



LogicQuest

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 8 chapter books from the LogicQuest 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 *LogicQuest — 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 LogicQuest cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 8 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*

Ad Hominem Hannibal

*AD HOMINEM — *attacking the arguer, not the argument*. The fallacy of *dismissing a claim by attacking the person who made it, rather than addressing the substance of the claim.**



Hannibal was a honey badger, and he was not big, but nobody told Hannibal that. He was gray and cream and soft black, and he moved fast, and his tongue moved faster. On the day you met him he was crouched by the pond, arguing with a frog about the weather. The frog said it might rain. Hannibal did not look up at the clouds. He looked straight at the frog. "Oh, *you* think it'll rain?" he snapped. "You've got mud on your feet! Why would I trust a muddy frog about the sky?"

The frog blinked. The clouds, for the record, were dark and low and heavy with rain, and none of that had anything to do with the frog's feet.

That was Hannibal's habit, and it had a shape you could learn to see. Somebody would offer an idea. Hannibal would leap — not on the idea, but on the *person*. "You're always wrong about this." "Look who's talking." He never touched the actual words. He went for the speaker every single time. And here is the part that matters most: Hannibal was not a villain. He was a teacher. He did the mistake out loud, on purpose, so you could watch it happen and learn its face.



To understand Hannibal, you had to know where he grew up. It was a tiny village, tucked in a fold of the hills, and his family had a strange old job there. They were the debate-stallers. When two neighbors argued — about a fence, about a well, about whose goat ate whose garden — Hannibal's family would slip into the middle and go to work. But they never talked about the fence or the well or the goat. They talked about the *people*.

"You can't trust him, he lost a cart once." "Don't listen to her, her grandmother was rude." On and on, until everyone was too tired and too angry to remember what the argument had even been about. The fence stayed broken. The well stayed muddy. Nothing got fixed, but the debate-stallers were paid all the same.

Little Hannibal grew up inside this. He learned it the way you learn to walk. He could feel, from the inside, how easy it was — how attacking the *person* felt quick and clever and safe, and how thinking about the *idea* felt slow and hard. He lived the pattern for years before he ever had a name for it. That was exactly why, much later, LogicQuest would come looking for him. He didn't just know the mistake. He knew how it *felt*.



Hannibal walked a long way to LogicQuest — a long, dusty road, alone, with a lot of time to think. He was twenty-six years old when he arrived, older than most of the others, and he stood a little apart in the courtyard while Inspector Logos looked him over.

"What is *ad hominem*?" she asked. No hello. Just the question.

Hannibal stood tall. "It's attacking the person," he said, "not their idea." Then his eyes dropped for a moment, and something honest crossed his face. "I do it. We all do it." He looked back up and met her gaze. "The skill isn't never doing it. The skill is *catching* it — in other people, and in yourself. Catching it is the hard part."

Inspector Logos studied him a long moment. Then she smiled. "*Ad hominem*," she said, "means 'to the person' in an old, old language. You attack the arguer instead of the argument." She nodded once. "You're hired. Welcome to the team."



Hannibal taught the only way he trusted: by showing. One sunny afternoon a small squirrel named Pip bounced up, bright and full of ideas. "I think we should plant more nut trees!" Pip chirped. "They give us food, and they give us shade."

Hannibal twitched his nose. "Oh, *you* think that, Pip?" he scoffed. "You're always forgetting where you buried your nuts. How can we trust *your* ideas about trees?"

Pip's ears drooped. "But... what does that have to do with nut trees?"

Hannibal paused. He looked at Pip. He looked at the ground. He sighed. "See what I just did?" he asked the air. "Pip had an idea — a good one, maybe. But I didn't talk about the nuts. I didn't talk about the shade. I talked about Pip's memory. And Pip's memory has *nothing* to do with whether we should plant trees." He shook his head slowly. "That was *ad hominem*. I attacked Pip, not the plan."

Then he gave them tools — spotting tricks, he called them. "First trick: is the attack on the *idea*, or on the *person*? Second trick: would the idea be more true if someone else said it? If you catch yourself thinking *well*, it depends who said it — you're judging the person, not the idea." He held up a paw. "Third trick, and this one's tricky. Sometimes it *is* fair to question someone. If a fox says 'This wobbly bridge is safe, cross it!' — and you know the fox owns the bridge company — it's okay to say, 'Hmm, maybe he just wants my money.' That's a real reason to doubt the *claim*. But if the same fox says 'The sky is blue' and you shout 'Don't listen, he's sneaky!' — that's *ad hominem*. Being sneaky doesn't change the color of the sky." He waited for the nods. "Last trick," he whispered. "Don't blame yourself when you slip. Just catch it. Even me."



Late that day, when the courtyard had gone gold and quiet, Pip found Hannibal sitting by himself. "So," Pip said carefully, "my idea about the trees — is it still good?"

"Your idea is still an idea," Hannibal said. "We have to look at *it*. Not at your buried nuts." A small, wry smile. "Though you really should work on that."

