

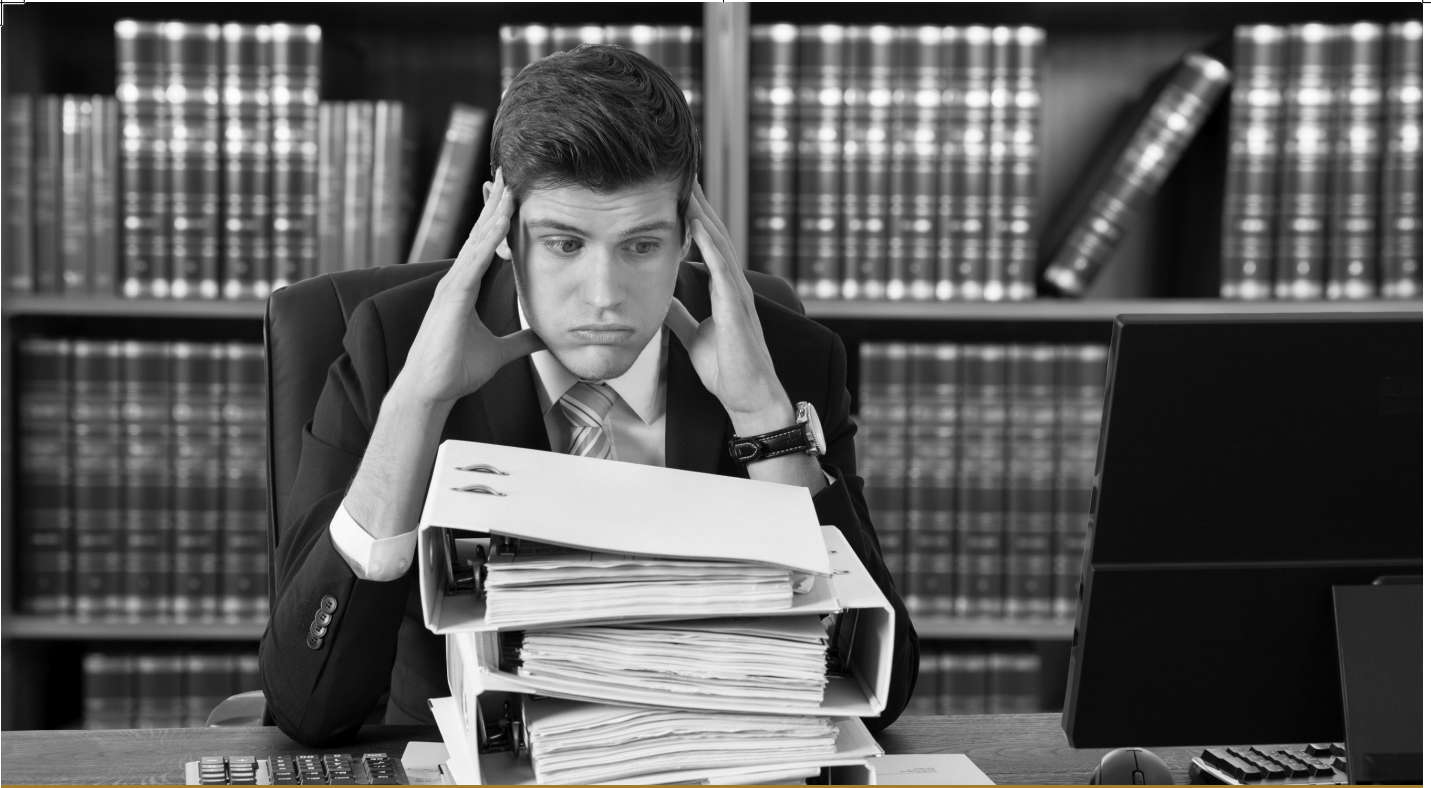
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Lesson 4

Love Is a Fallacy



Love Is a Fallacy

Max Shulman

Charles Lamb, as merry and enterprising a fellow as you will meet in a month of Sundays, unfettered the informal essay with his memorable “Old China” and “Dream’s Children.” There follows an informal essay that ventures even beyond Lamb’s frontier. Indeed, “informal” may not be quite the right word to describe this essay; “limp” or “flaccid” or possibly “spongy” are perhaps more appropriate.

Vague though its category, it is without doubt an essay. It develops an argument; it cites instances; it reaches a conclusion. Could Carlyle do more? Could Ruskin?

Read, then, the following essay which undertakes to demonstrate that logic, far from being a dry, pedantic discipline, is a living, breathing thing, full of beauty, passion, and trauma.

—Author’s Note

- 1 Cool was I and logical. Keen, calculating, perspicacious, acute and astute—I was all of these. My brain was as powerful as a dynamo, as precise as a chemist’s scales, as penetrating as a scalpel. And—think of it!—I was only eighteen.
- 2 It is not often that one so young has such a giant intellect. Take, for example, Petey Burch, my roommate at the University of Minnesota. Same age, same background, but dumb as an ox. A nice enough young fellow, you understand, but nothing



upstairs. Emotional type. Unstable. Impressionable. Worst of all, a faddist. Fads, I submit, are the very negation of reason. To be swept up in every new craze that comes along, to surrender yourself to idiocy just because everybody else is doing it—this, to me, is the acme of mindlessness. Not, however, to Petey.

3 One afternoon I found Petey lying on his bed with an expression of such distress on his face that I immediately diagnosed appendicitis. “Don’t move,” I said. “Don’t take a laxative. I’ll get a doctor.”

