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# Writing Guide

with Handbook

# Writing Guide with Handbook

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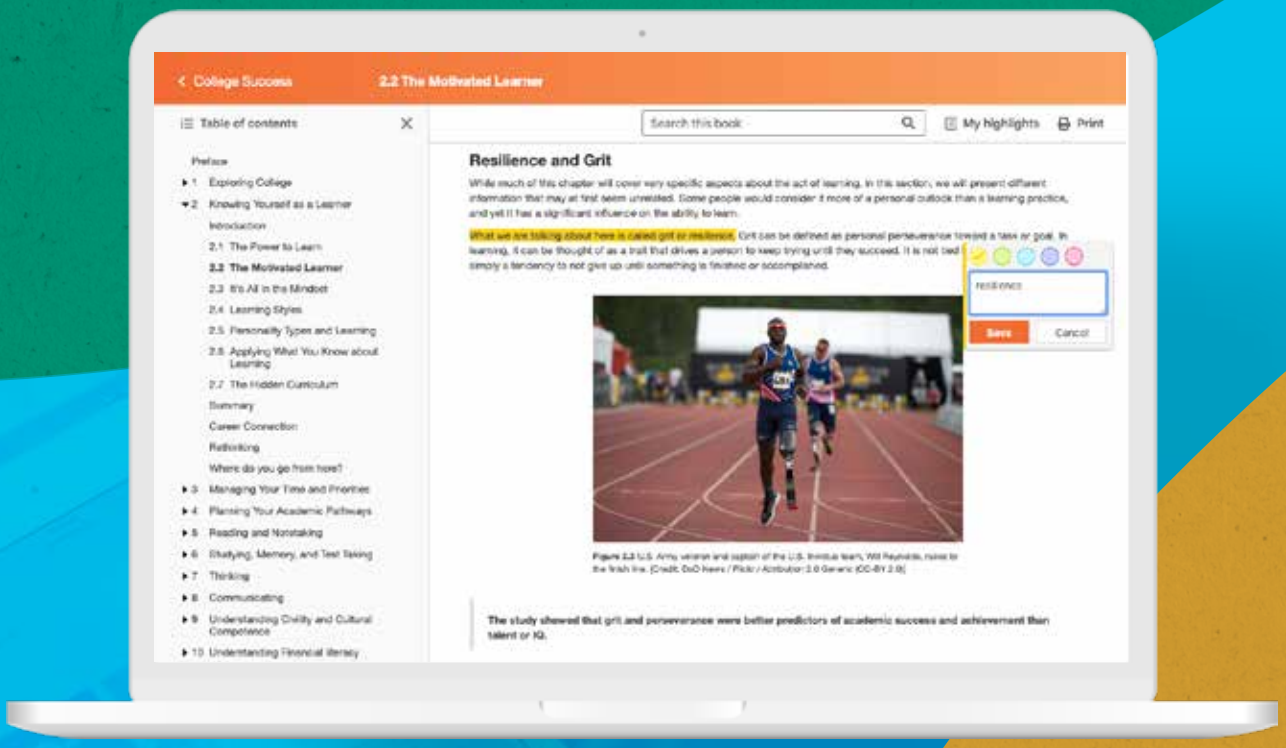
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# CONTENTS

Preface 1

## UNIT 1 THE THINGS WE CARRY: EXPERIENCE, CULTURE, AND LANGUAGE

Unit Introduction 8

**CHAPTER 1**

### The Digital World: Building on What You Already Know to Respond Critically 9

Introduction 9
1.1 "Reading" to Understand and Respond 10
1.2 Social Media Trailblazer: Selena Gomez 12
1.3 Glance at Critical Response: Rhetoric and Critical Thinking 13
1.4 Annotated Student Sample: Social Media Post and Responses on Voter Suppression 17
1.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically About a “Text” 20
1.6 Evaluation: Intention vs. Execution 30
1.7 Spotlight on … Academia 32
1.8 Portfolio: Tracing Writing Development 34
Further Reading 37
Works Cited 37

**CHAPTER 2**

### Language, Identity, and Culture: Exploring, Employing, Embracing 39

Introduction 39
2.1 Seeds of Self 40
2.2 Identity Trailblazer: Cathy Park Hong 43
2.3 Glance at the Issues: Oppression and Reclamation 44
2.4 Annotated Sample Reading from The Souls of Black Folk by W. E. B. Du Bois 47
2.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically about How Identity Is Constructed Through Writing 50
2.6 Evaluation: Antiracism and Inclusivity 55
2.7 Spotlight on … Variations of English 57
2.8 Portfolio: Decolonizing Self 60
Further Reading 62
Works Cited 62

**CHAPTER 3**

### Literacy Narrative: Building Bridges, Bridging Gaps 65

Introduction 65
3.1 Identity and Expression 66
3.2 Literacy Narrative Trailblazer: Tara Westover 69
3.3 Glance at Genre: The Literacy Narrative 71
3.4 Annotated Sample Reading: from Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass by Frederick Douglass 73
3.5 Writing Process: Tracing the Beginnings of Literacy 78
3.6 Editing Focus: Sentence Structure 95

3.7 Evaluation: Self-Evaluating 98
3.8 Spotlight on … The Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (DALN) 100
3.9 Portfolio: A Literacy Artifact 101
Further Reading 103
Works Cited 103
Works Consulted 103

UNIT 2 BRIDGING THE DIVIDE BETWEEN PERSONAL IDENTITY AND ACADEMIA

Unit Introduction 106

CHAPTER 4
Memoir or Personal Narrative: Learning Lessons from the Personal 107
Introduction 107
4.1 Exploring the Past to Understand the Present 108
4.2 Memoir Trailblazer: Ta-Nehisi Coates 109
4.3 Glance at Genre: Conflict, Detail, and Revelation 112
4.4 Annotated Sample Reading: from Life on the Mississippi by Mark Twain 115
4.5 Writing Process: Making the Personal Public 119
4.6 Editing Focus: More on Characterization and Point of View 127
4.7 Evaluation: Structure and Organization 129
4.8 Spotlight on … Multilingual Writers 131
4.9 Portfolio: Filtered Memories 132
Further Reading 134
Works Cited 134

CHAPTER 5
Profile: Telling a Rich and Compelling Story 137
Introduction 137
5.1 Profiles as Inspiration 138
5.2 Profile Trailblazer: Veronica Chambers 139
5.3 Glance at Genre: Subject, Angle, Background, and Description 141
5.4 Annotated Sample Reading: “Remembering John Lewis” by Carla D. Hayden 143
5.5 Writing Process: Focusing on the Angle of Your Subject 146
5.6 Editing Focus: Verb Tense Consistency 163
5.7 Evaluation: Text as Personal Introduction 165
5.8 Spotlight on … Profiling a Cultural Artifact 167
5.9 Portfolio: Subject as a Reflection of Self 170
Works Cited 172

CHAPTER 6
Proposal: Writing About Problems and Solutions 173
Introduction 173
6.1 Proposing Change: Thinking Critically About Problems and Solutions 174
6.2 Proposal Trailblazer: Atul Gawande 176
6.3 Glance at Genre: Features of Proposals 178
6.4 Annotated Student Sample: “Slowing Climate Change” by Shawn Krukowski 180
6.5 Writing Process: Creating a Proposal 188
6.6 Editing Focus: Subject-Verb Agreement 203

6.7 Evaluation: Conventions, Clarity, and Coherence 204
6.8 Spotlight on ... Technical Writing as a Career 206
6.9 Portfolio: Reflecting on Problems and Solutions 208
Further Reading 209
Works Cited 209

**CHAPTER 7**
Evaluation or Review: Would You Recommend It? **211**
Introduction 211
7.1 Thumbs Up or Down? 212
7.2 Review Trailblazer: Michiko Kakutani 213
7.3 Glance at Genre: Criteria, Evidence, Evaluation 214
7.4 Annotated Student Sample: "Black Representation in Film" by Caelia Marshall 217
7.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically About Entertainment 222
7.6 Editing Focus: Quotations 230
7.7 Evaluation: Effect on Audience 232
7.8 Spotlight on ... Language and Culture 236
7.9 Portfolio: What the Arts Say About You 238
Further Reading 239
Works Cited 239

**CHAPTER 8**
Analytical Report: Writing from Facts **241**
Introduction 241
8.1 Information and Critical Thinking 242
8.2 Analytical Report Trailblazer: Barbara Ehrenreich 244
8.3 Glance at Genre: Informal and Formal Analytical Reports 246
8.4 Annotated Student Sample: "U.S. Response to COVID-19" by Trevor Garcia 249
8.5 Writing Process: Creating an Analytical Report 254
8.6 Editing Focus: Commas with Nonessential and Essential Information 268
8.7 Evaluation: Reviewing the Final Draft 269
8.8 Spotlight on ... Discipline-Specific and Technical Language 272
8.9 Portfolio: Evidence and Objectivity 274
Further Reading 275
Works Cited 275

**CHAPTER 9**
Rhetorical Analysis: Interpreting the Art of Rhetoric **277**
Introduction 277
9.1 Breaking the Whole into Its Parts 278
9.2 Rhetorical Analysis Trailblazer: Jamil Smith 280
9.3 Glance at Genre: Rhetorical Strategies 282
9.4 Annotated Student Sample: “Rhetorical Analysis: Evicted by Matthew Desmond” by Eliana Evans 287
9.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically about Rhetoric 291
9.6 Editing Focus: Mixed Sentence Constructions 299
9.7 Evaluation: Rhetorical Analysis 301
9.8 Spotlight on ... Business and Law 303
9.9 Portfolio: How Thinking Critically about Rhetoric Affects Intellectual Growth 311
Further Reading 312
Works Cited 312

**CHAPTER 10**
Position Argument: Practicing the Art of Rhetoric **313**
Introduction 313
10.1 Making a Case: Defining a Position Argument 314
10.2 Position Argument Trailblazer: Charles Blow 316
10.3 Glance at Genre: Thesis, Reasoning, and Evidence 317
10.4 Annotated Sample Reading: "Remarks at the University of Michigan" by Lyndon B. Johnson 320
10.5 Writing Process: Creating a Position Argument 327
10.6 Editing Focus: Paragraphs and Transitions 343
10.7 Evaluation: Varied Appeals 344
10.8 Spotlight on ... Citation 346
10.9 Portfolio: Growth in the Development of Argument 348
Further Reading 349
Works Cited 349

**CHAPTER 11**
Reasoning Strategies: Improving Critical Thinking **351**
Introduction 351
11.1 Developing Your Sense of Logic 352
11.2 Reasoning Trailblazer: Paul D. N. Hebert 356
11.3 Glance at Genre: Reasoning Strategies and Signal Words 358
11.4 Annotated Sample Reading: from Book VII of The Republic by Plato 369
11.5 Writing Process: Reasoning Supported by Evidence 374
Further Reading 387
Works Cited 387

**CHAPTER 12**
Argumentative Research: Enhancing the Art of Rhetoric with Evidence **389**
Introduction 389
12.1 Introducing Research and Research Evidence 390
12.2 Argumentative Research Trailblazer: Samin Nosrat 392
12.3 Glance at Genre: Introducing Research as Evidence 394
12.4 Annotated Student Sample: "Healthy Diets from Sustainable Sources Can Save the Earth" by Lily Tran 395
12.5 Writing Process: Integrating Research 402
12.6 Editing Focus: Integrating Sources and Quotations 411
12.7 Evaluation: Effectiveness of Research Paper 414
12.8 Spotlight on ... Bias in Language and Research 417
12.9 Portfolio: Why Facts Matter in Research Argumentation 419
Further Reading 421
Works Cited 421

**CHAPTER 13**
Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information **423**
Introduction 423
13.1 The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources 424
13.2 The Research Process: How to Create Sources 432
13.3 Glance at the Research Process: Key Skills 437
13.4 Annotated Student Sample: Research Log 438

13.5 Research Process: Making Notes, Synthesizing Information, and Keeping a Research Log 440
13.6 Spotlight on ... Ethical Research 445
Further Reading 447
Works Cited 447

**CHAPTER 14**
Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources **449**
Introduction 449
14.1 Compiling Sources for an Annotated Bibliography 450
14.2 Glance at Form: Citation Style, Purpose, and Formatting 462
14.3 Annotated Student Sample: “Healthy Diets from Sustainable Sources Can Save the Earth” by Lily Tran 465
14.4 Writing Process: Informing and Analyzing 468
Further Reading 477
Works Cited 477

**CHAPTER 15**
Case Study Profile: What One Person Says About All **479**
Introduction 479
15.1 Tracing a Broad Issue in the Individual 480
15.2 Case Study Trailblazer: Vilayanur S. Ramachandran 481
15.3 Glance at Genre: Observation, Description, and Analysis 484
15.4 Annotated Sample Reading: Case Study on Louis Victor "Tan" Leborgne 485
15.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically About How People and Language Interact 489
15.6 Editing Focus: Words Often Confused 502
15.7 Evaluation: Presentation and Analysis of Case Study 505
15.8 Spotlight on ... Applied Linguistics 508
15.9 Portfolio: Your Own Uses of Language 510
Further Reading 511
Works Cited 511

UNIT 3 NAVIGATING RHETORIC IN REAL LIFE

Unit Introduction 512

**CHAPTER 16**
Print or Textual Analysis: What You Read **513**
Introduction 513
16.1 An Author’s Choices: What Text Says and How It Says It 514
16.2 Textual Analysis Trailblazer: bell hooks 515
16.3 Glance at Genre: Print or Textual Analysis 517
16.4 Annotated Student Sample: "Artists at Work" by Gwyn Garrison 519
16.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically About Text 527
16.6 Editing Focus: Literary Works Live in the Present 541
16.7 Evaluation: Self-Directed Assessment 542
16.8 Spotlight on ... Humanities 544
16.9 Portfolio: The Academic and the Personal 546
Further Reading 547
Works Cited 547

**CHAPTER 17**
## Image Analysis: What You See **549**
Introduction 549
17.1 "Reading" Images 550
17.2 Image Trailblazer: Sara Ludy 560
17.3 Glance at Genre: Relationship Between Image and Rhetoric 562
17.4 Annotated Student Sample: "Hints of the Homoerotic" by Leo Davis 565
17.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically and Writing Persuasively About Images 569
17.6 Editing Focus: Descriptive Diction 578
17.7 Evaluation: Relationship Between Analysis and Image 579
17.8 Spotlight on ... Video and Film 581
17.9 Portfolio: Interplay Between Text and Image 584
Further Reading 586
Works Cited 586

**CHAPTER 18**
## Multimodal and Online Writing: Creative Interaction between Text and Image **589**
Introduction 589
18.1 Mixing Genres and Modes 591
18.2 Multimodal Trailblazer: Torika Bolatagici 594
18.3 Glance at Genre: Genre, Audience, Purpose, Organization 595
18.4 Annotated Sample Reading: "Celebrating a Win-Win" by Alexandra Dapolito Dunn 601
18.5 Writing Process: Create a Multimodal Advocacy Project 603
18.6 Evaluation: Transitions 618
18.7 Spotlight on . . . Technology 622
18.8 Portfolio: Multimodalism 626
Further Reading 628
Works Cited 628

**CHAPTER 19**
## Scripting for the Public Forum: Writing to Speak **629**
Introduction 629
19.1 Writing, Speaking, and Activism 630
19.2 Podcast Trailblazer: Alice Wong 635
19.3 Glance at Genre: Language Performance and Visuals 637
19.4 Annotated Student Sample: "Are New DOT Regulations Discriminatory?" by Zain A. Kumar 639
19.5 Writing Process: Writing to Speak 642
19.6 Evaluation: Bridging Writing and Speaking 653
19.7 Spotlight on ... Delivery/Public Speaking 655
19.8 Portfolio: Everyday Rhetoric, Rhetoric Every Day 659
Further Reading 660
Works Cited 660

**CHAPTER 20**
## Portfolio Reflection: Your Growth as a Writer **663**
Introduction 663
20.1 Thinking Critically about Your Semester 664
20.2 Reflection Trailblazer: Sandra Cisneros 664
20.3 Glance at Genre: Purpose and Structure 666

20.4 Annotated Sample Reading: “Don’t Expect Congrats” by Dale Trumbore 668
20.5 Writing Process: Looking Back, Looking Forward 673
20.6 Editing Focus: Pronouns 679
20.7 Evaluation: Evaluating Self-Reflection 683
20.8 Spotlight on … Pronouns in Context 684
Further Reading 687
Works Cited 687

Handbook 689
Index 751

# Preface

## About OpenStax

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### About *Writing Guide with Handbook*

*Writing Guide with Handbook* bridges the gap between everyday rhetoric and academic discourse by revealing to students that they are already engaged in rhetorical work within the familiar contexts of personal interaction and social media. The text seeks to extend these existing skills by showing students how to construct a variety of compelling compositions within self-defined contexts. *Writing Guide with Handbook* breaks down barriers in the field of composition by offering an inviting and inclusive approach to students of all intersectional identities. To meet this goal, the text creates a reciprocal relationship between daily

conversation and the evolving world of academia, which must allow itself to be shaped by students as much as it seeks to shape them.

*Writing Guide with Handbook* was conceived in 2020—the year that brought everything into question for students and instructors alike. Would we avert the climate crisis? Would we survive a global pandemic? Would we achieve gender equality? Would we finally acknowledge that Black lives and Black linguistics matter? Would we show acceptance toward refugees and Dreamers? Would we embrace multilingualism? How would we navigate our way through one existential crisis after another? Put simply, the answer for some of us has become that we write . . . we write for our lives. We write calls to action on social media. We write protest signs to carry in the streets. We write proposed legislation to create change. We write our stories . . . and we write the stories of those who cannot write their own.

In a world with so many questions and seemingly so few answers, the writing classroom as supported by *Writing Guide with Handbook* becomes an essential space for navigating hard conversations about *what is right* versus *what is easy*. The text invites students and instructors to practice invitational, rather than confrontational, verbal and written conversations. These classroom communities will learn to communicate about culture in its broadest sense without divisiveness. Instructors will be empowered to emphasize meaning and voice over outdated writing traditions and to teach empathy as a rhetorical strategy. Students will be empowered to negotiate their identities and their cultures through language as they, too, join us in writing for their lives.

## Pedagogical Foundation

The OpenStax *Writing Guide with Handbook* is organized according to relevant writing genres, with the writing process, effective writing practices or strategies—including graphic organizers, writing frames, and word banks to support visual learning—and conventions of usage and style contextually embedded. The text includes an editing and documentation handbook, which is linked to the Editing Focus feature located in each genre chapter. This organizational approach allows instructors and students to focus on the importance of argumentation and research. In addition, the text allows for nimble customization based on inclusive assignments that welcome all voices and experiences to the academic forum as appropriate to the teaching styles of individual instructors and writing programs.

### Highlights

- **Cultural awareness** is a defined outcome of the text. As a standalone aspect of the rhetorical situation, this outcome supports a culturally integrated pedagogical approach. As such, it is evident throughout the text. In addition, multiculturalism is supported by a repeating chapter-level feature on diverse trailblazers who are working innovatively within each genre. Annotated writing samples in each chapter cross time, space, and culture to emphasize the contributions of many to the genre. There is also a chapter titled "Language, Identity, and Culture," which focuses on contemporary cultural issues and invites students to participate in the ongoing dialogue over the power of language to define and shape both identity and culture. Students of all identities are invited to write about and reflect on their personal experiences with rhetoric in public or private settings. Writing assignments are inclusive so as to invite a wide range of subjects, voices, and viewpoints into the classroom, reinforcing the idea that all are welcome and respected. Writing assignments also include suggestions for differing cultural or linguistic approaches. In addition, writing practices and graphic organizers are marked by targeted icons with regard to culture, linguistics, and learning styles to help instructors and students scaffold assignments.


understanding content through the broad lens of language


understanding content through the broad lens of culture


seeing to create meaning





voice to text



listening to create meaning



movement to create meaning



where ideas come from and how to capture them

- **Critical language awareness** is an important part of the goal of cultural awareness. The text invites and encourages instructors and students to openly and regularly challenge and question accepted conventions and practices with regard to language use with the understanding that language both results from and transmits social, political, and ideological beliefs and practices. In so doing, language is a force of both liberation and oppression. Critical language awareness is a journey, not an end destination. As language grows and evolves, so too must our willingness to engage with it in culturally inclusive ways.

  With this awareness in mind, OpenStax has not censored the racial slur that appears in the excerpt from Frederick Douglass's autobiography in Chapter 3. Because the issues regarding the usage of the word are complex and evolving, instructors may choose to discuss with students the usage of the word in the text and how that might differ from the practice of reading it aloud in the class, for example. For support, the introduction to the text provides a research-based discussion of the term and its usage.
- **Process orientation** is supported by two different chapter structures that move students through the writing process in elongated and abbreviated ways. Five genre assignments guide students through a complete experience with the writing process, including formatting that is relevant to the genre. Other optional writing assignments feature an abbreviated process so that instructors and students are afforded the time to build out their courses in customized ways. Complex genres such as position argument and argumentative research are covered through a multiple-chapter approach so that students are supported throughout the writing process. Each of the genre chapters includes modeling through an annotated sample, a Quick Launch guide that includes a graphic organizer to get students started writing, and an evaluation rubric that informs the drafting process. Finally, students are encouraged in the ongoing construction and self-evaluation of a writing portfolio through a concluding feature in each chapter and a final chapter titled "Portfolio Reflection."
- **Editing in context** is supported through a chapter-level Editing Focus feature that calls out a particular editing issue related to the genre. The feature instructs students in recognizing and editing the error. Each Editing Focus feature is linked to the appropriate section of the Handbook, as these editing focuses are based on the 10 most important editing topics as suggested by instructors of writing. Given that the *Modern Language Association Handbook*, 9th edition, was published in 2021, simultaneous to the developmental process of this text, OpenStax has relied on the *Modern Language Association Handbook*, 8th edition, for citation information. Any discrepancies will be addressed in a future reprint of this text.
- **Information and media literacy** is supported through specific chapters, such as "Multimodal and Online Writing" and "Image Analysis." In addition, the Genre Trailblazer feature includes those who work in genres such as newspapers, visual arts, and film.
- **Media assets** are featured in 14 chapters. These assets invite students to consider and practice the application of varying genre characteristics as well as steps in the writing process, such as peer review and revision. The media assets may be completed by students individually in class or at home; by groups in class; or by the class as a whole with the instructor leading. For support, these assets are discussed at point of use in the Instructor's Manual.

### Key Features

- **Learning Outcomes** begin each numbered section. These sets of clear and concise outcomes have been thoroughly revised to be both measurable and closely aligned with current teaching practice. These outcomes are designed to help the instructor decide what content to include or assign and to guide student expectations of learning. After completing each chapter and writing assignment, students should be able to demonstrate mastery of the learning outcomes.
- **Genre Trailblazer** introduces and grounds each chapter by presenting one of a diverse group of contemporary artists who are doing innovative work within the genre. Discussion questions invite students to consider the ways in which each trailblazer is working within or challenging the conventions of a genre.
- **Glance at Genre** introduces students to each genre through key characteristics and important terminology.
- **Annotated Sample Readings** or **Student Samples** provide alternating annotated readings by professional authors and student writers. The annotations point out characteristics of each genre. Discussion questions invite students to consider the ways in which authors meet or challenge these characteristics.
- **Writing Process** steps present students with a writing assignment in each chapter genre and then lead them through a recursive drafting process. This section provides students with Quick Launch strategies, graphic organizers, samples and models, and invitations to develop their assignments in varying ways.
- **Editing Focus** presents students with an editing focus and then invites them to practice and apply the focus in a number of ways. This feature, as well as other activities, will also be addressed in the instructor's manual and the student toolkit so that instructors can use it flexibly.
- **Evaluation** is approached through a sample rubric, which is provided for every assignment.
- **Spotlight on . . .** provides students with additional information on topics related to the genres.
- **Portfolio Reflections** help students incorporate each assignment into ongoing portfolios. Students are encouraged throughout the text to keep course portfolios in print or digital format.
- **Further Reading** helps students further explore the chapter genre through references and links to other information sources.

## About the Authors

### Senior Contributing Authors

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Dr. Michelle Bachelor Robinson directs the Comprehensive Writing Program and is an assistant professor of writing and rhetoric at Spelman College. For five weeks each summer, she also serves as faculty for the Middlebury College Bread Loaf School of English, a summer residential graduate program for secondary educators. Her research and teaching focus on community engagement, historiography, African American rhetoric and literacy, composition pedagogy and theory, and student and program assessment. She is the coeditor of the *Routledge Reader of African American Rhetoric* and has published articles in *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, *Peitho: Journal of the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition*, the *Alabama Humanities Review*, and the *Journal of Social Work Education*. Her early career was spent as a secondary educator, teaching high school students in the subjects of writing, literature, reading, debate, and drama. Dr. Robinson currently serves as the higher-education cochair of the College Board test development committee for the Advanced Placement (AP) English Language Exam, as well as a member of the test development committee for the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) for College Composition. Dr. Robinson also served on the executive committee for the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) from 2017 to 2020 and is still actively involved in that national work.

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*featuring* **Toby Fulwiler, Emeritus, University of Vermont**

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## Additional Resources

### Answers to Questions in the Book

Suggested responses to the Discussion Questions are provided in the Instructor Manual so that instructors can guide student discussion. These same Discussion Questions are also included in the Lecture Slides. The Toolkit contains question prompts designed to aid students in composing specific writing types. Thus, student-facing responses are not provided.

### Student and Instructor Resources

We've compiled additional resources for both students and instructors, including an instructor's manual, lecture slides, and a student-facing toolkit. Instructor resources require a verified instructor account, for which you can apply when you log in or create your account on OpenStax.org. Take advantage of these resources to supplement *Writing Guide with Handbook*.

**Instructor's Manual**

Designed to provide guidance for delivering the textbook content in dynamic and interesting ways, the instructor's manual includes chapter-by-chapter teaching tips, classroom activities, answers to the discussion questions, and suggestions for integrating the chapter content and the toolkit (see below). In addition, the manual offers sample syllabi, tips for creating assignments, advice for classroom management and responding to student writing, suggestions for using culturally responsive and anti-racist teaching practices, an overview of the handbook in the textbook, and a glossary of terms. Authored by Carol Hollar-Zwick, writer and curriculum designer.

**Lecture Slides**

The PowerPoint slides provide outlines, images, and an overview of chapter topics as a starting place for instructors to build their lectures. Authored by Michael Hartwell, composition instructor and English-language tutor.

**Toolkit**

The student-facing toolkit provides practice and instruction to accompany each chapter's assignment. With frames for writing at the sentence, paragraph, and assignment levels, the toolkit allows instructors to provide scaffolded support. Authored by Victoria Friedrich, writer and curriculum designer.

### Community Hubs

OpenStax partners with the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME) to offer Community Hubs on OER Commons—a platform for instructors to share community-created resources that support OpenStax books, free of charge. Through our Community Hubs, instructors can upload their own

materials or download resources to use in their own courses, including additional ancillaries, teaching material, multimedia, and relevant course content. We encourage instructors to join the hubs for the subjects most relevant to your teaching and research as an opportunity both to enrich your courses and to engage with other faculty. To reach the Community Hubs, visit www.oercommons.org/hubs/openstax.

### Technology Partners

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# Unit 1

# The Things We Carry: Experience, Culture, and Language

## Unit Introduction

Unit 1 is about **you**—who you are and what you bring to the writing classroom. In his short story "The Things They Carried" (1990), American author and Vietnam War (1954–1975) veteran Tim O'Brien (b. 1946) suggests that the identities of soldiers may be explored through an examination of the items they choose to carry in their packs. Of course, in their new roles as soldiers, they carry items related to survival—weapons and rations—but they also carry other items. Some carry photographs of loved ones, others carry good luck charms or religious icons, and still others carry paper and pen for writing home. Like these soldiers, you carry experiences into the writing classroom that will inform your participation. Your prior experiences with language, culture, and literacy define the unique viewpoint that you will offer during classroom discussions and writings. During this journey, your classmates will learn from you, as you will learn from them. In this way, a new element of your identity will evolve—that of a college student.

# The Digital World: Building on What You Already Know to Respond Critically

1



**FIGURE 1.1** Whether these students realize it or not, they are engaging in rhetoric by consuming and posting information on social media. (credit: "Together and Alone" by Garry Knight/flickr, CC-BY)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**1.1** "Reading" to Understand and Respond
**1.2** Social Media Trailblazer: Selena Gomez
**1.3** Glance at Critical Response: Rhetoric and Critical Thinking
**1.4** Annotated Student Sample: Social Media Post and Responses on Voter Suppression
**1.5** Writing Process: Thinking Critically About a "Text"
**1.6** Evaluation: Intention vs. Execution
**1.7** Spotlight on ... Academia
**1.8** Portfolio: Tracing Writing Development


**INTRODUCTION** Your past experiences with computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices represent your conscious choice to connect with a global community. For example, you may post on social media sites where you receive instant feedback from around the world in the form of reposts or likes. Through these interactions, you are empowered to influence people more than at any other point in history. In fact, you may be on the road to becoming the next big social media influencer—a person with established credentials in a certain field with access to a large audience and who, because of popularity, can influence others' actions. With applications that instantly translate into many languages, even language has become less of a barrier to your potential audience and thus to your potential influence. However, even though the world may be more connected now than ever before and communication may be faster, easier, more powerful, and more widely accessible, the basics of communication have not changed.

The essential element of all communication, past and present, including your social media posts and related comments, is the **rhetorical situation**: the **conditions**, or circumstances, of the communication and the **agents**, or people involved, in that communication. Notice that the term comes from the word ***rhetoric***. Originally, *rhetoric* referred to the art of persuasive speaking or writing. Now it is used more inclusively to mean the "techniques and theories of communication." And notice, too, that like the people in Figure 1.1, you are already using rhetoric every day as you find yourself in different rhetorical situations on social media. In this chapter, you will learn more about the use of rhetoric within rhetorical situations as you begin the journey of constructing bridges among the communication taking place on social media, in the world of academia, and in the world at large.

## 1.1 "Reading" to Understand and Respond

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify genre elements and determine how conventions are shaped by audience, purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Articulate the importance of inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in varying rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Identify relationships between ideas, patterns of organization, and interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements in a diverse range of texts.

To read and write well means to read and write critically. *What are you saying that's new, different, insightful, or edgy?* In fact, a major goal of most college curricula is to train students to be critical readers, writers, and thinkers so that they carry those habits into the real and virtual worlds beyond campus borders. *What, you may ask, does it mean to be critical? How does being a critical reader, writer, and thinker differ from being an ordinary reader, writer, and thinker?* Being critical in reading means knowing how to analyze distinctions, interpretations, and conclusions. Being critical in writing means making distinctions, developing interpretations, and drawing conclusions that stand up to thoughtful scrutiny by others. Becoming a critical thinker, then, means learning to exercise reason and judgment whenever you encounter the language of others or generate language yourself. Beginning with social media and then moving into the world of academia, this chapter explores strategies for helping you become a more accomplished critical reader and emphasizes the close thinking relationship between critical reading and critical writing.

### Rhetoric and the Rhetorical Situation

To begin to read, write, and think critically, it is helpful to look at something familiar such as social media and the way it is used. Interactions on social media, as in all types of conversation, present rhetorical situations that form the basis of communication. In the most basic terms, a rhetorical situation has two elements: agents and conditions. Agents are the originators (initiators) and the audience of the communication. The originator may have a real audience or an anticipated audience. A real audience is made up of people the originator may know personally or know of. For example, if you are the originator, your real audience could be a group of your peers to whom you present your ideas in class. Or it could be a person to whom you send a text message. You know the members of the class and know something about them. Similarly, you know the person to whom you send the text. An anticipated audience is one you hope to reach or one you expect will engage with your communication. When you post on social media platforms, for instance, your audience is probably anticipated. While you might have followers, you may not know them personally, but you anticipate who they are and how they might react.

The conditions of a rhetorical situation refer to the genre, purpose, stance, context, and culture. The **genre**, or medium, is the mode in which you communicate. You may speak persuasively in class, or you may send a text message; both are genres. The **purpose** is your reason or reasons for the communication. For example, if you are presenting to your class, your purpose might be to do well and get a good grade, but it also might be to

inform or to persuade your classmates. Likewise, you might want to gain attention by posting something on social media that connects to other people's thoughts and feelings. The third condition is the **stance**, which is your take, or viewpoint, as presented in the communication. Your stance may be that college loans should be forgiven, or it may be that college loans should be repaid in full. The **context** is the setting of the rhetorical situation. Some examples might be a communication taking place during a global pandemic or during a Black Lives Matter protest. The context affects the ways in which a particular social, political, or economic situation influences the process of communication. The final element is **culture**, which refers to groups of people who share commonalities. When communicating, you make assumptions about the cultural traits of your audience, perhaps expecting that they will agree with you regarding certain values or beliefs. For example, if you are communicating with an American audience, you may assume a positive value for democracy or a dislike of foreign interference. Conversely, you also may communicate with people whose cultural views are at odds or in conflict with your own: for example, a man who publicly advocates outdated gender views might have trouble communicating culturally with a younger female audience. The ways in which you choose to communicate to those within and those outside of your culture are likely to differ as you craft a stance within a given context for a particular purpose and audience.