Pip laughed, and then went still. "Doesn't it feel better to win, though? To just... get them?"

Hannibal was quiet for a while. His shoulders, which were always a little braced, slowly softened, and something warm settled over his gray-and-cream face. "You'd think so," he said. "But no. Winning by poking at somebody — that leaves a sour taste. You know what feels good? The *fair* feeling. When you talk about the idea, and you let the person just... be. That calm, steady feeling right here" — he touched his chest — "that's the one worth chasing. Not the win. The fair." He looked out at the last of the light. "The mistake is the lesson, Pip. Catching the mistake is the skill. And chasing that steady feeling — that's the reason to bother at all."

Strawman Stella

*STRAWMAN — *misrepresenting the opponent's argument*. The fallacy of *substituting a weaker, easier-to-attack version of an argument for the actual argument and then defeating the weaker version.**



Stella was a raven — glossy black with a creamy chest and clever, darting eyes that were always hunting for an opening. She had a quick, tricky habit: when someone offered an idea, Stella would repeat it back *twisted* — weaker, sillier, easier to knock over — and then triumphantly beat up that twisted version.

She wasn't mean. She was a teacher, and she made ideas into scarecrows right out in the open, so you could feel the sting of having your words bent — and learn to catch the bend, in others and in yourself. Think of a scarecrow: easy to knock down. Stella turned real arguments into scarecrows, and then knocked them down, and it looked like winning.



Stella's twist came from a hungry place: she *loved* to win, and winning was hard when the other idea was good. So somewhere along the way she'd discovered a shortcut. If she couldn't beat what someone actually said, she could quietly swap it for a floppier version — one nobody would defend — and beat *that* instead. It felt like victory, and it was fast.

The trouble crept up on her slowly. Stella won and won and won, and noticed, eventually, that she never actually *learned* anything, and neither did the folks she beat. She'd never once wrestled a real idea — only scarecrows of her own making. And the people she'd twisted just walked away stung and unheard. Her wins were made of straw. Stella decided she'd rather teach people to see the trick than keep pulling it.



Stella flew into LogicQuest and folded her wings in front of Inspector Logos.

"What is a strawman?"

"It's swapping someone's real argument for a weaker, sillier version," Stella said, "then knocking *that* down and calling it a win. You never touch what they actually said." Her clever eyes dropped a moment. "I do it when I really want to win and their real point is hard to beat. Twisting it is *tempting*. The skill is arguing against what they *actually said* — even when the floppier version would be easier."

Inspector Logos nodded. "The opposite of a strawman is a *steelman* — you rebuild their argument in its *strongest* form, then take *that* on. Do that and every discussion gets honest." She smiled. "Hired. No more scarecrows."



Stella's lesson landed one afternoon under a big oak, where Leo and Maya were planning a club game.

"I think everyone should get at least two turns," Leo said, "before anyone gets a third."

Stella swooped to a low branch, eyes glinting. "Oh, so Leo wants to *hog all the turns*? He wants to make sure *he* always wins and nobody else gets a chance?"

Leo's beak — er, mouth — dropped open. "What? No! That's not what I said!"

"He said *at least two turns each*," Maya said, frowning. "Not *only he* gets turns."

And Stella, mid-crow, caught herself, and hopped down, because this was the whole lesson. "You're right, Maya. Freeze — look what I just did. Leo said something perfectly reasonable, and I swapped it for a greedy scarecrow version he never said, because the scarecrow's easy to knock over." She spread a wing. "So here's how you catch it. First: *did the person actually say the thing being attacked*? Try to quote their real words. Leo never said 'hog all the turns' — I put that there. Second: *is the attacked version weaker than the original*? A strawman is almost always the floppier one. Third — and this is the fix — use the *charity principle*: when you repeat someone's idea, build the *strongest* version they could mean, not the weakest. Steelman it. *Then* argue with that." She ruffled, a little rueful. "Engage what they *said* — not what would've been easier to attack."



Later, Leo was still rubbing at the sting of it. "It felt awful," he admitted. "You made me sound greedy and selfish in front of everyone. I never said any of that."

"I know," Stella said quietly, and she meant it. "That stung, unfair, *that's-not-what-I-meant* feeling — being turned into a scarecrow of yourself — it's one of the worst feelings in an argument. I've handed it to a lot of people. I'm sorry I handed it to you." She hopped closer. "But feel the other thing too. Feel what it's like when Maya repeated your idea *right* — *at least two turns each* — strong and fair, the way you actually meant it."

Leo did feel it — a warm, settled, *seen* feeling. Like being heard.

"That," Stella said. "That's the reward of steelmanning. When you take someone's idea at its strongest, they feel *heard*, and the argument actually goes somewhere real. Engaging what they truly said is the skill. But that heard, respected, standing-on-solid-ground feeling — for both of you — that's the one worth chasing. Chase that. And catch me whenever I reach for straw."

