft, humbling surprise when a hidden floor turns out to be air — is one of the most important feelings there is," Footing said warmly. "It's the feeling of your mind getting *bigger*. It doesn't mean you were foolish. It means you were brave enough to look down. And on the other side of it is something steady and good: a mind that stands on ground it has actually checked, and a heart humble enough to be surprised." Footing pressed a little floor-stomping-stone into the sparrow's claw. "Go find an 'everybody knows' and give it a gentle stomp. See what holds."

The sparrow took the stone, felt the humble, roomier feeling of a checked-for-real floor, and went to stomp-test something everyone knew.

Temper

TEMPER — match a claim's strength to your evidence; "usually" survives what "always" can't.



- NEVER
 - USUALLY
 - OFTEN
 - SOMETIMES
 - RARELY

Temper and the Claim That Was Too Big to Hold

In the debate hall, a badger named Temper watched a confident rabbit make a bold declaration: "Dogs ALWAYS chase cats! Everyone knows it!"



Temper stepped in, kind. "See what happened? The idea wasn't *wrong* — dogs chasing cats is a real, common thing. The *word* was wrong. You said *always*, and *always* means *zero exceptions ever* — so a single dozing dog knocks it flat. Try tempering it: *dogs OFTEN chase cats*. Now it's still true, it still makes your point — and that one sleepy dog can't topple it, because *often* already leaves room for exceptions. Match the size of your claim to the size of your evidence. An honest 'usually' stands where a proud 'always' falls."

The rabbit tried it. "Dogs... often chase cats." It held. Nobody could knock it over.



As a young badger, Temper had once announced, grandly and to a whole crowd, that "the library is NEVER open on rest-days." Temper was so sure. And a small voice pointed out that the library had, in fact, been open last rest-day, for the seed-swap. One exception. And because Temper had said *never* — the biggest, most breakable word there is — the entire proud claim shattered, and worse, everything *else* Temper said that day got doubted too, because *never* had been so easily broken.

Standing there, cheeks hot, Temper felt the sting of it — not the sting of being wrong about libraries, but of having *over-claimed*, of having stretched a mostly-true thing into an all-the-way claim it couldn't support, and paying for the extra reach with the whole argument. *The bigger the word, the easier it breaks*, Temper realized. *Always and never are made of glass*. From then on, Temper learned to weigh a claim's size as carefully as its truth — to say exactly as much as the evidence held up, and not one word more.



Temper set a claim on one scale and a pile of evidence on the other. "A qualifier is the word that sizes a claim to fit its evidence — *always, usually, often, sometimes, rarely, never*. Strong evidence earns a strong word. Thin evidence earns a careful one. Say *always* and you promise *zero exceptions*; say *usually* and you've already made peace with a few. It's not about sounding unsure. It's about being *exactly as sure as you've earned the right to be* — no bigger, no smaller."

Logos weighed the honesty of it and nodded. "You are appointed."

In Temper's workshop, a young stoat scoffed, arms folded.

"Temper, all these 'usually's and 'often's sound so *weak* and wishy-washy. When I argue, I want to sound *strong* and *sure*! Doesn't hedging just make me look like I don't believe my own point?"



The stoat's arms slowly unfolded. "So 'usually' isn't me being unsure. It's me being un-knock-over-able."

"Un-knock-over-able," Temper agreed. "The strongest thing an arguer can be."

Think of a time you said exactly what you meant — no more, no less. What did that feel like compared to over-claiming?

Onus

ONUS — whoever makes the claim carries the job of supporting it; bigger claims need bigger evidence.



At the debate club, a heron named Onus watched a fox make a sweeping announcement: "There's a treasure buried under the old oak. It's obviously true — and none of you can prove there ISN'T!"

The younger club members shifted, uneasy, half-convinced. How *would* you prove there wasn't?

Onus stepped forward, calm and tall. "Hold on. You've flipped the job the wrong way round. *You* made the claim — so *you* carry the load of supporting it. That load has a name: the burden of proof, and it sits with the one who asserts, not the one who doubts. 'You can't prove I'm wrong' isn't evidence for anything — I could say a purple whale lives in the pond and challenge you to disprove *that*. The doubter doesn't have to dig up the whole field to show there's no treasure. The *claimer* has to show a reason to start digging. Where's your map? Your witness? Your reason? Bring the evidence that matches the size of your claim — and the bigger the claim, the more you'll need to bring."

The fox opened its mouth, found no map, no witness, no reason — and the treasure quietly deflated.



Have you ever been told to "prove it's NOT true" about something wild? How did being put on that spot feel?

Onus had learned about the burden after being cornered by a backwards one.

