False dilemma: Worksheet

1. Define false dilemma.

2. List at least three other names for false dilemmas.

3. Why are false dilemmas so dangerous?

4. What's the difference between a false dilemma and a legitimate binary choice?

5. List a specific example of a false dilemma.
6. Identify whether each of the below dilemmas are false dilemmas or not. If the example is a false dilemma, list a hidden third possibility.

A. You're either a god-fearing man or a good-for-nothing scientist playing at god.

B. The person reading this sentence either speaks English or doesn't.

C. America: either love it or leave it.

D. You can have either tea or coffee with your meal.

7. Below are examples of false dilemmas. Underline what the two binary choices are. Then come up with a third option that results in the most beneficial outcome while still abiding by the rules and regulations of the situation.

A. A state official is presented with a bill. The bill is fully supported by her colleagues and family. Voting against it would drive a rift between her and the people she's close to. However, the bill pushes a very liberal agenda and the state is very conservative. Voting for the bill would ruin her political career. What should the state official do?

B. An old king gives a captured warrior the chance to fight for his freedom. The warrior endures many long rounds of combat and wins each one, but the matches take longer and longer as he grows more and more tired. Finally, the king declares that the warrior needs to win only one more fight and he will be freed. “Since you've fought so well,” the king says, “I will allow you to choose your final opponent.” The king claps his hands, and two soldiers step forward for the warrior's inspection. One is armed with a spear, dagger, and shield but is leaner than the other. The other soldier has no weapons but is covered in muscles. Who should the warrior choose?
False dilemma: Worksheet Answer Key

1. A false dilemma is a logical fallacy that claims there are only two choices when, upon closer inspection, there are more possibilities present.

2. Excluded middle, fallacy of bifurcation, false dichotomy, black-or-white fallacy, all-or-nothing fallacy, and the either-or fallacy,

3. The binary decision making doesn't account for the varied conditions and contexts that exist outside of the two possibilities. Therefore, a false dilemma frames any argument in a misleading way, obscuring rational, honest debate.

4. A legitimate binary choice does not purposefully obscure any options or prevent rational, honest debate and decision making.

5. Answers will vary. A sample answer is: You either recycle daily or you're trying to destroy the planet.

6.
   A. False dilemma. Many scientists are actually devoted believers of various religions.
   B. Not a false dilemma.
   C. False dilemma. You can advocate for change in your government.
   D. Not a false dilemma.

7.
   A. Voting against the bill. Voting for the bill. Answers may vary, but a sample answer is: The state official should abstain from the vote, or not be present the day of the vote.
   B. A soldier armed with a spear, dagger, and shield but is leaner than the other. The other soldier has no weapons but is covered in muscles. Answers may vary, but a sample answer is: The warrior should choose to fight the old king.