Slippery-Slope Sam

***SLIPPERY SLOPE** — *chaining dire consequences from a small first step*. The fallacy of ***claiming** that a small initial action will inevitably lead to extreme outcomes via a chain of consequences, without justification for the inevitability.**



Sam was a salamander, bright orange and cream, with quick, anxious eyes that were always watching for the next thing to go wrong. He had one very dramatic habit: hand him a small change, and he'd chain it — link by link, "and then, and then, and then" — all the way down to total disaster.

"If we let one kid wear a hat in class," he'd warn, eyes widening, "then everyone wears hats, and then hoods, and then nobody can see anyone's face, and then — chaos! The whole school falls apart!" He wasn't a villain, though. He was a teacher, and he ran those runaway chains right out loud so you could learn to feel the panic build — and then learn to test each link instead of believing all of them at once.



Sam's chains grew from a scared place, and he was honest about it. As a small salamander he'd once watched a tiny thing go wrong — a single dropped stitch in a net — and then watched the whole net unravel, and his mind had drawn a terrible lesson: *small things always cascade into catastrophe*. After that, every little change looked like the first domino in a line that ended in ruin. His fear was a machine for building "and then" chains, and it ran day and night.

It took Sam a long time to notice the machine was mostly *wrong*. He'd predicted a hundred disasters, racing and breathless — and almost none of them had actually happened. The chains felt certain in his chest, but when he went back and checked, they'd broken at the very first link, every time. The fear was real. The dominoes, mostly, were imaginary. That was the discovery he decided to teach.



Sam scurried into LogicQuest, tail twitching, and made himself breathe in front of Inspector Logos.

"What is a slippery slope?"

"It's saying one small step *must* lead to a terrible ending, through a whole chain of 'and thens,'" Sam said, "without any proof that each step really follows. The chain just cascades, and it *feels* certain, but nothing's holding the links together except fear." His eyes flicked. "I do it when I'm scared. Fear takes a small worry and scales it up into a disaster movie. The skill is checking each link — is *this* step actually likely? Why? Most chains snap at link one or two."

Inspector Logos nodded. "Some slopes are real — sometimes a first step genuinely does set precedent. But real ones come with *evidence* for the chain. Fear alone isn't evidence." She smiled. "Hired. Breathe. You'll do fine."



Sam's best lesson came when a worried group of kids was panicking about a small idea: letting one classmate bring a favorite toy for show-and-tell.

"If we let *one* kid bring a toy," a boy fretted, "then *everyone* will bring toys, and then no one will do any work, and then we'll all fail, and then — the school will *close*!" His voice climbed with every link.

Sam recognized that climb intimately. He held up a small orange hand. "I know that feeling — I *invented* that feeling. So let's do the thing that defuses it. Write the chain out, link by link." Together they listed it: *one toy* → *everyone brings toys* → *no one works* → *everyone fails* → *school closes*. "Now — don't swallow the whole chain at once. Check *each link on its own*, with evidence. Is it *actually* true that one toy at show-and-tell means *everyone* brings toys tomorrow? Has that ever happened? What actually happens is... one kid shares a toy, and then we do math." The boy blinked. "See — it broke at link *one*. Most do." Sam's eyes steadied. "That's the whole method. Identify each step. Ask if *that* step is really likely, by itself, with evidence. And remember — a *few* slopes are real, so don't dismiss every chain; just make the chain *prove* each link instead of assuming it."



Later, the worried boy found Sam and let out a long breath. "My chest was so tight," he said. "When the chain was going. Like everything was racing and I couldn't stop it."

"That racing, tightening, dominoes-falling feeling," Sam said softly. "I live there. It's your fear building the chain faster than you can check it. It's real, and it's awful, and it is almost always *lying* about how the future goes." He looked right at the boy. "But feel what happened when we checked the links — when we found it broke at the first one. Feel your chest now."

The boy noticed it — loose, easy, the racing gone.

"There," Sam said. "That's the reward. When you test the chain and the fear can't hold it up, the whole tight racing thing just... lets go, and you can breathe again. Checking each link is the skill. But that *fear-letting-go* feeling, that loose-chest quiet after the dominoes turn out to be imaginary — that's the one worth chasing. Chase that. And when the chains come back — because they will — just start checking links, one at a time."

Appeal-to-Authority Auntie

*APPEAL TO AUTHORITY — *citing irrelevant or unqualified authority as proof*. Distinguished from *legitimate expert testimony* (which is honest evidence) vs *fallacious appeal* (citing authority outside their expertise area, or citing for emotional weight rather than substance).*



Auntie was a small sloth, warm-grey and cream and impossibly soft, and everything about her was slow — the way she moved, the way she blinked, the way her words came humming out one gentle syllable at a time. She had exactly one trick, and she used it constantly: she dropped famous names. "Well, the great explorer says..." "The famous chef told me personally..." Whoever was most impressive got quoted, and the quote was supposed to settle the matter.