As you work through a deeper understanding of rhetoric within a rhetorical situation, remember a few key points. When you read, write, and think critically or rhetorically, you try to figure out why a message is being communicated in a certain way. Reading language rhetorically means figuring out *why* and *how* it works or fails to work in achieving its communicative purpose. Writing rhetorically means being conscious of the ways in which you construct a message within a clearly defined rhetorical situation. Thinking rhetorically means considering the possibilities of meaning as conveyed through language and image. By putting these concepts together, you will come to understand how these elements work in concert with each other and affect your interactions with the world.

### Social Media Savvy



Social media is an important part of modern life, and many people maintain multiple social media accounts. These applications can educate and help you connect to others. However, every post you make on any social media platform leaves a digital footprint—the sum of your online behavior. These footprints might reflect on you positively or negatively. On one hand, if you repost a baby goat jumping around a barnyard, you and others may laugh and no harm is done. On the other hand, if you are upset or angry and post something nasty about someone, the target can be harmed through cyberbullying and your online reputation tarnished. It is important to understand that the footprint you leave may never go away and may cause trouble for you down the road.

Negative footprints could hurt your credibility regarding future admissions to programs or future employment. Comedian Kevin Hart (b. 1979), for example, lost a job hosting the Academy Awards when some of his negative posts resurfaced, even after he rescinded them and acknowledged the problem. Right or wrong, social media leaves a trail for others to find. *In other words, what are you showing others about your talents and skills through your social media presence?* The point is that with its wonder and power, social media should be treated responsibly and with an awareness of its longevity. One way to better judge what you might post would be to consider the rhetorical situation so that you can anticipate an audience reaction based on genre, purpose, stance, context, and cultural awareness.

# 1.2 Trailblazer

## Social Media Trailblazer: Selena Gomez

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical contexts.
- Identify the elements of successful social media use.



**FIGURE 1.2** Selena Gomez (credit: "Selena Gomez" by jenniferlinneaphotogaphy/flickr, CC BY 2.0))

*"Our actions and words have an impact on others—whether on social media or in real life."*

### Authenticity as Rhetoric

By any standard, singer, actor, and philanthropist Selena Gomez (b. 1992) is an influencer. By 2021, Gomez had amassed around 65 million Twitter (https://openstax.org/r/selenagomeztwitter) followers and over 260 million Instagram (https://openstax.org/r/selenagomezinsta) followers, placing her among celebrities with top follower counts. Gomez was born in Grand Prairie, Texas, but raised outside of Dallas. She is named after the popular Tejano singer Selena Quintanilla-Perez (1971–1995), who was murdered by her fan club president but still maintains an avid following. Gomez entered show business as a child, inspired by the single mother, an amateur actress, who raised her. After roles on *Barney and Friends (https://openstax.org/r/barneyandfriends)* (from 2002–2004) and *Spy Kids 3-D: Game Over* (2003), Gomez auditioned for the world of Disney. Appearing first on *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* (2005–2008), Gomez landed a lead role as Alex Russo on Disney's *Wizards of Waverly Place* (2007–2012), for which she also sang the theme song (https://openstax.org/r/themesong). By 2012, Gomez was ready to depart from such family-friendly roles, taking parts in films such as *Spring Breakers* (2012), *The Dead Don't Die* (2019), and *A Rainy Day in New York* (2019). Gomez's music career paralleled that of her acting career; she began as a member of the band Selena Gomez and the Scene (2009) and launched her solo career in 2012. Gomez has released the solo albums *Stars Dance* (2013), *Revival* (2015),

and *Rare (https://openstax.org/r/rare)* (2020).

Despite Gomez's success as a public figure, her relationship with social media has been rocky. Gomez describes her social media strategy as "intentional . . . I don't take a lot of pointless pictures." Gomez recognizes the power of her social media platform, and she has used it to champion the causes that she cares about. As a person diagnosed with both lupus (2015) and bipolar disorder (2018), Gomez has used social media to advocate for mental and physical health causes. (Lupus is an inflammatory disease caused by the immune system attacking its own tissue; bipolar disorder is characterized by extreme mood swings.) Gomez says, "Everything that I'm attached to has a charity aspect." She continues, "If something good isn't coming out of it, I'm not going to do it." This "intentional," open approach to her personal difficulties and her emphasis on building positivity out of struggle generates an intimacy with fans that has served to increase her following.

However, the most radical action that Gomez may have committed with regard to social media was her decision to quit it. Suffering from publicity overload, cyberbullying, and a negatively changing sense of self, Gomez handed over her Instagram account to her assistant in 2017. She has also handed her Instagram account over to people such as Georgia voting rights advocate Stacey Abrams (https://openstax.org/r/staceyabrams) (b. 1973) as part of the #ShareTheMicNow (https://openstax.org/r/sharethemicnow) campaign, which amplifies the voices of Black women. Gomez deleted social media apps from her smartphone and gave up knowledge of her passwords. She claims that the move has been liberating: "I suddenly had to learn how to be with myself." She reflects that there were 150 million people on her phone, and "I just put it down. . . . That was such a relief."

Despite the shift in approach, Gomez's relationship with social media remains strong. She actively cultivates a "deliberate . . . vulnerability" through her unwillingness to shy away from tough or important issues. Regardless of which of Gomez's assistants hits the "post" button, Gomez's focus on giving of herself to improve society resonates with her fans.

### Discussion Questions

1. Have you heard of Selena Gomez? What did you know about her before reading this feature?
2. If you consider her background, what skills do you think have helped Gomez establish her savvy rhetorical presence on social media? Which skills do you relate to, and how might you use them?
3. In what ways has Gomez used her struggles with mental and physical health to amplify her platform? How might this context affect the rhetorical situation?
4. Explain how authenticity helps Gomez communicate. What influence does one's experience have on the rhetorical situation?
5. In what ways does Gomez rely on emotional appeals to her audience? In what ways does she incorporate ethics, logic, or timeliness?

## 1.3 Glance at Critical Response: Rhetoric and Critical Thinking

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Use words, images, and specific rhetorical terminology to understand, discuss, and analyze a variety of texts.
- Determine how genre conventions are shaped by audience, purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Distinguish among different types of rhetorical situations and communicate effectively within them.

Every day you find yourself in rhetorical situations and use rhetoric to communicate with and to persuade others, even though you might not realize you are doing it. For example, when you voice your opinion or respond to another's opinion, you are thinking rhetorically. Your purpose is often to convince others that you

have a valid opinion, and maybe even issue a call to action. Obviously, you use words to communicate and present your position. But you may communicate effectively through images as well.

## Words and Images

Both words and images convey information, but each does so in significantly different ways. In English, words are written sequentially, from left to right. A look at a daily newspaper or web page reveals textual information further augmented by headlines, titles, subtitles, boldface, italics, white space, and images. By the time readers get to college, they have internalized predictive strategies to help them critically understand a variety of written texts and the images that accompany them. For example, you might be able to predict the words in a sentence as you are reading it. You also know the purpose of headers and other markers that guide you through the reading.

To be a critical reader, though, you need to be more than a good predictor. In addition to following the thread of communication, you need to evaluate its logic. To do that, you need to ask questions such as these as you consider the argument: *Is it fair (i.e., unbiased)? Does it provide credible evidence? Does it make sense, or is it reasonably plausible?* Then, based on what you have decided, you can accept or reject its conclusions. You may also consider alternative possibilities so that you can learn more. In this way, you read actively, searching for information and ideas that you understand and can use to further your own thinking, writing, and speaking. To move from understanding to critical awareness, plan to read a text more than once and in more than one way. One good strategy is to ask questions of a text rather than to accept the author's ideas as fact. Another strategy is to take notes about your understanding of the passage. And another is to make connections between concepts in different parts of a reading. Maybe an idea on page 4 is reiterated on page 18. To be an active, engaged reader, you will need to build bridges that illustrate how concepts become part of a larger argument. Part of being a good reader is the act of building information bridges within a text and across all the related information you encounter, including your experiences.

With this goal in mind, beware of passive reading. If you ever have been reading and completed a page or paragraph and realized you have little idea of what you've just read, you have been reading passively or just moving your eyes across the page. Although you might be able to claim you "read" the material, you have not engaged with the text to learn from it, which is the point of reading. You haven't built bridges that connect to other material. Remember, words help you make sense of the world, communicate in the world, and create a record to reflect on so that you can build bridges across the information you encounter.

Images, however, present a different set of problems for critical readers. Sometimes having little or no accompanying text, images require a different skill set. For example, in looking at a photograph or drawing, you find different information presented simultaneously. This presentation allows you to scan or stop anywhere in the image—at least theoretically. Because visual information is presented simultaneously, its general meaning may be apparent at a glance, while more nuanced or complicated meanings may take a long time to figure out. And even then, odds are these meanings will vary from one viewer to another.




**FIGURE 1.3** Young woman looking away from the viewer or old woman in profile? (credit: "My wife and my mother-in-law" by W. E. (William Ely) Hill/Public Domain)

In the well-known image shown in Figure 1.3, *do you see an old woman or a young woman?* Although the image remains static, your interpretation of it may change depending on any number of factors, including your experience, culture, and education. Once you become aware of the two perspectives of this image, you can see the "other" easily. But if you are not told about the two ways to "see" it, you might defend a perspective without realizing that you are missing another one. Most visuals, however, are not optical illusions; less noticeable perspectives may require more analysis and may be more influenced by your cultural identity and the ways in which you are accustomed to interpreting. In any case, this image is a reminder to have an open mind and be willing to challenge your perspectives against your interpretations. As such, like written communication, images require analysis before they can be understood thoroughly and evaluation before they can be judged on a wider scale.

If you have experience with social media, you may be familiar with the way users respond to images or words by introducing another image: the **meme**. A meme is a photograph containing text that presents one viewer's response. The term *meme* originates from the Greek root *mim*, meaning "mime" or "mimic," and the English suffix *-eme*. In the 1970s, British evolutionary biologist and author Richard Dawkins (b. 1941) created the term for use as "a unit of cultural transmission," and he understood it to be "the cultural equivalent of a gene." Today, according to the dictionary definition, memes are "amusing or interesting items that spread widely through the Internet." For example, maybe you have seen a meme of an upset cat or of a friend turning around to look at something else while another friend is relating something important. The text that accompanies these pictures provides some expression on the part of the originator that the audience usually finds humorous, relatable, or capable of arousing any range of emotion or thought. For example, in the photograph shown in Figure 1.4 of a critter standing at attention, the author of the text conveys anxiousness. The use of the word *like* has been popularized in the meme genre to mean "to give an example."




**FIGURE 1.4** Example of a meme (credit: "Waiting for you like . . ." by Marco Verch/flickr/CC BY 2.0)

While these playful aspects of images are important, you also should recognize how images fit into the rhetorical situation. Consider the same elements, such as context and genre, when viewing images. You may find multiple perspectives to consider. In addition, *where* images show up in a text or for an audience might be important. These are all aspects of understanding the situation and thinking critically. Engaged readers try to connect and build bridges to information across text and images.

As you consider your reading and viewing experiences on social media and elsewhere, note that your responses involve some basic critical thinking strategies. Some of these include summary, paraphrase, analysis, and evaluation, which are defined in the next section. The remaining parts of this chapter will focus on written communication. While this chapter touches only briefly on visual discourse, Image Analysis: What You See presents an extensive discussion on visual communication.

## Relation to Academics

As with all disciplines, rhetoric has its own vocabulary. What follows are key terms, definitions, and elements of rhetoric. Become familiar with them as you discuss and write responses to the various texts and images you will encounter.

- **Analysis:** detailed breakdown or other explanation of some aspect or aspects of a text. Analysis helps readers understand the meaning of a text.
- **Authority:** credibility; background that reflects experience, knowledge, or understanding of a situation. An authoritative voice is clear, direct, factual, and specific, leaving an impression of confidence.
- **Context:** setting—time and place—of the rhetorical situation. The context affects the ways in which a particular social, political, or economic situation influences the process of communication. Depending on context, you may need to adapt your text to audience background and knowledge by supplying (or omitting) information, clarifying terminology, or using language that best reaches your readers.
- **Culture:** group of people who share common beliefs and lived experiences. Each person belongs to various cultures, such as a workplace, school, sports team fan, or community.
- **Evaluation:** systematic assessment and judgment based on specific and articulated criteria, with a goal to improve understanding.
- **Evidence:** support or proof for a fact, opinion, or statement. Evidence can be presented as statistics, examples, expert opinions, analogies, case studies, text quotations, research in the field, videos, interviews, and other sources of credible information.
- **Media literacy:** ability to create, understand, and evaluate various types of media; more specifically, the ability to apply critical thinking skills to them.
- **Meme:** image (usually) with accompanying text that calls for a response or elicits a reaction.

- **Paraphrase:** rewording of original text to make it clearer for readers. When they are part of your text, paraphrases require a citation of the original source.
- **Rhetoric:** use of effective communication in written, visual, or other forms and understanding of its impact on audiences as well as of its organization and structure.
- **Rhetorical situation:** instance of communication; the conditions of a communication and the agents of that communication.
- **Social media:** all digital tools that allow individuals or groups to create, post, share, or otherwise express themselves in a public forum. Social media platforms publish instantly and can reach a wide audience.
- **Summary:** condensed account of a text or other form of communication, noting its main points. Summaries are written in one's own words and require appropriate attribution when used as part of a paper.
- **Tone:** an author's projected or perceived attitude toward the subject matter and audience. Word choice, vocal inflection, pacing, and other stylistic choices may make the author sound angry, sarcastic, apologetic, resigned, uncertain, authoritative, and so on.

As you read through these terms, you likely recognize most of them and realize you are adept in some rhetorical situations. For example, when you talk with friends about your trip to the local mall, you provide details they will understand. You might refer to previous trips or tell them what is on sale or that you expect to see someone from school there. In other words, you understand the components of the rhetorical situation. However, if you tell your grandparents about the same trip, the rhetorical situation will be different, and you will approach the interaction differently. Because the audience is different, you likely will explain the event with more detail to address the fact that they don't go to the mall often, or you will omit specific details that your grandparents will not understand or find interesting. For instance, instead of telling them about the video game store, you might tell them about the pretzel café.

As part of your understanding of the rhetorical situation, you might summarize specific elements, again depending on the intended audience. You might speak briefly about the pretzel café to your friends but spend more time detailing the various toppings for your grandparents. If, by chance, you have previously stopped to have a pretzel, you might provide your analysis and evaluation of the service and the food. Once again, you are engaged in rhetoric by showing an understanding of and the ability to develop a strategy for approaching a particular rhetorical situation. The point is to recognize that rhetorical situations differ, depending, in this case, on the audience. Awareness of the rhetorical situation applies to academic writing as well. You change your presentation, tone, style, and other elements to fit the conditions of the situation.

## 1.4 Annotated Student Sample: Social Media Post and Responses on Voter Suppression

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Determine how conventions are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and expectations.
- Read for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in varying rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Distinguish relationships between genre conventions, ideas, patterns of organization, and interplay between various elements and how they influence the rhetorical situation.

## Introduction



**FIGURE 1.5** In Ohio, legal voter Larry Harmon was purged from the voter rolls because he had not voted since 2008. (credit: "Kaptur stands up for Ohio voters at Supreme Court" by Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

In the social media thread that follows, Proud Immigrant Citizen @primmcit posts about immigration and voter suppression. Others add their comments regarding voter suppression. Consider the ways in which each person responds to this initial post.

### LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

#### Social Media Thread

> Proud Immigrant Citizen @primmcit
>
> POTUS and DOJ have created a section dedicated to denaturalization. Strips citizenship and disenfranchises immigrant citizens, mainly persons of color, on trumped-up charges. Not-so-subtle way to control who can and cannot vote! This is a nightmare!

*This opening post sets up a rhetorical situation. The genre is social media in which the platform limits the number of characters. The author's purpose is to inform others about a policy. It may also be to collect "likes" or reposts to spread the information, regardless of its accuracy. The audience is a collection of social media users—some known, some unknown. The author's stance is against the denaturalization policy. The context is a POTUS/DOJ action against immigrants. The culture shows a conflict between immigrants and the current administration (and its supporters).*

> History Buff @historyfuture
>
> This is not new. Immigration Act of 1924 limited number of new immigrants to 2% of current U.S. citizens of that nationality. Largest groups (e.g., White people from northwest Europe) kept getting bigger. Effective way to concentrate political power.

*This response provides further information about the rhetorical situation by offering historical context, which, again, may or may not be accurate.*

> Proud Immigrant Citizen @primmcit
>
> It may not be new, but it's still wrong!

*The original poster reiterates their stance.*

> American and Proud @IPledge
>
> Are you for real saying that the government shouldn't control immigration? I don't want all these criminals voting, and I've had it up to here with everyone's stupid complaining!

*This response provides an inaccurate summary of the original post. The tone shows anger and unwillingness to engage in meaningful discussion or to learn more about the issue. This person's mind is made up, so it would be hard to convince them to take a new or refined position.*

> Peter @BetweenTheLines
>
> No, Proud Immigrant is saying that denaturalization is being used as a means of voter suppression.

*This response corrects the previous responder with an accurate paraphrase of the original poster's stance and hints at the factual nature of the original post.*

> Karen @ConservativeGirl
>
> What are the trumped-up charges? Can you direct me to some evidence? Sounds like a lot of liberal garbage.

*This responder, although clearly against the original poster's stance, properly asks for evidence—something that may be provided through a link to keep the character count within the confines of the genre. Based on the handle and the end of the post, this person may or may not be open to a new perspective or factual information about the issue.*

> Miguel @BothSides
>
> Liberal or conservative, voter suppression is one of the most dangerous threats to our democracy.

*This responder offers an evaluation, regardless of stance. The tone indicates a reasonable attitude. However, by stating "liberal or conservative," this post may limit the audience since other cultures, such as moderate or progressive, may be following the thread.*

> Sarah @IWatch
>
> When the news talks about low voter turnout in an election, it's hard to know why people didn't show up.

*This responder begins an analysis of the original post by providing a questioning tone. However, this post does not seem to further the discussion; it makes a statement and does not follow up with new information or ideas.*

> Mario @MyVote
>
> Exactly, did they stay home by choice, or were they "encouraged" to stay home by government red tape?

*This responder clarifies the analytical question and tries to reengage previous responders. The question also opens up the potential for new evidence from others.*

> Maria @HomeGirl
>
> It's not just immigrants. After Obama was elected, more than 20 states passed measures to limit voting in Black and Brown neighborhoods.

*This responder offers possible evidence to support the ongoing problem of voter suppression. While unverified, it provides a strong starting point for further inquiry and discussion so that evidence can be brought into the discussion.*

> Malik @BlackPanther
>
> This kind of racism isn't new. History Buff @historyfuture is right. Closing polling locations in Black and Brown neighborhoods is the new poll tax or literacy test.

*This responder makes a connection between the past and present—an element of analysis.*

| Cho @HistoryRepeats | Yes, the party seeking power wants their voters to turn out, not all voters. |
|---|---|

*This responder makes an inference based on the accumulation of evidence. While the conclusion may be sound, it remains unclear.*

| Megan @FightThePower | It's easier to suppress the votes of non-supporters than to try to win them over. |
|---|---|

*This responder makes another inference based on the accumulation of evidence and alludes to previous instances of voter suppression along with potential rationale.*

| Marco @DontMessWithMe | That's why we need to #StayInLine |
|---|---|

*This responder presents a potential call to action—something people can do to fight voter suppression. This call to action assumes the audience within the given culture understands or can find out what #StayInLine means and how to become involved.*

### Conclusion

You are likely familiar with this type of social media thread—users from different cultures and with differing views coming together to comment on a post. What you may not have realized is that these users and others like them are engaging in rhetoric by responding to a text through summary, paraphrase, analysis, evaluation, calls for evidence, or proposals of action. Again, they demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation and how to navigate within it.

### Discussion Questions

1. How might you have responded to the initial post, and why?
2. How do the usernames or handles affect your reading of the posts?
3. What might you have posted to begin a discussion about the voter suppression? How might each of these responders have interacted with your post?
4. What did you learn from the posts, and how might you confirm (or deny) the information provided? What specific items should you research to better engage with and further the discussion?
5. What conventions of social media do you notice (or do you recognize as missing)?

## 1.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically About a "Text"

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Develop and implement flexible strategies for reading and rereading.
- Articulate how organizational features function for different audiences, creating cultural awareness within rhetorical situations.
- Determine how genre conventions for structure, paragraphs, tone, and mechanics vary.
- Identify common formats and design features for different kinds of text.
- Read and write critically within social media platforms.

Thinking critically is crucial to success both in and after school. Indeed, this skill may be the foundation of all education. Most of *Writing Guide with Handbook* explores strategies for helping you become an accomplished critical writer, but as you have already learned, a close relationship exists between critical writing and critical reading. Reading and writing, like producing and consuming, are two sides of the same coin. When you study one, you inevitably learn more about the other at the same time. The more you attend to the language of published writers, the more you will learn about your own language. The more you attend to your own written

language, the more you will learn about the texts you read.

## Summary of Assignment: Critical Response

Select a short "text" for response. The "text" may be written, visual, or a combination of both. Keeping in mind the example of Selena Gomez or other social media activists (such as Swedish environmentalist Greta Thunberg [b. 2003] or conservative speaker and entrepreneur Wayne Dupree [b. 1968]), focus on a text, perhaps a meme or social media post, that addresses an aspect of social activism. First, read it completely for understanding. Summarize or paraphrase the main ideas of the text to check for comprehension. Second, read it critically to determine its purpose, to analyze its use of language (or another element), and to evaluate it. Finally, write a short (1–2 pages) critical response to the text, perhaps recommending or not recommending it to other readers, explaining its significance in a particular area of life or field of study, or even commenting on the diction or style of the communication and its potential impact on readers.

***Another Lens.*** When you consider another perspective, you often learn information you have not considered before. Look at Figure 1.6:

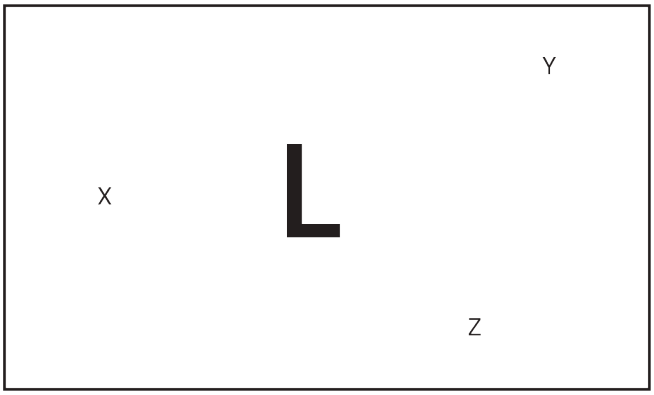



**FIGURE 1.6** What X, Y, and Z see (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

If you have the perspective of the X, all you see is the "back" of the L. You might not even know it's an L. You might think it is an I, but it also could be the side of an M, or an N, or even a P. From the perspective of X, you have only limited information about the structure, letter, or whatever is in front of you. If you take the perspective of Y, you have a different information, which contrasts with what you learned from X. Furthermore, neither X nor Y has the perspective of Z. As you can see, combining the perspectives gives you a more comprehensive picture. Although it is unlikely you will ever get a complete and accurate picture of any given situation, by considering other perspectives, you begin to think critically to understand an issue, problem, or condition.

As a class or in small groups, agree on a short text to read and respond to, as described. Share your responses in small groups, paying particular attention to the evaluation, analysis, and evidence that each person presents. Revise your initial response based on these new, shared perspectives from your classmates about the same text. The goal is to learn from others' perspectives. In so doing, consider how your classmates' perspectives enhance your comprehension and broaden your ability to understand the interpretations of the text. As you revise, incorporate this new knowledge, and consider how the various cultures and interpretations based on culture can lead to understanding and even misunderstanding. Finally, pay attention to how you might consider these multiple perspectives to clarify the text's purpose or meaning for an audience.

## Quick Launch: Mapping the Rhetorical Situation

When you first sit down to write, you can use any of several methods to get going. The blank page can be intimidating, and facing a blank page is one of the reasons writing can be challenging at first. Figure out which "launch" methods work best for you and your style(s) of thinking and writing. Sometimes this stage is called

**prewriting** or **planning**. Taking the time to prewrite helps you decide how to proceed to the actual writing and builds your confidence in the process. Some people make concept maps, others make checklists, and still others create formal outlines. Some do research on a topic before they start, whereas others just sit down and write whatever comes to mind, a process called **freewrite**. There is no perfect or correct way to begin writing. The important thing is to discover which strategies work for you for a particular writing task, and then to use them.

For this writing task, create a concept map with six radiating circles (or use six index cards that you can physically move around on a tabletop). Label the map as noted in Figure 1.7. In each radiating circle, fill in the information regarding the rhetorical situation (that is, the agents and the five conditions: genre, purpose, stance, context, and culture) in relation to your chosen text. As you assess the rhetorical situation, you will further your understanding of the text, and you may begin to find areas for analysis or evaluation.

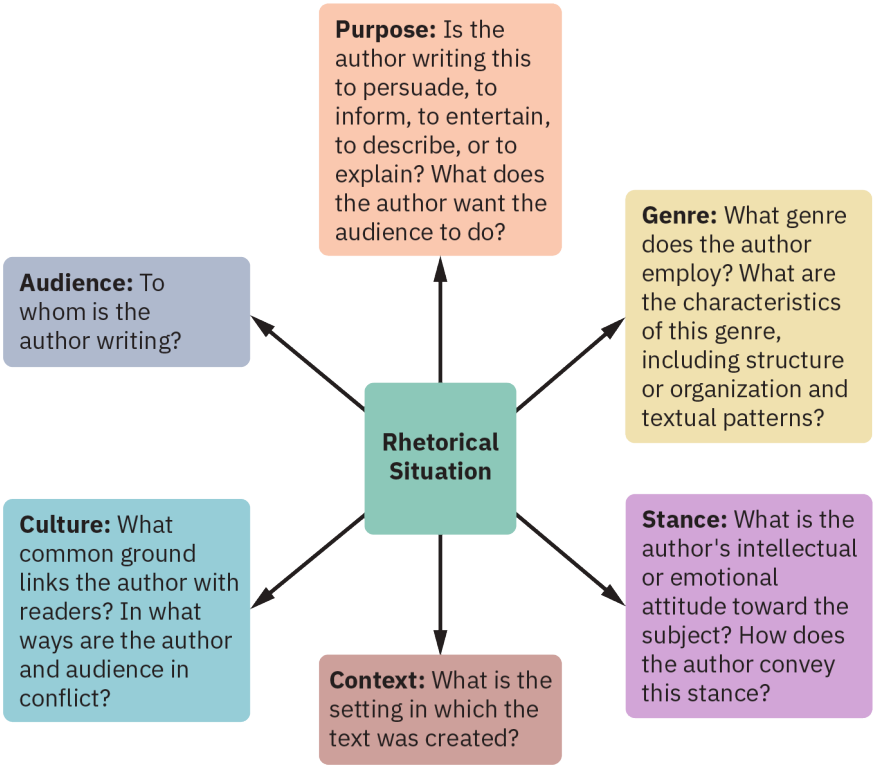



**FIGURE 1.7** Concept map (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

## Drafting: Restating, Analyzing, and Evaluating

To restate and then respond to a text, you need to both reread and "resee" it, reconsidering its rhetorical situation and your reaction to it. Be sure that you grasp the main ideas within the text but move beyond that to a critical understanding of the text as a cultural artifact. In responding, you start a conversation with the text so that you enter into the framework and context of the communication. In general, when responding to a text, you have to

- understand what it means within its rhetorical situation;
- analyze its meaning;
- evaluate its significance; and
- determine how to incorporate it into your own thinking and writing.

### Responding to Understand: Summary

A summary is a condensed version of a longer text that reviews its main ideas. Shorter than the original text, a summary is written in your own words. To prepare a summary, you may outline or annotate the text to

highlight relationships between ideas or conclusions. Reread sections of the text such as abstracts, first and last paragraphs, and sections titled "Summary," "Observations," or "Conclusion(s)." Also consider headings, subheadings, and visuals, all of which often name main ideas. Remember, you want to provide a summary in your own words of the source's work, not your interpretation or opinion of it. Review this video on summarizing (https://openstax.org/r/summarizing) for more information.

### Responding to Clarify: Paraphrase

A paraphrase is a restatement of a text or part of a text, written in your own words, to clarify its meaning for your readers. A paraphrase is usually about the same length as the original text, although it can be either longer or shorter. Your goal in paraphrasing is to provide readers with clarity about a complex idea while still maintaining the perspective of the source. Paraphrasing can be difficult and requires practice, so be sure to review (https://openstax.org/r/review).

### Responding to Analyze

Responding to analyze means moving beyond a basic understanding and appreciation of what the text *says* and examining it to see how it was put together in order to deepen your comprehension. From thorough analysis, you can arrive at your own theory regarding what the text *means.* Thus, analysis leads to interpretation and to evaluation, or judgment of its merits.

In responding to analyze, consider the following questions: *How has the author constructed this text? What is the author's subject, tone, and message or theme? For what reason or purpose has the author constructed this text in this way at this time?* An analysis provides an understanding of the ways in which the parts of the text form a whole within a rhetorical situation. Any such response points to important ideas and makes connections to provide textual evidence to support the analysis.

To read a text analytically, mark it for

- points of agreement and disagreement with claims or assertions;
- convincing examples that support claims or assertions;
- implications or consequences of believing the author;
- personal associations with text material;
- connections to other "texts" you have read;
- recurring images, symbols, diction, phrases, ideas, and so on; and
- conclusions.

Consider developing a coding system for cross-referencing to show that one annotation, passage, or idea is related to another. Some students write comments on different features of the text in different colors, such as green for nature imagery, blue for key terms, red for interesting anecdotes, and so on. Other students use numbers, such as 1 for plot, 2 for character, and so on.

Visit Walden University (https://openstax.org/r/WaldenUniversity) for more detail on including analysis in your writing. You can also refer to Rhetorical Analysis: Interpreting the Art of Rhetoric for more on rhetorical analysis and Print or Textual Analysis: What You Read for more on print or textual analysis.

### Responding to Evaluate

Responding to evaluate means deciding whether you think the text accomplishes its purposes effectively. *In other words, does the text do what it claims to do?* You can also determine the significance of the text and its implications. Of course, different genres of texts should be judged using different criteria. To evaluate a text, you need to understand and analyze it in order to support your judgments.

In an **argument**, a writer (or speaker) advances claims and supports them with logical reasoning and evidence. A **claim** is a statement that something is true (or valid) or that some action should be taken. Every claim in an argument should be supported by logical **reasoning** (e.g., cause and effect, comparison and

contrast, or problem and solution) and by reliable and sufficient **evidence** (e.g., facts, statistics, anecdotes, examples, or quotations). When responding to an argument, ask the following questions: *Is the claim based on presented facts—information that can be verified? Is the claim based on credible inferences—connections between textual evidence and personal knowledge or experience? Is the claim based on unsubstantiated opinions—personal belief?* All three elements—facts, inferences, and opinions—have their places in argumentative texts. However, the strongest arguments are those based on verifiable facts and reasonably drawn inferences. Look out for opinions masquerading as facts and for inferences stemming from insufficient facts. Refer to the social media exchange in the Annotated Student Sample and recognize how those posts present information to help you see these connections.

An **informational text** presents facts and draws conclusions based on those facts. When responding to an informational text, ensure that the facts are accurate, that the inferences rely on facts, and that opinions presented as evidence are based on expertise, not emotion. Decide whether the author presents enough reliable facts to justify the conclusions. In addition, consider whether the author is reliable and reasonable. Also, ask questions, such as *Is the tone objective? Has all the relevant information been presented? Is the author an expert in the field? What necessary or useful information seems missing? Are other perspectives missing?*

To understand an informational text, you need some context for the new ideas you encounter, some knowledge of the terms and ideas, and knowledge of the rules that govern the genre. If would be difficult to read the Emancipation Proclamation with no knowledge of the Civil War (1861–1865) or the practice of enslavement. It would also be difficult to read a biology textbook chapter about photosynthesis but know nothing of plants, cell structure, or chemical reactions. The more you know, the more you learn; the more you learn, the more critical your reading, writing, and thinking will be. As you gain knowledge, you will naturally ask more questions and make more connections or bridges between information sources, thereby enhancing your reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.

Many college instructors will ask you to read about subjects that are new to you. First, of course, it's important to understand what you read. Comprehension means being proactive as a reader: looking up words you do not know, taking meaningful notes, asking questions, understanding the rhetorical situation of the text, and so on. Second, you want to improve your skills to analyze or evaluate texts critically and write about this understanding. *However, how do you develop context, learn background, and find the rules to help you read unfamiliar texts on unfamiliar subjects? What strategies or shortcuts can speed up the learning process?*

As an experiment, read the following statement issued by President Harry S. Truman (1884–1972), take notes, and practice being a proactive reader who focuses on comprehension, the rhetorical situation, and critical analysis of the passage:



**FIGURE 1.8** Harry S. Truman (credit: "Portrait of President Harry S. Truman" by National Archives and Records Administration/Public Domain)

> Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, and destroyed its usefulness to the enemy. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of T.N.T. It had more than two thousand times the blast power of the British Grand Slam, which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare.