4 “Raccoon,” he mumbled thickly.

5 “Raccoon?” I said, pausing in my flight.

6 “I want a raccoon coat,” he wailed.

7 I perceived that his trouble was not physical, but mental. “Why do you want a raccoon coat?”

8 “I should have known it,” he cried, pounding his temples. “I should have known they’d come back when the Charleston came back. Like a fool I spent all my money for textbooks, and now I can’t get a raccoon coat.”

9 “Can you mean,” I said incredulously, “that people are actually wearing raccoon coats again?”

10 “All the Big Men on Campus are wearing them. Where’ve you been?”

11 “In the library,” I said, naming a place not frequented by Big Men on Campus.

12 He leaped from the bed and paced the room, “I’ve got to have a raccoon coat,” he said passionately. “I’ve got to!”

13 “Petey, why? Look at it rationally. Raccoon coats are unsanitary. They shed. They smell bad. They weight too much. They’re unsightly. They...”

14 “You don’t understand,” he interrupted impatiently. “It’s the thing to do. Don’t you want to be in the swim?”

15 “No,” I said truthfully.

16 “Well, I do,” he declared. “I’d give anything for a raccoon coat. Anything!”

17 My brain, that precision instrument, slipped into high gear. “Anything?” I asked, looking at him narrowly.

18 “Anything,” he affirmed in ringing tones.

19 I stroked my chin thoughtfully. It so happened that I knew where to get my hands



on a raccoon coat. My father had had one in his undergraduate days; it lay now in a trunk in the attic back home. It also happened that Petey had something I wanted. He didn't have it exactly, but at least he had first rights on it. I refer to his girl, Polly Espy.

20 I had long coveted Polly Espy. Let me emphasize that my desire for this young woman was not emotional in nature. She was, to be sure, a girl who excited the emotions, but I was not one to let my heart rule my head. I wanted Polly for a shrewdly calculated, entirely cerebral reason.

21 I was a freshman in law school. In a few years I would be out in practice. I was well aware of the importance of the right kind of wife in furthering a lawyer's career. The successful lawyers I had observed were, almost without exception, married to beautiful, gracious, intelligent women. With one omission, Polly fitted these specifications perfectly.

22 Beautiful she was. She was not yet of pin-up proportions, but I felt sure that time would supply the lack. She already had the makings.

23 Gracious she was. By gracious I mean full of graces. She had an erectness of carriage, an ease of bearing, a poise that clearly indicated the best of breeding. At table her manners were exquisite. I had seen her at the Kozy Kampus Korner eating the specialty of the house—a sandwich that contained scraps of pot roast, gravy, chopped nuts, and a dipper of sauerkraut—without even getting her fingers moist.

24 Intelligent she was not. In fact, she veered in the opposite direction. But I believed that under my guidance she would smarten up. At any rate, it was worth a try. It is, after all, easier to make a beautiful dumb girl smart than to make an ugly smart girl beautiful.

25 “Petey,” I said, “are you in love with Polly Espy?”

26 “I think she's a keen kid,” he replied, “but I don't know if you'd call it love. Why?”

27 “Do you,” I asked, “have any kind of formal arrangement with her? I mean are you going steady or anything like that?”

28 “No. We see each other quite a bit, but we both have other dates. Why?”

29 “Is there,” I asked, “any other man for whom she has a particular fondness?”

30 “Not that I know of. Why?”

31 I nodded with satisfaction. “In other words, if you were out of the picture, the field would be open. Is that right?”

32 “I guess so. What are you getting at?”

33 “Nothing, nothing,” I said innocently, and took my suitcase out of the closet.



- 34 “Where are you going?” asked Petey.
- 35 “Home for the weekend.” I threw a few things into the bag.
- 36 “Listen,” he said, clutching my arm eagerly, “while you’re home, you couldn’t get some money from your old man, could you, and lend it to me so I can buy a raccoon coat?”
- 37 “I may do better than that,” I said with a mysterious wink and closed my bag and left.
- 38 “Look,” I said to Petey when I got back Monday morning. I threw open the suitcase and revealed the huge, hairy, gamy object that my father had worn in his Stutz Bearcat in 1925.
- 39 “Holy Toledo!” said Petey reverently. He plunged his hands into the raccoon coat and then his face. “Holy Toledo!” he repeated fifteen or twenty times.
- 40 “Would you like it?” I asked.
- 41 “Oh yes!” he cried, clutching the greasy pelt to him. Then a canny look came into his eyes. “What do you want for it?”
- 42 “Your girl,” I said, mincing no words.
- 43 “Polly?” he said in a horrified whisper. “You want Polly?”
- 44 “That’s right.”
- 45 He flung the coat from him. “Never,” he said stoutly.
- 46 I shrugged. “Okay. If you don’t want to be in the swim, I guess it’s your business.”
- 47 I sat down in a chair and pretended to read a book, but out of the corner of my eye I kept watching Petey. He was a torn man. First he looked at the coat with the expression of a waif at a bakery window. Then he turned away and set his jaw resolutely. Then he looked back at the coat, with even more longing in his face. Then he turned away, but with not so much resolution this time. Back and forth his head swiveled, desire waxing, resolution waning. Finally he didn’t turn away at all; he just stood and stared with mad lust at the coat.
- 48 “It isn’t as though I was in love with Polly,” he said thickly. “Or going steady or anything like that.”
- 49 “That’s right,” I murmured.
- 50 “What’s Polly to me, or me to Polly?”