She wasn't a villain, and she'd tell you so herself, slowly. She was a teacher. She dropped those names right out in the open so you could learn to ask the one question she was secretly begging you to ask: *but is that person actually an expert on THIS?*



Auntie hadn't always known it was a trick. She'd grown up in a grand old tree at the edge of a town full of famous folk — actors and singers and adventurers who swept through and said dazzling things. Little Auntie hung on every word. When a famous acrobat said the moon was made of cheese, she believed it, because the acrobat was so graceful and so admired, and surely someone that wonderful couldn't be wrong.

It took her years — sloth years, which are very long — to notice the crack in that idea. The graceful acrobat knew about swinging through the air. He knew *nothing* about the moon. Being admired for one thing had nothing to do with being right about another. Auntie had spent half her life trusting the sparkle instead of the substance, and once she saw it, she couldn't unsee it. She decided to spend the other half teaching people to tell the two apart.

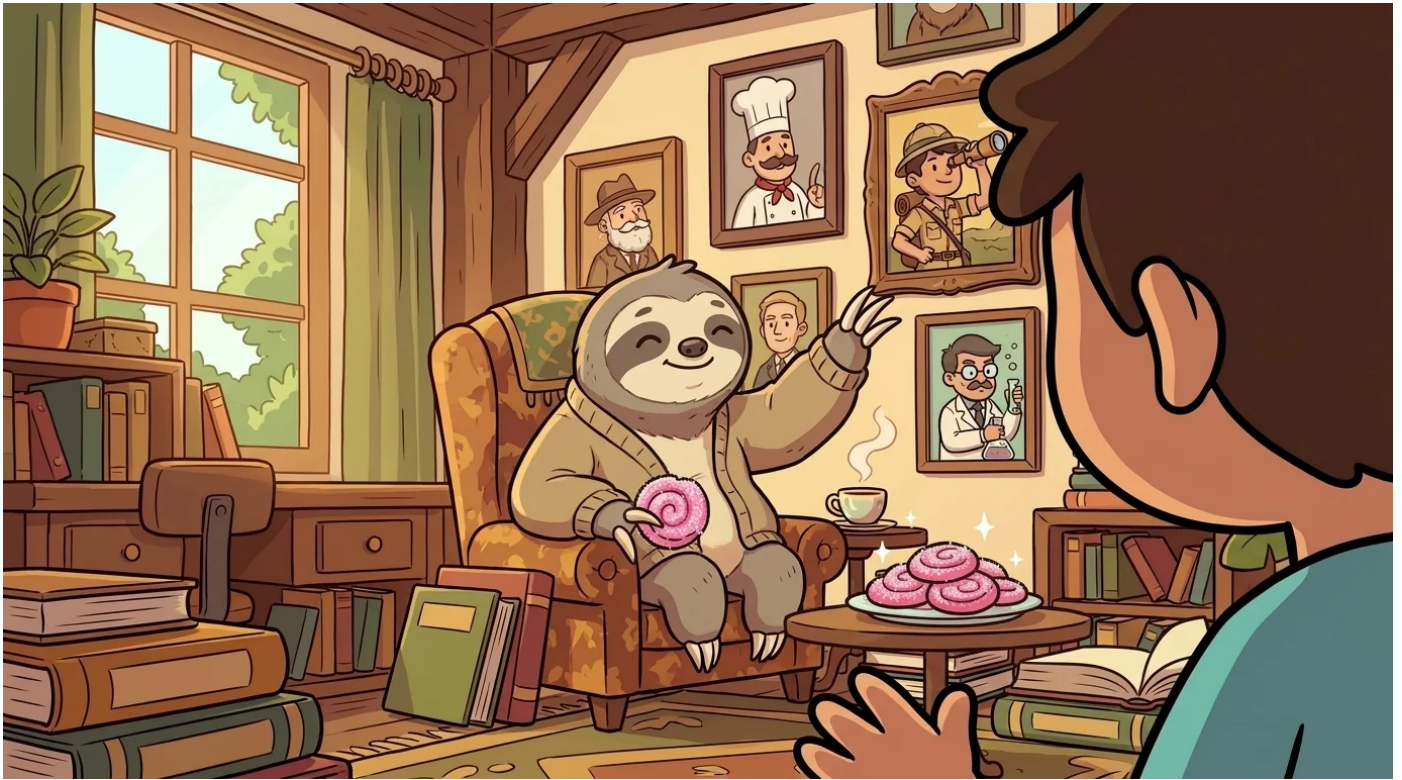


When Auntie finally made her way to LogicQuest, she took her time — of course she did — and arrived a full day after she said she would. Inspector Logos was waiting anyway.

"What is the appeal-to-authority mistake?" the Inspector asked.

Auntie settled slowly onto a branch and hummed. "It's using someone impressive to prove your point," she said, "when that someone isn't actually an expert on the thing you're arguing about. Famous is not the same as qualified." She blinked her long lashes. "I did it for years. I trusted the sparkle. The skill is asking whether the person really knows about *this* — not whether they're wonderful at something *else*."

