

CRITICALTHINKING

Mapping complex arguments

PASSAGE 5

Uranium emits rays similar to X-rays. These rays arise either from an interaction between the uranium and its surroundings, or from the uranium itself. If the rays arise from an interaction between the uranium and its surroundings, then the amount of radiation should vary with temperature, illumination, or other factors. The radiation, however, is constant: it does not vary with temperature, illumination, or other factors. Thus, the radiation does not arise from an interaction between the uranium and its surroundings. The radiation, therefore, comes from the uranium itself.

(Note: one claim made in the above passage is not part of the argument, and is merely present for background information. It does not need to be counted in the claims asserted.)

CRITICAL THINKING

PASSAGE 6

Rising obesity levels are caused by falling prices for food – especially unhealthy processed foods. Thus, to combat obesity, we need to change the relative price of healthy and unhealthy foods. Abandoning subsidies for corn, which is used to make cheap high-fructose corn syrup, would change the relative price of healthy and unhealthy foods. Therefore, the government should stop subsidising corn.

PASSAGE 7

Our distant ancestors lived in very small societies. On a normal day, everyone they met would be someone they had known all of their lives. These societies did not interact very much with other societies. Just about everything they ate, everything they wore, and every tool they used was made within that group. Today, of course, we live in vast societies. We can look out at a busy city street and see, all at once, more people than our ancestors saw in their entire lives. We live in a global trading system. Indeed, our world is unimaginably different from the world of our distant ancestors. Our minds, however, are designed for the life of our distant ancestors. Thus, our minds may not be well adapted to the special challenges of the modern world.