This thesis uses techniques and theory from argumentation, informal logic, and critical thinking to assess the quality of arguments presented by journalists in Pulitzer Prize-winning stories.

Journalists strive to inform citizens about the way their world is, was, and will be. These claims about the world are descriptive arguments, which can be accepted or rejected based on the quality of their reasons and evidence. Argumentation, informal logic, and critical thinking provide tools for determining whether the reasons and evidence given in an argument support its conclusion. So one way to test whether journalists fulfill their goal of informing citizens is to see whether they offer good reasons and evidence to support their conclusions. This thesis carries out such a test on Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporting. It finds that the stories frequently presented insufficient evidence in support of their conclusions, while also struggling to justify important assumptions and appeals to authority.