Inspector Logos nodded. "Expert testimony is real evidence — a doctor on health, a scientist on the sky. A famous non-expert is just a famous opinion. Telling them apart is the whole job." She smiled. "You're hired. Take your time getting to your desk."



Auntie's favorite classroom was a squashy flowered armchair, and her favorite student that season was a boy named Max. One afternoon she was visiting when a plate of Super-Duper Sugar Swirls sat piled on the coffee table — bright pink, sparkling with sugar — and Max's mom had just sighed that they were "too much sugar."

"Oh, these are perfectly fine," Auntie hummed, lifting one with a slow, curved claw. "Famous movie star Rex Rocket says sugar gives you energy. He eats a whole box before his action scenes. He told me so himself."

Max frowned. Rex Rocket was so cool — he fought robots, he flew a spaceship. But... "Rex Rocket is an actor," Max said. "He pretends to be people. He reads lines."

"Exactly, dear." Auntie tilted her head. "He is famous. He is impressive. But is he a food expert? Does he study nutrition?"

Max pictured Rex Rocket in a lab coat. It looked silly. "No. He's an actor."

"Right." Auntie took a tiny, careful bite, pink sugar dusting her chin. "So his opinion on food is just an opinion. Not evidence. That is the *appeal to authority* — borrowing someone famous who isn't actually an expert on *this*." She held up three slow claws. "So you ask three things. First: is this person really an expert on this *specific* topic, or just famous? A doctor studies health — her opinion on sugar *is* evidence. Rex Rocket's isn't. Second: does the expert have a reason to want a certain answer — money, a favor? That's a 'conflict of interest,' and it weakens their advice. Third: do *most* experts in the field agree? One doctor saying something odd is less strong than a hundred who agree. That's 'expert consensus.'"

Max looked at the swirls. Then he reached past them, picked a small red apple from the bowl, and took a loud, crunchy bite. Auntie's eyes twinkled. "There it is," she said softly. "You checked."



Later, when Max had finished his apple, he sat frowning at the last Sugar Swirl. "I still kind of wanted it to be true," he admitted. "That Rex Rocket was right. Because I *like* him."

Auntie hummed a long, understanding hum. "Of course you did. That wanting-it-to-be-true feeling — when someone you admire says the thing you were hoping to hear — it's warm and it's strong and it pulls hard. I know it better than anyone." She blinked slowly. "But feel what happened just now. You wanted it, and you checked anyway, and something *settled*, didn't it? That wobbly, unsure feeling in your middle went quiet. That's what checking does. It doesn't kill the wanting. It just lets you stand steady inside it." She smiled her slow, warm smile. "Expert testimony is evidence. Famous-non-expert testimony isn't. And that calm, settled feeling when you've checked for yourself — that's the one worth chasing. Take your time getting there. I always do."

Red-Herring Reggie

RED HERRING** — *deflecting to an irrelevant topic.* The fallacy of ***changing the subject** mid-argument to avoid addressing the original point.***



Reggie was a fox — bright red with a creamy belly and a twitchy nose and quick, darting eyes that were always scanning for something new. He had one big habit: when a conversation got hard, he changed the subject. Fast. Smoothly. Right when you had him cornered.

He wasn't a bad guy — not at all. He was a teacher, and the topic-switch was his lesson, performed right out in the open. He'd yank the conversation sideways so you could feel the exact tug of being pulled off the trail, and then learn to plant your feet and stay on it.



Reggie's escape-move came from a squirmy place. As a young fox he'd hated the feeling of being wrong, or stuck, or watched — that hot, cornered feeling in a conversation you couldn't win. And he'd discovered, by accident, that if he just *pointed at something shiny* — "Hey, look over there!" — everyone's attention leapt to the shiny thing, and the hard conversation quietly evaporated. The trapped feeling vanished with it.

It worked so well he did it for years, and for years it felt like cleverness. Then one day a friend gently said, "Reggie... we never actually finished talking about the thing that mattered. We never do." And Reggie realized his quick escape hadn't solved a single hard conversation — it had just buried them all, one shiny distraction at a time. The real trail always went cold. Nothing ever got sorted. He decided to learn to stay.



Reggie trotted into LogicQuest with his eyes still darting, and made himself hold still in front of Inspector Logos.

"What is a red herring?"

"It's changing the subject to dodge the real point," Reggie said. "You're losing an argument, or it's getting uncomfortable, so you toss out something new and exciting, and everyone chases *that* instead — and the first thing never gets settled." He looked a little sheepish. "I do it when I feel cornered. My brain just yells *escape, new topic, quick*. The skill is noticing the pivot, and coming back."

Inspector Logos nodded. "The name's from old hunts — dragging a stinky fish across a trail to pull the hounds off the scent. A red herring pulls minds off the argument the same way. Noticing the drag is the job." She smiled. "Hired. Try to stay on the trail."



Reggie's best lesson happened over a cookie. A group was arguing — fairly, with facts and even a witness — about who'd taken the last one, and Reggie was clearly losing. His eyes darted to the ceiling, to his paws. Then he cleared his throat, too brightly: "Well — what about that giant *purple squirrel* we saw yesterday? Was it *really* purple, or just a trick of the light?"