*How did you do? Did your reasoning go something like this?*

- Noting the setting—Hiroshima, Japan. Prior historical knowledge suggests that Hiroshima is one of the cities on which the United States dropped an atomic bomb near the end of World War II (1939–1945).
- Staying with the first sentence, Truman focuses on Hiroshima as something useful to the enemy that has been destroyed. There is no mention of human casualties.
- The second sentence focuses on the destructive power of the bomb, suggesting the force of the United States's arsenal.
- Out of curiosity, you might have looked up the British Grand Slam to learn it was a powerful bomb type developed by engineer and inventor Sir Barnes Wallis (1887–1979) and used during World War II. Here, too, Truman suggests that the United States is even more powerful than its ally Great Britain.
- The tone of the text is prideful, as if using the largest bomb in the history of warfare is a grand accomplishment.

Whether reading new texts, learning new information, or witnessing unfamiliar events, you usually draw meaning by following a process something like this one—trying to identify what you see, hear, or read; questioning what you do not understand; making and testing predictions; and consulting authorities for confirmation or credible information. In this way, comprehension leads to critical analysis, understanding, and evaluation.

You will encounter different text types, too. Authors of **literary texts** such as short stories, poems, and plays may strive to make their work believable, enjoyable, and effective in conveying their themes. To locate a **theme**, look for recurring language, ideas, or images. Consider how the characters change between the beginning and the end of the story. Then, consider whether the author's choices effectively convey the theme.

The strongest responses to literature or other art forms are based on textual evidence, as in most academic writing. Visit Colorado State University (https://openstax.org/r/Colorado_State_University) for more insight into evaluation.

You also can refer to Evaluation or Review: Would You Recommend It? for more on evaluation or review and Print or Textual Analysis: What You Read for more direction in approaching narrative texts.

### Responding to Write

Once you understand a text, examine it more slowly to analyze and evaluate its cultural assumptions, its arguments, its evidence, its logic, and its conclusions. The best way to do this is to respond, or "talk back," to the text in writing. Again, pay attention to the rhetorical situation: the agents and conditions. Talking back can take various forms, from actually saying words to yourself or aloud, to making margin notes, to composing a critical response. Respond to passages that cause you to pause for a moment to reflect, to question, to read again, or to say "Ah!" or "Aha!" Your reactions may suggest something important, maybe a revelation or an insight. Whichever it may be, take note of it because you may not have that reaction on another reading.

If the text is informational, try to capture the statements that are repeated or that pull together or summarize ideas. These are often critical elements to understand and possibly evaluate later. If the text is argumentative, examine the claim, reasoning, and each piece of supporting evidence. You can always go back to examine evidence or look up sources the author used when you want to gain a better understanding of the text's purpose and position in a larger conversation. If the text is literary, pay extra attention to language features, such as images, metaphors, and crisp dialogue. Often, authors use these elements to help create a character, such as a character that always says "ya know" after every sentence, thus making a character more individual and realistic.

Basically, you want to note what's happening to you as you read. Ask about the text's effect on you. *How are you reacting? What are you thinking or feeling? What do you like? What do you dislike? What do you trust or distrust? Why?* These responses are useful especially if the information is new or unexpected. By noting them, you will be able to build your understanding and convey that to readers. Part of the goal as a writer is to take the connections and bridges you have made and provide them for *your* readers to help them follow the logic of those connections.

Responding to a text in writing also means locating specific evidence to quote, paraphrase, or summarize in support of your analysis or evaluation. When you quote, you use the exact language of the text; when you summarize, you reduce the text to a brief statement of its main ideas in your own words; when you paraphrase, you restate the text in your own words. In all these cases—quotation, summary, or paraphrase—you will need to cite or reference the original source. Proper and consistent citation is important for several reasons. It helps establish your authority, thus building your credibility with readers. It also allows readers to go to your sources for more details or specifics so that they, too, can take part in the conversation. And it shows you are crediting your sources, thus avoiding plagiarism. To learn more about source citation, consult MLA Documentation and Format or APA Documentation and Format.

Use this media interactive to practice identifying the different ways in which readers respond to texts. Then, examine the annotated professional critical response model below.

Access multimedia content (http://openstax.org/books/writing-guide/pages/1-5-writing-process-thinking-critically-about-a-text)

### Critical Response: An Annotated Model

#### The Case of Jean Gianini

In 1914, in the village of Poland, New York, sixteen-year-old Jean Gianini murdered his former teacher Lydia Beecher. During the commission of this brutal murder, Gianini provided evidence that tied him to the murder through a lost a button at the crime scene. Upon arrest, Gianini confessed to the crime. At the trial, Gianni's

defense lawyers claimed that Gianini was legally insane during the commission of his crime. Psychologist Dr. Henry Herbert Goddard was called to testify as an expert witness.

Here, as the author, Henry Herbert Goddard *(1866–1957)*, analyzes *"The Case of Jean Gianini" (1915).* The selection that follows demonstrates a framework and an example of a critical response to a text. It has been excerpted for clarity and space.

**Introduction**

In the introduction to his critical response, Goddard includes the title of the work and a summary of the rhetorical situation. He ends the introduction with a statement of evaluation.

> "We find the defendant in this case not guilty as charged . . ."

> Such was the verdict by the jury of the Supreme Court of Herkimer County, New York, on May 28th, 1914, in the case of the people *vs.* Jean Gianini, indicted for the murder of Lida Beecher, his former teacher.

*Here, the author cites the title of the text—a court case—and provides some early context.*

> The prosecution and, at first at least, the majority of the citizens of the community held that this had been a carefully planned, premeditated, cold-blooded murder of the most atrocious character, committed with a fiendishness seldom seen among human beings. It was, on the other hand, claimed by the defense that the boy . . . had only the intelligence of a ten-year-old child, that he did not know the nature and quality of his act, and that he did not have any true realization of the enormity of his crime. For some reason unaccountable to a great many people, the jury accepted the view of the defense.

*Here, the author provides elements of the rhetorical situation: culture, context, and stance. Shared cultural assumptions are that the guilty will be punished. Contextual details of the trial include a summary of the defense and the jury's reaction. The phrase "unaccountable to a great many people" may suggest that the author does not agree with the jury's "not guilty" verdict.*

> Not infrequently have verdicts in murder trials been unacceptable to the populace. In that respect this verdict is not an exceptional one, but from other standpoints it is remarkable. Probably no verdict in modern times has marked so great a step forward in society's treatment of the wrongdoer. For the first time in history psychological tests of intelligence have been admitted into court and the mentality of the accused established on the basis of these facts.

> The value of this verdict cannot be overestimated. It establishes a new standard in criminal procedure.

*Here, the author offers commentary about the larger meaning of this case, historically. In addition, the author concludes with a statement of evaluation—the importance of the verdict to the administration of justice.*

**Body**

The next several body paragraphs provide Goddard with the opportunity to offer the reasons behind his evaluation. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence to maintain focus and organization. For each reason offered, explanation of its importance and supporting evidence from the text through quotations, summaries, or paraphrases should follow. See MLA Documentation and Format or APA Documentation and Format for guidance on citation.

> One of the unique features, so far as court procedure is concerned, was the introduction into the case, of examinations by means of the Binet-Simon Measuring Scale of Intelligence.

*In this passage, the author gives one reason to support both his and the jury's assessment of Jean's intelligence—an intelligence test. Moreover, it is presented as a new scientific tool, which it was in 1915, to help establish the case.*

> The writer's examination of Jean consisted largely of the use of these tests, and as a result he estimated his mentality at approximately ten years of age. It was somewhat difficult to estimate his mentality with the usual exactness since others had already used the tests, and it was impossible to say how much Jean had learned from his previous examinations. As a matter of fact, in some cases at least, he had not profited by the experiences which should have helped him greatly [. . .] For example, one of the tests is to draw from memory a diagram which he has been allowed to study for ten seconds. It is clear that if one were given this test two or three times, at the last trial he should have a pretty good idea of it and be able to draw it correctly. Although the writer's use of this test was in the last of the series of those who tested him, yet he did not succeed in drawing it. This is usually drawn by a child of ten years. When asked to repeat a certain sentence, he replied, "Oh, I have been asked that a hundred times." But in spite of the fact that he had heard it several times he failed to remember it, and yet this sentence is generally remembered by a child of twelve.

*Here, the author introduces evidence from the test through summary. Yet, he employs some faulty cause-and-effect reasoning. Based on Jean's response to repeating a sentence, is it possible that he refuses to participate in the tests rather than that he is unable to produce the desired responses? By not considering alternative conclusions (or perspectives), the author shows a bias against Jean and favoritism toward the test and the conclusion he draws from it.*

**Conclusion**

To conclude, Goddard shares with readers his final thoughts about the text and leaves the readers with something to think about.

> Our general studies have not yet gone far enough, and certainly our study of this particular family is far from sufficient, to enable us to decide whether this is a matter of heredity or whether we shall say that Jean's condition as well as that of the first child is traceable directly to the mother's insanity or to her alcoholism.

> For the present purpose, of course, it does not matter. We see in these facts, whether we regard them as causes or merely as symptoms of a deeper lying cause, sufficient reason for Jean's [intellectual condition. [. . .] The next important question that arises is a legal one of whether [. . .] he knew the nature and quality of his act and that it was wrong.

*Finally, the author introduces subsequent (and maybe distracting) information. Additionally, the author concedes to the popular assessment of Jean's mental condition, but he raises a legal question that prompts readers to continue thinking: Does one's intellectual capacity excuse one from criminal culpability?*

Now, it is your turn to put this knowledge to work. Use a graphic organizer like Table 1.1 to get started drafting your ideas in response to your chosen text.

| Structure of Response | Content of Response | Your Response |
|---|---|---|
| Introduction | Author<br>Title of Work<br>Summary of rhetorical situation<br>Statement of analysis or evaluation | |
| Body 1 | Point 1 of analysis or evaluation<br>Evidence from text in form of quotation, summary, or paraphrase | |

**TABLE 1.1** Drafting frame

| Structure of Response | Content of Response | Your Response |
|---|---|---|
| Body 2 | Point 2 of analysis or evaluation<br>Evidence from text in form of quotation, summary, or paraphrase | |
| Body 3 | Point 3 of analysis or evaluation<br>Evidence from text in form of quotation, summary, or paraphrase | |
| Body 4 (if needed) | Point 4 of analysis or evaluation<br>Evidence from text in form of quotation, summary, or paraphrase | |
| Body 5 (if needed) | Point 5 of analysis or evaluation<br>Evidence from text in form of quotation, summary, or paraphrase | |
| Conclusion | Final conclusions regarding analysis or evaluation<br>Leave readers thinking or suggest action | |

**TABLE 1.1** Drafting frame

In addition, use these sentence starters as needed during drafting:

**Summary**:

[Name of author] explains _____.

After discussing _____, the author claims _____.

[Author's name]'s main point is _____.

**Paraphrase:**

In other words, the author is saying that _____.

To paraphrase, the author claims that _____.

To simplify this idea, think about it in this way: _____.

**Analysis**:

[Name of author] develops _____ to show _____.

The author's use of _____ supports _____.

The author employs _____ to create _____.

**Evaluation**:

The most important aspect of this text is _____ because _____.

[Name of author] fails to address _____ and _____, which makes me think about the impact on _____.

I think [name of author] is wrong [or correct] because _____.

**Evidence:**

As an example, the author says, "_____." *(Be sure to provide accurate citation!)*

The sentence "_____" suggests that _____.

The use of the word "_____" creates the impression that _____.

As often as possible, use the author's name rather than a pronoun. The first time you mention it, write the full name as it is listed on the source you are using. Then, use the last name only, and be certain to cite properly. Finally, edit and revise your work to catch any oversights.

## 1.6 Evaluation: Intention vs. Execution

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Distinguish variations in genre conventions.
- Differentiate between intention and execution with regard to intended meaning.
- Articulate how rubrics provide insight into the final outcomes of an assignment.

When you write, you try to convert what is in your mind into words on paper or on a screen. Because you are writing for others, your thoughts must be understandable to them. Have you ever said, "I know what I *mean*; I just don't know how to say it"? Your **intention** is what you mean, and your **execution** is how you say it. Sometimes, however, intention and execution don't convey the same thing. When this gap occurs, your intention needs some focus so that you can execute.

Rubrics help you direct your prewriting and drafting to fulfill the criteria of an assignment. In basic terms, a rubric provides a guide for drafting and evaluating a paper (or other project). More important, it helps you understand your intention and process it into execution. At times, having an idea of how a work will be evaluated is useful so that you can address the elements of the rubric as you draft and revise. Nevertheless, you should understand that any rubric will not cover every aspect of a given assignment. You also will need to consider other factors while drafting. In addition, rubrics may be based on conventions already discussed in class or a previous reading. For example, part of the following rubric is "analyzing and evaluating the text." If you do not know what these terms mean or how to analyze or evaluate the text, having such criteria is useless. In other words, to be able to analyze and evaluate a text, you need to know *how to analyze and evaluate a text*. This observation brings you back to the rhetorical situation and the other important elements of this chapter. So be sure to review, take meaningful notes, and understand what you will need to do. Once you are ready, use this rubric to evaluate the chapter's assigned writing task.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the task as discussed in Section 1.5: summarizing, paraphrasing, explaining, analyzing, and evaluating a reading selection. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The written work consistently features clear and coherent language that allows readers to move seamlessly from section to section with clearly linked concepts and transitions. The writing is consistently focused on the topic. | Each aspect of the rhetorical situation is clearly identifiable, presented clearly, and understood. The language is perfectly suited to the writer's purpose and audience. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the task as discussed in Section 1.5: summarizing, paraphrasing, explaining, analyzing, and evaluating a reading selection. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writing usually provides clear and coherent language that allows readers to move easily from section to section with linked concepts and transitions. The writing is mostly focused on the topic. | Most aspects of the rhetorical situation are identifiable, presented clearly, and understood. Language is generally suited to the writer's purpose and audience. |
| **3**<br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the task as discussed in Section 1.5: summarizing, paraphrasing, explaining, analyzing, and evaluating a reading selection. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writing provides general awareness of clear and coherent language and sometimes allows readers to move from section to section with basic linking of concepts and meaningful transitions. The writing may show a lack of focus on the topic. | Some aspects of the rhetorical situation are identifiable, presented, and partly understood. Language is sometimes unsuited to the writer's purpose and audience. |

**TABLE 1.2**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the task as discussed in Section 1.5: summarizing, paraphrasing, explaining, analyzing, and evaluating a reading selection. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writing provides minimal attention to clear and coherent language and does not adequately allow readers to move from section to section through the use of linked concepts or transitions. The writing is often unfocused. | One aspect of the rhetorical situation is identifiable and presented and is partially or minimally understood. Language is mostly unsuited to the writer's purpose and audience. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the task as discussed in Section 1.5: summarizing, paraphrasing, explaining, analyzing, and evaluating a reading selection. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writing reflects minimal or no attention to clear and coherent language and may hinder readers in moving from section to section. Transitions are either missing or incorrect. The writing is unfocused. | No aspect of the rhetorical situation is identifiable, presented, or understood. Language is unsuited to the writer's purpose and audience. |

**TABLE 1.2**

## 1.7 Spotlight on … Academia

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Determine how various mediums address, affect, and interact with a range of audiences.
- Examine the importance of your college experience and larger impact on society.
- Write and post texts in different environments and in varying rhetorical situations.

### The Role of the Classroom in This Brave New World

The term ***academia*** refers to "the life, community, or environment of teachers, schools, and education." With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the world of academia was challenged. There were logistical challenges, of course: *How would students and teachers attend classes and remain safe? In what ways could digital learning replace classroom learning effectively?* But there were deeper philosophical challenges: *What is the real value of a traditional college education in a world that is seemingly on the brink of one crisis after another? Would the classroom become something of value, leading the way in this brave new world, or would it become obsolete?* While some students chose not to return to their classrooms in the fall of 2020, others either returned or logged on virtually. Whichever way students decided to engage, the larger purpose of college was challenged.

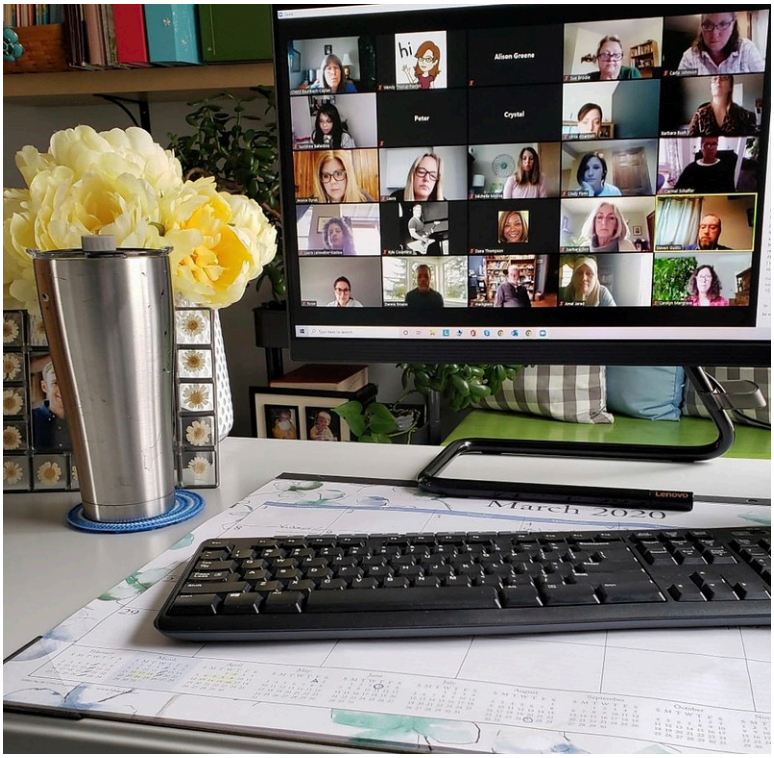



**FIGURE 1.9** Students in a virtual classroom during the 2020 pandemic (credit: "Chaps Work From Home 31" by COD Newsroom/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

At its best, the college experience is one of personal transformation. The student embarks on a journey of empowerment, learning to understand the world around them, then to participate in it, and finally to influence it. It is a journey from understanding to analysis and from evaluation to problem-solving. The final awarding of a degree calls a student to action. *What will you do with the newly gained knowledge and practiced skill sets? How will you make an impact the world in positive ways? Will you develop the vaccine for the next health threat? Will you address centuries of racial injustice in ways never before attempted? What unique contribution can only you make at this time and in this place?* The question is not really whether the college classroom has a role to play in this world, but whether it will rise above outdated traditions to the level of impactful engagement. One thing is certain, however; the answer starts with you and the publication of your ideas.

## Authentic Publication

To practice your knowledge and use some of the tools in your growing skill set, do this short activity. If you have a social media account, use it to bridge social media and academia by publishing a version of your critical response that meets the characteristics of the platform, likely by reducing the character count or posting a video. First, summarize or paraphrase your main points. Research a link you might include to provide readers with background information and a larger context of your rhetorical situation. Next, create a post that asks an honest, analytical, or evaluative question about the topic. In determining your phrasing, assess the rhetorical situation. If you can, tag a few of your followers to encourage them to respond. You might even mention that this is part of a school project or add a hashtag—a word or phrase preceded by # that categorizes the accompanying text. If you are on multiple platforms, try different versions or approaches to see which one generates the most attention and discussion.

As a result, you might learn something compelling or find your interest piqued by engaging with others. Maybe you can even incorporate what you learn into your portfolio reflection, which is covered at the end of this chapter. Remember, part of the goal of writing is learning. Writing helps you solidify what you are thinking, what it might mean, why it matters, how to say it, and how to communicate it to others. Using various media to

convey information will continue to be an essential element of your education and your life, so be sure to practice it.

## 1.8 Portfolio: Tracing Writing Development

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Reflect on the development of composing processes.
- Reflect on how those composing processes affect your work.



**FIGURE 1.10** (credit: "Carbon fiber keyboard" by H. Sterling Cross/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

### The Portfolio: And So It Begins . . .

In simplest terms, a writing portfolio is a collection of your writing contained within a single binder or folder. This writing may have been done over a number of weeks, months, or even years. It may be organized chronologically, thematically, or according to quality. A private writing portfolio may contain writing that you wish to keep only for yourself. In this case, you decide what is in it and what it looks like. However, a writing portfolio assigned for a class will contain writing to be shared with an audience to demonstrate the growth of your writing and reasoning abilities. One kind of writing portfolio, accumulated during a college course, presents a record of your work over a semester, and your instructor may be use it to assign a grade. Another type of portfolio presents a condensed, edited story of your semester's progress in a more narrative form.

The most common type of portfolio assigned in a writing course combines the cumulative work collected over the semester, plus a cover letter in which you explain the nature and value of these papers. Sometimes you will be asked to assign yourself a grade on the basis of your own assessment. The following suggestions may help you prepare a course portfolio:

- **Make your portfolio speak for you.** If your course portfolio is clean, complete, and carefully organized, that is how it will be judged. If it is unique, colorful, creative, and imaginative, that, too, is how it will be judged. Similarly, your folder will be judged more critically if it is messy, incomplete, and haphazardly put together. Before giving your portfolio to somebody else for evaluation, consider whether it reflects how you want to be presented.
- **Include exactly what is asked for.** If an instructor wants three finished papers and a dozen sample journal entries, that is the minimum your course portfolio should contain. Sometimes you can include more than what is asked for, but never include less.
- **Add supplemental material judiciously.** Course portfolios are among the most flexible means of presenting yourself. If you believe that supplemental writing will show you in a better light, include that

too, but only after the required material. If you include extra material, attach a memo to explain why it is there and what you think it adds to your portfolio. Supplemental writing might include journals, letters, sketches, or diagrams that suggest other useful dimensions of your thinking.

- **Include *perfect* final drafts.** At least make them as close to perfect as you can. Show that your own standard for finished work is high. Check spelling, grammar, citation, formatting, and font sizes and types. You should go over your work carefully and be able to find the smallest errors. In addition, if you are asked for a hard copy of your portfolio, final drafts should be double-spaced and printed on only one side of high-quality paper, unless another format is requested. And, of course, your work should be carefully proofread and should follow the language and genre conventions appropriate to the task.
- **Demonstrate growth.** This is a tall order, but course portfolios, unlike most other assessment instruments, can show positive change. The primary value of portfolios in writing classes is that they allow you to demonstrate how a finished paper came into being. Consequently, instructors frequently ask for early drafts to be attached to final drafts of each paper, the most recent on top, so they can see how you followed revision suggestions, how much effort you invested, how many drafts you wrote, and how often you took risks and tried to improve. To build such a record of your work, make sure the date of every draft is clearly marked on each one, and keep it in a safe place (and backed up electronically).
- **Demonstrate work in progress.** Course portfolios allow writers to present partially finished work that suggests future directions and intentions. Both instructors and potential employers may find such preliminary drafts or outlines as valuable as some of your finished work. When you include a tentative draft, be sure to attach a memo or note explaining why you still believe it has merit and in which direction you plan to take your next revisions.
- **Attach a table of contents.** For portfolios containing more than three papers, attach a separate table of contents. For those containing only a few papers, embed your table of contents in the cover letter.
- **Organize your work using clear logic.** Three methods of organization are particularly appealing:
  - **Chronological order:** Writing is arranged in order, beginning with the first week of class and ending with the last week, with all drafts, papers, journal entries, letters, and such fitting in place according to the date written. Only the cover letter is out of chronological order, appearing at the beginning and serving as an introduction to what follows. This method allows you to show the evolution of growth most clearly, with your latest writing (presumably the best) presented at the end.
  - **Reverse chronological order:** The most recent writing is up front, and the earliest writing at the back. In this instance, the most recent written document—the cover letter—is in place at the beginning of the portfolio. This method features your latest (presumably the best) work up front and allows readers to trace the history of how it got there.
  - **Best-first order:** You place your strongest writing up front and your weakest in back. Organizing a portfolio this way suggests that the work *you* consider strongest should count most heavily in evaluating the semester's work.

With each completed chapter in this textbook, you will add to this portfolio. As you work through the chapters and complete the assignments, save each one on your computer or in the cloud, unless your instructor asks you to print your work and arrange it in a binder. Each assignment becomes an artifact that will form a piece of your portfolio. Depending on your preference or your instructor's approach, you may write a little about each assignment as you add to the portfolio. As you compile your portfolio, take some time to read the assignments—drafts and finished products—carefully. Undoubtedly, you will see improvement in your writing over a short amount of time. Be sure to make note of this improvement because it will prove useful moving forward.

### Reflective Task: The Freedom of Freewriting



As you begin your portfolio with the addition of your critical response, compose an accompanying freewrite, sometimes called a quick write. In this case, you will be responding to your own text—a powerful tool in your intellectual development. To begin, write quickly and without stopping about the process of composing your

critical response and the finished product. See where your thoughts go, a process that often helps you clarify your own thoughts about the subject—your own text and its creation. When you freewrite, write to yourself in your own natural style, without worrying about sentence structure, grammar, spelling, or punctuation. The purpose is to help you tie together the ideas from your writing process, your assignment, and other thoughts and experiences in your mind. One future value of freewriting is that the process tends to generate questions at random, capture them, and leave the answering for a later task or assignment. Another bonus of freewriting is that you will build confidence with writing and become more disciplined when you have to write. In other words, the more you write, the more confidence you will have in your voice and your writing.

By now you may have realized that writing, whether on social media platforms or in the classroom, is a conversation. The conversation may take place with yourself (freewriting), with your instructor and classmates (assignment), or with the world (social media). You have learned how people like Selena Gomez and others use simple and effective strategies, such as vulnerability, understanding, analysis, and evaluation, to engage in such conversations. Now adopt these same processes—try them on for size, practice them, and learn to master them. As you move through the remainder of this course and text, compose with intention by keeping in mind the limits and freedoms of a particular defined rhetorical situation.

## Further Reading

It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with texts of evaluation and analysis. Below, you will find a few titles with which to start.

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# Language, Identity, and Culture: Exploring, Employing, Embracing

# 2



**FIGURE 2.1** In a 19th-century lithograph, Cherokee leader Sequoyah, unable to read or write, is shown with a table depicting the writing system he created for his native Cherokee language. His invention of the Cherokee syllabary, a collection of symbols representing the syllables of the spoken language, would provide a divided Cherokee nation with a way to communicate and thus create a sense of identity and unity. (credit: "Sequoyah" by Lehman and Duval/ Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**2.1** Seeds of Self
**2.2** Identity Trailblazer: Cathy Park Hong
**2.3** Glance at the Issues: Oppression and Reclamation
**2.4** Annotated Sample Reading from The Souls of Black Folk by W. E. B. Du Bois
**2.5** Writing Process: Thinking Critically about How Identity Is Constructed Through Writing
**2.6** Evaluation: Antiracism and Inclusivity
**2.7** Spotlight on ... Variations of English
**2.8** Portfolio: Decolonizing Self


**INTRODUCTION** Based on his dealings with white people who could read and write, Sequoyah (c. 1775–1843), a Cherokee leader, believed that power resulted from the ability to share knowledge. A written language comprehensible and accessible to the Cherokee people could be far more effective in preserving their culture than relying on memory or oral tradition. Hoping to unite and strengthen the Cherokee politically after they were forced from their lands by the U.S. government, Sequoyah spent 10 years developing a method for his people to communicate in writing. His language system, based on written symbols representing syllables spoken in the Cherokee language, was treated skeptically at first but was later adopted and used in Cherokee newspapers, official documents, and descriptions of rituals and medicines.

Although the use of the Cherokee language eventually gave way to English, Sequoyah remained true to all aspects of Cherokee culture. He spoke only Cherokee, wore the clothing of his people, and followed Cherokee religious customs, refusing to assimilate in any way. As evidenced by Sequoyah's ideas about communication, language, writing, and culture are clearly linked. Although Sequoyah had political purposes in mind, a common language is an important element of shared culture and goes further in developing a sense of cultural identity than what Sequoyah may have envisioned at the time.

While all humans have the same basic needs—food, water, shelter, affection, and a sense of belonging—cultural identity is shaped by family, upbringing, language, and geographical location. You may have grown up in a small town, in a large city, or in the suburbs; you may have been raised with siblings and may have attended church; you may speak more than one language. You may be single, married, or dating; you may drive a car, SUV, or truck. All your lived experiences have shaped who you are today. **Identity** is the word that encompasses all the parts of yourself that make you who you are. For example, if you were to respond to all of the scenarios presented in the sentences above, your answers would collectively make up at least some of your identity.

Having a variety of identities might result in both advantages and disadvantages associated with your lived experiences. Those advantages are called privileges, and the disadvantages **discrimination**. When you consider that people have multiple identities, also consider that these multiple identities lead to various points of **intersection** among lived experiences. The idea of **intersectionality**, then, helps you consider systems of privilege or discrimination projected onto people as a consequence of their identities.

Considering your own identity and position in the world, as well as the identities and positions of others, gives critical meaning to your personal and academic writing. Experiences make people who they are, teaching them how to move through the world and consider the effects their actions and words have on others.

In this chapter, you will explore the concept of cultural identity. *What kind of lived experiences have you had?* How have those experiences shaped and molded you? What experiences have others had, and how have those experiences shaped them?

Whenever you consider lived experiences, think about the contexts in which they occur, and the systems of communication used in those contexts. The word **culture** includes the expressions, customs, practices, and experiences that connect a person to other people in their present, past, and future. Who you are is closely connected to the cultures you inhabit and the ways in which you communicate. Among the more noticeable markers of your identities are the languages you speak. In this chapter, **language** is defined as a system of words used to communicate. Just as you likely have multiple identities, you likely speak varieties of languages as part of each of those identities.

The goal of this chapter in particular, and this text in general, is to help you think critically about language, culture, and identity in ways that make room for everyone's lived experiences. In this chapter, you will learn how authors use language to communicate their sense of cultural identity. You will read about Cathy Park Hong and W. E. B. Du Bois, activists who have used writing to explore identity and culture. You will examine your own culture as well as your personal, unconscious bias, reflecting on both of these aspects of identity to increase your understanding of the world.

## 2.1 Seeds of Self

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the importance of communication in various cultural, language-related, and rhetorical situations.
- Articulate how language use can promote social justice and equality.



Between 1870 and 1900, nearly 12 million immigrants arrived in the United States, many through Ellis Island. Many sought relief from religious and political persecution; others were skilled workers in search of jobs. Once

in the United States, many immigrants faced difficulties adjusting to the demands of life in a new country, including the challenges of learning a new language and new customs. They moved into neighborhoods where others from the same country already resided. There, they lived among those who knew their language and customs, ate familiar food, and participated in cultural practices handed down by their ancestors. Living in immigrant communities reminded people of their home countries and kept their cultures alive.

## Understanding Culture

Culture includes observable aspects, such as the religion and language of a group of people, as well as intangible aspects, such as shared preferences, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, in Black women's natural hair culture, wash day practices might be prescribed and may involve assistance from other members of the group, whether family or friends. This community has a shared vocabulary of hair types labeled from 1 to 4 for curl type and A to C for curl diameter, as well as steps such as *detangle* and *lift* and styling techniques such as *twist out*, *braid out*, *wash and go*, and *updo*. These terms evolved from Black women's shared experiences. Likewise, in Hispanic culture, the *quinceañera* is a custom and rite of passage for 15-year-old girls. The elaborate celebration is attended by the girl's extended family and recognized by the cultural community at large. Participation in regular daily practices, such as Black women's natural hair culture, and once-in-a-lifetime celebrations, such as the *quinceañera*, can contribute to a person's culture and sense of identity.

The iceberg is often used as a metaphor for culture. The top of the iceberg, visible to all, is much smaller than the part hidden below the water. So it is with culture. The less obvious parts of culture can sometimes be "hidden" from observers. This lack of knowledge can make understanding cultures other than your own more difficult because these hidden parts are more challenging to recognize or understand.

