Chapter 2

Introducing Guidelines for Inquiry

“The Great Film Debate”

Sophia and Phil have just finished watching the Academy Awards presentations.

Sophia: That was really exciting—so many great films to choose from. But I have to admit that I was really hoping that Boyhood would win.

Phil: You mean you really liked that film?

Sophia: I didn't just like it—I LOVED it! It was so . . . AMAZING!

Phil: Come on. It was BORING!!! Watching this kid grow up—it was like watching grass growing. No thrills and chills, no belly laughs, and no FX!!!

Sophia: Well I found it perceptive and tender and sad . . . and so original. I didn't want it to end.

Phil: Now take Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb—THAT was an awesome film. All those historical characters—created by CGI—running around doing hilarious things. And it was a huge success at the box office. But it won't ever get nominated for an award.

Sophia: Night at the Museum—you can't really mean that! I mean, it was OK for a laugh, but really . . .

Phil: OK, OK . . . let's stop arguing. I hate arguing. Let's see what's on TV.

Sophia and Phil are having a fairly typical disagreement about films: they exchange opinions, react to each other’s views, then move on to something else. Disagreements about films (or music or rock videos) often end at this point, with an agreement to disagree. But they don’t have to. These disagreements, like many other kinds of disagreements, problems, and perplexities, can become the object of inquiry. We can explore further, analyze in more detail, evaluate ideas, and perhaps come to a reasoned judgment and to some agreement.

But even if we don’t end up agreeing, even if you continue to love Boyhood while my loyalty stays with Night at the Museum, perhaps we can learn something by the process. We may come to notice aspects of the films that we hadn't noticed before, to be more discriminating about films and what makes them good, and to appreciate these films, and others, in new and enriching ways.
What Do You Think?

Think about how Sophia and Phil could continue their discussion and begin to inquire about the merit of these films. Make a list of the questions they could ask themselves to aid their inquiry. Make a list of the resources (people, places, and things) they could use to help them with their inquiry.

There are a number of resources that Sophia and Phil could draw on to get their inquiry started. First, they have their own opinions and reactions, and this is a good place to start. They could begin by asking themselves why, exactly, they liked or didn’t like each film; what, in particular, they thought was well or poorly done. Trying to think of actual moments from the films would be very helpful.

But there are other resources they can call upon besides just themselves. Inquiry is often a communal enterprise, and so soliciting the opinions of friends and acquaintances about these films (and, in particular, the reasons for their views) can add to the pool of information that can form the basis of the inquiry.

There are additional resources as well. Reviews of most films are readily available, often online. Sophia and Phil can consult the reviews of Boyhood and Night at the Museum to see what kind of judgments, and reasons for the judgments, have been offered by both film critics and viewers.

These resources will provide Sophia and Phil with lots of opinions, ideas, and arguments which they can add to their own initial impressions. But that’s just the beginning. What our two film buffs require is some way to think about and evaluate all this information. They need some guidelines for structuring their inquiry so that they can come to some reasoned judgment about the two films. It is such guidelines that we offer in this book. The guidelines are outlined in this chapter and elaborated in the rest of the text.

Guidelines for Inquiry

Guiding Questions:

- What is the issue?
- What kinds of claims or judgments are at issue?
- What are the relevant reasons and arguments on various sides of the issue?
- What is the context of the issue?
- How do we comparatively evaluate the various reasons and arguments to reach a reasoned judgment?
**What Is the Issue?**

Before we can even begin to inquire, we need to be very clear about what the issue, problem, or question is that we are trying to inquire about. This may seem obvious, but when we look more closely, we may discover that there are really several different questions at issue—and it is possible that the answers to the various questions are different or that the answer to one question does not directly give us the answer to the other questions.

Sophia: You know, it occurs to me that we’re actually arguing about a few different issues. First, there’s the question of whether *Boyhood* should have gotten the Oscar. But we’re also arguing about whether *Boyhood* is even a good film. But it’s not always the best film (or even a good film) that wins the Oscar—sometimes a film might win because people think that it’s time that the director received recognition. Or a film might be good, but there might be even better films that year that deserve the award more.

Phil: Or a really good film—like *Night at the Museum*—might not even get nominated!

Sophia: I agree with your point (but not necessarily with your example).

Phil: Don’t forget that I think that *Night at the Museum* is a better film than *Boyhood*—so we also have the question of which film is better.

Sophia: OK—so how about if we focus on these two questions: Which is the better film *Boyhood* or *Night at the Museum*? And should *Boyhood* have gotten the Oscar?

Phil: And we have to remember that, even if we decide that *Boyhood* is the better film (which I very much doubt), that doesn’t tell us whether it should have gotten the Oscar.

Sophia and Phil have gone through a number of steps in order to get their inquiry started. These steps are the following:

1. becoming clear about what, exactly, are the issues which will be the focus of the inquiry
2. separating out the various issues, if there is more than one
3. becoming clear about the relationship among the various issues

In deciding on the issue for their inquiry, Phil and Sophia have wisely decided to narrow their inquiry by focusing on a comparison between the two films and on whether *Boyhood* should have gotten the Oscar. In formulating an issue, it is important to focus in and to avoid overly broad characterizations, which will be difficult to deal with in sufficient depth. (We will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 7.)
What Kinds of Claims or Judgments Are at Issue?

Phil: You know, Soph, something’s bothering me about this whole process. Isn’t the issue of which film is better just a matter of taste? I mean, it’s not like asking, “Who was the producer of Boyhood?” or even “What did the critics say about Boyhood?” There are answers to those questions that we could find out. But all we’re going to get here are people’s subjective opinions.

Sophia: I’m not so sure about that. Sure, I might just give a first impression or gut reaction to a film. But then again, I might be able to give you some reasons for my reaction and even point out specific moments in the film that I thought were good or not so good. Then maybe my response is more than just a subjective opinion. Maybe it’s more like what my art professor calls an aesthetic judgment.

Phil: But still, how do I know if my aesthetic judgment about the film is better than your aesthetic judgment?

Sophia: According to my prof, aesthetic judgments can be evaluated according to criteria just the way that judgments about facts can. But the criteria will be different for aesthetic judgments than for judgments about facts.

Phil: So I guess part of our job will be to find out what criteria are used to evaluate films.

An important aspect of clarifying the issue is to be clear about exactly what type of judgment is involved in the particular inquiry which we are undertaking. In many cases, what we are looking for is a judgment about the way things are. Does sugar cause hyperactivity? Why are some galaxies curved? Will taking a certain herbal remedy help my cold? These questions call for judgments of fact or factual judgments.