- 51 “Not a thing,” said I.
- 52 “It’s just been a casual kick—just a few laughs, that’s all.”
- 53 “Try on the coat,” said I.
- 54 He complied. The coat bunched high over his ears and dropped all the way down to his shoe tops. He looked like a mound of dead raccoons. “Fits fine,” he said happily.
- 55 I rose from my chair. “Is it a deal?” I asked, extending my hand.
- 56 He swallowed. “It’s a deal,” he said and shook my hand.
- 57 I had my first date with Polly the following evening. This was in the nature of a survey; I wanted to find out just how much work I had to do to get her mind up to the standard I required. I took her first to dinner. “Gee, that was a delish dinner,” she said as we left the restaurant. Then I took her to a movie. “Gee, that was a marvy movie,” she said as we left the theater. And then I took her home. “Gee, I had a sensaysh time,” she said as she bade me good night.
- 58 I went back to my room with a heavy heart. I had gravely underestimated the size of my task. This girl’s lack of information was terrifying. Nor would it be enough merely to supply her with information. First she had to be taught to think. This loomed as a project of no small dimensions, and at first I was tempted to give her back to Petey. But then I got to thinking about her abundant physical charms and about the way she entered a room and the way she handled a knife and fork, and I decided to make an effort.
- 59 I went about it, as in all things, systematically. I gave her a course in logic. It happened that I, as a law student, was taking a course in logic myself, so I had all the facts at my fingertips. “Polly,” I said to her when I picked her up on our next date, “tonight we are going over to the Knoll and talk.”
- 60 “Oo, terrif,” she replied. One thing I will say for this girl: you would go far to find another so agreeable.
- 61 We went to the Knoll, the campus trysting place, and we sat down under an old oak, and she looked at me expectantly. “What are we going to talk about?” she asked.
- 62 “Logic.”
- 63 She thought this over for a minute and decided she liked it. “Magnif,” she said.
- 64 “Logic,” I said, clearing my throat, “is the science of thinking. Before we can think



correctly, we must first learn to recognize the common fallacies of logic. These we will take up tonight.”

- 65 “Wow-dow!” she cried, clapping her hands delightedly.
- 66 I winced, but went bravely on. “First let us examine the fallacy called Dicto Simpliciter.”
- 67 “By all means,” she urged, batting her lashes eagerly.
- 68 “Dicto Simpliciter means an argument based on an unqualified generalization. For example: Exercise is good. Therefore everybody should exercise.”
- 69 “I agree,” said Polly earnestly. “I mean exercise is wonderful. I mean it builds the body and everything.”
- 70 “Polly,” I said gently, “the argument is a fallacy. Exercise is good is an unqualified generalization. For instance, if you have heart disease, exercise is bad, not good. Many people are ordered by their doctors not to exercise. You must qualify the generalization. You must say exercise is usually good, or exercise is good for most people. Otherwise you have committed a Dicto Simpliciter. Do you see?”
- 71 “No,” she confessed. “But this is marvy. Do more! Do more!”



- 72 “It will be better if you stop tugging at my sleeve,” I told her, and when she desisted, I continued. “Next we take up a fallacy called Hasty Generalization. Listen carefully: You can’t speak French. I can’t speak French. Petey Burch can’t speak French. I must therefore conclude that nobody at the University of Minnesota can speak French.”
- 73 “Really?” said Polly, amazed. “Nobody?”
- 74 I hid my exasperation. “Polly, it’s a fallacy. The generalization is reached too hastily. There are too few instances to support such a conclusion.”
- 75 “Know any more fallacies?” she asked breathlessly. “This is more fun than dancing even.”
- 76 I fought off a wave of despair. I was getting nowhere with this girl, absolutely nowhere. Still, I am nothing if not persistent. I continued.
- 77 “Next comes Post Hoc. Listen to this: Let’s not take Bill on our picnic. Every time we take him out with us, it rains.”
- 78 “I know somebody like that,” she exclaimed. “A girl back home—Eula Becker, her name is. It never fails. Every single time we take her on a picnic—”
- 79 “Polly,” I said sharply, “it’s a fallacy. Eula Becker doesn’t cause the rain. She has no connection with the rain. You are guilty of Post Hoc if you blame Eula Becker.”
- 80 “I’ll never do that again,” she promised contritely. “Are you mad at me?”
- 81 I sighed deeply. “No, Polly, I’m not mad.”
- 82 “Then tell me some more fallacies.”
- 83 “All right. Let’s try Contradictory Premises.”
- 84 “Yes, let’s,” she chirped, blinking her eyes happily.
- 85 I frowned, but plunged ahead. “Here’s an example of Contradictory Premises: If God can do anything, can He make a stone so heavy that He won’t be able to lift it?”
- 86 “Of course,” she replied promptly.
- 87 “But if He can do anything, He can lift the stone,” I pointed out.
- 88 “Yeah,” she said thoughtfully. “Well, then I guess He can’t make the stone.”
- 89 “But He can do anything,” I reminded her.
- 90 She scratched her pretty, empty head. “I’m all confused,” she admitted.