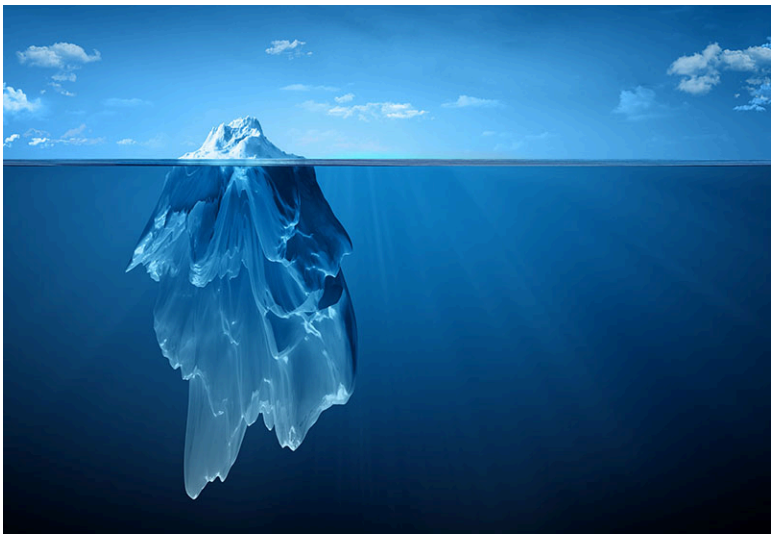


**FIGURE 2.2** Icebergs often serve as a metaphor for the aspects of culture that seem "hidden" or invisible. Notice how only part of the iceberg is visible above the water. (credit: "iceberg" by Ce?sar Henrique de Santis Nascimento/ flickr, Public Domain)

Within a culture, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are both taught explicitly and learned implicitly. Think back for a moment to your high school days. You may have attended a freshman orientation that included a tour of the building, a summary of school rules, and an overview of the school schedule. This orientation was the beginning of your cultural understanding of the school and your role in it. But as you began attending regularly, you probably learned other, often unspoken cultural traditions and norms—perhaps ninth graders were expected to sit in a certain part of the cafeteria, for example. All cultures teach in similar ways. This conscious and unconscious learning process develops beliefs and attitudes that you come to view as valid. You then express these beliefs through your actions and teach them to other members.

Culture is not static; it changes and grows dynamically in response to any number of variables. Some aspects are difficult to interpret, particularly language. In fact, culture plays a significant role in the use of language. Not only does it affect *what* is said, but culture also affects *how* it is said (including tone). Different aspects of culture can be interpreted differently by various groups, making language among the most challenging aspects of culture.

## Situating Self

Attending college and participating in academic traditions are now a part of your identity. This new environment not only welcomes the traditions you bring with you but also will teach you new ones, thereby broadening your view of culture and the world. In this new cultural environment, you may struggle to find your place. Embrace this struggle because it is a sign of personal growth and development. What is important to note is that even though you may struggle to situate yourself in this new environment, nothing should prevent the self you bring with you to college from finding its proper place. In other words, you do not need to lose who you are to become who you will be. Former First Lady Michelle Obama (b. 1964) writes in her book *Becoming* (2018) that your personal story "is what you have, what you will always have. It is something to own." So make space in your understanding of yourself for the value that your cultural experiences provide to others in this new environment. By sharing yourself—your culture and identity—with peers and professors, you give them an opportunity to develop and grow. College or university is a place for you to have experiences that help you first figure out who you already are and then explore who you want to be. Allow these experiences to provide that opportunity.

A **cultural system** includes all parts of a culture that shape its members: its beliefs, traditions, and rituals. Self-awareness about your own culture includes an examination of who and what have influenced your perception of the world and how you experience it. This perception, often called a **cultural lens**, affects how you understand the world and will change as you form new experiences. For example, your religious culture may influence your beliefs. However, if challenged by a new cultural experience, those beliefs may be reinforced, shift, or change completely.

## Exploring Voice

One discovery that often comes out of a first-year college writing experience is finding your writing voice. When instructors talk about **voice** in writing, they are imagining a rhetorical mixture of these elements:

- **Vocabulary:** the words used to express your thoughts
- **Tone:** the attitude conveyed through your words
- **Viewpoint:** the position or perspective that comes through your writing
- **Syntax:** the order or arrangement of words

Because they provide innumerable possibilities, combinations of words, attitude, perspective, and word order will create a unique signature for your writing—one that expresses your identity as a writer.

Communication is a cornerstone of culture. It is the way people share experiences, build relationships, and develop community. Similarly, expressing communication through writing is a powerful way to share culture. Just as a person's body language reveals a deeper meaning behind their spoken language, so does a writer's voice provide deeper insight into their culture and identity.

# 2.2 Trailblazer

## Identity Trailblazer: Cathy Park Hong

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how authors weave identity into their compositions.
- Articulate how genre conventions are shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.

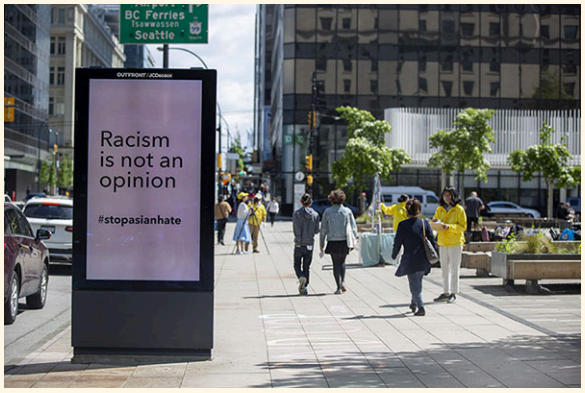



**FIGURE 2.3** Cathy Park Hong (https://openstax.org/r/cathyparkhong) writes about racism from the perspective of Asians and Asian Americans. (credit: "Racism is not an option" by GoToVan/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

*"Sometimes you need to explain your experiences in order to understand them yourself."*

### Fear: The Enemy Within

Cathy Park Hong (b. 1976) is an Asian American poet, writer, and educator committed to exploring living art. Born to Korean parents in Los Angeles, California, Hong studied at Oberlin College and at the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa, where she earned a master of fine arts degree. She has received numerous fellowships, including a Fulbright scholarship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, and a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship. Hong has taught at Sarah Lawrence College and Rutgers University and served as poetry editor for the *New Republic.*

In her work, Hong explores her search for identity as a first-generation Asian American, specifically her struggles with feeling alienated from Anglo-American culture. Hong's first publication, the book of poems *Translating Mo'um* (2002), examines the often tenuous challenges experienced by first-generation Americans, specifically regarding language. Her second book of poems, *Dance Dance Revolution: Poems* (2007), won the Barnard Women Poets Prize. The work incorporates the idea of "code switching," a technique in which people switch between languages or language forms, such as formal and colloquial.

Hong most recently published a collection of essays titled *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* (2020), a memoir that takes on the lens of cultural criticism. Writing from her personal experiences as an Asian American woman growing up and living in America, Hong delves into deeply painful and often unseen racial trauma experienced by Asians and Asian Americans. Published as anti-Asian hate crimes gained increasing national attention, Hong's essays help readers understand the curious place that Asian Americans inhabit in American race relations, where they are viewed as caricatures of the "model minority" and face

invisible racism.

The title of *Minor Feelings* comes from the word *han*, which Koreans use to describe emotions that include anger, melancholy, envy, and shame. Hong believes these same emotions are shared by minorities in America today. She expresses difficulty in using the pronoun *we* in her writing because of the diversity of Asian Americans. Yet she notes that what this diverse population has in common is that even as second- and third-generation Americans, Asian Americans find they still don't enjoy first-class status in American life in the same way that White Americans do. She proposes thinking of the label *Asian Americans* as "less of an identity, and more as a coalition" (Hong, "Why") in order to seek common ground with others who share similar experiences. Hong believes that one key is cross-cultural community building among Asian communities and between Asian, Black, Latina/Latino, and Indigenous communities.

Hong's poetry and essays also explore the racism she has experienced in the literary world, from graduate school to literary circles. Perhaps the most maddening part of those experiences, she notes, is that her perception of racism is constantly "questioned or dismissed" (Hong, *Minor* 55). Although writing about racial experiences was discouraged as "anti-academic" when she was a student, Hong has made a career of sharing these experiences through poetry and prose. She hopes that her work not only helps Asian Americans feel recognized and acknowledged but also encourages readers of all ethnicities to practice self-interrogation.

### Discussion Questions

1. Cathy Park Hong recalls not having an outlet to express the racism she experienced growing up. How has writing provided that outlet for her as an adult?
2. Race informs Hong's writing, though the academic circles she was a part of discouraged this. How can art and language be influenced by identity?
3. How has Hong's work helped her explore her own culture and provided a window for others to understand it?
4. The myth of the model minority isolates Asian Americans from other people of color. How does Hong's writing work to overcome this isolation?

## 2.3 Glance at the Issues: Oppression and Reclamation

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Articulate how language conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes.
- Define *oppression* and explain its effects.
- Define *inclusion* and summarize ways to write inclusively.

Writing about identity and culture gives authors the opportunity to share personal experiences and provides a vehicle for storytelling. This storytelling can turn into a purposeful message with meaningful rhetorical impact.

### What Is Oppression?

Some languages, cultures, and identities face discrimination. People often believe that for one group to advance, another must be held back. This suppression of growth, advancement, economic development, and educational opportunity has led to systems of **oppression**—prolonged and sustained unjust treatment—for some groups. For example, Black people from various parts of Africa endured centuries of oppression because of the transatlantic slave trade. Between the mid-16th and mid-19th centuries, European, Spanish, and American groups captured an estimated 10–12 million African men, women, and children from their homelands, boarded them on ships, and transported them to Europe, the Caribbean, and the Americas to be

sold into enslavement. After 1865, when the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in the United States, Black people continued to be denied basic human rights, such as the opportunity to work at certain jobs, despite their educational achievement; to be served a meal in a restaurant; to use a public restroom or water fountain; to shop for necessities in a grocery or department store; or to live peacefully in their own communities. Black Americans have continued to be subjected to social inequities. As a community, they suffer from higher rates of incarceration, lower pay rates, fewer educational opportunities, and higher mortality at the hands of law enforcement—injustices that stem from racist policies of centuries past. Similarly, Indigenous people have been subjected to hundreds of years of oppression and silencing, often the result of colonialization, which included stripping them of their customs, land, language, and lives.

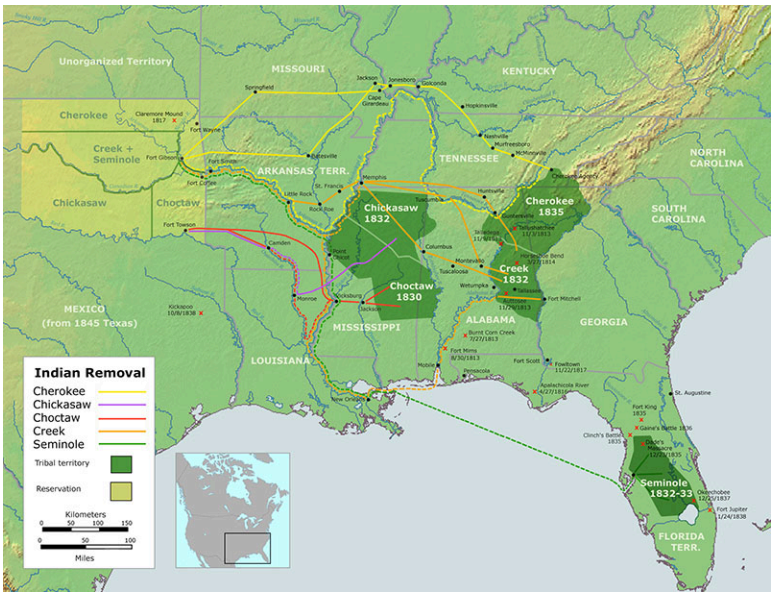



**FIGURE 2.4** This map shows the routes of the Trail of Tears (https://openstax.org/r/trailoftears) (1836–1839), the U.S. government's forced relocation of tens of thousands of Native Americans from their lands in the southeastern United States to "Indian Territory" in what is now Oklahoma. Thousands died of starvation, exposure, or disease during the long and brutal 1,200-mile journey, much of it on foot. (credit: "Trails of Tears" by Nikator and www.demis.nl/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Oppression isn't just a historical problem—it extends to society today. In the two decades since the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States and the subsequent War on Terror, Muslims and Sikhs have experienced hate crimes and oppression. People who identify as LGBTQ have been shunned or persecuted, subjected to hate crimes, and banned from serving in the military and have struggled to gain the right to marry. This TED Talk (https://openstax.org/r/thistedtalk) highlights the struggle for transgender rights.

In addition, migrant and refugee families, largely from countries in Central and South America, have been separated and jailed in recent efforts to curtail immigration along the southern U.S. border. Asian Americans have been subjected to racially motivated harassment and attacks, heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the violent March 2021 mass shooting at an Asian American massage parlor. This TED Talk (https://openstax.org/r/talksstereotype) discusses the harm of Asian stereotypes. Discrimination has persisted for generations and continues to make it difficult for those who oppress to view the oppressed as their equals.

## Reclaiming Humanity

One way to help restructure the world to reduce or even eliminate oppression is to explore your own biases. A **bias** occurs when you prejudicially favor one person, place, thing, or idea over another. People are naturally conditioned to favor the familiar over the unfamiliar. If you begin to question why you think as you do or make the decisions you make, you may begin to view others as equal, even though they may look different, live differently, and experience the world differently.

Two of the most frequent ways people isolate others are through markers of identity, especially race and gender, and through language varieties, such as standard and nonstandard English. If your view of people is primarily influenced by their physical features and the words they speak, you do not allow yourself to engage fully with them in their humanity.

Viewing others as people first and understanding the importance of questioning the lens through which you view them is the beginning. However, you also have to think critically about language bias. When you hear people of African descent speak in African American Vernacular English (AAVE) or speak English with Caribbean or African accents, you may make assumptions about who they are and what they know. When you encounter people who speak English with Spanish accents, you also may make assumptions about who they are and their place in the world. However, when you hear British English or English spoken with a French, German, or Slavic accent, you may notice the difference, but you also may make a different set of assumptions about those people.

## Anti-racism as Inclusion

One way to be inclusive is to write in specifically anti-racist ways. Inclusive writing begins with identifying ways in which language can be and has been used to exclude cultures, social groups, or races. Exclusive language is, unfortunately, ingrained in much of academia. It is a product of habit and the assumption that all readers are alike, with similar experiences, values, and beliefs. To write inclusively, think beyond yourself by considering other perspectives, groups, and races that may be harmed by thoughtless word choices.

Here are several principles to help you develop inclusive and anti-racist writing:

- Consider the assumptions you make about readers, and then work to address those assumptions.
- Choose language carefully.
- Revise with a critical eye. Look for racist phrases and words that label cultures negatively.
- Seek feedback and receive it with an open mind primed for learning. Because writing is personal, you may easily feel offended or dismissive. However, feedback, especially from people whose perspective differs from yours, can help you grow in anti-racist knowledge.
- Consider rhetoric and presentation. Aim to make your writing understandable, straightforward, and accessible. Use a glossary or footnotes to explain complex terms or ideas.
- Avoid casual phrases that suggest people with disabilities or from other cultures are victims and avoid euphemisms that refer to cultures to which you do not belong. Similarly, avoid using mental health issues in metaphors.
- Think about your adjectives. Some groups or people prefer not to be described by an adjective. It is important to follow individual groups' preferences for being referred to in either person-first or identity-first language.
- Avoid stereotyping; write about an individual as an individual, not as if they represent an entire group or culture. You may also choose to use gender-neutral pronouns.
- Be precise with meaning. Rather than describing something as "crazy," try a more precise term such as *intense*, *uncontrolled*, or *foolish* to give a more accurate description.
- Impact overrules intent. The impact of your language on your reader is more important than your good intentions. When you learn better, do better.

## Exploring the Issues

The following key terms and characteristics provide a better understand of anti-racist and inclusive writing:

- **Ally:** a person who identifies as a supporter of marginalized groups and who advocates for them
- **Anti-racist:** adhering to a set of beliefs and actions that oppose racism and promote inclusion and equality of marginalized groups
- **Critical race theory:** the idea that racism is ingrained in the institutions and systems of American society

- **Cultural appropriation:** taking the creative or artistic forms of a different culture and using them as one's own, particularly in a way that is disrespectful of the original context
- **Culture:** the shared beliefs, values, and assumptions of a group of people
- **Emotional tax:** the invisible mental stress taken on by people of marginalized backgrounds in an attempt to feel included, respected, and safe
- **Ethnocentrism:** the idea that one's own culture is inherently better than other cultures
- **Intersectionality:** the intertwining of different aspects of social identities, including gender, race, culture, ethnicity, social class, religion, and sexual orientation, that results in unique experiences and opportunities
- **Microaggression:** behavior or speech that subtly or indirectly expresses prejudice based on race, gender, ability, age, or other aspects of identity, often but not always without an individual's conscious intention (For example, the drill team director instructs all members to wear their hair straight for competition.)
- **Neurodiversity:** the idea that humans have a range of differences in neurological functioning that should be respected
- **Unconscious bias:** any implicit, unfair preferences that people hold without being aware of them

## 2.4 Annotated Sample Reading from The Souls of Black Folk by W. E. B. Du Bois

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Articulate how conventions are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Analyze relationships between ideas and patterns of organization.
- Analyze how W. E. B. Du Bois uses language, identity, and culture to shape his writing.

### Introduction



**FIGURE 2.5** W. E. B. Du Bois (credit: "Du Bois, W. E. B.." Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) was an American historian and sociologist who graduated from Fisk University in

1888 and Harvard University in 1895. Du Bois deeply influenced the civil rights movement in the United States and is widely regarded as among the most important Black protest leaders and activists of the first half of the 20th century. He helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and his essay collection *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) is considered seminal American literature.

Du Bois conducted sociological investigations of Black life in America, specifically the disenfranchisement of Black Americans and the pervasive nature of racism, including how it can influence how people of color see themselves. Du Bois dedicated years of his life to sociological studies of Black people in America, at first applying social science in his quest for racial and social justice. However, he eventually came to believe that the only path to progress was through protest. In his written works, particularly *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois discusses the dual nature of living as a Black person in America and feeling unable to be both a "Negro" and an American at once. In the excerpt below, Du Bois explains his famed theories of the color line, the veil, and double consciousness.

Du Bois's work was a direct result of the world in which he lived and the one from which previous generations came—one that highlighted the complex issues of race and conflict in America. He wrote both for Black and White audiences, professing that his message was for all and affected the very heart of American democracy. Learning about the struggles of Black people in 19th- and early 20th-century America is still important today, and even a century later, Du Bois's words can help all people understand the complex contextual issues that affect race relations. Understanding these challenges encourages tolerance, acceptance, and connections between cultures.

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### Between Me and the World

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.

***The Color Line.*** *Du Bois previously introduced the "color line," the divide between races, in his "Forethought." This line is sometimes invisible, but at other times, it is a physical line. The example of White people wondering what it feels like to be "a problem" demonstrates the invisible color line separating Black and White citizens into two separate communities.*

***Audience.*** *Du Bois probably is writing with a White audience in mind, as Black readers likely understand the ideas he proposes. He uses academic language, which may be his authentic voice as an academic and a writer, but he also seeks to reach his intended audience.*

> And yet, being a problem is a strange experience,—peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe. It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghkanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil.

***The Veil.*** *Du Bois's anecdote about the girl refusing his card introduces his idea of the "veil," a symbol he uses throughout the text to demonstrate the color line. The veil represents the different worlds that Black and White people must inhabit. Though invisible, the veil shuts Du Bois out of this girl's world.*

> I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows. That sky was bluest when I could beat my mates at examination-time, or beat them at a foot-race, or even beat their stringy heads. Alas, with the years all this fine contempt began to fade; for the words I longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities, were theirs, not mine. But they should not keep these prizes, I said; some, all, I would wrest from them. Just how I would do it I could never decide: by reading law, by healing the sick, by telling the wonderful tales that swam in my head,—some way. With other black boys the strife was not so fiercely sunny: their youth shrunk into tasteless sycophancy, or into silent hatred of the pale world about them and mocking distrust of everything white; or wasted itself in a bitter cry, Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house? The shades of the prison-house closed round about us all: walls strait and stubborn to the whitest, but relentlessly narrow, tall, and unscalable to sons of night who must plod darkly on in resignation, or beat unavailing palms against the stone, or steadily, half hopelessly, watch the streak of blue above.

***Point of View and Voice.*** *Du Bois uses the first-person point of view to relate his lived experiences. He writes in a voice that invites readers to picture him speaking, asking rhetorical questions.*

***Vivid Language.*** *Du Bois uses vivid language to emphasize the bitterness created by the treatment of Black children. The image of the "prison-house" walls closing in shows the inability to escape the veil that society placed between White and Black children. Du Bois emphasizes the impact of this separation in the choice that Black children must make: accept that they will never have the opportunities enjoyed by White children or hopelessly try to achieve them.*

> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

***Double Consciousness.*** *Du Bois expands the image of the veil separating the worlds of Black and White people to include the idea of "double-consciousness": that Black people see themselves through the eyes of White people. Racist ideation is inescapable, and Black people end up viewing their own culture negatively.*

***Conflict.*** *These ideas of double consciousness and the veil leave Black Americans at war with themselves. Du Bois uses the metaphor of a measuring tape meant for one world but used to measure another and the warring idea of "twoness."*

> The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.

***Culture and Self.*** *Du Bois explores the concept of self through the lens of Africanism and Americanism. He recognizes that the "Negro soul" has an important place in the world. Yet he feels that holding on to his Black roots means that the world sees him as un-American and leaves him without opportunity.*

> This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius. These powers of body and mind have in the past been strangely wasted, dispersed, or forgotten. The shadow of a mighty Negro past flits through the tale of Ethiopia the Shadowy and of Egypt the Sphinx. Through history, the powers of single black men flash here and there like falling stars, and die sometimes before the world has rightly gauged their brightness. Here in America, in the few days since Emancipation, the black man's turning hither and thither in hesitant and doubtful striving has often made his very strength to lose effectiveness, to seem like absence of power, like weakness. And yet it is not weakness,—it is the contradiction of double aims.

***Simile.*** *The comparison of Black men to falling stars, never allowed to reveal the possibilities of their success, demonstrates the difficulties they face.*

### Discussion Questions

1. What might have been the impact of Du Bois's use of academic language on his audience?
2. How does Du Bois use his personal experience to relate the experiences of a broader culture?
3. What impact do the images of shadows and darkness have on Du Bois's message?
4. In this section of the text, Du Bois focuses on internalization of race. How does this concept illustrate the impact of racism on society?

### Assumptions and Stereotypes

Du Bois experiences the veil between worlds as a Black American because of assumptions and stereotypes. Unfortunately, such assumptions and stereotypes still exist in America today. In Chapter 2, you have begun to learn about the impact of language on culture and about how developing anti-racist and inclusive ideas is an important part of the composition process.

Read the following scenario.

Mark is an assistant manager at a neighborhood convenience store. At the end of the evening, his inventory count is short. After an examination of the store, Mark notices that a large display of novelty items is nearly empty. Knowing his store sells only a few of those items each day, Mark identifies theft of the items as the likely source of the discrepancy. He thinks back through the customers he served that day.

## 2.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically about How Identity Is Constructed Through Writing

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the importance of communication in various cultural, language, and rhetorical situations.
- Implement a variety of drafting strategies to demonstrate the connection between language and social justice.
- Apply the composition processes and tools as a means to discover and reconsider ideas.
- Participate in the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.
- Give and act on productive feedback to works in progress.

Now it's your turn to join this cultural conversation. As you write, keep your audience in mind as well as the principles of inclusivity and anti-racism that you have learned about. Consider how you can share your personal experiences, ideas, and beliefs in a way that is inclusive of all and shows sensitivity to the culture of your readers.

## Summary of Assignment: Cultural Artifact

Choose an artifact that symbolizes something about a culture to which you belong. This might be a physical object that you have, or it may be a metaphorical object, such as Du Bois's color line or veil, that represents something larger about your culture. Write approximately 350–700 words describing it, using sensory detail and explaining its meaning both to you personally and within your culture. To begin your thinking, view this TEDx Talk (https://openstax.org/r/thistedxtalk) for a discussion of cultural artifacts and narrative led by artist David Bailey.

***Another Lens 1.*** Choose a space that is important to a cultural community to which you belong. While visiting this space, conduct an hour-long observation. Respond in writing to these items: *Describe the space in detail. What do you see permanently affixed in the space? What activity is going on? How is the space currently used? What is the atmosphere? How are you feeling while conducting your observation?* Then, do some brief research on the space (using the Internet, the library, or campus archives), and answer these questions: *What is the history of the space? When was it established, and under what circumstances? How has this space been used in the past? What is your response or reaction to this history?* Then write a passage in which you highlight a unique feature of the space and your cultural relationship to it.

***Another Lens 2.*** Considering Du Bois's theory of double consciousness, explore the ways in which you may experience competing identities or competing cultures in your own life. *What experiences have you had or witnessed where language clashed with or supported your identity or culture? What happened? How did others react? How did you react? What insight does your experience offer on this discussion of rhetoric and the power of language to define, shape, and change or give birth to identity or culture?*

## Quick Launch: Joining the Dialogue

You may choose to use journaling to develop your language use and voice. Journaling, or keeping a written record of your thoughts and ideas, can clarify your thoughts and emotions, help you better understand your values, and increase your creativity. The following two journaling techniques should help you get started.

### Character Sketch and Captured Moment

Because your cultural artifact may be tied to a person, a character sketch might help you think about its significance. A character sketch is a brief description of a real or fictional person—in this case, likely someone you know or even yourself. In it, you describe the character's personality, physical traits, habits, history, relationships, and ties to the cultural artifact. You may include research about the character to introduce readers to them. Use the following format if you need more guidance:

**Character Sketch**

- Introduction
  - Quotation
  - Anecdote about the character
  - Most important traits
- Supporting Details
  - Physical appearance
  - Actions
  - Thoughts
  - Language
  - Ties to cultural artifact

A character sketch of your grandmother might read as follows.

> My first memory of Nonna materializes in the kitchen, where we are baking Swedish cookies together. She carefully shows me how to measure ingredients, stirring with her hand over mine in her deep "cookie-making" bowl. Nonna is a slight woman with a big heart full of kindness. She teaches me many skills, both in and out of the kitchen, that I still use today. Some have proven to be life lessons. She never met a stranger she didn't like and often said it takes more effort to be unkind than kind. Because of Nonna, the Swedish cookie has become a metaphor for my life. The ingredients of one's life make up an identity, and the combination is always delicious.

Another journaling technique is to record a captured moment through the examination of a cultural artifact. This exercise lets you use an artifact as a means to look at an event in your life and create a written piece that captures its importance, emotion, or meaning. Select an artifact and an experience. Think about what they mean to you. *What do you remember, and why?* Then go deeper. Analyze the long-term meaning of it in your life. Try to recreate the artifact and then the experience in your mind, and relive the sensations you experienced in the moment.

### Choose the Artifact



Begin your assignment by choosing your artifact. You may take inspiration from W. E. B. Du Bois's image of the veil in the annotated sample in the previous section. Or, going back to the beginning of this chapter and Sequoyah's syllabary, you may choose to take inspiration from something linguistic, an expression or a way of talking that is associated with your culture. You may choose an artifact that, like the veil, has metaphorical significance. Or you may choose a more tangible artifact, such as a religious symbol, a traditional clothing item, or any number of objects related to your chosen culture.

Once you have chosen your artifact, do a prewriting exercise called a **freewrite**. In this activity, set a time limit (say, 10 minutes), and write whatever comes to mind about your object within that time. Don't worry about organization, flow, grammar, punctuation, or whether your writing is "good"; just write. This exercise not only gets your creative juices flowing but also allows you to put pen to paper and opens your mind to what may be subconscious thoughts about the object as it relates to culture.

Next, it is time to take a more refined approach to planning your writing. Think back to The Digital World: Building on What You Already Know to Respond Critically, which addresses the different purposes for writing. To help shape your writing use a separate sheet of paper to answer the questions in Table 2.1.

| |
|---|
| Who is my audience? |
| What is my purpose for writing? |
| What organizational strategies will I use? |
| How will I introduce my artifact? |
| How will I describe my artifact using sensory language? |
| Will I share personal anecdotes, examples, or ideas? |
| How will I add cultural context to my writing to help my audience understand my culture? |
| What transitions will I use? |
| How will I end my writing? |

**TABLE 2.1** Planning questions

## Drafting: Critical Context

In your writing, try to incorporate and respond to the current cultural climate. **Context** is information that helps readers understand the cultural factors that affect your ideas, actions, and thoughts. Context helps build the relationship between you as a writer and your audience, providing clarity and meaning. For example, Du Bois's veil means very little until readers understand the deep racial divide that existed during his lifetime, including Jim Crow laws, segregation, and violent crimes committed against his fellow Black Americans.

### Cultural Context

Sharing cultural context helps your readers understand elements of culture they may be unfamiliar with. Consider what background information you need to provide, especially information that is integral to readers' understanding of the traditions, beliefs, and actions that relate to your artifact. Essentially, you will need to close the gap between your own culture and that of your readers.

Armed with your freewrite and your answers to the questions as a starting place, create your first draft. As you write, embed cultural context and explain the significance of your artifact in a way that is relatable and meaningful to your audience. Like Du Bois, try to use figurative language, such as similes or personification, in your description, and include the relevant sensory elements of the artifact: its appearance, taste, smell, sound, and feel. See Print or Textual Analysis: What You Read for definitions and examples of some figurative language, or consult this site (https://openstax.org/r/figurativelanguage). Consider using a graphic organizer like Figure 2.6 as a guide. Add more outer circles if needed, and be mindful of writing in a way that it is accessible and inclusive.

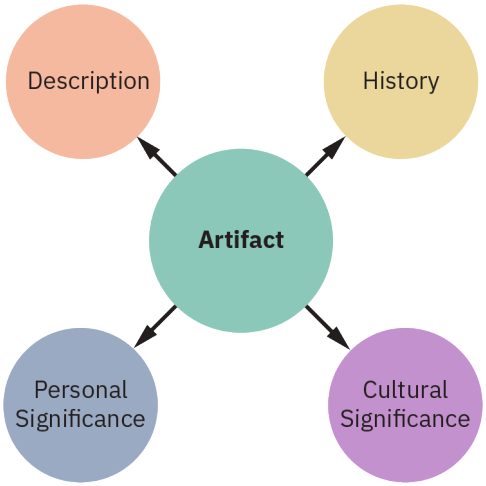



**FIGURE 2.6** Idea web (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

Remember that your first draft is just a starting point. The most important thing is to get your ideas on paper. This draft can be considered a test of sorts—one that determines what should and should not appear in the final paper.

Consider the following sensory description of Broadway in New York, written by British novelist Charles Dickens (1812–1870) in his book *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842). *What does Dickens, as a British observer, note about this street in America? How does he use language to convey what he sees, hears, and smells? In what ways does he use language to convey a British viewpoint?*

> Warm weather! The sun strikes upon our heads at this open window, as though its rays were concentrated through a burning-glass; but the day is in its zenith, and the season an unusual one. Was there ever such a sunny street as this Broadway! The pavement stones are polished with the tread of feet until they shine again; the red bricks of the houses might be yet in the dry, hot kilns; and the roofs of those omnibuses look as though, if water were poured on them, they would hiss and smoke, and smell like half-quenched fires. No stint of omnibuses here! Half-a-dozen have gone by within as many minutes. Plenty of hackney cabs and coaches too; gigs, phaetons, large-wheeled tilburies, and private carriages—rather of a clumsy make, and not very different from the public vehicles, but built for the heavy roads beyond the city pavement. . . . [C]oachmen . . . in straw hats, black hats, white hats, glazed caps, fur caps; in coats of drab, black, brown, green, blue, nankeen, striped jean and linen; and there, in that one instance (look while it passes, or it will be too late), in suits of livery. Some southern republican that, who puts his blacks in uniform, and swells with Sultan pomp and power. Yonder, where that phaeton with the well-clipped pair of grays has stopped—standing at their heads now—is a Yorkshire groom, who has not been very long in these parts, and looks sorrowfully round for a companion pair of top-boots, which he may traverse the city half a year without meeting. Heaven save the ladies, how they dress! We have seen more colours in these ten minutes, than we should have seen elsewhere, in as many days. What various parasols! what rainbow silks and satins! what pinking of thin stockings, and pinching of thin shoes, and fluttering of ribbons and silk tassels, and display of rich cloaks with gaudy hoods and linings! The young gentlemen are fond, you see, of turning down their shirt-collars and cultivating their whiskers, especially under the chin; but they cannot approach the ladies in their dress or bearing, being, to say the truth, humanity of quite another sort. Byrons of the desk and counter, pass on, and let us see what kind of men those are behind ye: those two labourers in holiday clothes, of whom one carries in his hand a crumpled scrap of paper from which he tries to spell out a hard name, while the other looks about for it on all the doors and windows.

*Now, how might Dickens go on to provide context and make connections between British and American cultures so that readers understand both more keenly?* Although *American Notes* is generally critical of the United States, this description creates a positive mood, as if Dickens recognizes something of home during his visit to Broadway—a cultural artifact. This recognition suggests that moments of unexpected joy can create connections between cultures.

### Peer Review:

One of the most helpful parts of the writing process can be soliciting input from a peer reviewer. This input will be particularly helpful for this assignment if the peer reviewer is not a member of the culture you are writing about. An outsider's view will help you determine whether you have included appropriate cultural context. Peer reviewers can use the following sentence starters to provide feedback.

- One piece of your writing I found meaningful was _____.
- Something new I learned about your culture is _____; you explained this well by _____.
- Something I was confused by was _____; I don't understand this because _____.
- A major point that I think needs more detail or explanation is _____.
- In my opinion, the purpose of your paper is _____.
- To me, it seems that your audience is _____.
- I would describe the voice of your piece as _____.
- I think you could better build cultural context by _____.

