Love is a Fallacy

Errors in logic or mistakes out of emotion?
Max Shulman (March 14, 1919–August 28, 1988) was an American writer and humorist best known for his television and short story character Dobie Gillis, as well as for best-selling novels.
Love? Or Fallacy?

…we have now spent five evenings together. We have gotten along splendidly. It is clear that we are well matched.

…you don't have to eat a whole cake to know that it's good.

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.

So you do owe me something, don't you, my dear? If I hadn't come along you never would have learned about fallacies.

You know that the things you learn in school don't have anything to do with life.

He's a liar. He's a cheat. He's a rat.
Common logic errors

- Dicto Simpliciter
- Hasty Generalization
- Post Hoc
- Contradictory Premises
- Ad Misericordiam
- False Analogy
- Hypothesis Contrary to Fact
- Poisoning the Well
The purpose of many essays is to persuade the reader that your point of view, your thesis, is reasonable and credible. But often writers become so emotionally involved with the ideas that passion twists the logic. Although appeals to emotion (pathos) and appeals to morality (ethos) may persuade some readers, reasoned argumentation (logos) is the basis for most academic discourse. Writers of persuasive essays must be aware that common errors in logic will weaken their argument. Also analysis of weaknesses in the opposition’s arguments can include evaluation for these common logical fallacies.

--Helen Hadley Porter, *Common Errors in Logic*
Examples and remedies

**Example:** Every American knows the flag is a symbol of freedom.

**Remedy:** Use appropriate qualifiers such as most, some, often, many, in some cases or refer to specific statistics.

**Example:** The State Senate in Helena is full of a lot of undereducated country bumpkins who are not capable of making informed decisions.

**Remedy:** Use supporting details and logic to show the validity of the argument rather than language that reveals a bias.

**Example:** Illegal voter registration practices, not her position on the issues, caused my candidate to lose the election.

**Remedy:** Provide evidence to support all your claims.

**Example:** Pitbulls are vicious dogs; my uncle was bitten by one just last week.

**Remedy:** Support all claims with ample evidence or logical development. Do not use an example as your only evidence.
Examples and remedies

Example: Canada does not have the problems with violent crime that the US does because it has strict gun control laws.
Remedy: Be absolutely sure that there is clear evidence to show a direct cause and effect relationship before making this type of claim.

Example: Joe Blowski is not a good marriage counselor; after all, he’s been divorced twice.
Remedy: Address a person’s position on an issue, not the person.

Example: Putting a dog on a six foot chain is like putting a human being in a four by four foot box.
Remedy: Examine all analogies for both similarities and differences.

Example: Helen will be a great teacher; she has such a good sense of humor.
Remedy: Explain all the connections between ideas so that one clearly follows the other.
Examples and remedies

**Example:** Smoking cigarettes injures your health because it harms your body.

**Remedy:** Tree diagram your argument so that the claim is separate from the reasons. Make sure you haven’t just rephrased your thesis in order to transform it into support.

**Example:** Smoking is not hazardous to your health (American Tobacco Growers Lobby).

**Remedy:** Consider the source and the methodology of all research. Do not accept numbers as “truth.” Interpret all charts, surveys, percentages, and graphs carefully.
Figures of speech

- **Simile**, e.g.,
  My brain was as powerful as a dynamo, precise as a chemist's scales, as penetrating as a scalpel.
  Petey Burch, ... dumb as an ox.
  He looked like a mound of dead raccoons. (irony)

- **Metaphor**, e.g.,
  Maybe somewhere in the extinct crater of her mind, a few members still smoldered. Maybe somehow I could fan them into flame.

- **Hyperbole**, e.g., Petey lying on his bed with an expression of such distress on his face that I immediately diagnosed appendicitis. I perceived that his trouble was not physical, but mental.

- **Irony**, e.g.,
  "It isn't as though I was in love with Polly," he said thickly. "Or going steady or anything like that."
  "That's right," I murmured.
  "What's Polly to me, or me to Polly?"
  "Not a thing," said I.
  "It's just been a casual kick - just a few laughs, that's all."
  "Try on the coat," said I.

One thing I will say for this girl: you would go far to find another so agreeable.
Figures of speech

- **Climax, e.g.**, First he looked at the coat with the expression of 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.

- **Anticlimax, e.g.**, a living, breathing thing, full of beauty, passion, and trauma.

- **Allusion, e.g.**, I was not Pygmalion; I was Frankenstein.
Various sentence schemes

- **Left-branching**, e.g., To be swept up in every new craze that comes along, to surrender oneself to idiocy just because everybody else is doing it—this to me, is the acme of mindlessness.

- **Mid-branching**, e.g., ... logic, far from being a dry, pedantic discipline, is a living, breathing thing, full of beauty, passion, and trauma.

- **Parallelism**, e.g., It develops an argument; it cites instances; it reaches a conclusion.
Colloquial, normal, and formal

A nice enough fellow, you understand, but nothing upstairs.

You know he is nice enough, but not wise enough.

As you may see, he is a gentleman less intelligent than generous.

Not that I know of.
Recommended topic for the journal

- List out all the verbs related to the action with hands, together with examples and definitions.
- List out all the phrases, e.g., at any rate, out of the picture, etc., together with examples and definitions.
- Find ten funny remarks, and identify the figures of speech in them.
- Find more examples in daily conversation or reading materials for each of these logic errors.
Group work

Please read the articles and list out questions.
Next week

*I have a dream*, the speech by Martin Luther King, Jr.
Please search for any audio/visual/textual information about the speech.
Read it loud as if you were King when he was speaking to the people in the demonstration and feel his power of words.