- 91 “Of course you are. Because when the premises of an argument contradict each other, there can be no argument. If there is an irresistible force, there can be no immovable object. If there is an immovable object, there can be no irresistible force. Get it?”
- 92 “Tell me some more of this keen stuff,” she said eagerly.
- 93 I consulted my watch. “I think we’d better call it a night. I’ll take you home now, and you go over all the things you’ve learned. We’ll have another session tomorrow night.”
- 94 I deposited her at the girls’ dormitory, where she assured me that she had had a perfectly terrific evening, and I went glumly to my room. Petey lay snoring in his bed, the raccoon coat huddled like a great hairy beast at his feet. For a moment I considered waking him and telling him that he could have his girl back. It seemed clear that my project was doomed to failure. The girl simply had a logic-proof head.
- 95 But then I reconsidered. I had wasted one evening: I might as well waste another. Who knew? Maybe somewhere in the extinct crater of her mind, a few embers still smoldered. Maybe somehow I could fan them into flame. Admittedly it was not a prospect fraught with hope, but I decided to give it one more try.
- 96 Seated under the oak the next evening I said, “Our first fallacy tonight is called Ad Misericordiam.”
- 97 She quivered with delight.
- 98 “Listen closely,” I said. “A man applies for a job. When the boss asks him what his qualifications are, he replies that he has a wife and six children at home, the wife is a helpless cripple, the children have nothing to eat, no clothes to wear, no shoes on their feet, there are no beds in the house, no coal in the cellar, and winter is coming.”
- 99 A tear rolled down each of Polly’s pink cheeks. “Oh, this is awful, awful,” she sobbed.
- 100 “Yes, it’s awful,” I agreed, “but it’s no argument. The man never answered the boss’s questions about his qualifications. Instead he appealed to the boss’s sympathy. He committed the fallacy of Ad Misericordiam. Do you understand?”
- 101 “Have you got a handkerchief?” she blubbered.
- 102 I handed her a handkerchief and tried to keep from screaming while she wiped her eyes. “Next,” I said in a carefully controlled tone, “we will discuss False Analogy. Here is an example: Students should be allowed to look at their textbooks during examinations. After all, surgeons have X-rays to guide them during an operation, lawyers have briefs to guide them during a trial, carpenters have blueprints to guide



them when they are building a house. Why, then, shouldn't students be allowed to look at their textbooks during an examination?"

103 "There now," she said enthusiastically, "is the most marvy idea I've heard in years."

104 "Polly," I said testily, "the argument is all wrong. Doctors, lawyers, and carpenters aren't taking a test to see how much they have learned, but students are. The situations are altogether different, and you can't make an analogy between them."

105 "I still think it's a good idea," said Polly.

106 "Nuts," I muttered. Doggedly I pressed on. "Next we'll try Hypothesis Contrary to Fact."

107 "Sounds yummy," was Polly's reaction.

108 "Listen: If Madame Curie had not happened to leave a photographic plate in a drawer with a chunk of pitchblende, the world today would not know about radium."

109 "True, true," said Polly, nodding her head. "Did you see the movie? Oh, it just knocked me out. That Walter Pidgeon is so dreamy. I mean he fractures me."

110 "If you can forget Mr. Pidgeon for a moment," I said coldly, "I would like to point out that the statement is a fallacy. Maybe Madame Curie would have discovered radium at some later date. Maybe somebody else would have discovered it. Maybe any number of things would have happened. You can't start with a hypothesis that is not true and then draw any supportable conclusions from it."

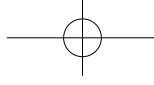
111 "They ought to put Walter Pidgeon in more pictures," said Polly. "I hardly ever see him any more."

112 One more chance, I decided. But just one more. There is a limit to what flesh and blood can bear. "The next fallacy is called Poisoning the Well."

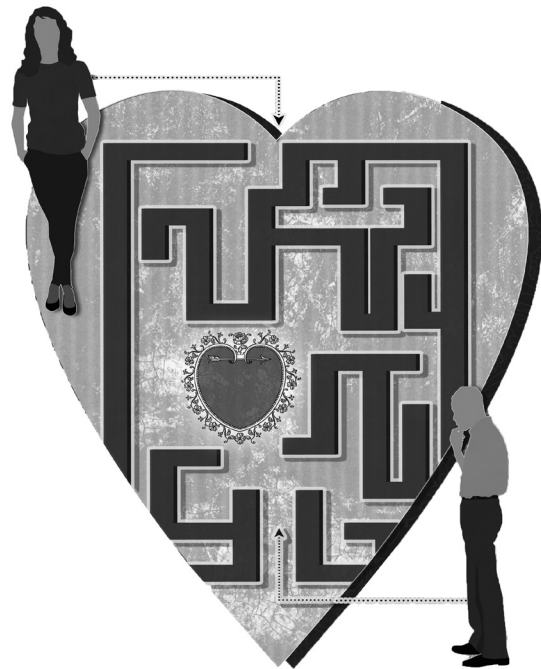
113 "How cute!" she gurgled.

114 "Two men are having a debate. The first one gets up and says, 'My opponent is a notorious liar. You can't believe a word that he is going to say.'...Now, Polly, think. Think hard. What's wrong?"

115 I watched her closely as she knit her creamy brow in concentration. Suddenly, a glimmer of intelligence—the first I had seen—came into her eyes. "It's not fair," she said with indignation. "It's not a bit fair. What chance has the second man got if the first man calls him a liar before he even begins talking?"