### Revising:

Writing is a **recursive** process; you will push forward, step back, and repeat steps multiple times as your ideas develop and change. As you reread, you may want to add, delete, reorder, or otherwise change your draft. This response is natural. You may need to return to the brainstorming process to mine for new ideas or organizational principles.

As you reread and prepare for revisions, focus on the voice you have used. *If a friend were to read your draft,*

*could they "hear" you in it?* If not, work on revising to create a more natural cadence and tone. Another area of focus should be to explain cultural context and build cultural bridges. Use your peer reviewer's feedback to develop a piece that will be meaningful to your audience.

While describing your artifact is likely a deeply personal endeavor, an important part of writing is to consider your audience. Composition offers a unique opportunity to build and share cultural understanding. One way to achieve this goal is by using anti-racist and inclusive language. Try to view your composition from outside of your own experience.

- Is any language or are any ideas harmful or offensive to other cultures?
- Are you using the language of preference for a specified group?
- Can people of various abilities read and understand your writing?

One overarching strategy you can use for anti-racist revision is to constantly question commonly used words and phrases. For example, the word *Eskimo* is a European term used to describe people living in the Arctic without regard for differentiation. The term was later used to describe a popular frozen treat known as an *Eskimo pie*. Today, the term is considered offensive to Inuit communities—Indigenous people living in Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. You can also make yourself aware of the evolving preferences for language use. For example, the term *Negro* gave way to *African American*, which is now giving way to the term *Black*. Finally, consider the use of the word *see*, for example, to mean "to understand": *Do you see what I mean?* Is the use of *see* in this way inclusive of a visually impaired person who may be reading your text? To start, determine one or two places to include anti-racist or inclusive language or ideas in your writing, and build those into your piece.

## 2.6 Evaluation: Antiracism and Inclusivity

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply or challenge measurement outcomes for anti-racist and inclusive language.
- Compare your written work with evaluation criteria.





Learning to be both anti-racist and inclusive in your writing will help you share your culture with others and build bridges with cultures that differ from yours. As a writer, you have a unique opportunity to share your understandings, beliefs, and ideas, but if you do so in a way that limits understanding, you will reach only those who already agree with you or have similar experiences.

Anti-racist writing actively identifies and opposes racism. Its goal is to directly challenge racist ideas, methods, and behaviors and to replace them with anti-racist ones. Unfortunately, the history of academic writing often has been entrenched in racism at institutional and structural levels. Like Du Bois's "double-consciousness," students from other cultures have been penalized unfairly for their adherence to cultural traditions. American culture has made some strides, yet it isn't enough to be "not racist"—it must do better by being actively anti-racist. One way to do this is to work to understand, use, and appreciate cultural forms, voices, and attitudes and to share beliefs that communicate identity and issues within cultures.

Inclusive writing encourages writers to think about what readers need and how they interact with the content. Inclusive writing represents culture authentically, helping readers find common threads in the writer's words, though they may not share a particular culture.

Ask a peer to use the following rubric to evaluate your final draft. The rubric is designed to help you think about your writing in anti-racist and inclusive terms.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text works to communicate cultural ideas using inclusive language and shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer presents an artifact and describes it clearly with sensory detail and figurative language. The connection to culture is evident and successfully builds cultural context. The writer's ideas are well organized and linked with appropriate transitions. | The paper consistently exhibits strong cultural awareness in the author's rhetorical choices. It uses anti-racist and inclusive language to appeal to readers from a variety of cultural backgrounds. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text works to communicate cultural ideas using some inclusive language and shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer presents an artifact and describes it with some sensory detail and figurative language. The connection to culture is evident and builds cultural context. The writer's ideas are organized and linked with some transitions. | The paper exhibits some cultural awareness in the author's rhetorical choices. It uses mostly anti-racist and inclusive language to appeal to readers from a variety of cultural backgrounds. |
| **3**<br>**Capable** | The text tries to communicate cultural ideas using limited inclusive language and shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer presents an artifact with some description but uses little or no figurative language. The connection to culture and cultural context may sometimes be weak. Some, but not all, of the writer's ideas are presented clearly; the writing is choppy at times and needs more, or more appropriate, transitions. | The paper exhibits some, but not enough, cultural awareness in the author's rhetorical choices. It uses some anti-racist and inclusive language but needs work to appeal to readers from a variety of cultural backgrounds. |

**TABLE 2.2**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text attempts to communicate cultural ideas using emerging inclusive language and shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer presents an artifact with little connection to culture and only minimally develops cultural context. The description is basic, lacking sensory details and figurative language. The writer has used few transitions or has used them incorrectly. | The paper exhibits weak cultural awareness in the author's rhetorical choices. It uses minimal anti-racist and inclusive language and does not appeal to readers from a variety of cultural backgrounds. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text begins to communicate cultural ideas but uses little to no inclusive language and shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer does not describe an artifact in any detail and makes no mention of cultural connection or cultural context. The ideas are disconnected, and no transitions are used. | The paper does not exhibit cultural awareness in the author's rhetorical choices. It does not use anti-racist or inclusive language and does not appeal to readers from a variety of cultural backgrounds. |

**TABLE 2.2**

## 2.7 Spotlight on … Variations of English

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, diction, tone, level of formality, and structure.
- Identify linguistic structures, including American English dialects.
- Write a description in an authentic voice.

### English and Its Dialects





Although English is the primary language of the United States, distinctive **dialects**, or forms of language specific to a particular region or social group, vary according to location, culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other factors. American dialects may have their own grammar, vocabulary, syntax, pronunciation, and common expressions. Many, mainly regional, differences in pronunciation are often marked by **rhotic** and **non-rhotic** accents. Speakers with rhotic accents pronounce the /r/ before consonants and at the end of a word. Those with non-rhotic accents do not pronounce the /r/; for example, think of the Boston accent pronunciation of *park* as *pahk* or the Coastal Southern (areas along the Gulf of Mexico) pronunciation of *better* as *bettuh*.

While the American Midwest has what might be considered the closest variation to **General American English**, the language spoken by most Americans, it has its own regional and cultural dialect variations. In characteristic **Midwest American English** words such as *cot* and *caught* are pronounced as homophones. As

in rhotic dialects, /r/ sounds are pronounced, even in words that don't contain the letter *r*: *wash*, for example, becomes *warsh*. And /s/ may be added to words as a grammatical construction: *Alls* we need is more ice cream.

Variations in pronunciation and dialect result from a host of factors. Dialects are formed when people are divided socially, geographically, or both. Despite the difficulties in categorizing such complex variations in language, most scholars agree that dialects can be classified on the basis of location and social groupings, despite the overlap between them. A **regional dialect** is a variation in language that occurs within a geographical region. A **social dialect** includes differences in speech associated with a social group or socioeconomic level.

Among the most common—and most debated—language variations is **African American Vernacular English (AAVE)**. AAVE, also referred to as **Black English Vernacular** or **Ebonics**, is a generalized term for a variety of dialects spoken by Black Americans. These dialects are influenced by American Southern dialects. With roots in the language patterns of people descended from enslaved Africans in the United States, AAVE has its own syntax, grammar, and tense system. Some common features include the absence of third-person singular and possessive pronouns and the use of double negatives.

AAVE has distinct grammar conventions. The speaker or writer will often omit forms of the verb *to be* from a sentence, as in these examples:

"What [omitted *is*] he talking about?"

"She [omitted *was*] the one who took it."

While General American English requires verb and tense agreement, AAVE features more variations. For example, in AAVE, the word *been* is often placed before a verb in order to convey a past event: for example, "He been married" rather than the General American English "He was married." This change in grammar can actually convey different meanings. In General American English, the sentence implies that the man is no longer married, whereas the sentence in AAVE indicates that the man is still married.

This is by no means an inclusive list of AAVE conventions, as languages are constantly evolving. Understanding that language differences result from culture, identity, and geography and that you, as a writer, have the opportunity to express yourself using your social norms is an important first step in recognizing the role of culture in language.

Although differences in pronunciation abound, English dialects are widely classified as "standard" or "nonstandard." **Standard dialect** follows specific rules for syntax, vocabulary, and grammar. This dialect is often perceived as more academic than nonstandard dialects and is used in formal situations. Other dialects, usually lacking such standardization and generally perceived as having less stature, are considered **nonstandard dialects**. For years, academic scholars and teachers have subscribed to the idea that so-called standard English should be the default dialect used in schools and academic writing. This dialect is spoken by newscasters, television news anchors, and a large percentage of middle-class Americans, especially those with formal educations.

And yet you, like others, have your own patterns of speech based largely on your culture, family, and region. **Code-switching**, or alternating between two or more languages or language forms, was taught explicitly in schools with the intent that students learn to speak and write standard English for certain academic and professional situations. However, newer research in best practices is revealing that allowing students to learn in and use their authentic voices, including nonstandard dialects, is a more equitable practice that is both culturally responsible and beneficial to learning.

### "Students' Right to Their Own Language"

The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) is the world's largest professional organization committed to writing research, theory, and teaching. It publishes the quarterly journal *College Composition and Communication* and holds an annual convention. The CCCC also publishes position

statements on writing and the teaching of writing based on research, best practices of writing pedagogy, and language practices. Recent research completed by the CCCC addresses the use of a wide variety of linguistic expressions and choices, including various regional and cultural dialects.

In 1974, the Conference on College Composition and Communication adopted "Students' Right to Their Own Language," a statement that affirmed students' rights to use "their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture" or those that help them create their own identity. The statement recognizes that so-called General American English is aligned with a dominant White majority and includes implicit bias against students from other backgrounds. Finally, the statement reinforces the idea that a nation that praises and encourages diversity, particularly in academic circles, should not only accept diversity in language and dialect but also celebrate it. Doing so allows students to use the totality of their lived experiences, cultural language, and ideas to create fuller meaning in their writing. Over the years, the statement has undergone revisions and has been expanded to address students learning and writing in a second language.

This statement takes a step toward confronting the assumptions and hidden bias present in the educational system and works toward creating more equitable, anti-racist teaching for students, particularly from Black and other BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) backgrounds. The most recent updated and reaffirmed statement (https://openstax.org/r/statementnewsrtol) stems from 2014.

### Demand for Linguistic Justice

One position statement released by the CCCC in July 2020 was "This Ain't Another Statement! This Is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!" Responding to the historical and sociopolitical context of today's world, this statement coincided with #BlackLivesMatter, a movement to fight racism directed at the Black community, often at the hands of police and vigilantes. The statement shifts the narrative to composition and communication, asking how Black lives matter in language education, research, and scholarship.

The CCCC strongly promotes students' language rights based on their own cultural backgrounds, yet it acknowledges that language rights have suffered from a similarly "inadequate response" as other social justice movements. Specifically for Black students and writers, cultural traditions such as **AAVE/Ebonics** continue to be devalued and diminished in line with the devaluation of Black lives. The demand upholds the organization's earlier statement that Ebonics communicates Black traditions and social truths. The statement includes these demands:

- That teachers stop teaching only standard English as the communicative norm
- That teachers stop teaching Black students to code-switch and instead teach about linguistic racism
- That teachers teach "Black Linguistic Consciousness" and work to unravel anti-Black linguistic racism
- That Black perspectives be included in the research and teaching of Black language

You can learn more about the impact of linguistic bias in education in this TEDx Talk (https://openstax.org/r/thistedxtalk_QrTFJ5NlM1g).

## Publication: Writing as Your Artifact

Try this short exercise to identify and practice writing in a dialect that directly reflects the culture your artifact comes from. Write a short three- to five-paragraph story from the perspective of the artifact you chose for this chapter's writing assignment. *What might your artifact see, hear, feel, or experience in its everyday life?* Concentrate on using an authentic dialect, including vocabulary, grammatical conventions, and sentence structure, when constructing your story. As you reread your writing, ensure that you can hear your authentic voice in the text.

When all stories have been written, consider collaborating with your instructor to collect them in a class book that includes illustrations of the artifacts and a short quotation from the point of view of each artifact, similar to the format of the Trailblazer sections of this book.

## 2.8 Portfolio: Decolonizing Self

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Write a reflection of your composition process and how it affects your work.
- Apply the composing processes as a means to discover and reconsider ideas.

After each writing assignment in this course, you will reflect on and write about the composition process. Doing so makes you a more thoughtful writer as you think about the ideas, audience, purpose, and cultural considerations of your work.

### The Colonized Self

The colonized lived experience is an important topic of academic discourse. When one refers to a situation as colonized, they mean that the ideas, customs, and culture of one group of people have been imposed onto the Indigenous people of a land. For example, colonization occurred when European explorers arrived in the Americas between the 16th and 18th centuries to inhabit land already populated by various Native American peoples with their own culture and customs. Many scholars and students are interested in exploring what it means to remove this foreign experience from the curriculum and to discontinue operating under the assumption that groups in power determine customs and culture.

Such a process begins with an examination of individual identities and cultures. You have likely attended school in systems that privilege a mainstream culture over all others. The challenge is to figure out the identity of your authentic self, stripped of colonizing forces, the way Sequoyah, Cathy Park Hong, W. E. B. Du Bois, and others have tried to do. Essentially, two versions exist of the self: the **colonized self** that conforms to academic standards even when they do not align with personal cultural experiences and the **decolonized self** that challenges mainstream standards, especially when they do not include or make space for lived experiences. So what does the process of decolonizing look like?

### The Decolonized Self

Throughout much of American history, education has focused on advancing the colonial purposes of assimilation. This practice can be harmful to everyone, especially to students identifying as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color). While outright racism and exclusion are now frowned upon in academia, colonial racism and exclusion persist through more subtle means: systems of oppression, curricula, and institutional structures.

As a student and writer, you likely have experienced the effects of colonization either to your benefit or your detriment. While it can be difficult to break through entrenched racism and exclusion, through the process of decolonization you can form your identity and better understand the identities of people from other cultures.

The word decolonization refers to the process of a nation or territory breaking free from an oppressive colonial power that controls it. In essence, decolonization is a statement of independence. When used in cultural terms, *decolonization* refers to challenging and changing the individual and collective consciousness rooted in racism and oppression. Essentially, then, it means undoing colonial practices that have influenced education in the past and continue to do so today. You can learn more about decolonizing education in this TEDx Talk (https://openstax.org/r/thistedxtalk_zeKHOTDwZxU).

As you work to develop your decolonized self, you will likely spend time on introspection, examining unconscious biases and how they affect your perspective on your culture and other cultures. Learning to be anti-racist and inclusive is a lifelong process, one that can be developed in part through the writing process. Continual questioning and reflection is the most important part of decolonization.

### Reflection Prompt

In your portfolio for this chapter, imagine that other students in colleges and universities across the country

are talking about some of these same cultural issues. Think of it as one big conversation. American philosopher and rhetorician Kenneth Burke (1897–1993) created the metaphor of a *parlor* where academics across time and space have gathered to help you imagine what academic conversations must be like. Burke describes an academic conversation as "unending": "Others . . . are engaged in a heated discussion. . . . You listen for a while . . . then you put in your oar" (Burke 110). In other words, as you write, you are adding to a timeless conversation among thinkers and authors. Your words help define cultural understanding of the future. (More about this "conversation" appears in Glance at Genre: Introducing Research as Evidence.)

Consider Burke's concept of joining an unending conversation along with the intersections of your cultural identities. Write a reflection in which you imagine what happens in the Burkean parlor of your own making when you enter. *How does the conversation change as a result of your presence? What parts of yourself contribute to, or maybe even derail, the ongoing conversations? How does the parlor change after you leave? Do you leave the parlor bubbling like warm, nourishing soup or in (figurative) flames?*

*[continued from previous conversation]*

**Former U.S. President Barack Obama:** "The worst thing that colonialism did was to cloud our view of our past."

**Nigerian Author Chinua Achebe:** "Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter."

**British Writer E. M. Forster:** "And Englishmen like posing as gods."

**American Professor J. M. Blaut:** "Eurocentrism is quite simply the colonizer's model of the world."

**American Theologian Catherine Keller:** "Western dominology can with religious sanction identify anything dark, profound, or fluid with a revolting chaos."

**Senegalese Author Mariama Bâ:** "The assimilationist dream of the colonist drew into its crucible our mode of thought and way of life."

**Antiguan American Author Jamaica Kinkaid:** "What I see is the millions of people . . . made orphans: no motherland . . . no . . . holy ground."

**African American Author Ralph Ellison:** "When I discover who I am, I'll be free."

**YOU:** ". . ."

*[to be continued]*

## Further Reading

To read more about the process of exploring language, identity, and culture, you may seek out the following authors and titles.

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# Literacy Narrative: Building Bridges, Bridging Gaps

3



**FIGURE 3.1** Five Black officers of the Women's League in Newport, Rhode Island, c. 1899. Mary Dickerson (1830–1914) and her husband, Silas, moved to Newport, Rhode Island, around 1865. Empowered by literacy, Mary had founded a dressmaking business by 1872, and she helped found the New England Federation of Colored Women's Clubs (later renamed the Northeastern Federation), which is still active, in 1896 and the Rhode Island Union of Colored Women's Clubs in 1903. The women pictured, among others, are credited with "an inherited interest in social questions and a . . . spirit and pride" that contributed to social equality and justice, including the empowerment of women through the right to vote. For more information, read Mary Dickerson's obituary (https://openstax.org/r/obituary). (credit: "Five female Negro officers of Women's League, Newport, R.I." by Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Public Domain)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**3.1** Identity and Expression
**3.2** Literacy Narrative Trailblazer: Tara Westover
**3.3** Glance at Genre: The Literacy Narrative
**3.4** Annotated Sample Reading: from Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass by Frederick Douglass
**3.5** Writing Process: Tracing the Beginnings of Literacy
**3.6** Editing Focus: Sentence Structure
**3.7** Evaluation: Self-Evaluating
**3.8** Spotlight on ... The Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (DALN)
**3.9** Portfolio: A Literacy Artifact


**INTRODUCTION** "Literacy is now understood as a means of . . . communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich, and fast-changing world," according to UNESCO. The literacy narrative is a genre that provides an account of an individual or a member of a community and their experience with learning.

Combining the broad definition of *literacy* with the term *narrative*, or *storytelling*, produces the literacy narrative: a story that provides an account of a learning experience. As you begin to reflect on what it means to learn, particularly in a college setting, this chapter will guide you through an exploration of the various features of the literacy narrative genre to prepare you to write one of your own.

One path to becoming familiar with the language of higher institutional learning, or the academy, is what professors like to call *entering the academic discourse community.* This phrase means that you begin to reflect on the experiences that have laid the path for your admission to this new community. In the traditional sense, when talking about **literacy**, people think of reading and writing. However, in the modern multimedia and kinesthetic world, the definition of *literacy* has been expanded to mean "competence in communication," including a multitude of methods, modes, and texts. This emerging definition means that literacy includes the abilities to compose and interpret messages using images, visual arrangements, spoken words, and other modes beyond simple written texts. People are considered literate in almost any concentrated area in which they demonstrate knowledge and communicate proficiently.



**FIGURE 3.2** In fact, literacy may no longer involve physical pages of paper. (credit: "Woman working on iPad" by Marco Verch/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Having this broad understanding of literacy allows individuals to think about the **genre**, or writing type, of the **literacy narrative** in many ways: ways that are textual, musical, digital, social, communal—the list continues. What scholars know for certain is that literacy involves individual as well as community engagement. One does not achieve literacy through isolation but rather as a result of active engagements with members of communities.

## 3.1 Identity and Expression

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Use reading and composing for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating.
- Discern the nature of identity in various rhetorical and cultural contexts.

You likely express your identity, or ideas about who you are, through language. The language you use also signals the ways in which you are rooted in specific culture, or groups of people who share common beliefs and lived experiences. Because the ways in which people speak and write are closely intertwined with their self-images and community affiliations, you can think, communicate, and interact most freely with others by using your personal **idiolect**—that is, your individual way of speaking and writing—which is based in cultural language use. This section examines a few myths about language use and explores some productive ways to think about language and communication.

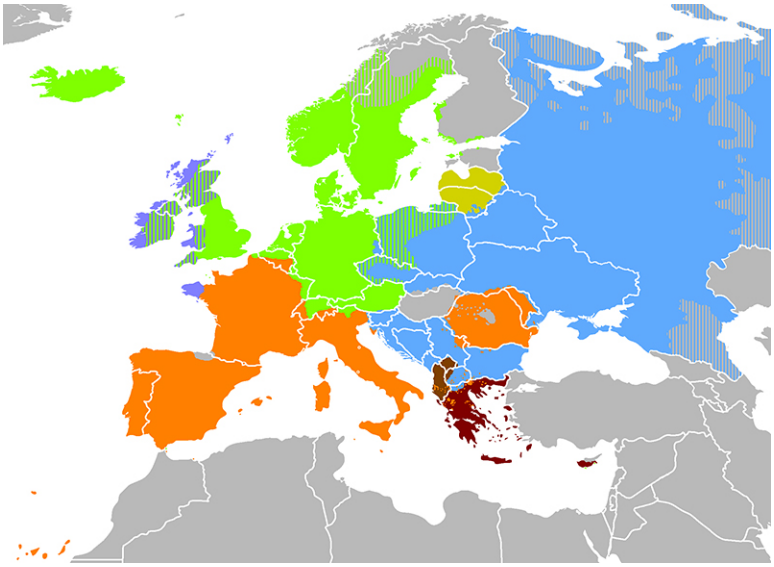


**FIGURE 3.3** Various language families in Europe (credit: "Indo-European languages" by Servitje/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## Language and Identity

As members of different communities, most Americans speak and write in a number of English varieties without even thinking about doing so. Like others, you generally speak differently with friends than you do with elders. You usually use different types of language when texting on your phone than when writing a professional email. As you make these communication choices based on different settings and audiences, you signal your identity and culture through word choice, sentence structure, and use of language in specific situations. For example, when speaking with friends, you may engage in wordplay to show identification with the group. On the other hand, you may speak with respect to elders to show an identity as a well-mannered younger relative, and you may use a standard email format to show a professional identity. If you speak other languages, you may find yourself freely switching between English and those other languages when conversing with people who share the same linguistic abilities; these shifts from one language to another showcase your identity as a multilingual person. As author Gloria Anzaldúa (1942–2004) writes in *Borderlands / La Frontera*, "I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white" (59).

Every time you communicate, you signal some aspect of your identity. In the same way that everyone has multiple, intersecting identities, everyone has multiple ways of expressing themselves through language. As members of a multiethnic, multicultural society, everyone should recognize and respect these personal ways of communicating, which are integral to a shared human experience.



**FIGURE 3.4** Many view the world as a global village, which contains many language identities. (credit: "Anonymous globe of flags" by Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

## Expressing Identity in Writing

Even though individuals speak and write effectively using different varieties of English, many people nevertheless believe that one standard, "proper" English variety exists and that this "correct" way of speaking and writing should be used universally in all settings. This viewpoint considers varieties of English outside the imagined norm to be "wrong," "bad," or "substandard." For example, speakers of some southern U.S. English varieties are often judged as "poor" or "unintelligent." Similarly, people who speak English with the accent of another language may be incorrectly assumed to be illiterate. If you speak and write using one of those undervalued English varieties, others may have judged you for your language use or told you that your writing is "wrong." Even without such judgment, you may have felt apprehensive when sharing your writing with others; you may still fear a harsh assessment, or you may feel vulnerable when others read your compositions.



**FIGURE 3.5** Leaders of the Writing in a Foreign Language panel at Finncon 2013 (credit: "Writing in a foreign language at Finncon 2013" by Henry So?derlund/ Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0)

The truth is that people speak and write in different ways for different **rhetorical situation**, or instances of communication. People in different communities and professions employ distinct kinds of English. You already use different varieties of English in different parts of your life; as you progress through college and into your career, you will learn the language expectations for the rhetorical situations you will encounter in those spaces. In learning these expectations, you will gain new identities. For example, you may become someone who knows how to write an exemplary lab report, you could develop an identity as an emerging researcher in any number of fields, or you may simply become someone who is comfortable letting other people read your writing. These new linguistic identities do not need to replace language use in other areas of your life. For instance, you should not feel the need to use a different form of grammar or punctuation in your social media posts. You should feel comfortable using your familiar English varieties in familiar rhetorical situations while, if needed, using new varieties of English you may learn in the new rhetorical situations you encounter. Additionally, you can and should seek out opportunities to use your familiar, nonacademic English varieties in academic and professional settings when you feel it is appropriate and aligns with the expectations of your instructor or employer.

Because people write in many different settings for many reasons, no particular English variety is appropriate for all writing tasks. As you become more familiar with the different ways English is used in different settings and communities, you can choose which variety to draw on in each rhetorical situation. You also may choose whether to meet or to disrupt the expectations of the people you are communicating with. In making these choices, you will rely on your existing literacies as well as newly learned ones.

## 3.2 Trailblazer

### Literacy Narrative Trailblazer: Tara Westover

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Use reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating.
- Identify various types of literacy in the context of a literacy narrative.

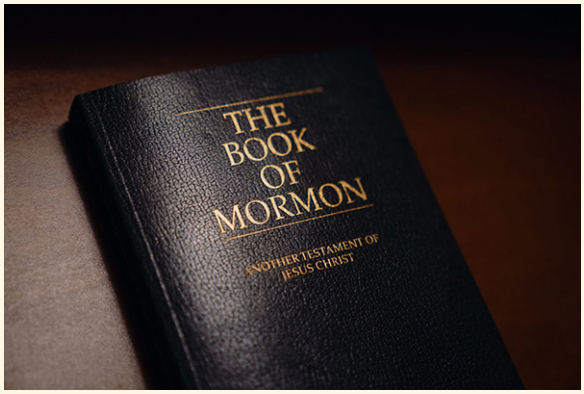



**FIGURE 3.6** The Book of Mormon was the basis of one of Tara Westover's (https://openstax.org/r/Tara) early literacies. (credit: "The Book of Mormon" by Tony Webster/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

*"We are all more complicated than the role we are assigned in stories."*

## Being *Educated*

In her 2018 best seller, *Educated: A Memoir*, Tara Westover (b. 1986) considers the effects of academic and nonacademic literacies in her life. She also contemplates the ways in which identification with certain literacies can both create and disturb an individual's relationships and community memberships. While *Educated* addresses a variety of themes, including the tensions that family members must confront when they disagree, the memoir can be read largely as a literacy narrative.

Early in her memoir, Westover discusses a range of literacies she developed as the youngest of seven children in a homeschooled family. Although she was taught to read, her literary world consisted almost exclusively of the Book of Mormon and other religious texts. Her other literacies included preserving food, preparing herbs, and caring for the animals on the family farm, located on an Idaho mountain. She felt a keen sense of belonging both to her family and to their mountain home. Westover also learned how to work in and survive the dangerous junkyard her family owned and operated. Even though many family members sustained a variety of horrific accidents and injuries over the years, mostly at the junkyard or in car accidents, the family relied entirely on natural remedies; both parents considered doctors and medicine to be sinful. Despite the range of literacies that Westover learned at home, her parents did not value formal schooling and were indifferent to the development of a broad understanding of science, history, or current events. The Westover children were almost entirely self-directed in their academic studies.

As a young child, Westover fully embraced her parents' beliefs that "government schooling" was wholly unchristian and equivalent to brainwashing. Her brother Tyler, however, had always loved "book learning" and decided to leave home to attend college. He could not fully articulate why he felt compelled to be the first to leave, and his departure intrigued Westover. She, too, began to think about pursuing higher education. After another brother became physically abusive toward her, Tyler encouraged her to use college as an escape. She then bought an ACT prep book, studied on her own, and did well enough on the exams to be accepted to Brigham Young University.

Westover articulates in her memoir that once on campus, she realized how her haphazard homeschooling experience had left her with large gaps in knowledge and no preparation for studying and taking tests. As she improved her academic skills, she also learned methods of academic inquiry that were at odds with her parents' faith-based interpretations of both world and personal events.

As Westover gained a science-based worldview through her college experience, she struggled to integrate her

new understandings with her family's perspectives; in other words, her new literacies were at odds with her old ones. She still felt connected to her family, but her new understanding of the world was irreconcilable with her father's survivalist, fundamentalist beliefs. When she refused to submit to her father's will and return to his rigid worldview and interpretation of Mormonism, Westover's relationship with most of her family members disintegrated. Instead, she used her academic literacies to examine the history of their religion in her doctoral research. All three Westover children who left the mountain—and, to some extent, their family—earned PhDs.

For Westover, the schism with her family was not primarily the result of her literacy learning; rather, the relationship ruptured because she refused to repudiate her newfound knowledge as inferior to her family's ways of knowing. In subsequent interviews, Westover has discussed the loss she felt in being cut off from her family and place of origin. Although many college students experience similar challenges when integrating new ways of encountering the world with their family's views of "how things are" or "how things should be," some families feel enriched by the new information, whereas others feel threatened by it.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the literacies that Westover learned while living at home? How might they conflict with the new ones learned away from home?
2. How might literacy learning have the potential both to separate and to unite individuals and their communities?
3. Do you think the Westovers with PhDs are more "literate" than the ones who remained at home? Explain your answer.
4. How are literacy and gaining new literacies related? Ambition? Desire for knowledge? Rebellion? Dissatisfaction? Explain your answer.
5. How do your childhood literacy experiences align with Westover's? How do they differ?
6. At this point in your college experience, have you had any encounters with ideas that conflict with the value system(s) with which you were raised, as Westover did? How do you envision navigating those differences?

## 3.3 Glance at Genre: The Literacy Narrative

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read and compose in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes.
- Match the capacities of different environments to varying rhetorical situations.

Over time, people have developed specific ways of writing for particular rhetorical situations. These distinctive ways of writing can be referred to in part as genres. You may have heard the term *genre* in reference to publishing categories, such as novels or memoirs, but the term can refer to any type of writing that conforms to specific forms and benchmarks. Many genres include stories of different kinds—for example, folktales, short stories, accounts of events, and biographies. As author Jonathan Gottschall says in his 2012 book of the same title, humankind is "the storytelling animal"; people of all cultures have engaged in telling stories, both as storytellers and as audience members. Simply put, narrative stories are essential to many genres of writing.



**FIGURE 3.7** Bronwyn Vaughan, storyteller (credit: "At the foot of the storytellers chair" by Mosman Library/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

## Exploring Narrative: Elements of Storytelling

Narratives, whether about literacy or anything else, include these key elements:

- **Plot.** Authors of narratives tell about one or more events. In fiction, the plot is the sequence of those events. In nonfiction, a plot is often referred to simply as the events, but nonfiction texts follow similar plot patterns, including exposition or introduction, a series of events leading to a climax or discovery, and events following the climax or discovery.
- **Characters.** The events in the story happen to characters, or individuals who are part of the story. In nonfiction, these characters are usually real people. The audience should feel a connection to the main character or characters. Readers may like or dislike characters, blame them or feel sorry for them, identify with them or not. Skilled writers portray characters through the use of dialogue, actions or behavior, and thoughts so that readers can understand what these individuals are like.
- **Setting.** Stories, fiction and nonfiction, take place in settings, which include locations, time periods, and the cultures in which the characters or real people are immersed.
- **Problem and Resolution.** In narratives, the characters generally encounter one or more problems. The tension caused by the problem builds to a climax. The resolution of the problem and the built-up tension usually occurs near the end of the story.
- **Story Arc.** Most narratives have a story arc—a beginning, a middle, and an end—but not necessarily in that order. The story arc, or order of events, may occur chronologically, or the story may begin in the middle of the action and explain earlier events later in the sequence.

## Specific Details and Other Conventions

To immerse the audience in the story, authors provide specific details of the scenes and action. Many authors, and teachers, call this strategy "showing, not telling." These aspects can include the following elements:

- **Sensory Details:** Full, literal or figurative descriptions of the things that the characters see, smell, hear, touch, and taste in their surroundings.
- **Dialogue:** Conversation between characters.
- **Action:** Vivid portrayal of the events in the story. Writers often use short sentences and strong verbs to indicate physical or mental action.
- **Engaging Language:** Sentence structure and word choices, including **tone** (vocal attitude of the narrator or characters), **diction** (language used by the narrator or characters), and **varied constructions** (different kinds of sentences), that provide specific, clear, and compelling information for the audience.

### Establishing the Significance

Most importantly, the audience must feel that the story has some significance. While the author's main point may only be implied, rather than stated outright as in a conventional academic essay, readers should understand the point of the story and believe that it matters.



**FIGURE 3.8** Malala Yousafzai in 2015 (credit: "Malala Yousafzai- Education for girls" by UK Department for International Development/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

For example, in the prologue to her memoir about the importance of education for girls, *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* (2013), Malala Yousafzai (b. 1997) writes, "The day when everything changed was Tuesday, 9 October 2012." Yousafzai provides reference to an exact date, the precise moment when a Taliban gunman shot her in the head because she had spoken publicly in favor of girls' right to education. Identifying the date in this way is a technique that serves a variety of purposes. This technique provides a focal point to draw the audience into the story, identifies details that serve as rising action that the audience can assume will culminate on this date, marks the setting in both time and place for the audience, and ultimately foreshadows a climax of action for the reader. The following elements, therefore, are crucial for writers of narratives to consider when creating content for their writing.