In our film case, it is not a judgment about facts that is at issue but rather an evaluative judgment. Evaluative judgments can be of different kinds. These include judgments about right and wrong (ethical judgments, e.g., It wasn’t fair for the instructor to give Stephen special treatment. It isn’t ethical to file share) and judgments about usefulness and practicality (instrumental judgments, e.g., the best way to get a good grade on the test is to do a lot of practice quizzes).

In the case of evaluating Boyhood and Night at the Museum, we are dealing with an evaluative judgment about what makes something aesthetically good; in other words, an aesthetic judgment. This is a kind of judgment which is common in the arts. Issues such as why a famous painting is considered great, which version of a musical piece is the better interpretation, or whether a certain film should receive an Oscar all call for aesthetic judgments. Another type of judgment which is common in the arts and which is relevant to the students’ discussion of Boyhood is an interpretive judgment, which focuses on what something means. In an upcoming dialogue, when Sophia states that Boyhood is about life as an experience and an evolution, she is making an interpretive judgment. Aesthetic and interpretive judgments will be a central focus in Chapter 14, which looks at inquiry in the arts.
It is important to be clear about the type of judgment (or judgments) involved in our inquiries because different kinds of judgments may be evaluated somewhat differently, according to different criteria. So, one criterion for evaluating films might be originality, but originality would not be what we were looking for in making a judgment about, for example, the truthfulness of testimony at a trial. On the other hand, correspondence with other facts might be important for evaluating the trial testimony, but that’s really not relevant for evaluating something fictional like a film.

One of the central tasks when conducting an inquiry is to find out what criteria are relevant for the type of judgment involved in our particular inquiry. Although there may not always be unanimity on the importance and weighting of each and every criterion in each case, criteria indicate the considerations which are generally seen as relevant to the evaluation of particular issues. We shall examine in more detail various types of judgments and the criteria by which they are evaluated in Chapter 7.

What Do You Think?

Make a list of some of the criteria that you might use to evaluate films.

What Are the Relevant Reasons and Arguments on Various Sides of the Issue?

Phil: I’ve just found this great Web site. It’s called “Rotten Tomatoes,” and it’s filled with tons of reviews by both critics and film viewers as well as all kinds of other information about films. And it’s interesting—in looking at some reviews of the two films—that the reviews are not just one-sided. There are both positive and negative reviews for each film (though more positive ones for Boyhood, I have to admit). And the reviewers don’t just give a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” to the films but actually do give all kinds of reasons for their judgments. So there really is an actual debate around these films, not just gut reactions!

Sophia: I thought so.

Phil: So let’s see what kinds of things people have actually said about these two films. Wow! Looking at all these reviews is mind-boggling! Maybe we should try to summarize the main points.

Sophia: OK. Mmm . . . I’ll skim the comments about Boyhood, while you have a look at the reviews of Night at the Museum. Well, I’m sorry to have to tell you this, but the vast majority of the reviews are positive—with an average rating of 9.2 out of 10. There are a few main points that keep recurring in most of the reviews. Virtually all of the reviewers praise the originality of the film. Boyhood was actually filmed over a period of twelve years, with the same cast members, and reviewers refer to this as “groundbreaking” and “an important landmark in how great films can be made.” Most reviewers praise the acting, commenting that the performance of the boy, Mason, whom we see from the time he is six until he is eighteen, is unaffected, honest, and captivating and that the acting of the parents is also very powerful. The reviewers liked the fact that the story is not sensationalized—it’s a simple story but told in a compelling way. Many
reviewers comment on how vividly the story is told through an accumulation of small, telling details and vivid snapshots of the recent past. They also mention the authenticity of the dialogue. One major strong point of the film for all reviewers is that *Boyhood* deals with important, universal themes—the rocky terrain of childhood, the struggle and joys of parenting, life as an experience and an evolution—and does this in a manner that reminds us of our common humanity.

**Phil:** Well . . . don’t forget to give the negative comments too.

**Sophia:** I know, I know—but only 6 of the 264 reviews were negative. Still, if we’re going to do a fair-minded inquiry, then we can’t just present the reasons that favor our position. So here’s a summary of the negative comments. A few reviewers think that the film doesn’t have a strong enough story, that it lacks focus, and that nothing very memorable happens. A few also think that the acting of the main character, as he gets older, is not very strong.

**Phil:** Now it’s my turn. Well, I have to admit that most of the reviews of *Night at the Museum* are not . . . well . . . enthusiastic, to say the least (it got an average rating of 5 out of 10). Some of the reviewers do say that it’s fun and entertaining and that it has some clever and even hilarious moments. A number of them like some of the acting, in particular Robin Williams as Theodore Roosevelt and the Sir Lancelot character. The comments on Ben Stiller’s performance as the museum guard are . . . well . . . mixed. Generally, the reviewers see it as a feel-good movie that’s a pleasant diversion, especially for the kids.

**Sophia:** And the negatives?

**Phil:** Yes, well . . . there are quite a few of those. The reviews really criticize *Night at the Museum* for having a contrived story and poorly conceived plot which is largely an excuse for showing historical characters coming to life through CGI. Many of the reviewers find the dialogue silly and the humor juvenile and inappropriate. They find the special effects simple and unspectacular. Although most of the reviewers find it better than the second of the trilogy, that’s pretty faint praise since they all hated the second one. They comment that there’s nothing new or original in the script, just the same old narrative and stale gags and that it stretches the idea to its breaking point. Some see this film as nothing more than an attempt to keep extending a moneymaking series.

Phil and Sophia have discovered that there are actually a variety of views about both films and that these views are backed up by reasons and arguments. In laying out the various views and positions, they must include the reasons and evidence which support the positions as well as any objections and responses. It is important that this analysis be fair-minded and that they include both positive and negative views with respect to both *Boyhood* and *Night at the Museum.* (They must be careful not to include only those views with which they agree.) This detailing of the reasons and arguments is a necessary prelude to the step of evaluating the views.
What Is the Context of the Issue?

Issues don’t generally exist in a vacuum. There is always a context of information and considerations that relate to the issue. If the issue is at all controversial, there will be a history of argument and debate, of views and opposing views, of ideas and alternatives. In conducting an inquiry, it is important to lay out some of this background and history in order to see what aspects are relevant to making a reasoned judgment.

Phil: One of the things I’m noticing is that the reviewers often compare the films to other films. For example, leading up to the Oscar competition, reviewers compared *Boyhood* to the other nominated films. Reviewers also compared *Boyhood* to other films on growing up. One reviewer, for example, refers to *Boyhood* as the most perceptive coming-of-age drama since Truffaut’s *The 400 Blows* and his subsequent Antoine Doinel films. And others compare it to the *UP Series*, which has been following the lives of fourteen British schoolchildren every seven years since 1964. But that’s a documentary. It would be helpful to know something about those other films in order to make a judgment about *Boyhood*’s originality.