- 116 “Right!” I cried exultantly. “One hundred percent right. It’s not fair. The first man has poisoned the well before anybody could drink from it. He has hamstrung his opponent before he could even start. ...Polly, I’m proud of you.”
- 117 “Pshaw,” she murmured, blushing with pleasure.
- 118 “You see, my dear, these things aren’t so hard. All you have to do is concentrate. Think—examine—evaluate. Come now. Let’s review everything we have learned.”
- 119 “Fire away,” she said with an airy wave of her hand.
- 120 Heartened by the knowledge that Polly was not altogether a cretin, I began a long, patient review of all I had told her. Over and over and over again I cited instances, pointed out flaws, kept hammering away without let-up. It was like digging a tunnel. At first everything was work, sweat, and darkness. I had no idea when I would reach the light, or even if I would. But I persisted. I pounded and clawed and scraped, and finally I was rewarded. I saw a chink of light. And then the chink got bigger and the sun came pouring in and all was bright.
- 121 Five grueling nights this took, but it was worth it. I had made a logician out of Polly; I had taught her to think. My job was done. She was worthy of me at last. She was a fit wife for me, a proper hostess for my many mansions, a suitable mother for my well-heeled children.
- 122 It must not be thought that I was without love for this girl. Quite the contrary. Just as Pygmalion loved the perfect woman he had fashioned, so I loved mine. I determined to acquaint her with my meeting. The time had come to change our relationship from academic to romantic.
- 123 “Polly,” I said when next we sat beneath our oak, “tonight we will not discuss fallacies.”
- 124 “Aw, gee,” she said, disappointed.
- 125 “My dear,” I said, favoring her with a smile, “we have now spent five evenings together and we have gotten along splendidly. It is clear that we are well matched.”
- 126 “Hasty Generalization,” said Polly brightly.
- 127 “I beg your pardon,” said I.





- 128 “Hasty Generalization,” she repeated. “How can you say that we are well matched on the basis of only five dates?”
- 129 I chuckled with amusement. The dear child had learned her lessons well. “My dear,” I said, patting her hand in a tolerant manner, “five dates is plenty. After all, you don’t have to eat a whole cake to know it’s good.”
- 130 “False Analogy,” said Polly promptly. “I’m not a cake. I’m a girl.”
- 131 I chuckled with somewhat less amusement. The dear child had learned her lessons perhaps too well. I decided to change tactics. Obviously the best approach was a simple, strong, direct declaration of love. I paused for a moment while my massive brain chose the proper words. Then I began:
- 132 “Polly, I love you. You are the whole world to me, and the moon and the stars and the constellations of outer space. Please, my darling, say that you will go steady with me, for if you will not, life will be meaningless. I will languish. I will refuse my meals. I will wander the face of the earth, a shambling, hollow-eyed hulk.”
- 133 There, I thought, folding my arms, that ought to do it.
- 134 “Ad Misericordiam,” said Polly.
- 135 I ground my teeth. I was not Pygmalion; I was Frankenstein, and my monster had me by the throat. Frantically I fought back the tide of panic surging through me. At all costs I had to keep cool.
- 136 “Well, Polly,” I said, forcing a smile, “you certainly have learned your fallacies.”
- 137 “You’re darn right,” she said with a vigorous nod.
- 138 “And who taught them to you, Polly?”
- 139 “You did.”
- 140 “That’s right. So you do owe me something, don’t you, my dear? If I hadn’t come along you never would have learned about fallacies.”
- 141 “Hypothesis Contrary to Fact,” she said instantly.
- 142 I dashed perspiration from my brow. “Polly,” I croaked, “you mustn’t take all these things so literally. I mean this is just classroom stuff. You know that the things you learn in school don’t have anything to do with life.”
- 143 “Dicto Simpliciter,” she said, wagging her finger at me playfully.



- 144 That did it. I leaped to my feet, bellowing like a bull. “Will you or will you not go steady with me?”
- 145 “I will not,” she replied.
- 146 “Why not?” I demanded.
- 147 “Because this afternoon I promised Petey Burch that I would go steady with him.”
- 148 I reeled back, overcome with the infamy of it. After he promised, after he made a deal, after he shook my hand! “The rat!” I shrieked, kicking up great chunks of turf. “You can’t go with him, Polly. He’s a liar. He’s a cheat. He’s a rat.”
- 149 “Poisoning the Well,” said Polly, “and stop shouting. I think shouting must be a fallacy too.”
- 150 With an immense effort of will, I modulated my voice. “All right,” I said. “You’re a logician. Let’s look at this thing logically. How could you choose Petey Burch over me? Look at me—a brilliant student, a tremendous intellectual, a man with an assured future. Look at Petey—a knot head, a jitterbug, a guy who’ll never know where his next meal is coming from. Can you give me one logical reason why you should go steady with Petey Burch?”
- 151 “I certainly can,” declared Polly. “He’s got a raccoon coat.”

(from *Rhetoric in a Modern Mode* by James K. Bell and Adrian A. Cohn)



Aids to Comprehension

This text is a piece of narrative writing, taken from Max Shulman's *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*, published in 1951. The narrator and the protagonist is Dobie Gillis, a freshman in a law school. He struggles

About "Love Is a Fallacy"

against two antagonists: Petey Burch, his roommate, whose girl friend he plans to steal, and Polly Espy, the girl he intends to marry after suitable re-education. The climax of the story is reached in the last paragraphs when Polly refuses to go steady with the narrator because she has already promised to go steady with Petey Burch. The denouement follows rapidly and ends on a very ironic note. The raccoon coat which he gave to Petey Burch for the privilege of dating his girl, the raccoon coat which the narrator disliked and abhorred, was the instrument of his undoing. Polly Espy promised to go steady with Petey Burch because he owned a raccoon coat, a coat that all fashionable people on campus were wearing. The main theme of the story, however, is stated by the writer in the title of the story: "Love Is a Fallacy."