- **Audience.** Narratives are designed to appeal to specific audiences; authors choose storytelling elements, details, and language strategies to engage the target audience.
- **Purpose.** Authors may tell stories for different reasons: to entertain, to reinforce cultural norms, to educate, or to strengthen social ties. The same story may, and often does, fulfill more than one purpose.

## 3.4 Annotated Sample Reading: from Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass by Frederick Douglass

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read in several genres to understand how conventions are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Use reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in varying rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Read a diverse range of texts, attending to relationships among ideas, patterns of organization, and interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements.

## Introduction

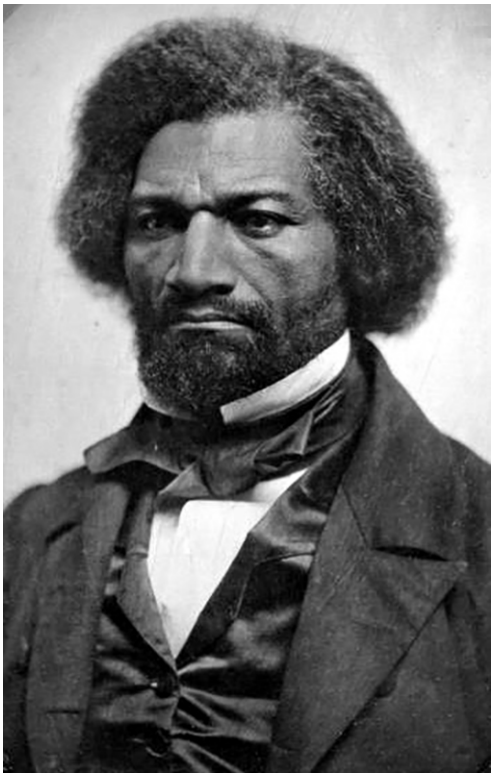


**FIGURE 3.9** Frederick Douglass: speaker, writer, abolitionist (credit: "Frederick Douglass, from an 1856 Ambrotype in the National Portrait Gallery" by Mike Licht, NotionsCapital.com/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) was born into slavery in Maryland. He never knew his father, barely knew his mother, and was separated from his grandmother at a young age. As a boy, Douglass understood there to be a connection between literacy and freedom. In the excerpt from his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, that follows, you will learn about how Douglass learned to read. By age 12, he was reading texts about the natural rights of human beings. At age 15, he began educating other enslaved people. When Douglass was 20, he met Anna Murray, whom he would later marry. Murray helped Douglass plot his escape from slavery. Dressed as a sailor, Douglass bought a train ticket northward. Within 24 hours, he arrived in New York City and declared himself free. Douglass went on to work as an activist in the abolitionist movement as well as the women's suffrage movement.

In the portion of the text included here, Douglass chooses to represent the dialogue of Mr. Auld, an enslaver who by the laws of the time owns Douglass. Douglass describes this moment with detail and accuracy, including Mr. Auld's use of a racial slur. In an interview (https://openstax.org/r/interview) with the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), Harvard professor Randall Kennedy (b. 1954), who has traced the historical evolution of the word, notes that one of its first uses, recorded in 1619, appears to have been descriptive rather than derogatory. However, by the mid-1800s, White people had appropriated the term and begun using it with its current negative connotation. In response, over time, Black people have reclaimed the word (or variations of it) for different purposes, including mirroring racism, creating irony, and reclaiming community and personal power—using the word for a contrasting purpose to the way others use it. Despite this evolution, Professor Kennedy explains that the use of the word should be accompanied by a deep understanding of one's audience and by being clear about the intention. However, even when intention is very clear and malice is not intended, harm can, and likely will, occur. Thus, Professor Kennedy cautions that all people should understand the history of the word, be aware of its potential negative effect on an audience, and therefore use it sparingly, or preferably not at all.

In the case of Mr. Auld and Douglass, Douglass gives an account of Auld's exact language in order to hold a mirror to the racism of Mr. Auld—and the reading audience of his memoir—and to emphasize the theme that literacy (or education) is one way to combat racism.

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### Literacy from Unexpected Sources

*From the title and from Douglass's use of pronoun I, you know this work is autobiographical and therefore written from the first-person point of view.*

> *[excerpt begins with first full paragraph on page 33 and ends on page 34 where the paragraph ends]*

> Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read.

*Douglass describes the background situation and the culture of the time, which he will defy in his quest for literacy. The word choice in his narration of events indicates that he is writing for an educated audience.*

> To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy."

*In sharing this part of the narrative, Douglass underscores the importance of literacy. He provides a description of Mr. Auld, a slaveholder, who seeks to impose illiteracy as a means to oppress others. In this description of Mr. Auld's reaction, Douglass shows that slaveholders feared the power that enslaved people would have if they could read and write.*

*Douglass provides the details of Auld's dialogue not only because it is a convention of narrative genre but also because it demonstrates the purpose and motivation for his forthcoming pursuit of literacy. We have chosen to maintain the authenticity of the original text by using the language that Douglass offers to quote Mr. Auld's dialogue because it both provides context for the rhetorical situation and underscores the value of the attainment of literacy for Douglass. However, contemporary audiences must understand that this language should be uttered only under very narrow circumstances in any current rhetorical situation. In general, it is best to avoid its use.*

> These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I the least expected it. Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master.

*In this reflection, Douglass has a definitive and transformative moment with reading and writing. The moment that sparked a desire for literacy is a common feature in literacy narratives, particularly those of enslaved people. In that moment, he understood the value of literacy and its life-changing possibilities; that transformative moment is a central part of the arc of this literacy narrative.*

> Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he was uttering. It gave me the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read. What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn. In learning to read, I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly aid of my mistress. I acknowledge the benefit of both.

*Douglass articulates that this moment changed his relationship to literacy and ignited a purposeful engagement with language and learning that would last throughout his long life. The rhythm, sentence structure, and poetic phrasing in this reflection provide further evidence that Douglass, over the course of his life, actively pursued and mastered language after having this experience with Mr. Auld.*

> *[excerpt continues with the beginning of Chapter 7 on page 36 and ends with the end of the paragraph at the top of page 39]*

> [In Chapter 7, the narrative continues] I lived in Master Hugh's family about seven years. During this time, I succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was compelled to resort to various stratagems. I had no regular teacher. My mistress, who had kindly commenced to instruct me, had, in compliance with the advice and direction of her husband, not only ceased to instruct, but had set her face against my being instructed by any one else. It is due, however, to my mistress to say of her, that she did not adopt this course of treatment immediately. She at first lacked the depravity indispensable to shutting me up in mental darkness. It was at least necessary for her to have some training in the exercise of irresponsible power, to make her equal to the task of treating me as though I were a brute.

> My mistress was, as I have said, a kind and tender-hearted woman; and in the simplicity of her soul she commenced, when I first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another. In entering upon the duties of a slaveholder, she did not seem to perceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere chattel, and that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong, but dangerously so. Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was a pious, warm, and tender-hearted woman. There was no sorrow or suffering for which she had not a tear. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach. Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness. The first step in her downward course was in her ceasing to instruct me. She now commenced to practise her husband's precepts. She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself.

*Douglass describes in detail a person in his life and his relationship to her. He uses specific diction to describe her kindness and to help readers get to know her—a "tear" for the "suffering"; "bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner."*

> She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had commanded; she seemed anxious to do better. Nothing seemed to make her more angry than to see me with a newspaper. She seemed to think that here lay the danger. I have had her rush at me with a face made all up of fury, and snatch from me a newspaper, in a manner that fully revealed her apprehension. She was an apt woman; and a little experience soon demonstrated, to her satisfaction, that education and slavery were incompatible with each other.

*The fact that Douglass can understand the harm caused by the institution of slavery to slaveholders as well as to enslaved people shows a level of sophistication in thought, identifies the complexity and detriment of this historical period, and demonstrates an acute awareness of the rhetorical situation, especially for his audience for this text.*

*The way that he articulates compassion for the slaveholders, despite their ill treatment of him, would create empathy in his readers and possibly provide a revelation for his audience.*

> From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book, and was at once called to give an account of myself. All this, however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the *inch*, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the *ell*.

*Once again, Douglass underscores the value that literacy has for transforming the lived experiences of enslaved people. The reference to the inch and the ell circles back to Mr. Auld's warnings and recalls the impact of that moment on his life.*

> The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent of errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids;—not that it would injure me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country.

*Douglass comments on the culture of the time, which still permitted slavery; he is sensitive to the fact that these boys might be embarrassed by their participation in unacceptable, though humanitarian, behavior. His audience will also recognize the irony in his tone when he writes that it is "an unpardonable offense to teach slaves . . . in this Christian country." Such behavior is surely "unchristian."*

> It is enough to say of the dear little fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard. I used to talk this matter of slavery over with them. I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. "You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, *but I am a slave for life*! Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?" These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free.

*Douglass pursues and attains literacy not only for his own benefit; his knowledge also allows him to begin to instruct, as well as advocate for, those around him. Douglass's use of language and his understanding of the rhetorical situation give the audience evidence of the power of literacy for all people, round out the arc of his narrative, and provide a resolution.*

## Discussion Questions

1. Based on what you have learned about literacy thus far, would you consider this excerpt from Frederick Douglass's autobiography a literacy narrative? Explain your response by providing evidence from Douglass's text.
2. How do Douglass's descriptions of Mr. and Mrs. Auld make these characters come to life for the reader?
3. What do Douglass's tone, use of language, and commentary reveal about him and why literacy was so important?
4. African American storytelling features a common trope (device) of a trickster character. The trickster is characterized by intellect or secret knowledge that they use to defy convention. How does Douglass play

the role of trickster in this excerpt from his narrative, and what impact does this rhetorical device have on the reading audience?

5. What elements of Douglass's narrative might help you develop your own narrative about literacy?

## 3.5 Writing Process: Tracing the Beginnings of Literacy

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Develop a writing project through multiple drafts.
- Use composing for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical, cultural, and language situations.
- Give and act on productive feedback to works in progress.
- Benefit from the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.
- Use language structures, including multilingual structures, grammar, punctuation, and spelling, during the processes of composing and revising.

Many inexperienced writers imagine that "good" writers compose their texts all at once, from beginning to end, and need only a small amount of attention to polish the grammar and punctuation before arriving at a final draft. In reality, however, the **writing process** (steps for creating a finished composition) is typically **recursive**. That is, it repeats steps multiple times, not necessarily in the same order, and the process is more messy than linear or systematic. You can think of the writing process in terms of these broad categories:

- **Prewriting.** You will end up with a stronger composition if you do some work before you begin writing. Before putting complete sentences on a page, take some time to think about the rhetorical situation for your writing, gather your thoughts, and consider how you might arrange your ideas.
- **Drafting.** In the past, you may have dedicated most of your writing time to drafting, or putting words into a document. When you have strong prewriting and revision habits, however, drafting is often a smaller portion of the writing process.
- **Peer Review.** Almost all strong writers rely on feedback from others, whether peers, instructors, or editors. Your instructor may guide you in some peer review exercises to complete with your classmates, or you might choose to consult with your university's writing center. When others give you clear, honest feedback on your draft, you can use that information to strengthen your piece.
- **Revision.** After you have a draft, carefully consider how to make it more effective in reaching the audience and fulfilling its purpose. You can make changes that affect the piece as a whole; such changes are often called global revisions. You can also make changes that affect only the meaning of a sentence or a word; these changes can be called local revisions.

### Summary of Assignment: Independent Literacy Narrative

In this assignment, you will write an essay in which you offer a developed narrative about an aspect of your literacy practice or experience. Consider some of these questions to generate ideas for writing: *What literacies and learning experiences have had profound effects on your life? When did this engagement occur? Where were you? Were there other participants? Have you told this story before? If so, how often, and why do you think you return to it? Has this engagement shaped your current literacy practices? Will it shape your practices going forward?*

The development of your literacy experiences can take multiple paths. If you use the tools provided in this section, you will be able to effectively compose a unique literacy narrative that reflects your identities and experiences. The questions prompting your writing in this section can help you begin to develop an independent literacy narrative. The next section, on community literacy narratives, helps you consider your composition course community and ways to think about your shared experiences around literacy. The following section, on literacy narrative research, guides you to a database of literacy narratives that offer an

opportunity to analyze the ways in which others in the academic community have reflected on their literacy experiences. Further sections will guide you through the development and organization of your work as you navigate this genre.

***Another Lens 1.*** As an alternative to an individual literacy narrative, members of your composition course community can develop a set of interview questions that will allow you to learn more about each other's past and present experiences with literacy. After the community has determined what the interview questions will be, choose a partner from the composition community to work with on this assignment; alternatively, your instructor may assign partners for the class. Using the interview questions you have discussed and developed, you will conduct an interview with your partner, and they with you. Your instructor will allow you and your peers to record and transcribe one another's responses and post them where all students in the community have access. After you have completed, transcribed, and posted your interviews, everyone will closely examine each of their peers' interviews and look for recurring themes as well as unique aspects of the narratives shared. This assignment will inevitably illuminate both the communal nature and the unique, independent experiences of literacy engagement.

***Another Lens 2.*** Using DALN (https://openstax.org/r/daln), perform a keyword search for literacy narratives on one aspect or area of concentration that interests you, such as music, dance, or poetry. Select two or more narratives from the archive to read and analyze. Read and annotate each narrative, and then think about a unique position you can take when discussing these stories. Use these questions to guide the development of your stance: *Do you have experiences in this concentrated area of literacy? If so, how do your experiences intersect with or depart from the ones you are reading? What common themes, if any, do these narratives share? What do these narratives reveal about literacy practices in general and about this area of concentration in particular?*

## Quick Launch: Defining Your Rhetorical Situation, Generating Ideas, and Organizing

When you are writing a literacy narrative, think about

- your audience and purpose for writing;
- the ideas and experiences that best reflect your encounters with various literacies; and
- the order in which you would like to present your information.

### The Rhetorical Situation

A **rhetorical situation** occurs every time anyone communicates with anyone else. To prepare to write your literacy narrative, use a graphic organizer like Table 3.1 to outline the rhetorical situation by addressing the following aspects:

| Rhetorical Situation Element | Brainstorming Questions | Examples | Your Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Author** (who) | Which of your identities will you inhabit as you write this assignment? | Student in this class?<br>Member of a specific family?<br>Part of a particular cultural group?<br>Person who loves a certain literacy? | |
| **Message** (what) | What do you want to communicate? | Significance of a particular literacy?<br>Meaning of a given literacy in my life? | |
| **Audience** (to whom) | Who is your primary audience? How will you shape your writing to best connect with this audience? Do you need to consider any secondary audiences? | My class community?<br>My instructor?<br>Will I want to share this narrative with others outside of class? If so, with whom?<br>How will I shape my language to communicate with these audiences? | |
| **Purpose** (why) | Earning a grade is a valid purpose, but what other reasons do you have for writing this piece? | Informing readers about a specific literacy or about my community partner?<br>Persuading readers to see a literacy or my community partner differently?<br>Entertaining readers?<br>Reflecting on a deeper meaning of a literacy or literacy experience? | |

**TABLE 3.1**

| Rhetorical Situation Element | Brainstorming Questions | Examples | Your Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Means** (how) | Your instructor will provide the means for this assignment: write a text that conforms to the expectations of the literacy narrative genre, and submit it in the way the instructor expects. | Given: literacy narrative<br>May I include visual elements, and do I want to do so?<br>Should my drafts and final submission be printed or submitted electronically?<br>What program should I use to create the document (Microsoft Word, for example)?<br>How and when will I submit drafts in progress and the final draft? | |
| **Context** (when/ where) | How will the time period or location change the way you develop your piece? | What is happening right now in my city, county, state, area, or nation or the world that relates to this narrative?<br>Have any new literacies appeared recently that relate to my narrative?<br>Does anything about my college or university connect with this piece of writing? | |
| **Culture** (community) | What social, cultural, or environmental assumptions do you, your subject, or your audience have? | How will I negotiate between my identity and communication style and the expectations of others? | |

**TABLE 3.1**

### Generating Ideas



In addition to these notes, write a few ideas relating to your literacy experiences. Feel free to use bullet points or incomplete sentences.

- What instructors, formal or informal, helped or hindered you in learning literacies?
- Which of your literacies feel(s) most comfortable?
- Which literacy experiences have transformed you?
- Do you use specialized language to signal your identity as part of a community or cultural group?
- After you look back over your notes, what is the most compelling story about a literacy or literacy experience that you can share, and what is the significance of that story?

### Organizing

In one last step before beginning to draft your literacy narrative, think visually about how you will put the pieces together.

- Where will you begin and end your literacy narrative, and what is your story arc? Will you jump right into some richly described action, or will you set the scene for the reader by describing an important story locale first?
- What tension will the story resolve?
- What specific sensory details, dialogue, and action will you include?
- What vignettes, or small scenes, will you include, and in what order should the audience encounter them?
- Some of your paragraphs will "show" scenes to your readers, and some of your paragraphs will "tell" your readers explanatory information. After you decide what elements to show to your readers through vivid descriptions and what elements you will inform your readers about, decide how to order those elements within your draft.
- Review the specific writing prompt given in the summary of the assignment, and make any additional notes needed in response to that material. Use visual organizers in such as those presented in Figure 3.10 through Figure 3.13 to develop the plan for your draft:

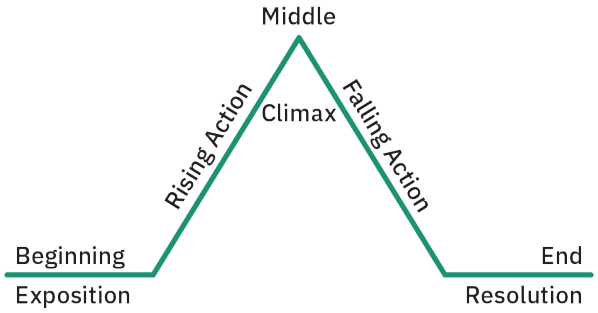



**FIGURE 3.10** Plot diagram (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)




**FIGURE 3.11** Storyboard (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

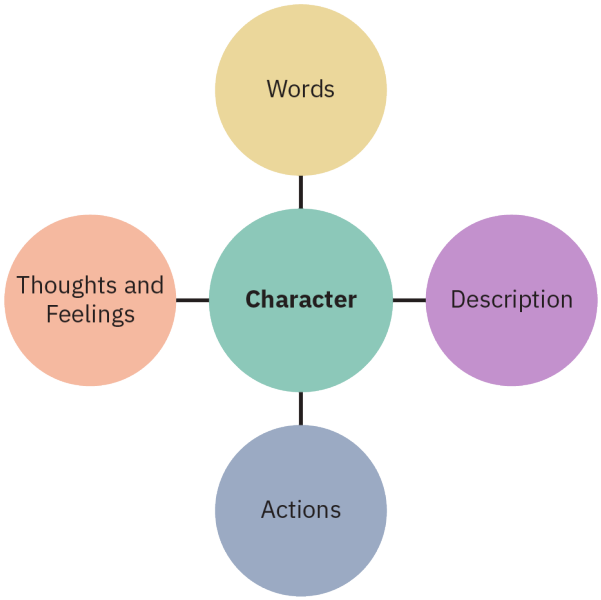



**FIGURE 3.12** Web diagram (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

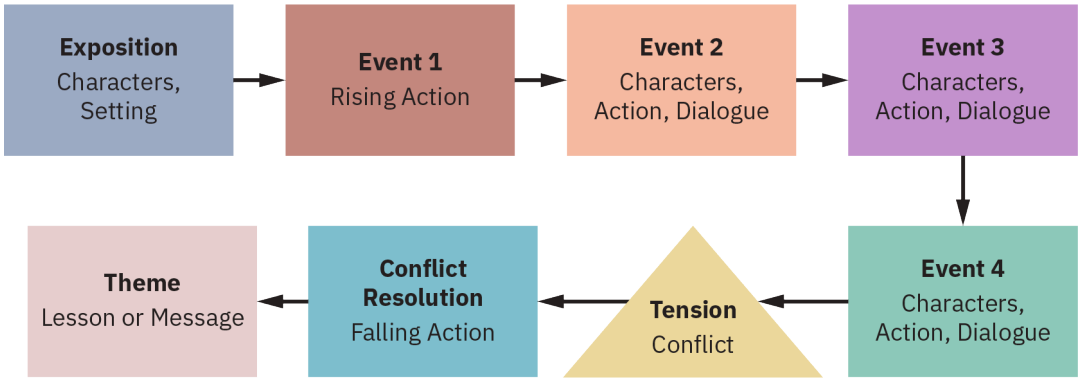



**FIGURE 3.13** Graphic sequence chart (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

Use the graphic organizer structure above that best helps you establish the narrative arc for your literacy story, including the following elements:

- **Beginning.** Set the scene by providing information about the characters, setting (where and when the narrative takes place), culture, background, and situation.
- **Rising Action.** In each successive section, whether it is a paragraph or more, add dialogue and other details to make your story vivid and engaging for readers so that they will want to continue reading. Tell your story in an order that makes sense and is clear to readers.
- **Climax.** At this point, show what finally happened to clinch the experience. *How did the literacy experience finally take hold? Or why didn't it? What happened at this "climactic" moment?*
- **Falling Action.** This is the part where the tension is released and you have achieved—or not—what you set out to do. This section may be quite short, as it may simply describe a new feeling or reaction. It leads directly to the next section, which may be more reflective.
- **Resolution.** This is a reflective portion. *How has this new literacy affected you? How do you view things differently? How do you think it affected the person who taught you or others with whom you are close?*

## Drafting: Writing from Personal Experience and Observation

Now that you have planned your literacy narrative, you are ready to begin drafting. If you have been thoughtful in preparing to write, drafting usually proceeds quickly and smoothly. Use your notes to guide you in composing the first draft. As you write about specific events and scenes, create a rich picture for your reader by using concrete, sensory details and specific rather than general nouns as shown in Table 3.2.

| | Person | Place | Thing | Idea |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **General** | girl | park | game | competition |
| **Less Specific** | schoolmate | bench | chess | tournament |
| **More Specific** | Sasha | gaming area | board | semifinal match |
| **Sensory** | tall, dark-haired Sasha | quiet, tree-shaded gaming area | glossy black and white board | popcorn-scented semifinal match |

**TABLE 3.2**

### Using Frederick Douglass's Text as a Drafting Model

As Douglass does, create your literacy narrative from your recollections of people, places, things, and events. Reread the following passage.

> The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent of errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids;—not that it would injure me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country. It is enough to say of the dear little fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard. I used to talk this matter of slavery over with them. I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. "You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, *but I am a slave for life*! Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?" These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free.

In this selection from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, elements of the literacy narrative genre as explained in Glance at Genre: The Literacy Narrative are evident. First, Douglass introduces additional characters who help him resolve his earlier complication of being prevented from learning to read by the Aulds. The interaction he records here reiterates the larger conflict of the narrative: Douglass's continuing enslavement. Although he does not give many scenic details, few more would be needed, for he places the action on the street near a shipyard, thereby giving an indication of the surroundings. Douglass presents his own words in dialogue to reinforce for readers that he knows how to speak and write in the ways that white people with means were taught at the time. In this piece, set against the backdrop of a culture that insisted on viewing enslaved people as "brutes," Douglass demonstrates his dignity by displaying his facility with language and his humanity by offering bread to hungry children who have more freedom and opportunity, but less food, than he does.



To create a draft that draws on multiple elements of storytelling, as this selection from Douglass does, you may need to generate ideas for additional scenes, or you may need to revisit a particular place so that you can provide concrete and sensory details for your readers. Refer to the storyboarding, web diagram, and plot flow charts in the "Organizing" section above to further develop your draft.

### Another Way to Draft the Literacy Narrative

Read the literacy narrative by American author and educator Helen Keller (1880–1968). An Alabama native, Keller lost both sight and hearing after a serious illness as a young child. The selection relates a transformational literacy moment in her life, when Anne Sullivan (1866–1936), Keller's teacher, helps her understand the connection between hand-spelled words and physical items. Keller's literacies, along with heroic support from her teacher, later enabled her to complete college and tour as an activist and lecturer.



**FIGURE 3.14** Helen Keller with Anne Sullivan, July 1888 (credit: "Helen Keller with Anne Sullivan in July 1888" by Family member of Thaxter P. Spencer/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

> The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrasts between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March, 1887, three months before I was seven years old.

*The introduction sketches the boundaries of this literacy narrative by noting that the arrival of a teacher separated Keller's life into two distinct parts.*

> On the afternoon of that eventful day, I stood on the porch, dumb, expectant. I guessed vaguely from my mother's signs and from the hurrying to and fro in the house that something unusual was about to happen, so I went to the door and waited on the steps. The afternoon sun penetrated the mass of honeysuckle that covered the porch, and fell on my upturned face. My fingers lingered almost unconsciously on the familiar leaves and blossoms which had just come forth to greet the sweet southern spring. I did not know what the future held of marvel or surprise for me. Anger and bitterness had preyed upon me continually for weeks and a deep languor had succeeded this passionate struggle.

*This paragraph helps establish the problem to be resolved in this short narrative: Keller is "dumb" but "expectant." Additionally, the three characters in this section have been introduced—mother, teacher, and Keller herself—though the audience has few details yet about any of them. The author provides some sensory details in this paragraph, however, including her mother's movements, the afternoon sun, and the tactile feeling of the honeysuckle.*

> Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding-line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding-line, and had no way of knowing how near the harbour was. "Light! give me light!" was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.

*When Keller's autobiography was originally written, the audience was readers of the Ladies' Home Journal, a monthly magazine popular with homemakers; Keller's autobiography was published in monthly installments. Keller*

*appeals to this audience with her allusions to Judeo-Christian imagery and an evocative writing style. While her wording may seem a bit overdone today, such phrasing would have been familiar to her contemporary readers. A year later, in 1903, Keller's story was published as a book and expanded to a much wider audience.*

> I felt approaching footsteps, I stretched out my hand as I supposed to my mother. Some one took it, and I was caught up and held close in the arms of her who had come to reveal all things to me, and, more than all things else, to love me.

*The subject of love often appears in the literacy narrative genre, whether love of a certain skill or pastime or love for a relative or teacher who taught a certain literacy.*

> The morning after my teacher came she led me into her room and gave me a doll. The little blind children at the Perkins Institution had sent it and Laura Bridgman had dressed it; but I did not know this until afterward. When I had played with it a little while, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled into my hand the word "d-o-l-l." I was at once interested in this finger play and tried to imitate it. When I finally succeeded in making the letters correctly I was flushed with childish pleasure and pride. Running downstairs to my mother I held up my hand and made the letters for doll. I did not know that I was spelling a word or even that words existed; I was simply making my fingers go in monkey-like imitation. In the days that followed I learned to spell in this uncomprehending way a great many words, among them pin, hat, cup and a few verbs like sit, stand and walk. But my teacher had been with me several weeks before I understood that everything has a name.

*With the introduction of finger spelling, this paragraph and the next present the rising action building toward the climax of this story.*

> One day, while I was playing with my new doll, Miss Sullivan put my big rag doll into my lap also, spelled "d-o-l-l" and tried to make me understand that "d-o-l-l" applied to both. Earlier in the day we had had a tussle over the words "m-u-g" and "w-a-t-e-r." Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that "m-u-g" is mug and that "w-a-t-e-r" is water, but I persisted in confounding the two. In despair she had dropped the subject for the time, only to renew it at the first opportunity. I became impatient at her repeated attempts and, seizing the new doll, I dashed it upon the floor. I was keenly delighted when I felt the fragments of the broken doll at my feet. Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst. I had not loved the doll. In the still, dark world in which I lived there was no strong sentiment or tenderness. I felt my teacher sweep the fragments to one side of the hearth, and I had a sense of satisfaction that the cause of my discomfort was removed. She brought me my hat, and I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine. This thought, if a wordless sensation may be called a thought, made me hop and skip with pleasure.

*In Keller's "still, dark world," she offers little indication of setting, giving the audience only glimpses of her surroundings: honeysuckle, a house with interior stairs, and a hearth in her teacher's room. Because she could not converse at the time, the only dialogue in this story appears in the form of the finger-spelled words. Plot tensions rise with Keller's action of breaking the doll.*

> We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Some one was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

*Keller's literacy in finger spelling not only laid the foundation for her future literacies in reading, writing, and speaking but also provided her foundational access to language itself. This paragraph provides the climax of this story as well as the resolution for the problem introduced earlier; having been introduced to language, Keller is no longer "dumb" (though she cannot yet speak).*

> I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange, new sight that had come to me. On entering the door I remembered the doll I had broken. I felt my way to the hearth and picked up the pieces. I tried vainly to put them together. Then my eyes filled with tears; for I realized what I had done, and for the first time I felt repentance and sorrow.

> I learned a great many new words that day. I do not remember what they all were; but I do know that mother, father, sister, teacher were among them—words that were to make the world blossom for me, "like Aaron's rod, with flowers." It would have been difficult to find a happier child than I was as I lay in my crib at the close of that eventful day and lived over the joys it had brought me, and for the first time longed for a new day to come.

*The final two paragraphs offer falling action following the dramatic climax.*

Consider the ways in which Douglass's account and Keller's account are stylistically similar and different. Both use figurative language—"bread of knowledge"—and make allusions to the Christian tradition. However, Douglass uses dialogue to illustrate a social disparity, whereas Keller's transformation and her language are largely internal. You should make use of the strategies that best fit your own literacy narrative as shown in Table 3.3.

| Writing Strategy | Examples and Explanation | Try It |
|---|---|---|
| Reflective diction | Remember<br>Filled with wonder<br>Consider<br>Guessed vaguely<br>Unconsciously<br>Uncomprehending<br>Confounding<br>*Keller uses these words to suggest that the transformation is mental rather than physical.* | In your literacy narrative, where does the shift in being occur? Is it mental, emotional, spiritual, or physical? Is it social, political, or cultural?<br>What words might you use throughout your draft to convey this idea?<br>Create a word bank from which to draw. |
| Figurative language (such as comparison through metaphor and simile) | Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding-line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding-line, and had no way of knowing how near the harbour was. "Light! give me light!" was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.<br>*Keller's comparison between a ship lost in the fog and her preliterate life provides insight into her mental state.* | Complete the following sentence frames:<br>My literary practice or experience is like _____.<br>My literary practice or experience is as _____ as _____.<br>My literary practice or experience is a(n) _____ (insert a noun) because _____.<br>Add versions of some or all of these sentences to your draft. |

**TABLE 3.3**

| Writing Strategy | Examples and Explanation | Try It |
|---|---|---|
| Sensory language | We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered.<br><br>As the cool stream gushed over one hand, she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly.<br><br>*Keller involves readers in the experience by appealing to their senses.* | Complete the following sentence:<br><br>My literary practice or experience . . .<br><br>. . . sounds like _____.<br><br>. . . smells like _____.<br><br>. . . tastes like _____.<br><br>. . . feels like _____.<br><br>. . . looks like _____.<br><br>Add versions of some or all of these sentences to your draft. |

**TABLE 3.3**

| Writing Strategy | Examples and Explanation | Try It |
|---|---|---|
| Allusion | "like Aaron's rod, with flowers"<br>*Keller equates her literacy with a biblical miracle.* | Complete the following sentences:<br>My literary practice or experience reminds me of . . .<br>. . . the book _____.<br>. . . the movie _____.<br>. . . the story _____.<br>. . . the TV show _____.<br>. . . the play _____.<br>. . . the song _____.<br>Add versions of some or all these sentences to your draft. |

**TABLE 3.3**

| Writing Strategy | Examples and Explanation | Try It |
|---|---|---|
| Shift in perception | On the afternoon of that eventful day, I stood on the porch, dumb, expectant. . . . That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free!<br>*Keller shifts from expectancy to awakening through literacy.* | Complete the following sentence:<br>My literary practice or experience caused me to shift from _____ to _____.<br>Add a version of this sentence to your draft. |
| Theme | "Light! give me light!" was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.<br>*Keller equates her literacy with light and then love.* | Complete the following sentence:<br>My literary practice or experience means _____ to me.<br>Add a version of this sentence to your draft. |

**TABLE 3.3**

## Peer Review: Giving Specific Praise and Constructive Feedback

Although the writing process does not always occur in a prescribed sequence (you can move among steps of the process in a variety of ways), participating in peer review is a necessary part of the writing process. Having the response and feedback of an outside reader can help you shape your writing into work that makes you proud. A peer review occurs when someone at your level (a peer) offers an evaluation of your writing. Instructors aid in this process by giving you and your peers judgment criteria and guidelines to follow, and the feedback of the reader should help you revise your writing before your instructor evaluates it and offers a grade.

When given the opportunity to engage in a peer review activity, use the following steps to provide your peers with effective, evidence-based feedback for their writing.

- Review all the criteria and guidelines for the assignment.
- Read the writing all the way through carefully before offering any feedback.
- Read the peer review exercise, tool, or instrument provided by the instructor.
- Apply and complete the peer review exercise while rereading the work.
- Provide feedback to your peer. Your comments should focus on these questions:
  - In what ways are the organization and coherence of the narrative logical and clear so that you can follow events?
  - What, if anything, do you not understand or need further explanation about?
  - What do you want to know more about?