Sophia: But they also compare it to the director Richard Linklater’s other films, in particular his three films, *Before Sunrise*, *Before Sunset*, and *Before Midnight*, which focus on a couple’s relationship over almost two decades. They say that *Boyhood* has similar ideas and style but takes these ideas a lot further. I’m wondering, though, whether that’s even relevant to our question of whether *Boyhood* deserved the Oscar this year—though maybe it is relevant to deciding how good a film it is.

Phil: The reviewers are also excited by that fact that *Boyhood* straddles the border between drama and documentary and so doesn’t fit neatly into one genre. So having some knowledge of a variety of relevant film genres might help us in our inquiry.

Sophia: And you have to admit, Phil, that most of the reviewers think that this episode of *Night at the Museum* pushes the premise beyond its breaking point. They do generally think that it’s better than the second film of the series, but then they thought that the second one was pretty bad. In fact, most reviewers seem to think that this film is just an attempt to capitalize on the popularity of the first two Museum films and make more money without bothering to make a good film.

Phil: You know, I’m also thinking about what you said earlier about films winning the Oscar for other reasons than their being the best film. That makes me wonder about the whole Academy Awards competition—how it works and what role politics plays. I’ve heard, for example, that producers often spend a ton of money lobbying members of the academy for votes. Knowing about all of that might help us to think about what the relationship is between the quality of a film and its winning an Oscar. Maybe that could also be part of our inquiry?
There are various kinds of contexts that may be relevant to the evaluation of an issue. One is what we call the “state of practice,” which refers to the current situation with respect to the issue. In inquiring about vegetarianism, for example, knowing about the current situation with respect to animal treatment on factory farms would be an important aspect of context to understand. Another aspect of context is the history of the debate which has led to current practice or thinking about the issue. Understanding, for example, how views about the moral status of animals have changed can contribute to an inquiry into vegetarianism. In addition, the roots of many issues can be found in certain ideas or philosophies about human nature, society, reality, and the world in general. Thus understanding something about the intellectual, social, political, and historical contexts surrounding an issue can also be of assistance in understanding and evaluating an issue. (These various aspects of context will be elaborated in detail in Chapter 8.)

Sophia and Phil have picked out some aspects of context that are relevant to their inquiry. One aspect is the state of practice with respect to the Academy Awards debates. They realize, for example, that the awards are based on comparative judgments, and because of this, information about other nominated films would be important. Even in the case of broader discussions of the quality of a film, there is usually a comparison to other films involved in the judgment, even if only implicitly. So part of deciding whether Boyhood is a good film would involve deciding how it compares to other examples of its genre or whether it’s as good as or better than other films directed by Linklater. And an aspect of making a judgment about Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb would involve comparing it to previous Night at the Museum films. The fact that this film is yet another of a moneymaking series also raises the issue of how commercial interests may interplay with aesthetic considerations; in this way, the economic context is brought into the discussion.

Another aspect of context that may be relevant to this issue is the political context. Knowing about the kind of lobbying and negotiating that goes on behind the scenes during the Academy Awards competition can help us to understand how political as well as aesthetic considerations enter into the awards process. As another example, knowledge about the history of the American civil rights movement as well as awareness of current racial tensions can help us understand the impact of one of the nominated films, Selma, for contemporary audiences. Knowledge of the political forces which surround an issue, as well as the intellectual and social situation in which it is embedded, can help us to better understand an issue and provide information which may prove useful when going on to make our evaluations.
How Do We Comparatively Evaluate the Various Reasons and Arguments to Reach a Reasoned Judgment?

What Do You Think?

What judgment would you come to about the relative merits of the two films based on the reasons listed above by Sophia and Phil?

Phil: So now that we have all these views about the two films, what do we do with them? I mean, it’s not like they all agree. That would make things easier.

Sophia: But the majority of reviewers did like Boyhood better.

Phil: So I guess that decides it. Oh well.

Sophia: Well . . . I’m not so sure. Can the quality of a movie really be decided by popular opinion? And what if some of the folks deciding don’t know anything about films? No . . . I think we really need to look at the reasons people give for their judgments and not just the numbers.

Phil: But quite a few of the reviewers are experienced film critics who know a lot about films—doesn’t that make a difference?

Sophia: Hmm . . . it does seem that it should, somehow. But how? We can’t simply accept what they say just because they’re critics. But we may want to pay particular attention to their judgments and especially their reasons and the criteria they use.

Phil: Great point! We were saying earlier that part of our job is to find out what kinds of criteria are used to evaluate films. And the reviews by the critics would be good sources of criteria.

Sophia: So why don’t we try to list the main criteria that are used in the reviews and see how our two films stack up against them? Now we’re getting somewhere.

Phil: OK. The quality of acting seems to be an important criterion for all the reviewers. Virtually all of them thought that Boyhood has really strong and honest performances. The reviews of the acting in Night at the Museum are pretty mixed.

Sophia: How about the quality of the story or plot and the writing? Most reviewers thought that the simplicity of the story and the vivid way it was told were pluses for Boyhood. Also the authenticity of the dialogue. They found the plot of Night at the Museum contrived and slapdash and the writing weak.

Phil: Originality? All the reviewers thought that Boyhood is extremely original on many levels. They thought that Night at the Museum was just more of the same after the other Museum films.

Sophia: The quality of the cinematography is a criterion that is mentioned by many reviewers. They generally liked the small details and vivid portraits of people and past eras in Boyhood but were generally not impressed by the special effects in Museum.
There’s also the point that Boyhood deals with important human themes and is moving on an emotional level—you really couldn’t say that about Night at the Museum. I think that that should count for something.

Phil: Well, looking at all of this, it’s pretty clear that Boyhood comes out quite a bit better. Night at the Museum does come out with some positives—mainly that it’s fun and has a couple of decent performances.

Sophia: But you have to admit that having a contrived story, silly dialogue, and stale gags are pretty serious problems, and you can’t make up for that with a few decent performances and a few laughs.

Phil: That’s true. You know, now that I look back on Night at the Museum, I do remember thinking that I pretty well knew what was coming—no surprises.

Sophia: And thinking about Boyhood, I’m seeing that there’s a lot more to that film than I had realized. And I liked it!

Phil: Hey, Sophia—why don’t we rent Boyhood? I really want to have another look at it and see what I think now that I know more about it. Though I don’t know if I’ll like it any better.

Sophia: Well, maybe you can recognize why a film is good but still not really enjoy it?