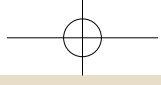
The whole story is a piece of light, humorous satire. The writer, Max Shulman, is satirizing or making fun of a smug, self-conceited freshman in a law school. The freshman is made the narrator of the story who goes on smugly boasting and singing praises of himself at every conceivable opportunity. From the very beginning, in Paragraph 1, he begins to heap on himself all the beautiful words of praise he can think of—cool, logical, keen, calculating, perspicacious, acute, astute, powerful, precise and penetrating. This exaggerated self-praise and the profuse use of similes and metaphors help to make the satire humorous. At the same time the narrator takes every opportunity to downgrade Petey Burch. For example, he calls him: dumb, nothing upstairs, unstable, impressionable and a faddist. And as for Polly Espy, she is "a beautiful dumb girl," who would smarten up under his



guidance. In order to smarten her up, the narrator decides to give her a course in logic. He teaches her how to recognize the common fallacies of logic. He succeeds too well because the whole thing backfires on him when Polly refutes all his arguments as logical fallacies before finally rejecting him. In desperation the narrator argues that “the things you learn in school don’t have anything to do with life.” The appeal does not move Polly because she does not reject him on logical grounds. She rejects him, because he does not own a raccoon coat as Petey Burch does. She is playing a game with him. At the end of the story, the reader feels the narrator has got what he deserved. He has been too clever for his own good.

The title of the story is humorous and well chosen. It has two meanings. When “fallacy” is taken in its ordinary sense, the title means: “there is a deceptive or delusive quality about love.” When taken as a specific term in logic the title means: “love cannot be deduced from a set of given premises.” Perhaps Max Shulman wants the reader, after reading the story, to conclude that “love” is an error, a deception and an emotion that does not follow the principles of logic. But the writer, through this story, has succeeded perhaps unwittingly in revealing what love may sometimes mean in an affluent society. Girls do not want brilliant, gifted or educated husbands, but want husbands who are rich and wealthy enough to provide all the things necessary for keeping up with the Joneses—houses, clothes, cars, etc.

Max Shulman has a style of his own. The story goes forward at a very fast pace with a racy dialogue full of American colloquialism and slang. He employs a whole variety of writing techniques to make his story vivid, dramatic and colorful. The lexical spectrum is colorful—from the ultra learned terms used by the conceited narrator to the clipped colloquial forms of Polly Espy. He uses figurative language profusely and also grammatical inversion for special emphasis. The speed of the narration is maintained by the use of short sentences, elliptical sentences and dashes throughout the story. This mix adds to the realism of the story. One would expect a freshman to talk like this.



Notes

- 1 Max Shulman (1919–1988) was a 20th century American writer and humorist best known for his television and short story character Dobie Gillis, as well as for best-selling novels. He began writing Dobie Gillis stories in 1945 for various humor magazines. In 1951, these were collected and published as a book entitled *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*.
- 2 **Charles Lamb (Author's Note):** (1775–1834) English essayist of the romantic period. Lamb attempted work in the fields of drama and poetry but was most successful in the personal essay. His writings in this form are known for their humor and whimsy. He was also a perceptive critic with a special sympathy for the works of Elizabethan and early 17th century writers.
- 3 **Carlyle (Author's Note):** See Note 14 in Lesson 1.
- 4 **Ruskin (Author's Note):** John Ruskin (1819–1900), English writer and art theorist. His critic works, such as *Modern Painters* and *The Stones of Venice*, made him the most influential critic of the day, and his social criticism gave him the status of a moral guide or prophet.
- 5 **The University of Minnesota (Para. 2):** The University of Minnesota is a public research university located in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, United States. It is the oldest and largest part of the University of Minnesota system and has the fourth-largest main campus student body in the United States, with 51,611 students in 2010–2011.
- 6 **Stutz Bearcat (Para. 38):** Name of an automobile.
- 7 **Holy Toledo (Para. 39):** An interjectional compound (like holy cow! holy smoke!) to express astonishment, emphasis, etc.
- 8 **What's Polly to me, or me to Polly? (Para. 50):** Perhaps this is a parody of "What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba that he should weep for her?" from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act 2, scene 2.
- 9 **Dicto Simpliciter (Para. 66):** A clipped form of "a dicto simpliciter ad dictum secundum quid," a Latin phrase meaning "from a saying (taken too) simply to a saying according to what (it really is)"; i.e. according to its truth as holding under special provisos.
- 10 **Post Hoc (Para. 77):** A clipped form of "post hoc, ergo propter hoc," a Latin phrase meaning "after this, therefore because of this"; a fallacy in logic of thinking that a happening which follows another must be its result.
- 11 **Ad Misericordiam (Para. 96):** A Latin phrase meaning "to pity"; a fallacy in

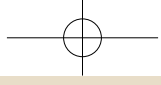


logic of appealing to pity or compassion.

- 12 **Madame Curie (Para. 108):** Marie Curie (1867–1934), physicist, born in Warsaw, who worked with her French husband Pierre Curie (1859–1906) on magnetism and radioactivity. Together they discovered and isolated polonium and radium, and shared the 1903 Nobel Prize for Physics with Becquerel for the discovery of radioactivity. Madame Curie published her treatise on radioactivity in 1910 and was awarded the Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1911.
- 13 **Walter Pidgeon (Para. 109):** (1897–1984) A Canadian actor who lived most of his adult life in the United States. He starred in many motion pictures, including *Madame Curie*, *Mrs. Miniver*, *The Bad and the Beautiful*, *Forbidden Planet*, *Advise and Consent* and *Funny Girl*.
- 14 **Pygmalion (Para. 122):** (Greek mythology) King of Cyprus and a sculptor, who fell in love with his own statue of Galatea, later brought to life by the goddess of love, Aphrodite, at his prayer.
- 15 **Frankenstein (Para. 135):** He is the title character in a novel (1818) written by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Frankenstein is a young scientist who creates a monster that destroys him.