Following these steps will give your reading the necessary context and situate your feedback within the criteria and guidelines of the assignment. This process will be critical to the revision process for your peer. In addition, reading and evaluating the work of another, and using the criteria and guidelines for that assignment, will strengthen your writing skills and help you when you revise your own work.

Before you can engage in a successful peer review exercise, you must develop a first draft and carefully read it to determine whether you need to make any of these changes.

- On a global, or structural, level, do you need to insert material, delete tangents, or rearrange some sections? Make the changes necessary to strengthen the coherence of your draft as whole
- On a local, or surface, level, check for grammar, punctuation, and capitalization errors.

After you have done a thorough check of your own work, you are ready to share the draft of your literacy narrative with a peer review partner or group. Depending on the guidance of your instructor, you may use a peer review activity such as the one provided in Table 3.4 to evaluate the literacy narrative and provide feedback to your partner or group members.

**Guided Peer Review Activity**

| Essay Criteria | Evidence | Suggestion for Revision |
|---|---|---|
| The narrative engages the identity of the writer. | List evidence of the writer's identity in the narrative:<br>1.<br>2.<br>3. | The writer could strengthen the ways in which identity is represented in the narrative by making the following changes:<br>1.<br>2.<br>3. |
| The narrative is written from a particular viewpoint or perspective. | List evidence that indicates the viewpoint or perspective of the narrative:<br>1.<br>2.<br>3. | The writer could develop a (stronger) viewpoint or perspective in the narrative by making the following changes:<br>1.<br>2.<br>3. |
| The narrative has moments that are centered on either a past or present literacy experience. | Provide evidence from the narrative of past or present literacy experience(s):<br>1.<br>2.<br>3. | The narrative could be better developed if the following literacy experience(s) were included or expanded:<br>1.<br>2.<br>3. |
| The narrative has a literacy experience that is the focus of the writing. | Identify the literacy experience that is the focus of the narrative: | The focal literacy experience would be stronger with the following details and/or development:<br>1.<br>2.<br>3. |

**TABLE 3.4**

| Essay Criteria | Evidence | Suggestion for Revision |
|---|---|---|
| The narrative identifies social, cultural, or environmental influences on the literacy experience(s). | List the ways in which the narrative includes social, cultural, or environmental influences on the literacy experience(s):<br>1.<br>2.<br>3. | The literacy narrative would be stronger if the experiences included these details about social, cultural, or environmental influences:<br>1.<br>2.<br>3. |
| The details of the narrative include descriptions of people, places, things, and events. | Identify examples within the narrative that provide details about people, places, things, and events:<br>1.<br>2.<br>3. | The narrative would be stronger if the following details about people, places, things, and events were more fully developed:<br>1.<br>2.<br>3. |
| The elements of the rhetorical situation—author, message, audience, purpose, means, context, and culture—are addressed and included in the essay. | List elements of the rhetorical situation included in the narrative:<br>• Author<br>• Message<br>• Audience<br>• Purpose<br>• Means<br>• Context<br>• Culture | The narrative would be more effective if the following elements of the rhetorical situation were more fully developed and provided greater details (list all that apply):<br>• Author<br>• Message<br>• Audience<br>• Purpose<br>• Means<br>• Context<br>• Culture |

**TABLE 3.4**

After you and your partner have completed the written guided exercise, spend some time talking about the elements of the essay and the feedback that you are giving one another. Talk through the suggestions, and ask questions about issues that arise during your assessment of one another's writing.

## Revising: Adding and Deleting Information

After you have completed the peer review exercise and received the related constructive feedback, you are ready to revise your literacy narrative in preparation for submission to your instructor for grading and a possible publication venue. (See "Spotlight on . . . the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (DALN).") The peer review exercise guided you and your partner or group members through a thorough assessment of your narratives. If you are not able to participate in peer review, make an appointment with your campus writing center to receive similar feedback. After getting responses from peers or the writing center, the next step is to take that feedback and make changes to your draft.

Look at the criteria in the first row of the peer review chart above, and then look at the evidence for that criteria that your partner listed. *Does your reviewer's understanding of the parts of your essay match your own? Where*

*are the disconnects between what you intended for a section of your writing and what your reviewer has read and understood?* These points of disconnect are good places to begin your revisions. Your peer reviewers represent your audience, so if they experience some misunderstandings in the reading of your narrative, you will want to make changes to clarify your writing.

Imagine you have written a literacy narrative in which you discuss the difficulty of learning to read music. Imagine the opening paragraph contains the following sentence: "I have always had a hard time reading music." Your peer reviewer might list in column 2, for the first criterion on engaging identity, that you read music, and that is all. Such a brief and limited assessment might lead your partner to suggest in column 3 that you strengthen your identity by answering the following questions:

- When and why did you begin trying to learn to read music?
- Do you come from a musical background?
- Did you have a music reading teacher, or are you self-taught?
- What are your specific challenges in reading music?

During the discussion after the written peer review, you might share the details of your learning to play the piano: that you were five years old and that your grandmother was your teacher. Your revision for this opening paragraph might then include a sentence such as the following: "I have struggled to read music since I began playing piano at five years old, when my grandmother, our church musician, gave me my first lesson." This process demonstrates the way in which the peer review should lead to substantive change and revision in your writing.

You will want to read and discuss the details of the evidence (column 2) and suggestions (column 3) for each of the above criteria (column 1) with your peer review partner. On the basis of your partner's assessment—and your own judgment, of course—make any necessary revisions before submitting your literacy narrative for grading. The more time you take to go through this process, the more developed and comprehensive your writing will be. Some people may feel anxious about having others read their work, but the scenario provided above demonstrates the valuable ways in which a preliminary reading audience can help improve the narrative.

## 3.6 Editing Focus: Sentence Structure

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Use language structures, including multilingual structures, grammar, punctuation, and spelling, during the process of editing.
- Develop flexible strategies for drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, and editing.
- Use composing processes and tools as a means to discover and reconsider ideas.

After writing a draft of your literacy narrative and revising it to strengthen the overall structure and content of the text, you are ready to pay closer attention to individual sentences within it. This section offers several strategies for improving your sentences to communicate meaning more effectively to your audience and to make the reading experience more engaging.

### Sentence Combining

**Sentence combining** is an often-used revision strategy that can completely transform a narrative. When writers compose early drafts with many short sentences rather than more sophisticated efforts at varied or complex sentence construction, the writing appears choppy and disjointed. Once you have a complete draft of your essay, consider combining sentences to provide your audience with more effective and nuanced ways of reading your work. You can combine short, repetitive sentences into a simple sentence with a compound predicate or subject, as in the first example below. Or you can combine the shorter sentences into a complex sentence with a dependent clause, as in the second example. See Clear and Effective Sentences for more

information about effective sentences and sentence structure.

**1a.** I learned to play piano. I was five years old. Learning to play piano is my literacy experience. Memorizing the location of the keys is also my literacy experience.

**1b.** Learning to play piano at the age of five and memorizing the location of the keys are my literacy experiences.

**2a.** I learned to read in first grade. Learning to read made me want to be a teacher. I want to share my experience with reading with future first graders.

**2b.** Learning to read as a first grader made me want to become a teacher so that I could share my experiences with future first graders.

Read through the draft of your essay, and look for sentences that are closely related enough that they can be combined for richer meaning. However, keep in mind that short sentences can be effective in your writing, especially when you want to create realistic dialogue or show action. Strive to create a balance among sentence lengths and types to engage your audience. Remember, too, that the best test of whether words are pulling their own weight and providing rhythm, balance, and emphasis is to read the passage aloud. Let your ear tell you what is sharp and clear and what could benefit from editing.

## Revising Common Sentence Patterns for More Effective Communication

If you have often been told to make your sentences clearer, less wordy, or both, but you do not know where to start, this section offers some quick strategies to address some of the most common issues that contribute to unclear or wordy writing.

***Defining* You *and* This.** One common pattern that makes writing less clear is the use of *you* to mean "a random person" rather than "you," the audience. Here is an example, followed by a revision.

**1a.** You must plan your document carefully to connect with your audience.

**1b.** Writers must plan their documents carefully to connect with their audiences.

This sentence is stronger with the revision clearly indicating who needs to plan their writing. You might be writing a piece addressed directly to the audience, as this textbook is. If so, be careful to distinguish between the use of *you* to mean your specific audience—appropriate when directly addressing an audience—and a hazier use of *you* that needs clarification. Use the "find" function to search your document for the word *you*, and then replace every unclear *you* with a definite noun.

Another pattern affecting the clarity of written work is using the word *this* on its own without an explanation of what "this" is. Here is an example, along with its revision.

**1a.** This can be confusing to the reader.

**1b.** This lack of explanation can be confusing to the reader.

In the first sentence, the audience wonders, "This what?" In the second sentence, the writer simply adds a noun phrase to explain, and readers will appreciate the clarification. Use the "find" function to search your document for *this*, and make sure you have defined or explained *this* in all cases.

***Revising Sentences to Change* There are / There is *or* It is.** Readers relate better to sentences that feature a "doer"—someone or something performing an action—and an "action"—the activity of the doer. For this reason, writing that overuses the sentence patterns *There are . . . / There is . . .* and *It is . . .* in place of a doer and action can seem unclear, remote, or dull for the reader. As you revise such sentences, you may find at times that you need to insert a doer or an action; one or both may be missing from the first version of the sentence. Here is one example, with a suggested revision.

**1a**. There are many strategies to revise written work.

**1b.** Authors employ many strategies to revise written work.

In the first sentence, the doer ("authors") is implied, but the second sentence includes a doer for a more reader-friendly version.

Sentences using the *It is . . .* pattern need similar attention to present a doer and an action to the reader. Here is one example and revision.

**1a.** It is challenging and rewarding to revise a composition.

**1b.** I feel challenged and rewarded when revising a composition.

Again, the first sentence needs an agent to do the sentence's actions. Use the "find" function to search your document for "there are," "there is," and "it is," and replace these weaker sentence constructions with doers and actions wherever possible.

***Eliminating Wordiness.*** To begin, look at the sentences below to get a sense of what wordiness is. Eliminating wordiness should not alter or omit information. In these sentences, the information remains the same, but the edited sentence shows a trimmed-down version. *There was* and *that* are eliminated, as is the unnecessary adverb *really*; *was shining* becomes *shone*; and the phrase *waves in the ocean* becomes *ocean waves*.

**1a.** There was a really bright light that was shining on the waves in the ocean.

**1b.** A bright light shone on the ocean waves.

In general, try to cut out words that do not add meaning, rhythm, or emphasis. Sentences clogged with unnecessary words often cause readers to lose interest, patience, and comprehension. Edit sentences to include concrete nouns and action verbs—or "doers" and "actions," as described above. Additionally, choosing modifiers carefully will help you weed out unnecessary words. Look at the following sentences, which all say essentially the same thing. However, you will see some changes and omissions.

- In almost every situation that I can think of, except with few exceptions, it will make good sense for you to look for as many places as possible to cut out needless, redundant, and repetitive words from the papers and reports, paragraphs and sentences you write for college assignments. (49 words)
- In most situations, it makes good sense to cut out needless words from your college papers. (16 words)
- Whenever possible, omit needless words from your writing. (8 words)
- Omit needless words. (3 words)

The 49-word sentence is full of early-draft language; you can almost visualize the writer finding their way while writing. The 16-word sentence says much the same thing with far fewer words. Most of this editing simply cut out unnecessary words. Only at the end were several wordy phrases condensed: "from the papers and reports, paragraphs and sentences you write for college assignments" was reduced to "from your college papers." That 16-word sentence was reduced by half by rephrasing and dropping the emphasis on college writing. And that sentence was whittled down by nearly two-thirds to arrive at the core three-word sentence, "Omit needless words."

The first sentence is long-winded by any standard or in any context; each of the next three might serve well in different situations. Thus, when you edit to make language more concise, think about the overall effect you intend to create. Sometimes the briefest construction is not the best one for your purpose. For example, the three-word sentence is more suited to a brief list than to a sentence of advice for this book.

## Editing for More Effective Sentences

This paragraph from a student's first draft of a narrative contains sentences that need editing. On a separate sheet of paper, revise the sentences to eliminate *There are . . . / It is . . .* , unclear *you* and *this*, and wordiness. For better flow, combine sentences that are repetitive or choppy.

It is now hours later. I think it is almost midnight, in fact. I have finally managed to get my paper started and

studied for my exam. My eyes are very tired. I get up and leave my comfortable chair. Next, I walk out of the library. You have to walk through a glass door. I retrace the path that goes back to my apartment, where I came from earlier.

Revision: _____

Since it is midnight, it is dark, and I nervously listen to footsteps. They are coming up behind me. Then they get too close for comfort. This is really making me very, very nervous. I am really very scared, but I step over to the sidewalk's edge. I am trying to be calm, and I let a man walk briskly past. Phew!

Revision: _____

When I am finally at my door to my apartment, I fumble for the key to the door. I insert the key in the lock. I open the door, put my hand on the switch to turn on the hall light, and step inside the door to my apartment. There are two slices of pizza left in the box that is on the kitchen counter. They are really cold and very congealed.

Revision: _____

***Possible edited version.*** Hours later—my paper started, my exam studied for, my eyes tired—I leave my comfortable chair in the library, go through the glass door, and retrace the path to my apartment. It is midnight now. I listen closely when I hear footsteps approaching behind me, their steady rhythm making me nervous. Scared, I step to the sidewalk's edge to let a man walk briskly past. Phew! At my apartment door, I fumble for the key, insert it in the lock, open the door, tum on the hall light, and step inside. On the kitchen counter, I see the box with its two slices of cold, congealed pizza.

## 3.7 Evaluation: Self-Evaluating

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Gain experience negotiating variations in genre conventions.
- Learn common formats and design features for different kinds of texts.
- Identify how genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics vary.

The section below provides a rubric that your instructor will use to evaluate the aspect of your literacy experience that you have chosen to explore in a full essay. Refer to it frequently throughout the writing process to make sure that you are fulfilling the requirements of the assignment.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—combining independent clauses appropriately, as discussed in Section 3.6—and employs a variety of complex sentence structures. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The text always maintains focus on the central narrative and provides detailed description and thorough development of characters, setting, and sensory details, and it demonstrates a clear and organized sequence of events. | The text always demonstrates an awareness of the rhetorical situation: author, message, audience, purpose, means, context, and culture. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—combining independent clauses appropriately, as discussed in Section 3.6—and employs complex sentence structures.<br>The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The text usually maintains focus on the central narrative and provides detailed description and development of characters, setting, and sensory details, and it demonstrates an organized sequence of events. | The text consistently demonstrates an awareness of the rhetorical situation: author, message, audience, purpose, means, context, and culture. |
| **3**<br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—combining independent clauses appropriately, as discussed in Section 3.6—and employs complex sentence structures.<br>The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The text generally maintains focus on the central narrative and provides detailed description and development of characters, setting, and sensory details, and it demonstrates some organization in the sequence of events. | The text generally demonstrates an awareness of the rhetorical situation: author, message, audience, purpose, means, context, and culture. |

TABLE 3.5

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—combining independent clauses appropriately, as discussed in Section 3.6—and employs complex sentence structures.<br>The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The text occasionally maintains focus on the central narrative and provides detailed description and thorough development of characters, setting, and sensory details, and it demonstrates an attempt at organization in the sequence of events. | The text occasionally demonstrates an awareness of the rhetorical situation: author, message, audience, purpose, means, context, and culture. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—combining independent clauses in meaningful ways, as discussed in Section 3.6—or employ complex sentence structures.<br>The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The text does not maintain focus on the central narrative or provide detailed description or thorough development of characters, setting, or sensory details, and it does not demonstrate a clear and organized sequence of events. | The text does not demonstrate an awareness of the rhetorical situation: author, message, audience, purpose, means, context, and culture. |

**TABLE 3.5**

## 3.8 Spotlight on … The Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (DALN)

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences.
- Match the capacities of different environments to varying rhetorical situations.



**FIGURE 3.15** Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom (credit: "The Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom" by Garrett/

flickr, CC BY 2.0)

An archive is a collection of artifacts, often historical, that serve to document a time period, location, or group of people. Archives may be located far from cities, accessible only in person, and they typically house rare documents that visitors view or handle with particular care. When an archive is digitized, however, visitors are allowed to view the document in virtual spaces, thus creating an open and accessible environment. The Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (DALN) "is an open public resource made up of stories from people just like you about their experiences learning to read, write, and generally communicate with the world around them." People who have diverse identities, lived experiences, and engagement with literacies have uploaded their literacy narratives and given permission for their stories to be read and shared with public audiences.

### Using the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (DALN)

The DALN is completely keyword searchable, so if you are looking to read literacy narratives on particular subjects—such as music or dance as literacy, or any other concentrated subject about which one can demonstrate knowledge—you can search for shared narratives with these literacies. As the website states, "The DALN invites people of all ages, races, communities, backgrounds, and interests to contribute stories about how—and in what circumstances—they read, write, and compose meaning, and how they learned to do so (or helped others learn)." Sharing your literacy narrative in the DALN can be a rewarding way to celebrate the completion of this writing milestone. The DALN welcomes literacy narratives of all kinds and in all formats, including diaries, blogs, poetry, music, videos, letters, stories, chat rooms, and so on.

### Publish Your Literacy Narrative

After you have completed and revised your literacy narrative, consider sharing it with the DALN (https://openstax.org/r/daln) You may also want to consider reimagining your literacy narrative in the form of a podcast or a TED Talk–type video. The TED in TED Talks is an acronym that stands for the phrase "Technology, Entertainment, and Design." TED (https://openstax.org/r/ted) is a nonprofit organization devoted to the distribution of ideas; the website is keyword searchable and provides an archive where you can find short talks about just about any topic. The criteria (https://openstax.org/r/criteria) for a TED Talk can be found on the organization's website. To prepare for this publication alternative, take an opportunity to watch the following sample TED Talks that fit the genre of literacy narrative:

- Luvvie Ajayi (https://openstax.org/r/luvvieajayi) discusses how blogging and creating a post that went viral led to her identifying as a writer.
- John Trischitti (https://openstax.org/r/johntrischitti) talks about how reading literally saves lives and advocates for providing young people with books to secure their futures.

## 3.9 Portfolio: A Literacy Artifact

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Reflect on the development of composing processes.
- Consider how those processes affect your work.

Your instructor may require a portfolio as a part of the composition course curriculum. A portfolio is a collection of your work, gathered in a single place for the purpose of assessing your growth and achievement as a writer. A portfolio allows you not only to include writing artifacts but also to reflect on the process of composing those artifacts. In this section, you will have an opportunity to compose a reflection on the process of writing your literacy narrative.

### Reflection Prompt

One of the most valuable writing exercises is to reflect on work you have completed or experiences you have had. Reflection supports learning by allowing writers to articulate the impact that experiences have had on

various aspects of their lives. In responding to the ideas in this section, take some time to reflect on your experiences, as well as the experiences of others, with literacy and learning. Using the guidelines your instructor provides, compose a reflection that responds to the following questions:

- How has your understanding of literacies been affected by the opportunity to reflect on your engagement with literacy practices, the practices of those in your composition course community, or the practices of people beyond your immediate community?
- How will this experience and reflection affect your future engagement with various literacies?

## Literacy Narrative Revision

Submitting the best version of your work is an important part of preparing a portfolio. After you have received a graded essay with comments from your instructor, use those comments as a resource to revise the essay for a final time. You will want to use this revised essay for your portfolio submission.

## Further Reading

The digital and hard-copy texts and other materials listed below can provide additional models and context for your work in reading and writing in the literacy narrative genre.

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# Unit 2

# Bridging the Divide Between Personal Identity and Academia

## Unit Introduction

Unit 2 is about **academia**, a term for the world of education. The challenge in this part of your journey is learning to showcase your identity and your viewpoint within an exploration of traditional writing genres. You will learn that academia is defined in part by its traditions. In the writing classroom, expect to be asked to write in a variety of narrative and academic genres. Each of these genres is characterized by a defined set of structures and expectations. However, because writing is also a creative art form, you will find more than enough room in academia to develop your individual voice and to challenge conventions and expectations as you write about different subjects. As you approach the assignments in this unit, consider ways to infuse your writing with your personality and identity—your unique voice.

# Memoir or Personal Narrative: Learning Lessons from the Personal

4



**FIGURE 4.1** Personal narratives and memoirs give the narrator's perspective on a life experience. Here, a Florida family is having a makeshift meal together at a shelter set up during Hurricane Charley in 2004 for people who had to evacuate their homes. How do you imagine the parents and children are feeling and getting along during this time? What might the children, now adults, say about their memories of the hurricane? Family relationships and living through natural disasters are frequent subjects of personal writing. (credit: "Photograph by Mark Wolfe" by Mark Wolfe/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**4.1** Exploring the Past to Understand the Present
**4.2** Memoir Trailblazer: Ta-Nehisi Coates
**4.3** Glance at Genre: Conflict, Detail, and Revelation
**4.4** Annotated Sample Reading: from Life on the Mississippi by Mark Twain
**4.5** Writing Process: Making the Personal Public
**4.6** Editing Focus: More on Characterization and Point of View
**4.7** Evaluation: Structure and Organization
**4.8** Spotlight on ... Multilingual Writers
**4.9** Portfolio: Filtered Memories


**INTRODUCTION** Since pen was first put to paper, authors have been recording their personal experiences in order to perpetuate them, share meaningful lessons learned, or simply entertain an audience. Indeed, even as far back as Roman ruler Julius Caesar (100–44 BCE), who wrote accounts of his epic battles, authors have written to preserve history, seek acclaim for accomplishments, and pass down wisdom. Writing about your own life can feel alternately satisfying, terrifying, and exhilarating. It allows you to share meaningful personal experiences, to reflect on them, and to connect on a new level with your audience. Personal writing can reveal

more than just events you've experienced—it tells your audience who you are as you relate personal experiences to convey humor, compassion, fears, and beliefs.

A **personal narrative** is a form of nonfiction writing in which the author recounts an event or incident from their life. A **memoir** is a type of nonfiction writing in which the author tells a first-person version of a time period or an event in their life. Because the two genres, or forms of writing, share more similarities than differences, they are covered here together. Personal writing, whether a narrative or a memoir, is an opportunity to share your lived experiences with readers. A personal narrative tells a story and often includes memories and **anecdotes** (short, amusing, or interesting stories about something that happened in real life) to relate events and ideas. Like all good writing, personal narratives have an overarching **theme** (message you want to impart to your readers) and a purpose beyond the story itself. Although personal narratives usually follow the traditional narrative arc of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution, personal writing has several unique features. Unlike some forms of academic writing, personal writing welcomes the use of **first-person point of view** (narrator participates in events), and narratives and memoirs often have a narrow focus.

The key to effective personal writing is to know your audience and purpose. You may write to relay an event, to teach a lesson, or to explore an idea. You may write to help provide relief from stages of deep emotion (a process called *catharsis*), to evoke an emotional response, or simply to entertain readers. Above all, a personal narrative or memoir tells about an individual's experience or a series of events in a way that emotionally engages readers. The more clearly and vividly you share your experience, the more likely readers will be moved.

This chapter presents an excerpt from American writer Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), a memoir about his years as a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi River. Studying this text and Twain's use of the components of personal narrative will help you understand how authors create meaningful accounts of personal events. Later in the chapter, you too will create a personal narrative about an important event in your life.

## 4.1 Exploring the Past to Understand the Present

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating.
- Read in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes.

Personal writing is unique in that it tells *your* story. Because it is a form of storytelling, there may be a tendency to discount personal writing as less academic or less valuable a skill than more formal writing. Although it may allow for greater freedom in style and content, personal writing is valuable in its own right because it enables you to make sense of the world as you—not others—experience it.

Two genres of this type of writing are personal narratives and memoirs. A **genre** is a category of writing that features compositions with distinct characteristics, styles, content, and formats. These two genres belong to the larger family of **creative nonfiction**, a term that applies to the kind of nonfiction writing that shares many traits with fiction writing. The main difference is that the plots, settings, and characters come from real life rather than an author's imagination. (For more about the characteristics of literary nonfiction, see Print or Textual Analysis: What You Read.) Works of creative nonfiction include American writers Sebastian Junger's (b. 1962) *The Perfect Storm* (1997), Jon Krakauer's (b. 1954) *Into Thin Air* (1997), and Terry Tempest Williams's (b. 1955) *Refuge* (1991). Shorter pieces appear regularly in popular literary magazines, especially in *The New Yorker*, *Harper's Magazine*, and *The Atlantic*, as well as in periodicals such as *Sports Illustrated*, *Rolling Stone*, and *The Wall Street Journal.*

Writers of narrative nonfiction commonly borrow stylistic and formal techniques from the fast-paced visual narratives of film and television as well as from the innovative language of poetry, fiction, and drama. These influences encourage a multifaceted, multidimensional prose style to keep pace with the multifaceted and multidimensional real world. In addition to memoirs and personal narratives, biographies, autobiographies, and literary journalism are considered creative nonfiction.

### Differences between Memoir and Personal Narrative

Both a memoir and a personal narrative are accounts of personal experiences written in a narrative style, but there are some differences. A memoir is an account of certain incidents in a person's life, often from a specific period of time. The narrator is a character in the story and reflects on past events to draw a conclusion based on those events. Memoirs focus on how the author remembers a part of their own life. On the other hand, personal narratives typically center on one major event through which the narrator reveals thoughts, feelings, and possibly related experiences. Like other works in the narrative genre, personal narratives and memoirs develop setting, plot, characterization, and dialogue.

The word *memoir* comes from the French *mémoire*, meaning "memory." Personal writing relies on memory but is not necessarily an account of every detail of the event the author is writing about. If this were the case, it could make for dry and tedious reading, contrary to what most authors seek—audience engagement. The more important aim is to create a composition that is emotionally authentic and conveys the core sentiment of an event, time period, or lesson and its impact on you, the writer. In the next section, you will meet an author who does just that. He reflects on deeply personal events from his own life as they relate to broader cultural and social issues. The subject of your personal narrative or memoir should not be just *you*, though you will tell a story from your life. The overall message of the story should be about something bigger—a universal understanding, a lesson learned, a common human experience. The more readers can relate to your story through the details you include, the more it will mean to them.

### The Cultural Aspect



Personal writing provides a unique opportunity to explore cultural contexts. **Culture**—shared values, customs, arts, and traits of a social group—is at the heart of personal narratives and memoirs and should be part of their central focus. Including historical information, anecdotes, and vivid details in your writing, as well as using a specific and relevant English variety, helps you depict the cultures that are part of your life and enhances readers' understanding. Thus, readers are likely to experience deeper **empathy** and emotional responses in connection to the larger issues presented. You also provide opportunities for culture to be shared as a common human experience.



## 4.2 Trailblazer

### Memoir Trailblazer: Ta-Nehisi Coates

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read for inquiry, learning, and critical thinking to determine how authors develop personal narratives and memoirs.
- Identify composition techniques for personal writing in various rhetorical and cultural contexts.



**FIGURE 4.2** Author Ta-Nehisi Coates often frames current events from the perspective of his own lived experiences. (credit: "Ta Nehisi Coates 2 BBF 2010 Shankbone" by David Shankbone/ Wikicommons, CC BY 3.0)

*"I just felt this . . . deep need to express myself. . . . I felt the deep need to understand."*

## The Storyteller's Tools: Context and Voice

Ta-Nehisi Coates (b. 1975) is a best-selling author, journalist, and educator. His writing explores complex issues such as race relations, urban policing, and racial identity, often focusing on his personal experiences as a person of color. Coates was born in Baltimore, Maryland. His mother was a teacher, his father a librarian and founder of the Black Classic Press, which publishes and republishes significant works by and about lesser-known people of African descent. Reading the works of these authors instilled in Coates a lifelong love of reading and learning and a desire to experience the world outside his neighborhood.

Coates began his writing vocation at age 17, first exploring the genre of poetry. He studied journalism at Howard University for five years but did not graduate. However, he did write and begin earning bylines as a young writer, publishing articles in popular periodicals such as *Washington Monthly*, *Mother Jones*, and *Time.* In 2008, he became a national correspondent for *The Atlantic*, often writing articles and covering stories about national current events. Among other topics, he has written about Barack Obama (b. 1961) as the first Black president and the shooting of Florida teen Trayvon Martin (1995–2012).

True to the genre of personal narrative, Coates focuses his writing not only on his lived experiences but also on their meaning in the context of larger cultural and social issues, specifically examining race relations and racial equity. In 2008, Coates published his first book, the critically acclaimed memoir *The Beautiful Struggle: A Father, Two Sons, and an Unlikely Road to Manhood*. In it, he writes about his childhood, especially his memories of his father. A former member of the Black Panther Party (founded in 1966), Coates's father raised

him and his six siblings as a family unit in West Baltimore. Coates's father and the children's four mothers raised the siblings together. Though they didn't all live together, they were a continuing and active presence in one another's lives.

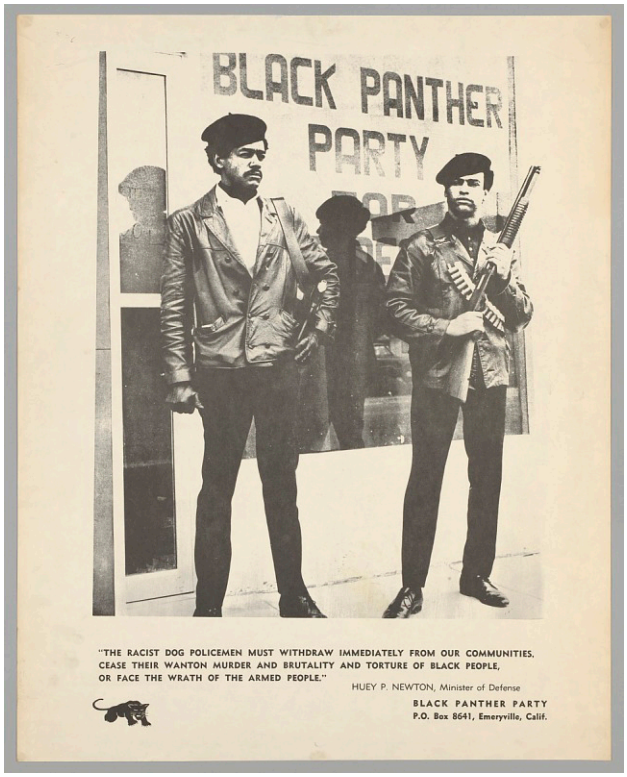



**FIGURE 4.3** Bobby Seale (left; b. 1936) and Huey P. Newton (right; 1942–1989) founded the Black Panther Party in 1966 in response to police violence and racism. (credit: "Black and white poster of Huey Newton and Bobby Seale" by Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Public Domain)

Coates credits his unusual upbringing with providing him both stability and early access to influential "Afro-centric" literature, which would influence his life and career. His memoir reflects the steps his father took to encourage his son's development into adulthood, from reading all types of books to exploring the neighborhood to helping him grapple with what it means to be a Black man in America. This lived experience is central to the personal narrative he creates in *The Beautiful Struggle.*

Coates's best-known essay, "The Case for Reparations," which proposes reparations for slavery, was published in *The Atlantic* in June 2014. Framing his argument around the history of slavery, Coates paints a picture detailing the connections among slavery, race, and economics, specifically focusing on the modern Chicago housing crisis and policy. "The essence of American racism is disrespect," he proposes.

The next year, Coates published the best seller *Between the World and Me*, a personal narrative written as a letter to his teenage son. In this book, recounting his own upbringing in Baltimore's violent inner city during the crack cocaine epidemic, Coates explores the idea that the structure of American society fosters white supremacy. He reveals his wish for his son, now "growing into consciousness": "that you feel no need to constrict yourself to make other people comfortable." In 2019, Coates published his first novel, *The Water Dancer*, a work of historical fiction about a slave who helps in the Underground Railroad.

In addition to writing, Coates is an educator. From 2012 to 2014, he was a visiting professor at MIT, and in 2014, he joined the faculty of the City University of New York as a journalist-in-residence. Coates compares writing to a refining process: by applying pressure to yourself, you develop new muscles. He calls writing "an act of physical courage" that relies on the revision process to translate thought to page: "I . . . consider the entire process about failure, and I think that's . . . why more people don't write."

Coates uses **doubling** in his writing. Because he is both protagonist and narrator, he sees himself as both subject and object, both character and storyteller, and at once a participant and an observer in his narration. Such doubling is often symbolic in memoirs, represented by paired events or mirroring.

You can watch Advice on Writing (https://openstax.org/r/adviceonwriting) to learn more of Coates's advice to writers such as yourself. Listen as American correspondent Martha Teichner (b. 1948), interviews Coates on *CBS Sunday Morning (https://openstax.org/r/cbssundaymorning)*, November 5, 2017.

### Discussion Questions

1. How might Coates's use of personal stories influence the emotions of his readers?
2. How might Coates use personal anecdotes and current events to create commentary on broad historical ideas? What personal events can you link to more wide-ranging ideas or issues?
3. What is the impact of the cultural and lived experiences that Coates weaves into his personal writing? How would the impact differ if he wrote in a more academic style?
4. Coates says his writing process is about pressure and failure. In what way is failure part of the development of narrative writing?
5. On what turning points or important events might Coates focus in his memoir when discussing his father?