As a young heron, Onus had once been told, flatly, "you took the missing whistle — and you can't prove you didn't!" And Onus had panicked, because how *do* you prove you didn't do something? Onus scrambled, flustered and near tears, trying to account for every single moment of the day, feeling more guilty-looking with every gap. The accuser just folded their arms and repeated, *you can't prove you didn't*.

It was an older, wiser club-keeper who finally set it right: "The one who *says* Onus took it has to show *why* they think so — a sighting, a reason, anything. Onus doesn't have to disprove a claim that was never supported in the first place." And the accusation, having no legs, simply fell over. Onus, weak with relief, felt the lesson burn in deep: *being asked to prove a negative is a trap, and the trap works by putting the load on the wrong shoulders*. From then on, Onus made it a life's work to gently, firmly hand every burden back to the shoulders it actually belonged on: the claimer's.



Onus waded up to the ClaimCraft academy, standing tall on two long, steady legs.

Logos, the mentor, met Onus and asked the question. "Who carries the burden of proof?"

Onus lifted one leg, balancing the whole body's weight on the other. "The one who makes the claim — always. If you assert it, you support it. The doubter's job is only to ask *why should I believe that?* — a fair, small question — and then to weigh what's brought. And the load scales: a small everyday claim needs a little support; a big, surprising, world-changing claim needs a lot. Extraordinary claims ask for extraordinary evidence. Point the burden the right way, and 'you can't disprove it' stops being a trick that works."

Logos nodded at the balanced, upright fairness of it. "You are appointed."



In Onus's reed-side study, a young vole worried, twisting a stem.

"Onus, doesn't this just make me the annoying one who always demands proof? Won't people think I'm a hostile, doubt-everything grouch who trusts nobody?"

Onus lowered a gentle head to the vole's level.

"That's the fear, so let me ease it. Asking who carries the burden isn't hostility — it's *fairness*, and it protects everyone, including you. It's the rule that stops anyone from being convicted by 'you can't prove you didn't,' the rule that keeps wild claims from stampeding a crowd just because they're loud. And it isn't 'doubt everything' — for small, ordinary claims, a little support is plenty and you move right along; you don't demand a mountain of proof that your friend really did have toast for breakfast. You save the real weight for the claims that carry real weight. It's not grouchiness. It's a fair set of scales that everyone can stand on — the claimer brings what their claim is worth, no more, no less."

The vole stopped twisting the stem. "So it's not me being difficult. It's me keeping the scales fair for everybody."

"Fair scales for everybody," Onus agreed. "Including the next person someone tries to corner."



Think of a time someone backed up a big claim with real reasons instead of just insisting. What did that solid feeling do for your trust?

The vole thought, and the worry settled.

"When the club captain wanted to change our whole meeting spot, they didn't just say 'trust me,'" the vole recalled. "They brought the reasons — the old spot floods, the new one's closer for everyone, here's the map. I felt *good* saying yes, because they'd actually carried the weight of their own big idea."

"That's exactly the feeling the burden protects," Onus said warmly. "The solid, settled yes you can give when someone has earned it — versus the queasy, pushed-into-it feeling when someone just insists and dares you to disprove them. Putting the burden on the claimer isn't about making people prove themselves to death. It's about making sure that when you *do* believe something, you believe it because it was *held up*, not because you were tricked into carrying its weight." Onus offered the vole a smooth balancing-stone. "Go hand a burden back to where it belongs today — gently. Watch how fair it feels."

The vole took the stone, felt the steady fairness of scales set right, and went to ask, kindly, *and why do you think that?*

Grant

GRANT — concede the points the other side gets right; find the shared ground; disagreement is usually a narrow slice, not the whole.



At the community forum, a deer named Grant watched two clubs argue about the new garden — one side wanting flowers, the other wanting vegetables — as if they were sworn enemies who agreed on *nothing*.

"We should grow flowers! Beauty matters!" "No, VEGETABLES — food matters!" Round and round, each treating the other as 100% wrong.

Grant stepped softly into the middle. "Can I try something? Flower-side — is it true that food matters?" A grudging pause. "...Yes, of course food matters." "Vegetable-side — is it true that beauty matters?" Another pause. "...Well. Yes. Beauty matters too." Grant smiled gently. "Look what just happened. You each *granted* something true the other side said, and the ground stopped shaking. You don't actually disagree about *everything* — you both want a garden that feeds people AND lifts hearts. The real disagreement is tiny: it's just about *how much space* for each. That's a solvable question. You were fighting a total war over a border dispute."

Within minutes the two sides were sketching a garden with both, arguing now only, and cheerfully, about the *rows*.



Have you ever admitted the other person had a good point mid-argument? How did it feel to say it out loud?

Grant had learned the power of granting after "winning" an argument the wrong way.

