

What i tell you three  
times is true by lewis  
carroll essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Repetition is our way of learning knowledge. Repetition is drilling something to memory, reinforcing the idea in our heads. It is the key to reflexive use (use without conscious thought). Your mind “learns” by repetition and reinforcement. Repetition and its effects on what we believe to be true, play a major role in the way that we accumulate general knowledge. The formula implies that repetition is equal to truth, when really repetition is just repetition. Repetition does not make a statement the truth. But a statement, if repeated often enough, can come to be accepted as truth.

This leads us to the question whether a lie can be accepted as truth. From the standpoint of logic, the number of times an incorrect fact is repeated is irrelevant. It is still false. But research has shown that a statement, even an incorrect fact, if repeated often enough, can be accepted as truth. This paper will examine several research studies, influencing variables, and examples from everyday life to identify this occurrence. In addition to this, the possible effects of repetition will be discussed as well. One of the simplest ways to show how repetition causes a statement to be accepted as truth is gossip.

First, someone tells a friend a statement, which can be true or false. This friend tells another friend, who tells another friend, and soon this statement is known by everyone, and considered by everyone to be a fact. The repetition of this statement causes it to be thought of as true, and this belief increases with every whisper. This can be a problem, as statements which are completely false can be willingly accepted to be true by the general population. The phenomenon has been identified by several psychologists and philosophers. In *Straight and Crooked Thinking*, R. H.

Thouless states that: " If statements are made again and again in a confident manner, then their hearers will tend to believe them quite independently of their soundness and of the presence or absence of evidence for their truth" (Thouless, 1974, p. 111). Similarly, in Nietzsche's *On Truth and Falsity in an Extramoral Sense*, Nietzsche asserts that " truth" is a metaphor fixed by repetitive usage. According to Nietzsche, truth comes from repetition. Many research studies have illustrated that there is a tendency to believe statements based on repetition instead of on actual evidence.

This phenomenon has several names. The mere exposure effect is when the repeated exposure of an individual to a stimulus results in the enhancement of their attitude towards that stimulus (Zajonc 1968). The repetition-validity effect is defined as an increase in the belief of truth due to repeated exposure. The frequency-validity effect is the idea that the rated truth of a stimulus is determined by how often that stimulus is repeated (Brown & Nix, 1996). The repetition effect is the notion that repeated statements are rated to be truer than new ones (Bacon, 1979).

Finally, the truth effect is defined as the repetition-induced increase in judged validity (Message Repetition, website). The philosopher Francis Bacon suggested that two mechanisms operate the truth effect: recognition and familiarity. When the individual recognizes those statements as having been repeated before, those statements increase in validity. Familiarity gained by repetition also increases validity. The first time we see or hear something, it is new to us, and unfamiliar. But the second time there is recognition. After that, there is familiarity.

Emotion can influence our perception of truth. We may distrust some information when we hear it for the first time, but when we hear it repeatedly from different sources, we may eventually accept it. Furthermore, when a statement is repeated by an authoritative source, we think less to question it. We find it easier to believe it to be true. In the research studies, it was found that participants agreed with sources of higher reputation and authority, even when they disagreed with the information being given to them by these sources (Hovland and Weiss 1951).

As I have discussed in the previous section, many research studies have shown that repetition inclines us to believe a statement to be true, even if the statement is false. There are several instances in which these effects occur in everyday life. Eyewitness reports are an example of an everyday situation in which these effects can occur. The “misinformation effect” occurs when misleading information is given to a witness after the event in question has taken place. While eyewitnesses initially possess memory for the event, the false information they receive can alter or impair their memory, causing them to report what is untrue.

The more that the repetition of this false information is repeated, the more adamant the eyewitness becomes about the truth of that information (Loftus & Hoffman, 1989). Repetition is one of the most effective marketing strategies to get people to purchase certain products. Consumers are subject to so many ads each day that they cannot help but become influenced. Slogans or jingles are repeatedly drummed into our minds. In this way, ads effectively influence our perceptions of truth. For example, certain ads stress that their products can remove cellulite and stretch marks.

<https://assignbuster.com/what-i-tell-you-three-times-is-true-by-lewis-carroll-essay-sample/>

This is a false statement because cellulite and stretch marks can never be removed using creams; they can only be lightened. But since the ad is repeated so many times, consumers believe the statement to be true.

Similarly, this repetition equals truth effect can be shown in politics.

Throughout history, dictators and leaders have used propaganda to influence people. Propaganda is an example of a statement becoming true by repetition. In Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Hitler describes the principles of effective propaganda: it must repeat those points over and over again until the public believes it.

The principles behind propaganda are the same principles of mind control, hypnotic suggestion, and mental programming: distraction and repetition. With propaganda, distraction draws attention away from information that is true and directs attention to information that is false. Repetition of the false information imbeds it in your subconscious mind so that your acceptance of its truth becomes a conditioned response. You accept this information as true without thinking whenever it is presented to you again. Religion is also based on this very notion of the truth being repeated so often that one just simply accepts it as truth.

In the Bible, certain ideas are repeated. For example, the birth of Jesus is retold by several of his disciples. The story of his crucifixion is also told several times. In Sunday School, children are taught to memorize Bible verses. One verse I remember is " For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3: 16. " Throughout my years of Sunday School, I have repeated this verse many times. Never once have I questioned whether <https://assignbuster.com/what-i-tell-you-three-times-is-true-by-lewis-carroll-essay-sample/>

it is true or not. In conclusion, the formula does determine what we believe to be true.

However, we must realize that repeating a fact does not actually make it true. It only makes it perceived to be true. It has been demonstrated in the laboratory and occurs in our everyday lives. Our logic, reasoning and emotions are influencing variables in what we believe to be true. What we must remember is that repetition is just reinforcement. We should not mistakenly believe it to be the truth. Many problems can occur from this, because the statement may in fact be a lie. Problems that can occur include memory impairments and the distribution of false information.