Phil: Or realize that a movie isn’t the greatest work of art in the world but still find it a hoot? So how about if we rent Night at the Museum too?

Sophia: Great! But you know, we still haven’t talked about whether Boyhood should have won the Oscar. For that, we’ll need to compare Boyhood to all the other films that were nominated. Then there’s the question of whether the Academy Awards process is even a good way to try to pick the best film . . . now that would be interesting!

Phil: Stop! Enough inquiry for one day. Let’s get online and rent those films!

Phil and Sophia have been engaging in the final—likely the most crucial and possibly the most difficult—aspect of the process of inquiry: coming to a reasoned judgment about the issue. This involves evaluating the various reasons in comparison to one another. If an issue is at all controversial, there will likely be some good reasons and some problems on each side. The challenge is to weigh the strengths and weaknesses and to come to an overall judgment that takes these into account. This will often involve an assessment of the relative importance of various criteria and the balancing of various considerations (for example, when Sophia observes that a few decent performances and some laughs can’t make up for a contrived story and silly dialogue). The overall judgment might involve deciding in support of one side, or it might involve coming to a position which is somewhere between them. The final judgment may even be different from any of the initial positions. We will look at this process of comparative evaluation and the details of weighing strengths and weaknesses of reasons and balancing considerations in Chapter 10.
Film critics engage in precisely this process of making a reasoned judgment about a film. Here is an example.

Selma

When movies speak as directly into current events as this one does, the movie is likely to sound like it represents one side of a partisan debate, like it represents “special interests,” or like it’s just exploiting our wounds and worries for big-screen thrills. Not this film.

By choosing intimacy over an epic scale, by going small instead of large, by discernment and selectivity over throwing everything available to her at the screen, Ava DuVernay has surpassed all expectations with a masterfully crafted film that will become a standard by which American historical dramas are measured.

Selma gracefully avoids stumbling into any of the classic biopic ditches. It doesn’t over-glorify its subject; Dr. King is portrayed as a complex, flawed, human character. It marches from beginning to end with remarkable focus, historicity, conscience, beauty, and soul. It never becomes showy. It never becomes heavy-handed. Nor does it shy away from portraying the centrality of Christian faith in this story, but bravely models how King’s faith was not an accessory or a badge or a brochure, but a deeply integrated part of his life.

And it is fair. David Oyelowo seems born for this moment, portraying King with humor, heart, and nuance, showing him to be a man of deep conscience and courage, but also profound doubts and disillusionment. His well-documented infidelities are also acknowledged soberly, in a way that exposes him as a figure of deep flaws and moral failures. But that is the way to go: Tell the truth, and that enhances those moments when he is charged with courage and faith, speaking truth to power.

Coretta King is also more than just the usual Hero’s Wife here; her strength, intelligence, and resilience is as crucial as King’s eloquence in keeping the fires burning—the fires of the protests against rampant cruelty and illegal prejudice in the South, as well as the fires of her marriage and family (which are the foundation on which King stands). And Carmen Ejogo’s performance gives us a complex, nuanced portrait.

Even as DuVernay raises the terrifying specters of George Wallace (Tim Roth, whose restraint here is powerful) and his troops of badge-wearing racists, she avoids exaggeration and refrains from giving them the Iconic Villain treatment . . .

Considering the gravity of the situation she’s filming, DuVernay’s approach to every scene is impressively modest—one might even call her style “gentle.” The music acknowledges what is happening, it doesn’t announce or insist. The cinematography is attentive, never acrobatic. All of these things work together to draw us in, to get us thinking, to undermine our expectations and give us an unconventionally truthful experience.

Selma is, quite simply, everything I could have hoped for in a film about Dr. King. It is artful, inspiring, perfectly cast and powerfully acted, beautifully shot, scored with sensitivity rather than sentimentality, efficiently edited, and profoundly dignified.

One important task in doing this type of evaluation will be to discover the criteria which are relevant for the particular inquiry. Some of the criteria may be quite general and applicable in many areas—for example, logical soundness or the relevance of a reason to the argument. Other criteria will be specific to the area. Quality of acting, of plot, and of cinematography as well as originality are some of the criteria which operate in the realm of film.

At times, evaluating an argument will involve making some judgment about the source of the argument; for example, does the source have sufficient expertise to be relied on as an authority, and, indeed, is this expertise relevant to the issue at hand? This is an issue which Sophia and Phil reflect on when discussing whether film reviewers should be relied on as authorities in judging films.

What Do You Think?

What criteria does this critic use to evaluate Selma?
The importance of arriving at an agreed-upon judgment may vary in different contexts as well. In some cases, for example, with legislators having to decide on a law (as in the vicious dog case below), coming to some agreed-upon judgment is vital. In other cases, such as our film case, agreement is not crucial, as no decision hangs on the results. Rather, the inquiry can be undertaken simply in order to gain a better understanding.

It must be noted, as Sophia and Phil do, that in the realm of aesthetics gaining an understanding of why some work is of value does not necessarily equate with liking the work. Personal preferences may explain why you like or dislike a film (e.g., “I find horror films upsetting”) but they don’t provide reasons in support of judgments about the work. Nonetheless, you may continue to enjoy a work even if you understand that it “isn’t the greatest work of art in the world.” There are both subjective and objective aspects to appreciating aesthetic works. It is often the case, however, that gaining some understanding of a work will affect how one sees it and may open up possibilities for coming to appreciate the work.

Guidelines for Inquiry: Application

“Those Dangerous Dogs”

Theo Onassis, along with his fellow city councilors Daimon McGregor and Agatha Chong, are assembled in the council chambers at city hall on Friday morning to discuss a pressing issue.

Onassis: Another pit bull attack. That’s the third one this year! We’ve got to do something. Council has a responsibility to the people to protect them from these attacks.

McGregor: Oh no! There you go again, Onassis, wanting to make another law and take away people’s freedoms. Even dogs aren’t safe from your rule mongering.

Onassis: So you think it’s OK for children, and adults for that matter, to be attacked by pit bulls? Phil Gold, a good friend of my daughter Sophia, had a close call with a pit bull a few months back, and it was pretty harrowing, I can tell you. Don’t you realize that the city has a duty to protect people from just such attacks?

McGregor: I think people have to take responsibility to protect their kids. And I think dog owners have to take responsibility for their dogs. Need I remind the honorable councilor that we already have dog leash laws? So if an unleashed dog attacks someone, then the owner should be fined and sued. But we shouldn’t be telling people what kinds of dogs they can have.
Onassis: And what kind of dog do you have, Councilor McGregor? Given your personality, I would assume that you also have a pit bull or perhaps a Rottweiler.