As a young deer, Grant had once been *determined* to win a debate about the club's meeting time, and had refused — flatly, stubbornly — to admit that the other side had a single good point, even the ones that were obviously true. Grant argued past every fair objection, conceded nothing, and eventually *won* by sheer exhausting persistence. But something felt hollow. The other side walked away feeling steamrolled and unheard, the friendship went cold, and — worst of all — one of the points Grant had refused to grant had actually been *right*, and the club suffered for it later because Grant had been too proud to say *yes, you have a point there*.

Standing in that hollow victory, Grant felt the strange emptiness of it. *I won the argument and lost almost everything worth having*, Grant understood. *Refusing to grant a true thing didn't make me stronger. It made me smaller, and it made the truth smaller too*. From then on, Grant made a practice of the bravest, most disarming move in any disagreement: saying, out loud and early, *you're right about that part*.



Grant walked to the ClaimCraft academy, stepping lightly, leaving room on the path.

Logos, the mentor, met Grant and asked the question. "What is concession?"

Grant drew a wide circle in the dirt, then a small slice of it. "Concession is granting the parts the other side gets right — and it's not surrender, it's *honesty*. Look: most disagreements aren't this whole circle. They're this thin slice. All the rest — the big shared circle — is ground you *both* already stand on, if anyone bothers to name it. When I grant your true points, three things happen: you feel heard, so you can finally listen back; my own case gets *stronger*, because now I'm only defending what's actually defensible; and the fight shrinks to the one real slice, where progress is possible. Granting isn't losing. It's clearing away the fake fight to find the real one."

Logos regarded the wide circle and the thin slice, and nodded. "You are appointed."



In Grant's clearing, a young lynx bristled, unconvinced.

"Grant, if I admit the other side is right about *anything*, don't I just *lose*? Isn't conceding the same as giving up — like waving a white flag? And if we agree on so much, does anyone even really disagree, or is it all just opinion anyway?"

Grant lay down calmly in the shared clearing, making room.

"Two traps, and I want to steer you between them both. First trap: thinking concession is surrender. It isn't — granting a *true* point you can't honestly deny makes you *more* believable, not less, because now people trust that when you *do* hold your ground, you mean it. The arguer who concedes nothing gets believed on nothing. Second trap, the opposite one: thinking that because we agree on a lot, *nothing* is really true or false and it's 'all just opinion.' That's not right either. After you clear away the shared ground and the fake fight, there's usually a *real* disagreement left in that thin slice — a genuine question with a better and worse answer — and *that* one you argue honestly, holding exactly what you can defend. Grant what's true. Hold what's true. The slice in between is where the real thinking happens."

The lynx's bristle smoothed. "So I concede the true parts — and that's what earns me the right to really fight for the part that's left."

"That's the whole art of it," Grant said. "Give the shared ground freely. Defend the real slice honestly."



Think of a disagreement where you found something you both actually agreed on. What did standing on that shared ground feel like?

The lynx thought, and the wariness eased into something warmer.

"My sister and I fought for a week about a trip," the lynx said slowly. "Then someone made us each say one thing we agreed on, and it turned out we *both* just wanted to feel included in the plan. Once we said that out loud, the rest was easy. The whole week of fighting was about, like, five percent." The lynx blinked. "It felt like putting down something heavy."

"That's the feeling I want you to chase," Grant said warmly. "Not the hollow, lonely 'win' of conceding nothing — the *relief* of finding the wide ground you already share, and the warmth of someone finally feeling heard by you. When you grant what's true, the other person unclenches, you unclench, and the real question — the small honest slice that's left — becomes something you can actually solve *together*. That's not losing. That's the closest thing to winning a disagreement really has." Grant nudged a smooth stone across the shared ground. "Go tell someone which part of *their* side you think is right. Watch the heavy thing get put down."

The lynx took the stone, felt the light, unclenched relief of shared ground found, and went to grant someone the true part of what they'd been saying all along.

About Spark & Anvil

Spark & Anvil is a 501(c)(3) public charity. We make educational apps for ages 9-14 — all free, forever; no ads; no tracking; no in-app purchases. ClaimCraft is one of 140+ apps in the portfolio.

More chapter books from Spark & Anvil

Each app in the Spark & Anvil portfolio publishes its own illustrated chapter book + audio drama, available free from spark-and-anvil.com/books. Highlights include:

- **GambitTales** — chess tactics through Sir Pinwell, Lady Skewer, Queen Vesper, and the Twin Knights of Fork Hill
- **ProofQuest** — formal proof techniques through Direct-Proof Dora and the Lemma Library
- **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).

License

© 2026 Spark & Anvil (501(c)(3) public charity). Chapter text and illustrations licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. App software © Spark & Anvil — all rights reserved. Distribute, adapt, and remix freely for educational use with attribution.

Cover art, chapter illustrations, and chapter text are reviewed for age-appropriate, trauma-aware content before publication. Audio drama transcripts available at spark-and-anvil.com/cast.