Words & Expressions

pedantic (Author's Note)	paying too much attention to rules and details; insisting on exact adherence to a set of arbitrary rules
perspicacious (Para. 1)	having keen judgment or understanding; acutely perceptive
scales (Para. 1)	a piece of equipment with two dishes used especially in the past for weighing things by comparing them to a known weight
scalpel (Para. 1)	a small very sharp knife used by doctors in operations
idiocy (Para. 2)	extreme stupidity or silliness; a very stupid remark or action
appendicitis (Para. 3)	阑尾炎
laxative (Para. 3)	泻剂，通便剂



raccoon (Para. 4)	浣熊；浣熊皮毛
cerebral (Para. 20)	connected with or affecting your brain; thinking or explaining things in a very complicated way that takes a lot of effort to understand; excluding emotion
waif (Para. 47)	a person without home or friends, especially a homeless child
oak (Para. 61)	橡树
contritely (Para. 80)	showing or resulting from remorse for having done wrong
premise (Para. 83)	(<i>logic</i>) either of the two propositions of a syllogism from which the conclusion is drawn; generally, a statement you consider to be true on which you base other ideas or actions
crater (Para. 95)	a bowl-shaped cavity, as at the mouth of a volcano or on the surface of the moon
ember (Para. 95)	a glowing piece of coal, wood, etc. from a fire; (<i>plural</i>) the smoldering remains of a fire
analogy (Para. 102)	(<i>logic</i>) an inference from certain admitted resemblances between two or more things to a probable further similarity between them; generally, a comparison between two things to show how they are similar
hypothesis (Para. 106)	an unproved theory, proposition, supposition, etc. tentatively accepted to explain certain facts or to provide a basis for further investigation or argument
pitchblende (Para. 108)	沥青铀矿
radium (Para. 108)	镭
hamstring (Para. 116)	to restrict someone's activities or development so much that they cannot do the job they are supposed to do; the name of a tendon behind the knee
constellation (Para. 132)	a group of stars that forms a particular pattern and has a name
modulate (Para. 150)	to vary the pitch or intensity of your voice, often to a lower degree

Exercises

I. Oral Presentation

Make a five-minute presentation in class based on your research.

Suggested topics:

1. Max Shulman
2. Charles Lamb

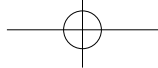
II. Questions

A. Questions on the Content

1. Can you find any evidence to support the view that the writer is satirizing a bright but self-satisfied young man?
2. Why does the narrator consider Petey Burch dumb as an ox?
3. What kind of girl is Polly? Why does the narrator teach Polly Espy logic?
4. What does Dicto Simpliciter mean? How does the narrator explain it to Polly?
5. What does Post Hoc mean? What example does the narrator give? What is Polly's first reaction to this argument?
6. What does Contradictory Premises mean? What example does the narrator give? Is Polly confused?
7. What does Ad Misericordiam mean? What example is given to explain this fallacy? How does Polly respond to the example? What does it show about her?
8. What is False Analogy? What is Poisoning the Well?
9. Why does the narrator say, "I was not Pygmalion; I was Frankenstein"? (Para. 135)

B. Questions on Structure and Style

1. What is the purpose of this story? What method does the writer employ?
2. What is the topic sentence of Paragraph 47? How does the writer develop the idea expressed in the topic sentence?
3. Why does the narrator refer to Pygmalion and Frankenstein? Are these allusions chosen aptly?
4. The narrator in this story has a vivid style. In part, it is characterized by many figures of speech. Mention examples of the following: simile, metaphor, hyperbole, metonymy, and antithesis. Comment on the figures that are used effectively.
5. The language used in this story is very colloquial. Pick out some of the colloquialisms and slang used in the text.



6. What narrative voice is used in this story? From whose point of view is the story told? Can we readers always rely on what the narrator tells us?

III. Paraphrase

Explain the following in your own words, bringing out any implied meanings.

1. A nice enough young fellow, you understand, but nothing upstairs. (Para. 2)
2. Fads, I submit, are the very negation of reason. (Para. 2)
3. I should have known they'd come back when the Charleston came back. (Para. 8)
4. "All the Big Men on Campus are wearing them. Where've you been?" (Para. 10)
5. My brain, that precision instrument, slipped into high gear. (Para. 17)
6. With one omission, Polly fitted these specifications perfectly. (Para. 21)
7. She was not yet of pin-up proportions, but I felt sure that time would supply the lack. (Para. 22)
8. In fact, she veered in the opposite direction. (Para. 24)
9. "In other words, if you were out of the picture, the field would be open. Is that right?" (Para. 31)
10. Back and forth his head swiveled, desire waxing, resolution waning. (Para. 47)
11. This loomed as a project of no small dimensions... (Para. 58)
12. Admittedly it was not a prospect fraught with hope, but I decided to give it one more try. (Para. 95)
13. There is a limit to what flesh and blood can bear. (Para. 112)
14. I was not Pygmalion; I was Frankenstein, and my monster had me by the throat. (Para. 135)
15. Frantically I fought back the tide of panic surging through me. (Para. 135)