Chong: Gentlemen, let’s not get personal! We have to be careful that we are not overreacting. We need to find out what the facts are. How bad are pit bulls? Are there certain breeds of dogs that tend to attack people, or are there certain people who raise dangerous dogs? We need to look into the issue before we decide what to do.

Political debate and discussion are natural areas for controversy; this makes them natural areas for inquiry. In this case, the councilors are faced with a complex and emotional issue in trying to decide how to deal with the problem of dog attacks. They recognize, however, that it would not be appropriate to rush to a decision based on their initial reactions. It is necessary for them to inquire further into the issue before they can come to a decision which would be reasonable and defensible.

What Do You Think?

Think about how the councilors might further their debate. Make a list of the questions they could ask themselves to aid their inquiry. What do they need to know before deciding what to do? Make a list of the resources (people, places, and things) they could use to help them with their inquiry.

In the case of the “great film debate,” it made sense for the participants to begin their inquiry by probing their own reactions since people’s reactions to art works do have some relevance for aesthetic judgments (but it was also important for the participants in the film discussion to get beyond their subjective reactions and begin to investigate their reasons). The reactions of the councilors are not, however, relevant in the same way to the dog regulation issue. Factors such as whether McGregor loves Rottweilers or Chong her yellow lab, or whether Onassis is understandably upset by reading about a dog attack will likely be reflected in the perspectives of the councilors, but they do not really help them decide on the proper public policy. What do they need?

Let’s use our guiding questions and apply them to this issue.

Guiding Questions:

- What is the issue?
- What kinds of claims or judgments are at issue?
- What are the relevant reasons and arguments on various sides of the issue?
- What is the context of the issue?
- How do we comparatively evaluate the various reasons and arguments to reach a reasoned judgment?
What Is the Issue?

Chong: Before we go any farther, I think we should clarify the issue. Onassis, you seem to be arguing that pit bulls and perhaps some other dogs should be banned from the city.

Onassis: Absolutely. These dogs are a menace.

McGregor: So now I suppose you’ll be arguing that we should also ban people who want to own pit bulls.

Onassis: Of course not. My point is that we do not need to protect their desire to have dangerous dogs.

McGregor: This is daft. This is what leads to gun prohibition. People have perfectly good reasons for wanting to have a gun—for hunting, sport, even self-defense. But because they are used by criminals, people like you claim that no one should have one. People kill people with cars too. The problem is solved by prosecuting misuse, not the whole activity.

Chong: There are at least three questions that are being confused here. The first question is whether there are exceptionally dangerous dogs. The second question is whether the best way to prevent dog attacks is by focusing on the banning of certain breeds or focusing on owner responsibility and training. And the last question is to what extent protecting people from dog attacks is the city’s responsibility.

As with the film example, the first step in the inquiry is to become clear about what exactly the issue is. Is the issue whether pit bulls are particularly aggressive dogs? Is the issue whether any breed of dog that is vicious should be banned? Is the issue how dog attacks can best be reduced? Or is the issue whether it is even the responsibility of the city to protect people from dog attacks? It is important for the councilors to be clear here because the type of action (or lack of action) they advocate will depend on what the question or problem is that they are trying to resolve. It will also be important for them to try to understand what the relationship is among the various questions; for example, even if the councilors discover that pit bulls are particularly aggressive, that in itself would not answer the question of whether these dogs should be banned. If they decide that the real issue is how dog attacks can best be reduced, then that is an issue that goes well beyond the question of whether one specific breed is vicious. If, on the other hand, the councilors decide that dealing with dog attacks is not the responsibility of the city council, then all the other questions would become irrelevant.
What Kinds of Claims or Judgments Are at Issue?

Chong: To answer any of these questions, we first need some facts. I suggest we adjourn to do some research on this question.

Onassis: I agree that research is in order. There are some facts that we need to know—in particular, whether pit bulls have more violent tendencies than other dogs.

Chong: There might also be some research on the effects of training on the behavior of certain dogs. And I’d also be interested in seeing what we can find out about the effectiveness of dog-banning legislation.

McGregor: Now wait just a minute! You can go find out all these facts if you want to. But facts won’t answer the main question—whether we as the town council have a responsibility or even a right to legislate about dog ownership. That’s a political question, and all the facts in the world won’t tell us what’s the right thing to do.

Chong: I have to agree with Councilor McGregor that the issue here is ultimately a political one which won’t be settled just by facts. But knowing the relevant facts can certainly help us to make a more informed decision. Let’s meet again on Monday morning, research in hand. Meeting adjourned.

What this discussion illustrates is that the councilors are dealing with a complex policy question that involves a number of different types of issues. It involves some factual issues about, for example, the violent tendencies of different breeds of dogs. But it also involves some evaluative issues, regarding, for example, the rights of dog owners, the extent of governmental responsibility for protecting its citizens, and the legitimate extent of government intervention in issues such as dog ownership. Instrumental judgments regarding the likely effectiveness of various policies will also be required. Ultimately, the point of the councilors’ inquiry will be to make an evaluative judgment about what the city council should do, but they will have to consider many claims, including factual claims, before they get to this final judgment. (We will look in more detail at the various types of judgments and how they can be justified in Chapter 7.)

Types of Judgments

- factual judgments (describe the way the world is)
- evaluative judgments (express an evaluation or assessment):
  - ethical judgments—about right and wrong
  - instrumental judgments—about usefulness and practicality
  - aesthetic judgments—about what makes something aesthetically good
  - interpretive judgments (focus on meaning)
City council chambers, Monday morning.

**Chong:** Let’s see what we’ve all found out on our vicious dog issue. As I see it, the basic factual question is whether there are certain types of dogs that have a strong tendency to attack humans. And if there are, how great is this tendency, that is, are some dogs dramatically more dangerous than others or only a little more dangerous?

**Onassis:** A report I looked at on dog attack deaths and maimings in the United States and Canada between 1982 and 2008 found that pit bulls were responsible for about 43 percent of deaths resulting from dog attacks identified in the study. The next highest were Rottweilers at about 21 percent. And according to DogBite.org, pit bulls and Rottweilers together were responsible for 64 percent of dog bite-related fatalities in 2014.

**Chong:** However, the statistics in these reports were based on media reports and not scientific studies.

**Onassis:** True. But the conclusion that certain breeds, in particular pit bulls and Rottweilers, are disproportionately involved in fatal dog attacks is confirmed by some data I found published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medicine Association.*

**Chong:** On the other hand, a 1996 study conducted by the Canadian Hospitals Injury Reporting and Prevention Program found that the breeds most commonly involved in biting incidents were German shepherds, followed by cocker spaniels, Rottweilers, and golden retrievers—no mention of pit bulls.