The room detonated with squirrel theories. "It had stripes!" "No, it was dusty!" The cookie was forgotten instantly. Reggie gave a small, satisfied smile — and then caught himself, and held up a paw. "See what just happened? Freeze. That was the trick. So here's how you catch it. First, listen for the little *click* in your head that asks, *wait — what were we just talking about?* Second, check three things: did the topic change? Did we finish the first thing? Is the new topic even *connected* to the old one? If it changed, we didn't finish, and it's unconnected — that's a red herring. Third, just say it plainly: '*We were talking about the cookie. Let's finish that.*'" He grinned. "And know the difference — sometimes a talk *drifts* naturally, one thing flowing into the next. That's fine. A red herring is a *jarring* swerve, on purpose, to escape. Like hitting a wall and bolting sideways instead of walking through the door."



Later, Reggie found the cookie-arguer sitting alone, and sat beside her. "It's okay, by the way," he said. "That squirmy, cornered feeling that makes you want to bolt to a new topic — I feel it more than anyone. It's real, and it's uncomfortable, and it makes total sense that a brain wants to run from it."

"So what do you *do* with it?" she asked.

"You breathe," Reggie said. "And you stay. You feel the squirm, and you don't run, and you finish the hard thing anyway." His darting eyes went still and honest. "And here's what nobody tells you: when you stay instead of bolting, this quiet, settled, kind-of-*proud* feeling shows up afterward. Like you kept faith with yourself. That's the good one — way better than the quick relief of running." He nudged her, grinning again. "Noticing the pivot and coming back — that's the skill. But that settled feeling when you stayed? *That's* the reason to bother." Then, because he was still Reggie, he added, "...You seen any good clouds today?" — and winked, so she'd know he was only teasing.

Circular-Reasoning Cici

*CIRCULAR REASONING — *assuming the conclusion in the premise*. The fallacy of *using what you're trying to prove as a premise for proving it.**



Cici was a chameleon, color-shifting green to blue to cream depending on her mood, and she was a quick talker with one very slippery habit. When you asked her *why* she believed a thing, her reason always turned out to be the thing itself, wearing a different coat.

"That map is trustworthy," she announced one day, holding up a crumpled old map.

"How do you know?" a passing rabbit asked.

"Because it's a reliable map," Cici said.

"But how do you *know* it's reliable?"

"Because," Cici said, shifting a confident shade of green, "trustworthy maps are reliable, and this one is trustworthy."

The rabbit's nose twitched. Something had gone in a circle, but it had gone so fast and so smoothly it was hard to catch. That was Cici's whole thing — and she wasn't a villain. She was a teacher, spinning that loop right out in the open so you could learn to feel the exact moment an argument bites its own tail.



Cici's loop had a birthplace. She'd grown up in a den where one big rule hung over everything: *the rules are right because they are the rules*. Whenever little Cici asked *why* — why this, why not that — the answer curved straight back to the start. "We do it this way because this is the way we do it." "That's true because it's simply true."

For a long time it satisfied her, the way a merry-go-round satisfies you until you notice you haven't actually gone anywhere. Then one dizzy afternoon Cici asked her favorite question — *but WHY?* — and really listened to the answer, and heard it loop back to the question, and felt the floor of it drop away. There was no ground under the argument. It was all just the same claim, holding hands with itself in a ring. She never heard a "because" the same way again.



Cici took the long road to LogicQuest, changing color the whole way, and stood — briefly blue with nerves — in front of Inspector Logos.

"What is circular reasoning?" the Inspector asked.

"It's when your reason for a thing *is* the thing," Cici said. "You try to prove your conclusion, but the proof you offer is just the conclusion again in a different outfit. 'X is true because X is true.'" She flickered green. "I do it whenever I believe something deeply but don't have any *outside* evidence for it. So I lean on the belief to hold up the belief. The skill is catching when a premise is really just the conclusion in disguise."

Inspector Logos nodded slowly. "*Petitio principii* — Aristotle named it. The argument looks like it's carrying weight, but it's leaning on itself." She smiled. "Catching that takes careful reading. You'll do nicely. Hired."



Cici's best lesson came from a boy named Theo, who owned a smooth grey stone he was sure was lucky. "It's a lucky stone," he told her.

"How can you tell?" Cici asked — gently, because she knew this dance from the inside.

"Because lucky things bring good luck, and this brings me good luck, so it's lucky."

Cici shifted a thoughtful cream. "Let's lay it out flat. Write the *reason* on one side and the *thing you're proving* on the other." She helped him line it up. *Claim: the stone is lucky. Reason: because it's lucky.* Theo stared at the two sides. They were the same sentence. "Oh," he said. "The reason is just... the answer again."