IV. Practice with Words and Expressions

A. Look up the dictionary and explain the meaning of the italicized words and phrases.

1. My brain was as powerful as a *dynamo*... (Para. 1)
2. ...pausing in my *flight*. (Para. 5)
3. ...when the *Charleston* came back. (Para. 8)
4. They *shed*. (Para. 13)
5. Don't you want to be *in the swim*? (Para. 14)
6. ...I would be out in *practice*. (Para. 21)
7. She was not yet of *pin-up* proportions... (Para. 22)
8. She already had the *makings*. (Para. 22)



9. She had an erectness of *carriage*, an ease of *bearing*... (Para. 23)
10. ...are you *going steady*... (Para. 27)
11. ...if you were *out of the picture*... (Para. 31)
12. I *deposited* her at the girls' dormitory... (Para. 94)
13. ...lawyers have *briefs* to guide them... (Para. 102)
14. ...hammering away without *let-up*. (Para. 120)

B. Explain how the meaning of the following sentences is affected when the italicized words are replaced with the words in brackets. Pay attention to the shades of meaning of the words.

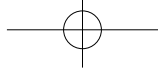
1. *Fads*, I submit, are the very negation of reason. (fashions)
2. "Can you mean," I said *incredulously*, "that people...again?" (incredibly)
3. ...he said *passionately*. (eagerly)
4. She was, to be sure, a girl who excited the *emotions*... (feelings)
5. I threw open the suitcase and *revealed* the huge, hairy, gamy object... (showed)
6. I was *tempted* to give her back to Petey. (inclined)
7. I hid my *exasperation*. (disappointment)
8. I said, patting her hand in a *tolerant* manner... (indulgent)
9. I chuckled with somewhat less *amusement*. (merriment)
10. I will *languish*. (suffer a lot)

C. Discriminate between these synonyms.

1. keen, calculating, perspicacious, acute, astute
2. intelligent, bright, brilliant, clever, smart

D. Analyze the logical fallacy in each of the following statements.

1. Watching television is a waste of time.
2. In the last month, fourteen students have been arrested in California for using drugs.
That state is obviously filled with young addicts.
3. All his life he has read comic books. Is it any wonder he's a juvenile delinquent?
4. If I had studied harder, I would definitely have passed that test.
5. Religion obviously weakens the political strength of a country. After all, Rome fell after the introduction of Christianity.
6. It's true that this boy killed four people. Yet think of the poverty and misery he was raised in: his parents neglected him, and he never had enough to eat.
7. Teachers in capitalist countries are out for all the money they can get.
8. Everybody in a capitalist country is basically dishonest. Look at all the politicians who are arrested every year for taking bribes and misusing public funds.



V. Translation

A. Translate the following sentences into Chinese.

1. My brain was as powerful as a dynamo, as precise as a chemist's scales, as penetrating as a scalpel. (Para. 1)
2. To be swept up in every new craze that comes along, to surrender yourself to idiocy just because everybody else is doing it—this, to me, is the acme of mindlessness. (Para. 2)
3. Let me emphasize that my desire for this young woman was not emotional in nature. (Para. 20)
4. It is, after all, easier to make a beautiful dumb girl smart than to make an ugly smart girl beautiful. (Para. 24)
5. He was a torn man. First he looked at the coat with the expression of a waif at a bakery window. Then he turned away and set his jaw resolutely. (Para. 47)
6. Maybe somewhere in the extinct crater of her mind, a few embers still smoldered. (Para. 95)
7. After all, surgeons have X-rays to guide them during an operation, lawyers have briefs to guide them during a trial, carpenters have blueprints to guide them when they are building a house. (Para. 102)
8. If Madame Curie had not happened to leave a photographic plate in a drawer with a chunk of pitchblende, the world today would not know about radium. (Para. 108)
9. Suddenly, a glimmer of intelligence—the first I had seen—came into her eyes. (Para. 115)
10. Heartened by the knowledge that Polly was not altogether a cretin, I began a long, patient review of all I had told her. (Para. 120)

B. Translate Paragraphs 142-151 into Chinese.



Read, Think and Comment



Read the following passage and respond to these questions: What is the main idea of each paragraph? What methods are used to develop these paragraphs?

Although neither the word *wit* nor *humor* originally was concerned with the laughable, both now find their chief uses in this connection. At present the distinction between the two terms, though generally recognized to exist, is difficult to draw.

Humor is the American spelling of *humour*, originally a physiological term which because of its psychological implications came to carry the meaning of "eccentric": from this meaning developed the modern implications of the term. *Wit*, meaning originally knowledge, came in the late Middle Ages to signify "intellect," "the seat of consciousness," the "inner" senses as contrasted with the five "outer" senses. In Renaissance times, though used in various senses, *wit* usually meant "wisdom" or "mental activity."

It is for the most part agreed that *wit* is primarily intellectual, the perception of similarities in seemingly dissimilar things—the "swift play and flash of mind"—and is expressed in skillful phraseology, plays upon words, surprising contrasts, paradoxes, epigrams, comparisons, etc., while *humor* implies a sympathetic recognition of human values and deals with the strange and silly features and incongruities of human nature, good-naturedly exhibited. A few quotations from writers who have made serious attempts to distinguish between the two terms may help further to clarify the conceptions: "*Wit* is intensive or incisive, while *humor* is expansive"; "*Wit* is rapid, *humor* is slow"; "*Wit* is sharp, *humor* is gentle..."; "*Humor* always laughs, and sometimes chuckles; but it never sniggers."