**McGregor:** Well, the research I looked at suggests that there are generally problems with this kind of data. It’s difficult to get accurate dog bite statistics because many bites go unreported, unless the person seeks medical care. There are also difficulties with the reporting of breeds involved in attack cases. Most information on dog bites comes from emergency room records and newspaper reports, neither of which can be relied on as accurate sources of information about the breed of dog doing the attacking. In fact, in one major study of dog bite-related fatalities, the breed of dog involved could not be reliably identified in more than 80 percent of the cases. In addition, there are difficulties in determining the rate of attack for each breed, because for this one would also need to know the number of dogs of that breed that are owned.

**Onassis:** Some of the research I’ve found suggests that pit bulls and certain other breeds are inherently more dangerous. That’s because pit bulls were originally bred for dog fighting, which required strength and aggressiveness. Also, because of their exceptional strength, tenacity, and manner of attacking, pit bull attacks are more likely to result in severe injury.
When citizens of Aurora, Colorado were asked if they wanted to repeal the city’s pit bull ban, two reporters used a poster similar to this to see if voters could identify a pit bull. The majority of respondents could not pick out the pit bull. Can you?
McGregor: But the statistics also show that any breed of dog might inflict injury. And then there’s the question of whether training and care is more important than the dog’s breed in predicting whether a dog will be dangerous. A number of dog groups claim that no dog or breed is inherently vicious—it all depends on training and environment. They point out that dogs that are poorly looked after and poorly trained (for example, dogs left outside on chains all the time) are more likely to attack and that any breed can be trained to be aggressive.\textsuperscript{12} Their claims are supported by the study I referred to earlier on dog bite-related fatalities. Most of these incidents were a result of the owner mismanaging the dog. Breed wasn’t one of the factors that was identified in the study.\textsuperscript{13}

Chong: And then there’s the problem of whether owners who train their dogs to be vicious tend to own a particular breed. It could be a kind of vicious circle in which owners interested in cultivating an attack dog are drawn to dogs with a reputation for viciousness and then train them to be so.

Onassis: Many of the articles I’ve been reading argue that banning certain breeds is effective since it removes from circulation those breeds which are most likely to be involved in serious attacks.

Chong: On the other hand, I’ve seen articles arguing that the banning of particular breeds is not effective because it doesn’t deal with the problem of other dangerous breeds which may be less well known, such as Presa Canarios and Japanese Tosas, or with the problem of dogs trained to be aggressive. In this way, banning pit bulls may give people a false sense of security when the real problem hasn’t been dealt with.\textsuperscript{14}

McGregor: Another problem that came up is that banning certain breeds is unfair to responsible dog owners. The evidence shows that virtually every breed can be involved in a serious attack, so can just banning some breeds be justified? Many people argue that we should regulate irresponsible owners and dogs with a history of aggressive behavior rather than one particular breed.\textsuperscript{15}

The question of how to deal with dog attacks is a hotly debated issue, with arguments and evidence offered to support a variety of different positions. The councilors will need to be cognizant of this range of views and the evidence and arguments which support them in order to evaluate the various possibilities for action.
What Is the Context of the Issue?

**Chong:** Thank you all for your research. This is proving to be a very complex issue. Making a decision will require some careful consideration.

**Onassis:** But we shouldn't wait too long. This latest pit bull attack has really got the public upset. And the press is constantly on our case. There are articles on the front page every day calling for us to take immediate action.

**Chong:** But we can't let those pressures cause us to make a hasty decision. We need to consider all the facts carefully and weigh the pros and cons before deciding what action to take.

**McGregor:** Speaking of the press, our local rag did feature a very interesting article on the history of dog attacks and people’s reactions to them a few days ago. It turns out that in the last few decades, different breeds of dogs, specifically Rottweilers, Doberman pinchers, and German shepherds, have been singled out as “devil dogs” depending on which breeds have been responsible for attacks at that time. If that’s true (and I certainly don’t always believe everything I read), then that might cast some doubt on some of these claims about the viciousness of pit bulls, or any other breed for that matter.

**Chong:** We’ll keep that in mind when we’re considering the various arguments.

A significant point here is that this issue arises in the context of a highly publicized local dog attack. Political decisions often occur in such a context as publicity puts pressure on the politicians to act. But such a highly charged context can also lead to precipitous decision making without careful consideration of the facts or of the pros and cons of any political decision.

Another relevant aspect of context in this case is the history of the issue. An attack by one particular type of dog is the focus of the councilor’s inquiry, but many different breeds have been labeled as vicious over the years. Keeping both these facts in mind should help the councilors maintain an appropriately skeptical viewpoint as they evaluate the various arguments.

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**Pit Bull Saves Girl from Dog Attack**

A five-year-old Florida girl’s life may have been saved by her family’s pit bull, Trigger. Remayah Hernandez was riding her bike in her Lake Worth neighborhood in November when she stopped to pet Tank, a neighbor’s lab mix dog. When the dog attacked the little girl, Trigger jumped over the fence and intervened. “To me, he’s like a hero. He’s a protective dog,” said Remayah’s mother. “We taught him to be protective and caring for the family.”
We can also see how the political/intellectual context plays a role in the views held by the various councilors. Councilor McGregor seems to hold what is known as a libertarian view of the world, believing strongly in the priority of human liberty and taking positions that oppose government intervention. He thus opposes any kind of regulation of dog ownership. Councilor Onassis, on the other hand, supports the role of government in regulating behavior in order to protect citizens from harm.

**How Do We Comparatively Evaluate the Various Reasons and Arguments to Reach a Reasoned Judgment?**

**What Do You Think?**

*What decision would you come to in this situation? How would you deal with the dangerous dog issue based on the reasons and arguments listed above by the councilors?*

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**Chong:** Let’s see where we are. On our first questions, it does appear to be the case that some breeds are more likely to attack than others. The studies that we mentioned before do seem to indicate that the largest number of attacks have been attributed to pit bulls, Rottweilers, and German shepherds. Now I grant that, without information on the total number of such dogs compared to other breeds, we cannot be certain that these dogs have a higher rate of fatal attacks. But unless we think these kinds of dogs represent a disproportionate part of the dog population, these statistics do support the claim that some breeds are much more likely to be involved in serious attacks on humans than others.

**McGregor:** But almost all breeds have been involved in fatal attacks. So why pick on just a few? Not only that, but the authors of several of the studies recommend against banning particular breeds because of its impracticality. How can we design a law that picks out one particular breed, unless, of course, the dog is a registered pure bred. Any law prohibiting these dogs would be expensive and impossible to enforce.