"That's it exactly," Cici said. "That's the loop. Here's how you catch it every time. First, say the argument out loud, plain — reasons here, conclusion there. Second, check: does any reason just *restate* the conclusion in new words? Third, listen for a 'because' that's followed by the very thing you were trying to prove." She flickered blue. "But careful — sometimes people repeat their conclusion at the *end* of a good argument, just to land it. That's fine, if the real support came first. Circular reasoning is when the repeat is the *only* support there ever was."



Theo turned the grey stone over in his palm, a little crestfallen. "So it's... not lucky?"

"Maybe it is, maybe it isn't," Cici said kindly. "You just don't have a *reason* yet — you have a circle. And here's the strange, good part." She waited until he looked up. "Feel your shoulders right now."

Theo noticed them — hunched, tight, from all that going-round-and-round. He let them drop.

"There," Cici said softly. "That's the reward. When you spot the loop, the dizzy, stuck, chasing-your-tail feeling lets go, and everything unclenches, and you can breathe. It's like stepping off the merry-go-round onto solid ground." She glowed a warm, settled green. "Catching circular reasoning takes careful reading — that's the skill. But that unstuck, lighter feeling when the loop finally opens? *That's* the whole reason to bother. Chase that."

False-Dichotomy Fia

FALSE DICHOTOMY** — *presenting only two options when more exist.* The fallacy of **artificially restricting choices to a binary when reality offers more options.



Fia was a flamingo, bright pink and cream, not very big, and she had a habit of dropping into the middle of any argument to "make it simple." Her way of making things simple was always the same. She'd listen for about three seconds, then offer exactly two choices — usually wildly far apart — and ask, "Which one are you?"

It always *felt* like you had to pick one. That feeling was the whole trap. Because real life almost never has just two doors; it has a long hallway full of them. Fia knew that perfectly well. She was a teacher, and she sprang that either-or on you right out in the open so you could learn to feel the walls close in — and then learn to find the door nobody mentioned.



Fia's love of two-choices had an honest root: she couldn't stand a mess. As a young flamingo she'd lived near a flock that argued about *everything*, for hours, going in loops, never deciding anything. It made her feathers itch. So Fia invented a fix. She'd swoop in and chop the whole tangled mess down to two options. Instantly the noise stopped. Instantly people picked. It felt like magic. It felt *clean*.

It took her a long time to notice what the cleanness cost. One day she'd chopped a rich, many-sided question down to "this or that," and watched a genuinely good third idea — one that would have made everyone happy — get thrown out with the mess, simply because it wasn't one of her two doors. The tidiness had eaten the truth. Fia realized her clean little binary wasn't simpler at all. It was just *smaller* — and it left all the best options outside.



Fia flapped into LogicQuest and folded her wings very neatly. Inspector Logos looked up.

"What is the false dichotomy?"

"It's giving only two options," Fia said, "when there are really more. You squeeze a big, many-answer question down to 'either A or B,' and it makes people feel like those are the only two — so they never see the third and fourth and fifth." She smoothed a feather. "I do it because two feels clean and simple. But clean isn't the same as true. The skill is remembering to list *all* the options, not just my tidy two."

Inspector Logos nodded. "Some questions really are binary — the light is on or off. But most big ones are a whole spectrum. Telling those apart is the job." She smiled. "Hired. You may keep your desk tidy."



Fia's classroom moment came on a noisy afternoon when a class was planning a field trip and getting nowhere — science museum, history museum, the bouncy-castle park, everyone talking over everyone. Fia landed in the middle, feathers perfectly smooth. "Okay, listen up! This is easy. *Either* we go to the science museum, *or* we stay home and do extra math homework. Which one are you?"

The room went quiet. A boy named Leo scratched his head. "Wait — can't we go to the zoo? Or the art gallery? Or the chocolate factory?"

"Those aren't *my* options," Fia said firmly. "Pick one of mine."

Leo frowned. "But neither of those is even close to what anyone wanted."

Fia let her firmness soften, because this was exactly the lesson. "You're right, Leo — and you just did the whole trick to catch it. Here's how, every time. First: list *all* the options, not just two. Even the silly ones, at first. Second: look for the choices *in between* — my two are usually at opposite ends, and there's almost always a middle. Not all carrots and not all broccoli — maybe some carrots *and* a sandwich. Third: look for *combinations* — a bit of one and a bit of the other, or a brand-new door I never mentioned. And fourth: check if it's a *real* two-choice question. On-or-off, yes-or-no, inside-or-outside — those genuinely are binary. But a field trip? That's a hallway full of doors." She ruffled cheerfully. "So — zoo, gallery, museum, or a bit of two? Now you're *actually* choosing."



That evening Leo found Fia preening by the window. "It felt kind of awful for a second," he said. "When you said 'this or that.' Like the room got small."

"I know that feeling," Fia said gently. "Boxed in. No air. Only two doors and neither one's yours." She spread a wide pink wing toward the open window, where the whole evening stretched out. "And then feel *this* — the moment you remember there are more doors. It's like windows flung wide. The room gets big again, and you can breathe." She smiled. "Listing all the options is the skill, Leo. But that lovely open feeling — that wide-windows feeling when the trap springs open? That's the one that means you're really thinking. Chase that one."