**Onassis:** But we do need to do something. I note that some of the research indicates that dog bites are actually a major source of emergency room visits and other medical care. According to one study, 330,700 patients were treated for dog bites in emergency departments in the United States in 1994.17 And over a ten-year period, from 2005 to 2014, there were 326 deaths due to dog bite injuries.18

**McGregor:** So, are you suggesting that we ban all dogs? This is the problem with you worrywarts when you get into government. You would have us all wearing seat belts at the dinner table because occasionally someone falls off a chair and gets hurt. Did you notice that while dog bites do represent an important source of injuries that show up in the emergency ward, dog bites are behind baseball as a source of emergency room injuries?19 Do you want to ban baseball?

**Chong:** I think Councilor McGregor has a point. We need to view the problem of dog bites in the context of other activities which also have some danger and also
recognize that having a dog is something that a very large percentage of people want to do.

**Onassis:** With all due respect, most of the injuries identified in that study are from people voluntarily doing an activity. I doubt if very many people volunteer to be attacked by a dog. Many public policy measures are designed to protect people from themselves. We don’t just post signs advising people to drive safely, we impose speed limits. I agree that there should be limits and that people have a right to make choices. But being attacked by someone’s off-property Rottweiler is not something a person would choose to do.

**McGregor:** I’m glad to hear that Councilor Onassis has some concern for our citizens’ freedoms. I notice that more than half of all fatal attacks occurred on the owner’s property. This suggests to me that the owners were at most putting themselves and their family at risk, not others.

**Onassis:** But most attacks are on children, who can’t “volunteer” for the risks their parents involve them in. That’s why we have rules that children must be in car seats.

**Chong:** Gentlemen . . . I think we should move on. Let’s see if we can get a resolution here. Let me try to summarize those points that I think we can assert with some degree of confidence after sifting through all the research. 1. Dog attacks constitute a serious problem, and we do need to take some sort of action. 2. We have some reason to believe that certain breeds pose a higher risk for serious attacks, although the data are not unambiguous. 3. Any breed of dog may be involved in an attack and owner behavior is a crucial determinant of the dog’s behavior. 4. There are problems with breed-specific legislation in terms of practicality and effectiveness in dealing with the real issue, which is dog attacks. 5. We should show some concern for the rights of dog owners and take action that we believe will be effective but at the same time will least infringe on their freedom. Do we have consensus on these points?

**Onassis:** Very well summarized, Councilor Chong. I agree with all the points.

**McGregor:** Yes . . . OK.

**Chong:** Then let me suggest the following. Why not have a much more aggressive policy of leash enforcement? We should target irresponsible owners and dogs that have already displayed aggressive behavior. This is the action most of the experts recommend. That won’t eliminate all the problems, but it does put responsibility on the owners and provide a fairly straightforward strategy for legal intervention. It also avoids alienating those dog lovers who love their Rottweilers, such as Councilor McGregor.

**Onassis:** It seems to me that that would deal with the problem and in a sensible and reasonably effective way.

**McGregor:** And would respect the rights of responsible dog owners. I like it!

**Chong:** I’ll prepare a formal motion for the next meeting. But let’s take a straw vote. All in favor?

**Onassis, McGregor and Chong:** Aye!
The councilors have sifted through a considerable amount of information and research in order to come to a decision on the issue of what to do about dog attacks. The process has presented challenges in that the research does not lead to a clear conclusion in any straightforward manner as the councilors may have hoped. One difficulty is the problem of gathering accurate data on the rate of dog bites per breed due to the unreliability of information about the breeds involved in attacks. Nonetheless, they realize that a reasonable conclusion can still be drawn on the basis of some of the research that certain breeds are more frequently involved in attacks than others. The research also gives them some reason to believe that training and owner behavior is at least as important as, if not more important than, breed.

This information assists them in refocusing on the real issue, which is how to prevent dog bites and how to aim their legislation at the behavior of problematic dogs and owners rather than at particular breeds. Thus, despite the inconclusiveness of the research, the councilors are able to come up with a reasoned judgment based on a study of systematically collected information and arguments. Making a decision based on such a critical evaluation is far better than basing a decision on personal impressions, which may be biased or uninformed, or on impressions from media reports, which may be one-sided and sensationalistic.

Because the issue has a normative dimension, the deliberation of the councilors must take into account not only matters of fact but also ethical issues concerning fairness to owners of unproblematic dogs, the freedom of the dog owners, and the responsibility of governments to protect citizens from themselves and each other. These considerations interact with factual considerations in the making of the final decision.

An important step that enables the councilors to arrive at a reasoned judgment is Councilor Chong’s pointing out that there are many points which can be asserted with some confidence despite the inconclusiveness of the research and conflicts in the arguments. She notes that the councilors can agree on these points despite their differences. This move allows the councilors to arrive at a decision that best accords with the facts they had found out and at the same time satisfies the purpose of their inquiry. In the vicious dog debate, the councilors manage to arrive at an agreed-upon decision—a consensus—based on this process. In some cases, however, the process may not result in a consensus. In such cases, the agreement of the majority would have to decide the matter.

**Applying the Guidelines for Inquiry**

In this chapter, we see examples of two inquiries that are different in a number of ways. They deal with different subjects: the first focuses on the arts, the second on social policy. They involve different participants: the first involves two friends having an amicable discussion, the second a group of individuals making a formal decision. They also have different purposes: the goal of the film discussion is understanding; the purpose of the city council debate is to make a decision.
Despite these differences, there are some fundamental similarities. Both cases begin with a problem or disagreement. In both cases, the disagreement is accompanied by emotional reactions and commitments to certain positions (for at least some of the participants). In both cases, the participants go beyond their initial disagreements by engaging in inquiry. And in both cases, the inquiry process involves asking the same guiding questions.

There are, however, differences in how the questions apply in the two cases. First, since the two inquiries focus on issues in different areas, different kinds of claims and judgments are involved. While the film case focuses on aesthetic judgments, the dog regulation case deals with factual as well as ethical controversies. Because of the differences in areas and kinds of judgments, the types of reasons offered and the criteria for their evaluation differ as well. Different kinds of contexts play a role in each of the examples. In the film case, other films constitute an important aspect of context, while in the dog case, the political context and the history of the issue are central. The process and outcome of the comparative evaluation differ as well because of the differing purposes of the two inquiries. Since the goal of the film discussion is understanding, it is not necessary that the participants come to an agreement. Since the purpose of the city council debate is to make a decision, the inquiry process must result in some sort of agreed-upon action. (This may be reached by consensus or, if a consensus is not reached, may require majority assent.)

One aspect that is common to both these inquiries, and is central to the process of inquiry in general, is the spirit of inquiry (see Chapters 1 and 11). In both our inquiries, the participants have to be willing to go beyond their original commitments and emotional reactions. They have to be open-minded and willing to consider views with which they initially disagree, and they have to be prepared to give such views fair-minded consideration. They also have to be willing to follow the evidence and arguments where they lead and to change their mind when required. In addition, treating other participants with respect even when one disagrees with their views is an important feature of the spirit of inquiry (though one that some of our participants have to work hard to achieve).

The cases presented here represent only two types of inquiries, but inquiries are possible in many other forms and contexts as well. Inquiries may take place in many areas, including science, social science, history, philosophy, ethics, interdisciplinary areas, and everyday life. The nature of the participants may vary, from two people engaged in a dispute, to a group of individuals making a decision, to a single person deliberating on a question. And the purposes of inquiries may differ as well: they may include resolving a disagreement, making a decision, deliberating over a perplexity or puzzle, seeking understanding, or doing formal research. We will be meeting examples of these various types of inquiries in the pages to follow.

In this chapter, we have presented an overview of guidelines which can be used to conduct inquiries in a wide variety of areas. In the chapters which follow, each of the aspects will be elaborated in detail. We will also offer examples which show how each of the elements applies in practice. The last section of the book provides a detailed examination of inquiry in particular domains and shows how the guidelines apply in these various areas.
Check Your Understanding

- What are the five guiding questions for inquiry?
- Why is it important to be clear about defining the issue that we are trying to inquire about?
- Why is it important to be clear about the type of judgment at issue in our inquiry?
- What types of judgments are involved in the “Great Film Debate”?
- What types of judgments are involved in the councilors’ debate about dangerous dogs?
- What aspects of context are important for the Academy Awards debate?
- What aspects of context are important for the dangerous dog debate?
- What are some of the criteria which are relevant to judging films?
- What are some of the considerations which are relevant to formulating a policy to deal with dangerous dogs?
- What are some of the differences between the two inquiries in this chapter?
- What are some of the similarities between the two inquiries in this chapter?

Exercises

1. Find a classmate, friend, or family member with whom you disagree about the issue of whether to ban cell phone use while driving. Then do the following:
   i) Discuss why each of you has the view you have about the issue.
   ii) Make a list of the reasons each of you gives for your judgment.
   iii) Support your judgment with evidence and arguments.
   iv) Try to figure out what criteria you used to make the judgment and list these as well.

2. Find a review in the newspaper or online of a film you have seen recently. Read the review carefully, then do the following:
   i) List the criteria that the reviewer is using to evaluate the film.
   ii) Give your evaluation of the film using the same criteria as the reviewer.
   iii) List any additional criteria which you think are relevant but which the reviewer has missed (if any), and add any additional evaluation according to these criteria.
3. For each of the following dialogues:
   
i) Identify the issue (hint: be specific; state in the form of a question).
   
ii) Identify what type(s) of claims or judgments are involved in answering the question.
   
iii) Identify the reasons offered on both sides of the issue.
   
a) Diego Alvarez and his neighbor Omar Ali are surveying the hedge that runs between their properties.

   **Diego:** Our privet’s not looking so good.
   
   **Omar:** I’m afraid it’s got some kind of insect infestation. I guess we’ll need to spray it with a pesticide.
   
   **Diego:** But aren’t pesticides bad for the environment? I’ve heard that they can kill birds who eat sprayed plants and can even be harmful to people.
   
   **Omar:** Oh . . . I think that’s an exaggeration. I can’t imagine that the small amount that we’ll be using could do much harm. And besides, we don’t want to let the hedge die, do we?

b) Nancy and Phil have just been watching some advertising on TV directed at children.

   **Nancy:** That’s really terrible—targeting ads to kids.
   
   **Phil:** What’s so bad about that? It’s the kids who are interested in the toys.
   
   **Nancy:** But it just makes them want whatever they see. The ads manipulate them. They don’t know any better.
   
   **Phil:** Kids are going to want toys anyway. The ads just let them know what’s out there.
   
   **Nancy:** It’s just going to turn them into consumers at a young age. And that’s exactly what these companies want. I don’t think it should be allowed.
   
   **Phil:** That would be censorship!

c) Juanita and Winnie are looking at the newspaper.

   **Juanita:** Can you pass me the entertainment section? I want to have a look at my horoscope. I have a test today in class and I want to know how it’s going to go.
   
   **Winnie:** You don’t really believe those things, do you? I mean, they’re good for a laugh, but . . .
   
   **Juanita:** Why shouldn’t I believe them? Usually what they say is right on!
   
   **Winnie:** That’s just because you notice the things that are right and forget everything they say that doesn’t happen. Anyway, they’re so vague that you can interpret them any way you like.
   
   **Juanita:** But horoscopes are based on how the stars move and align and all that—it’s pretty scientific, isn’t it?
   
   **Winnie:** I don’t think there’s any real scientific basis whatsoever to horoscopes.
d) Camillia Bell and Mona Gold are discussing the recent purchase by a local art museum of an art installation work for $500,000.  

**Mona:** I think it’s absolutely shocking!  

**Camillia:** Why do you say that?  

**Mona:** Spending all that money on that thing! It just looks like a pile of rubbish.  

**Camillia:** But it’s an important piece by a prominent artist. It’s making a profound statement about our consumerist society.  

**Mona:** Maybe you arts folks can see that in it. But spending that kind of taxpayer money on what looks to the rest of us like a pile of rubbish is just not acceptable. The public should have been consulted.  

**Camillia:** You can’t leave decisions about art to the general public. People with some expertise should make those choices.

4. Imagine that you are thinking about buying a cell phone and there is a particular cell phone which initially appeals to you. Engage in a process of inquiry in order to decide whether that really is the best cell phone to buy given your circumstances (this will require doing some research on different kinds of cell phones). Use the following questions to guide your inquiry:

   i) What is the issue I am focusing on? Is there more than one issue, and if so, which is the most important? How can I state the issue clearly?  

   ii) What kind of judgment or judgments will I need to make? What kinds of claims will I need to consider in order to make the judgment?  

   iii) What is the context in which I am making this judgment, including my own situation and other surrounding circumstances?  

   iv) What are the pros and cons of buying this particular kind of cell phone?  

   v) How can I take all the information I have gathered and make a reasoned judgment about whether I should buy this cell phone?

5. Your instructor will show a film in class. After seeing the film, work in pairs to evaluate the film. In order to do this, follow these guidelines:  

   i) Answer the five guiding questions for inquiry.  

   ii) Write an inquiry dialogue using your responses to the guiding questions as a guide. Present your dialogues orally in class.