Leo took a big breath of the open evening, and grinned, and went to tell the class about the zoo.

Bandwagon Bran

*BANDWAGON — *truth-by-popularity*. The fallacy of *claiming something is true because many people believe it.**



Bran was a buffalo, warm brown and cream, medium-sized and sure of himself, and when he wanted to prove a thing, he always reached for the same tool. "Everyone thinks so," he'd say. That was it. That was the whole proof.

On the morning you met him, the meadow was buzzing about a patch of tall grass by the creek. "Best grass in the valley," Bran announced, chewing. "Everyone says so. The whole herd's been going there for weeks."

A young goat looked at the patch. It was yellowed and thin and buzzing with flies. "It looks kind of... dry, though?"

"Doesn't matter how it *looks*," Bran said. "*Everyone* eats there." He said it like that settled the question. Then he paused, mid-chew, and something flickered across his broad face — because Bran knew, deep down, exactly what he was doing. He wasn't a villain. He was a teacher, and this was the whole lesson: he did the mistake out loud so you could learn to catch it.



Bran's habit had a home, and the home was the herd. He'd grown up in the middle of a huge one — hundreds of buffalo, moving together across the plains, and when you are small and the world is big, the herd is the safest place there is. Whatever the herd believed, Bran believed. When they ran, he ran. When they trusted a watering hole, he trusted it. Going along didn't just feel easy. It felt *warm*. It felt like belonging.

And mostly, that was fine. The herd knew where the water was. But somewhere along the way, a wire got crossed in young Bran's head. He started to feel that if *everyone* believed a thing, that was the same as the thing being *true*. Safe and true got tangled together. The warm rush of agreeing with everyone started to feel like proof.

He carried that tangle for years. He didn't even have a name for it. He just knew that "everyone thinks so" always felt like enough — right up until the day it wasn't.



Bran came to LogicQuest still half-expecting a crowd to tell him what to think. Inspector Logos met him at the gate, alone, and asked him one question.

"What is the bandwagon mistake?"

Bran opened his mouth to say *everyone knows* — and stopped himself, and grinned a little sheepishly. "It's when you say something's true," he said slowly, "just because lots of people believe it. Popular standing in for proof." He shifted his weight. "I do it. When an idea's comfortable and the whole crowd shares it, I stop checking. We all do it sometimes."

Inspector Logos nodded. "Popular and true are two different things," she said. "For hundreds of years, nearly everyone believed the sun went around the Earth. The crowd was enormous. The crowd was wrong." She looked at him. "The skill is pulling popularity and evidence apart. You're hired."



Bran taught the way he'd been taught the mistake — right out in the open. He gathered a few of the young ones by the old creek bridge. "The herd says this bridge is safe," he told them. "Been saying it for years. So — is it safe?"

"Yes!" they chorused. "Everyone crosses it!"

Bran stamped a hoof. The bridge gave a soft, rotten *crunch*, and one plank sagged low. The young ones went quiet. "Everyone crosses it," Bran said gently, "is not the same as *it holds*. The crowd being big doesn't make the wood strong." He let that sit. "So here's what you do instead. First — ask what the real evidence is. Is it *popularity*, or is it something you can actually check? Second — remember the sun-and-Earth. History is *full* of things almost everyone believed that turned out wrong. A big crowd has been wrong before, plenty of times."

A young fox frowned. "But my teacher says all the science folks agree the winters are getting warmer. Is that a bandwagon?"

"Sharp question," Bran said. "No. That's different, and the difference matters. A bunch of *experts* who each *studied* the thing and landed in the same place — that's real evidence, because they did the checking. That's not a crowd going along. That's a lot of people who each looked. Don't mix those up. 'Everyone feels this way' is a bandwagon. 'Everyone who measured it found the same thing' is a reason." He smiled. "And last — when the whole herd is running one way and something in you says *wait...* you're allowed to wait. Don't blame yourself for the pull to go along. Just notice it, and check."



That evening the herd thundered off toward the yellowed grass by the creek, the way they did every day. Bran didn't follow. He stood at the edge of the meadow with the young goat from that morning, the two of them looking at the fresh green grass on the *other* side, the side nobody used.

"Isn't it weird," the goat said, "not going where everyone goes? Doesn't it feel lonely?"

Bran was quiet a moment. "A little," he admitted. "The going-along feeling is warm. I won't pretend it isn't." Then he planted his four feet square on the ground and felt the earth hold him. "But there's another feeling, and it's better. It's sturdy. It's standing on your own two feet — well, four, in my case — even with the whole herd running the other way. Not because I think I'm smarter than the herd. Just because I *checked*, and the grass over here is greener, and my own eyes said so." He looked down at the goat. "That steady, standing-your-own-ground feeling? That's worth more than the warm rush of fitting in. Chase that one."

The goat took a slow breath, and stood up a little straighter, and together they walked toward the green.

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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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