## 4.3 Glance at Genre: Conflict, Detail, and Revelation

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify common formats and design features used to develop a personal narrative or memoir.
- Show that genre conventions are shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.

In personal writing genres, you share experiences of your life, centering them on a specific theme or memory. Unlike an autobiography, which typically extends across an entire lifetime or at least a number of years, memoirs and personal narratives are shaped by a narrower focus, with more specific storytelling surrounding a time period or an event. When writing in these personal genres, authors seek to make an emotional connection with their audience to relate an experience, emotion, or lesson learned.

### Characteristics of Memoirs and Personal Narratives




One way to approach a memoir or personal narrative is to think of it as a written series of photographs—snapshots of a period of time, moment, or sequence of events connected by a theme. In fact, writing prose snapshots is analogous to constructing and arranging a photo album composed of separate images. Photo albums, when carefully assembled from informational snapshots, tell stories with clear beginnings, middles, and endings. However, they show a lot of white space between one picture and the next, with few transitions explaining how the photographer got from one scene to another. In other words, while photo albums tell stories, they do so piecemeal, requiring viewers to fill in or imagine what happens between shots. You also might think of snapshots as individual slides in a slideshow or pictures in an exhibition—each the work of the same maker, each a different view, all connected by some logic, the whole presenting a story.

Written snapshots function in the same way as visual snapshots, each connected to the next by white space. Sometimes written snapshots can function as a series of complete and independent paragraphs, each an entire thought, without obvious connections or transitions to the preceding or following paragraph. White space between one snapshot and another gives readers breathing space, allowing them time to digest one thought before continuing to the next. It also exercises readers' imaginations; as they participate in constructing logic that offers textual meaning, the readers themselves make connections and construct meaning. At other times, snapshots flow more directly, one after another, through chronological, circular,

parallel, or other structures to move from event to event.

The secret to using snapshots successfully in your writing is to place them carefully in an order that conveys a theme and creates an unbreakable thread. And as with visual snapshots, writers must carefully choose which moments to include—and which to omit. Because they tell stories, memoirs and personal narratives share aspects of the fictional narrative genre. In writing them, you will use crafting tools to tell a vivid and purposeful story that takes into consideration your personal experience and the needs of your reader.

## The Storyteller's Dilemma: Clarity of Action

How you construct your story is as important as the story you choose to tell. Deciding on the most effective way the way to tell the story—that is, deciding what framework to use—helps you develop clarity of action to lead readers to the theme or message you seek to develop. Various components work together to bring clarity, but most often in a memoir or personal narrative, clarity comes from plot and character development. Narratives often follow a general structure called an *arc* to develop characters and plot and build the emotional impact of a story. Look at Figure 4.4 for an idea of what a story arc looks like.

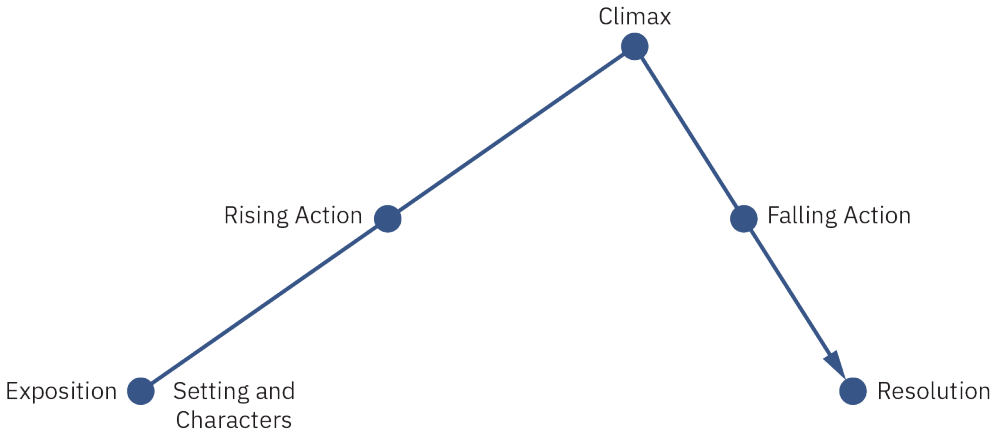



**FIGURE 4.4** Narrative arc (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

This arc, also called a *narrative arc* or a *plot triangle*, is composed of the following elements:

- The **exposition** sets up the narrative. It introduces characters and setting and establishes the primary conflict of the story, allowing readers to learn the who, what, when, where, and why of the events that will unfold.
- Next, the **rising action** fully develops the conflict. This developed series of events, the longest part of the narrative, produces increasing tension that engages readers.
- The **climax** is the turning point of the narrative, in which the story reaches its highest point of tension and conflict. It is the moment when some kind of action must be taken.
- In the **falling action**, the conflict begins to be resolved, and the tension lessens.
- Finally, during the **resolution**, the conflict is resolved, and the narrative ends. In memoirs and personal narratives, the resolution often includes or precedes a reflection that examines the broader implications of the theme or lessons learned. Of course, as in real life, conflicts are not always resolved, but the narrator can still reflect on the outcome of the situation.

Although many narratives and memoirs follow this plot-driven arc, narratives can also focus on character arcs. Character-driven narratives explore an individual, most often the narrator, and their development. The stories focus on creating an emotional connection between the character and the reader. Both plot and character arcs may be, and often are, present in memoirs and personal narratives.

Regardless of whether the focus is on plot or characters, conflict is synonymous with the reason for telling your story—it is the driving force. Conflict is often the main challenge faced by a character, and it urges the story along by engaging readers through tension and encouraging them to keep reading. Without conflict, your

memoir or personal narrative will lack an overall theme. The major conflict is the undercurrent that drives each scene and is often developed by an **inciting incident**. Introduced in the exposition and developed in the rising action, this incident sets the **mood** of the story and engages readers. After the story's climax, where the conflict reaches its peak, the tension gradually resolves during the falling action and moves toward resolution, during which you can explicitly or implicitly explore the theme that ties the story elements together. Sometimes the resolution is accompanied by a **revelation**, in which the narrator or reader understands something about the bigger picture, such as a lesson learned from the events recounted or knowledge about the general human condition. Of course, each scene or section should have its own conflict, connected in some way to the overarching message of your writing. As you write, ask yourself, *What's the conflict?* By identifying the conflict explicitly, you will ensure that it remains central to your narrative.

Two important aspects of plot structure regarding time in a memoir are *chronos* and *kairos*. ***Chronos*** is the sequence of events told according to their order. This order is often chronological and linear, but not always—it can be interrupted, fragmented, circular, or otherwise out of sequence and can sometimes include flashbacks. *Chronos* develops themes by the telling of events. ***Kairos***, on the other hand, is the Greek concept of timeliness. Events told through the lens of *kairos* are often transcendental, an argument that is made at the right time, often rooted in a cultural moment or movement.

Other important aspects of personal writing overlap with the narrative genre. Both reader engagement and plot rely largely on vivid details and sensory descriptions to move readers through the story. For more information on narrative elements that may enhance your personal narrative or memoir, revisit Literacy Narrative: Building Bridges, Bridging Gaps.

## Key Terms for Memoir or Personal Narrative Writing

- **anecdotes:** a short, interesting story or event told to demonstrate a point or amuse the audience.
- **Bias:** the inclusion or exclusion of certain events and facts, the decisions about word choice, and the consistency of tone. All work together to convey a particular feeling or attitude. Bias comes from a specific stance or worldview and can limit a text, particularly if that bias is left unexamined.
- **Characters:** fictional people (or other beings) created in a work of literature. The narrator of a memoir or personal narrative is the nonfiction equivalent of the main character.
- **Climax:** the point of highest level of interest and emotional response in a narrative.
- **Conclusion:** in narrative writing, the resolution. It is the point at which the narrator has reached a decision.
- **Conflict:** the major challenge that the main character faces.
- **Doubling:** a mirroring of events, objects, characters, or concepts in a memoir.
- **Exposition:** the beginning section of a narrative that introduces the characters, setting, and plot.
- **Falling action:** the section of the plot after the climax in which tension from the main conflict is decreased and the narrative moves toward the conclusion, or resolution.
- **Flashback:** a scene that interrupts the chronological order of the main narrative to return to a scene from an earlier time.
- **Foreshadowing:** hints of what is to come in the text.
- **Mood:** the atmosphere of the text, often achieved through details, description, and setting.
- **Plot:** the events that make up a narrative or story.
- **Point of view:** the perspective from which a narrative is told. Memoirs and personal narratives usually use the first-person point of view, or tell the story through the eyes of the narrator.
- **Resolution:** the point at which a story's conflict is settled; the conclusion of a narrative.
- **Revelation:** a discovery about a person, event, or idea that shapes the plot.
- **Rising action:** a series of events in the plot in which tension surrounding the major conflict increases and the plot moves toward its climax.
- **Setting:** when and where a narrative occurs. Setting is revealed through narration and details.
- **Theme:** the underlying idea that reveals the author's message about a narrative.

- **Vivid details:** sensory language and detailed descriptions that help readers gain a deeper and fuller understanding of ideas and events in the narrative.
- **Voice:** the combination of vocabulary, tone, sentence structure, dialogue, and other details that make a text authentic and engaging. Voice is the "identity" or "personality" of the writer and includes the specific English variety used by the narrator and characters.

## 4.4 Annotated Sample Reading: from Life on the Mississippi by Mark Twain

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read for understanding, showing that genre conventions are shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.
- Analyze relationships between ideas and patterns of organization in a nonfiction text.

### Introduction

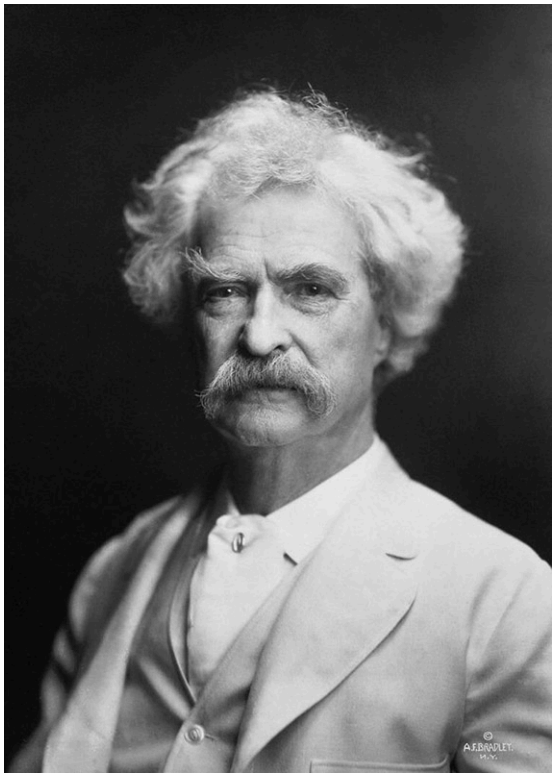


**FIGURE 4.5** Mark Twain, 1907 (credit: "Mark Twain" by A.F. Bradley/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

An image in literature is a description that engages one of the five senses. Details rich in **imagery** appeal to readers' emotions, create new meaning, and draw an audience into the story. Sensory images—what the narrator sees, hears, tastes, feels, and smells—should be specific and contain emotional content that enhances your writing. When you write your personal narrative, you will use imagery to engage readers, convey meaning, and bring your story to life.

In the text excerpt you are about to read, Mark Twain (1835–1910) uses imagery to place readers with him aboard a steamboat on the Mississippi River as Mr. Bixby trains him to pilot it. As you read, put yourself in the shoes of the narrator—Mark Twain. Notice how vividly he describes sensory experiences and how they enhance your understanding of his purpose.

Twain lived in a pre–Civil War America in which slavery was accepted and prevalent. He used his literature to criticize slavery and hierarchical social codes of the American South, though he wasn't necessarily an outspoken opponent in his public life. Twain provides an example of the ways in which literature can subtly

influence the beliefs and identities of generations of readers. Visit Project Gutenberg (https://openstax.org/r/projectgutenberg) for the full text of *Life on the Mississippi*.

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### The Storyteller's World: Entering through Imagery

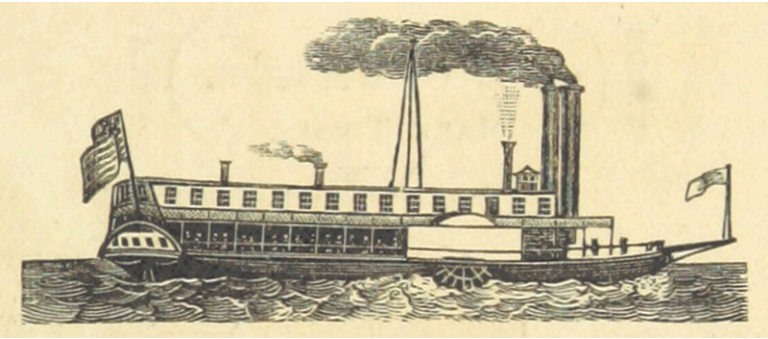


**FIGURE 4.6** In this illustration, appearing in Life on the Mississippi, the steamboat is an older vessel but is similar to the one in Twain's memoir. (credit: "MISSISSIPPI STEAMBOAT - FIFTY YEARS AGO" by Samuel Langhorne Clemens/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

> Mr. Bixby served me in this fashion once, and for years afterward I used to blush even in my sleep when I thought of it. I had become a good steersman [a person steering a boat or ship]; so good, indeed, that I had all the work to do on our watch, night and day; Mr. Bixby seldom made a suggestion to me; all he ever did was to take the wheel on particularly bad nights or in particularly bad crossings, land the boat when she needed to be landed, play gentleman of leisure nine-tenths of the watch, and collect the wages. The lower river was about bank-full, and if anybody had questioned my ability to run any crossing between Cairo and New Orleans without help or instruction, I should have felt irreparably hurt. The idea of being afraid of any crossing in the lot, in the *day-time*, was a thing too preposterous for contemplation. Well, one matchless summer's day I was bowling down the bend above island 66, brimful of self-conceit and carrying my nose as high as a giraffe's, when Mr. Bixby said,—

***Point of view.*** *Twain writes in first person, using the pronouns I and me.*

***Exposition.*** *Though the excerpt starts in the middle of a chapter of a larger work, this paragraph begins an anecdote that Twain relates about a specific incident in his time in training. The paragraph acts as the exposition, establishing the setting, characters, and lead-in to the conflict related in the anecdote.*

***Reflection.*** *Twain's reflection of the memory, saying he would "blush even in my sleep," reveals his embarrassment in a way that readers can relate to.*

> "I am going below a while. I suppose you know the next crossing?"

> This was almost an affront. It was about the plainest and simplest crossing in the whole river. One couldn't come to any harm, whether he ran it right or not; and as for depth, there never had been any bottom there. I knew all this, perfectly well.

> "Know how to *run* it? Why, I can run it with my eyes shut."

***Tone.*** *In this dialogue, the narrator takes on a tone of confidence, which helps develop his own voice and character.*

***Dialogue.*** *Twain uses dialogue to recreate the scene and reveal characters.*

> "How much water is there in it?"

> "Well, that is an odd question. I couldn't get bottom there with a church steeple."

> "You think so, do you?"

> The very tone of the question shook my confidence. That was what Mr. Bixby was expecting. He left, without saying anything more. I began to imagine all sorts of things. Mr. Bixby, unknown to me, of course, sent somebody down to the forecastle [forward part of the ship, below the deck] with some mysterious instructions to the leadsmen, another messenger was sent to whisper among the officers, and then Mr. Bixby went into hiding behind a smoke-stack where he could observe results. Presently the captain stepped out on the hurricane deck [an upper deck on a ship]; next the chief mate appeared; then a clerk. Every moment or two a straggler was added to my audience; and before I got to the head of the island I had fifteen or twenty people assembled down there under my nose. I began to wonder what the trouble was. As I started across, the captain glanced aloft at me and said, with a sham uneasiness in his voice,—

***Vivid Details and Imagery.*** *Twain builds tension through vivid detail and imagery that recreates the sounds and paints a picture of his experience. From the whispers of the messengers to the sight of more and more people appearing on the deck to observe the narrator, readers can almost feel the narrator becoming more nervous.*

***Rising Action.*** *The reader begins to understand the conflict through the sequence of events. This rising action builds tension by contrasting Twain's earlier stated confidence with his increasing anxiety.*

> "Where is Mr. Bixby?" | "Gone below, sir."

***Dialogue.*** *Twain employs dialogue to advance the plot and simultaneously increase tension, thus defining the conflict. The dialogue here signals the narrator's move from confidence to anxiety, the next line indicating that the captain's questioning "did the business" for him. Dialogue also helps establish authenticity and recreate "reality" for readers, allowing them an opportunity to "witness" the scene and the characters directly.*

> But that did the business for me. My imagination began to construct dangers out of nothing, and they multiplied faster than I could keep the run of them. All at once I imagined I saw shoal [shallow] water ahead! The wave of coward agony that surged through me then came near dislocating every joint in me. All my confidence in that crossing vanished. I seized the bell-rope; dropped it, ashamed; seized it again; dropped it once more; clutched it tremblingly once again, and pulled it so feebly that I could hardly hear the stroke myself. Captain and mate sang out instantly, and both together,—

***Vivid Description.*** *Twain moves the plot toward the climax in this paragraph, particularly with his description of the dangers multiplying and the peril he imagines.*

***Mood.*** *In this section, Twain creates a frazzled and frantic mood through not only the details and description but also the sentence structure. Particularly in the sentence "I seized the bell-rope; dropped it, ashamed; seized it again; dropped it once more . . . ," the short, connected clauses and phrases and the repetition of the words dropped and seized all add to the sense of panic.*

> "Starboard lead there! and quick about it!"

> This was another shock. I began to climb the wheel like a squirrel; but I would hardly get the boat started to port [the left side of the ship when a person on board is facing forward] before I would see new dangers on that side, and away I would spin to the other; only to find perils accumulating to starboard [the right side of the ship when a person on board is facing forward], and be crazy to get to port again. Then came the leadsman's sepulchral [bleak, morbid] cry:—

***Organization.*** *After the introduction in which Twain writes in the present tense to indicate he will tell an embarrassing story from the past, the rest of the passage follows a chronological organization, recounting the event from beginning to end.*

> "D-e-e-p four!" | Deep four in a bottomless crossing! The terror of it took my breath away.

> "M-a-r-k three! . . . M-a-r-k three . . . Quarter less three! . . . Half twain!"

> This was frightful! I seized the bell-ropes and stopped the engines.

> "Quarter twain! Quarter twain! *Mark* twain!"

***Dialogue.*** *Here, the dialogue emphasizes the narrator's terror and leads to the climax.*

> I was helpless. I did not know what in the world to do. I was quaking from head to foot, and I could have hung my hat on my eyes, they stuck out so far.

***Hyperbole.*** *Twain uses a combination of sensory detail and hyperbole, or exaggeration, to emphasize how panicked he feels in the moment.*

> "Quarter *less* twain! Nine and a *half*!"

> We were *drawing* nine! My hands were in a nerveless flutter. I could not ring a bell intelligibly with them. I flew to the speaking-tube and shouted to the engineer,—

> "Oh, Ben, if you love me, *back* her! Quick, Ben! Oh, back the immortal *soul* out of her!"

***Climax.*** *In this part of the story the narrator calls out for help as the tension reaches its peak.*

> I heard the door close gently. I looked around, and there stood Mr. Bixby, smiling a bland, sweet smile. Then the audience on the hurricane deck sent up a thundergust [roar] of humiliating laughter. I saw it all, now, and I felt meaner than the meanest man in human history. I laid in the lead, set the boat in her marks, came ahead on the engines, and said:—

***Vivid Details.*** *The narrator describes Mr. Bixby's "bland" smile, contrasted with the uproarious laughter of the rest of the group. He also uses vivid details to describe his own reaction: he "felt meaner than the meanest man in human history."*

***Falling Action.*** *After it is revealed that the group was tricking Twain, the tension begins to dissipate.*

> "It was a fine trick to play on an orphan, *wasn't* it? I suppose I'll never hear the last of how I was ass enough to heave the lead at the head of 66."

> "Well, no, you won't, maybe. In fact I hope you won't; for I want you to learn something by that experience. Didn't you *know* there was no bottom in that crossing?"

> "Yes, sir, I did."

> "Very well, then. You shouldn't have allowed me or anybody else to shake your confidence in that knowledge. Try to remember that. And another thing: when you get into a dangerous place, don't turn coward. That isn't going to help matters any."

***Theme.*** *Through this dialogue, Twain introduces the message of the story. More than providing an amusing recollection about a time he was embarrassed, his purpose is to convey the message that it is important to rely on your knowledge and training rather than allow fear to rule.*

> It was a good enough lesson, but pretty hardly learned. Yet about the hardest part of it was that for months I so often had to hear a phrase which I had conceived a particular distaste for. It was, "Oh, Ben, if you love me, back her!"

***Resolution.*** *The narrator explicitly states his lesson learned at the end of the story and adds a detail about his continuing humiliation.*

## Discussion Questions

1. For what reason might Twain have chosen to tell this anecdote in his memoir?
2. How does telling this story help Twain reveal his experience of learning to be a riverboat pilot?
3. How does Twain build tension to support the conflict in the anecdote?

4. How does the narrator pull the reader into the action in the paragraph beginning "But that did the business for me"?
5. How do the narrator's word choices in the story shape the tone and mood?
6. How does Twain's use of vivid details and descriptions help the reader connect to the text?

## 4.5 Writing Process: Making the Personal Public

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Develop a writing project through multiple drafts.
- Apply correct genre conventions for structure, paragraphs, tone, and mechanics.
- Write with purposeful shifts in voice, diction, tone, formality, and structure appropriate to personal narratives.
- Proficiently employ cultural and language variations in composition.
- Experience the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.
- Give and act on productive feedback to works in progress.

Now it's your turn to put pen to paper and experience the genre through action. Once you choose a moment to write about and begin the narrative process, you may want to rearrange, rewrite, or even omit some parts entirely. The goal is to create a story that not only gets your message across but also creates an emotional connection with your readers.

### Summary of Assignment: A Turning Point

Choose an event from your life that has stuck in your memory as a turning point of some sort. Certainly, you can write about major milestones—graduations, achievements, and the like—but consider small moments and events, too: something that someone said to you or that you overheard, a time you got or didn't get what you wanted, a time you were disappointed, or a time you thought you knew better than a more experienced person. To get the most accurate perspective of the event, go back in time as far as you can so that you think about the event as objectively as possible and know it as a real and meaningful turning point. Write a story about the event, and use narrative techniques to show why the event has become meaningful. Here are some other ideas about possible turning points:

- A changed attitude toward a friend, sibling, or other family member
- A change of major, if that change is a big step away from what you planned to do
- Making or not making the cut for a team or some other group
- Your feelings when you learned something about yourself or someone close to you
- A move from another country to the United States or from another U.S. location to where you are now
- Becoming fluent in another language
- Realizing that a certain behavior either gets you what you want or doesn't
- Realizing that someone you admire is not so admirable, or vice versa
- Becoming friends with someone you didn't expect to be friends with
- Facing an illness or crisis and how it changed or didn't change you

***Another Lens.*** An alternative to writing a first-person narrative about a turning point is to consider writing about the event from the perspective of someone—or something—else. If the story involves another person in addition to yourself, consider making that person the narrator and having them tell the story as they might view it. Also consider telling your story from an outside observer's perspective, or even from the perspective of an inanimate object—for example, the pen used to sign a contract. This perspective may be beneficial for exploring your own emotions and may also offer a helpful alternative if including details about your personal life in your story makes you uncomfortable.

### Quick Launch: Plot Diagram

Once you have chosen a topic, freewrite for 5 to 10 minutes, considering the following questions:

- Why is this event memorable?
- What conflict did you face?
- What images come to mind when you think of this event?

Then, begin to isolate details to create a plot diagram. Remember, following a plot diagram involves focusing on the building of tension surrounding the conflict in a story and then resolving it in a meaningful way.

Access multimedia content (http://openstax.org/books/writing-guide/pages/4-5-writing-process-making-the-personal-public)

### Drafting: Conflict, Point of View, Organization, and Reflection

With the skeleton of a plot diagram in mind, freewrite again for 5 to 10 minutes, considering the following questions:

- Why is this event memorable?
- What conflict did you face?
- What images come to mind when you think of this event?
- What do you want to express to your readers about the event?
- What lessons did you learn from the event?

#### Purpose

Along with your freewrite, consider what message you want to leave with readers. The reason this moment is important to you should be made clear to readers through the development of the story, most often through the conflict and its resolution. Remember that the conflict is the primary problem or obstacle that the main character—most likely you in this personal narrative—faces and must overcome in order to reach a resolution. Conflict in a personal narrative, as in fiction, usually consists of one or more of five main conflict types:

- Character vs. character
- Character vs. self
- Character vs. environment or nature
- Character vs. society
- Character vs. fate or the supernatural

The **purpose** and theme are shaped by the conflict. Consider the conflict in the Mark Twain excerpt. Twain needs to run a crossing that, at the beginning of the passage, he feels confident to handle. But as the story progresses and Mr. Bixby sends more people to make him nervous, Twain begins to second-guess himself.

> But that did the business for me. My imagination began to construct dangers out of nothing, and they multiplied faster than I could keep the run of them. All at once I imagined I saw shoal water ahead! The wave of coward agony that surged through me then came near dislocating every joint in me. All my confidence in that crossing vanished. I seized the bell-rope; dropped it, ashamed; seized it again; dropped it once more; clutched it tremblingly once again, and pulled it so feebly that I could hardly hear the stroke myself.

This conflict not only builds the reader's interest in the main character's problem but also helps Twain develop the theme, his message to the reader: you must rely on your knowledge and training rather than second-guess yourself. In this anecdote, the theme is explicitly stated, but more often than not, authors are more subtle, requiring readers to infer themes on the basis of details in the text. The ways in which you craft your conflict and theme will affect its significance to your readers.

To help you organize you work, complete a graphic organizer like Table 4.1 as you are able at this point. You may want to revise it later as you write your draft.

| Basic Story Elements | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | |
| **Conflict** | |
| **Main Characters** | |
| **Theme** | |

**TABLE 4.1** Basic story elements

### Plot Elements

Now that you have considered your overall message and have a general idea of what you will write about, think of how you will structure your story. You already have diagrammed some of the Mark Twain excerpt and know how plots move along. One idea for organizing the plot of your narrative is to write down individual moments or events on notecards and physically place them on a table to mimic a hands-on plot diagram. You should have a series of events leading to the climax and fewer events that make up the falling action. This method of plot diagramming also helps you identify where holes may turn up in your plan. For example: *Is your exposition missing key background information that is necessary for readers to understand the story? Have you created sufficient tension in the lead-up to the climax of your story?* Examine your plot diagram to identify where you need more (or perhaps less) detail in your outline. You might notice that the plot diagram is a bit lopsided, skewing left. If it does, then much of your story leads up to the climax, as it should, with fewer words between the climax and resolution.

Most, but not all, personal narratives are written in chronological order; that is, the storyteller follows the sequence of events according to the order in which they occur. However, there are other structures, such as anecdotes told according to theme, through flashbacks, or in reverse chronological order. The order in which you recount events is important in building tension in the story, thus stimulating readers' curiosity. Seriously consider how each choice that you make will create readers' engagement and emotional connection to your story as you plan toward the climax.

### Exposition

Next, follow your plot diagram to begin writing your narrative. Start with a strong introduction. Try to think of this introductory section as the "hook," engaging readers so that they want to continue reading. Create the introduction with vivid details or a relatable anecdote. Remember that this section will introduce the main characters, the setting, and the conflict. Here are some suggestions for an opening strategy, all of which should be brief, generally not more than two paragraphs:

- Anecdote related to your story
- Description of one of the characters involved
- Scenario in which you ask readers what they might do in that situation
- Description of a setting in which you found yourself
- Significant dialogue or action that you will explain later
- One or more open-ended questions that relate closely to the theme; avoid yes/no questions

### Transitions

As you do in other writing, build your overall structure through **transitions**—words and phrases you use to move readers through events, ideas, and time. Transitions smooth connections between ideas, clarifying them and making reading easier. In narratives, transitions often indicate the passage of time. They may also

introduce new characters or ideas, tie ideas together, or make connections to the larger theme or message.

Transitions may be concrete, as is the one Mark Twain uses: "Well, one matchless summer's day. . ." This statement clearly establishes the passage of time. But transitions can also be abstract or subtle, helping the author organize ideas and information. More subtle transitions include changes in elements such as tone, voice, point of view, or even setting. Use the plot diagram as an outline, and move from event to event as you draft your narrative. You will have freedom with paragraph length and structure because you will use dialogue and description. Also, some events or characters may require more detail than others. As you write your narrative, use transitions to move readers along until you ultimately resolve the central conflict and tie its resolution to the theme.

### Point of View

Authors have options for narrating a literary work—that is, they can choose from whose **point of view** they tell the story. In your narrative, you most likely will use the **first-person point of view**. When a story is told from this point of view, the narrator is a character in the story and tells it as it happens—that is, as the narrator experiences the event. Mark Twain tells his story from the first-person point of view in the excerpt from *Life on the Mississippi*. The first sentence of that excerpt reads, "Mr. Bixby served me in this fashion once, and for years afterward I used to blush even in my sleep when I thought of it." Not only do readers understand that the narrator is telling the story, using pronouns such as *me* and *I*, but the narrator also describes his feelings ("blush[ing] even in my sleep") and thoughts. For more information about point of view, see Editing Focus: Characterization and Point of View and Point of View.

### Characters

Characters in a personal narrative are generally real people, at least in part. As the author, you can focus on certain character traits and ignore, minimize, or exaggerate others. In making the people in your narrative come to life, you will likely assign them different ways of behaving and speaking. For example, one character may use long words and speak condescendingly to another. Another character may find conversation difficult and say little, relying on gestures more than words. Still another character might be generous, sympathetic, arrogant, or sneaky. When creating characters, make sure the characters' language and behavior reflect their characterizations. For more information about characterization, see Editing Focus: Characterization and Point of View.

You can use a web diagram, similar to the one shown in Figure 4.7, to keep track of characters' traits.

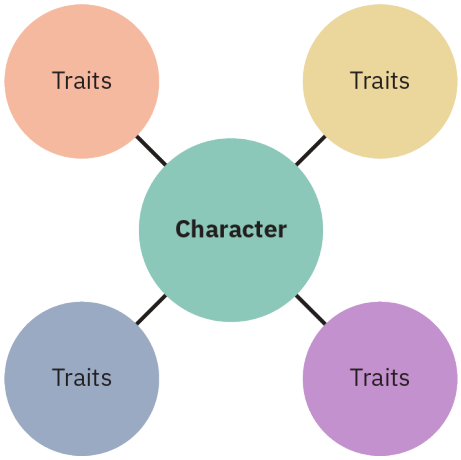



**FIGURE 4.7** Character web (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

### Setting

Where and when your narrative takes place is an important part of a narrative, as it is in the excerpt from Twain's story. You may want to describe a setting in detail if it is important in the course of the story, or you

may find it a less essential part of the narrative. In either case, the setting must be described to some extent to give the narrative a sense of time and place.

### Verb Tense

Choose the **tense** in which you want to tell your story, and ensure that you stay consistent throughout the narrative. Typically, you will choose between past tense and present tense. **Past tense** provides a familiar sense of storytelling, as Twain develops in his anecdote: "I looked around, and there stood Mr. Bixby, smiling a bland, sweet smile." Another option is to tell your story in the **present tense**, which provides a sense of urgency to the events and allows readers to feel closer to the action. If you are considering using the present tense, try substituting it in the excerpt from *Life on the Mississippi*. Consider how it sounds and the difficulties you might encounter in using it. Whichever tense you choose, however, the most important thing is to stick to it, changing it only to indicate a change in chronology. For example, if you are narrating in the present tense and want to indicate something that happened at a time before the events of your story, you would change tenses for clarity. Read more about verb tense consistency in Editing Focus: Verb Tense Consistency.

### Active vs. Passive Voice

Verbs have two voices: active and passive. In an active-voice sentence structure, the subject performs the action of the verb. In a passive-voice sentence structure, the subject receives the action of the verb. Consider the examples in Table 4.2.

| Active Voice | Passive Voice |
|---|---|
| I devoured the silky pudding. | The silky pudding was devoured by me. |
| The teacher will give you directions. | Directions will be given to you by the teacher. |
| The barnacles scraped my skin. | My skin was scraped by the barnacles. |
| The sloth carried her baby on her back. | The baby sloth was carried by its mother on her back. |
| The two presidents are signing the agreement. | The agreement is being signed by the two presidents. |
| A tornado destroyed the neighborhood. | The neighborhood was destroyed by a tornado. |

**TABLE 4.2** Active vs. passive voice

The meanings in both passive and active voice remain the same, yet their effect is different. In active voice, the message will be clearer and often more convincing. While it is not wrong to write in the passive voice on occasion, you will usually strengthen your writing by focusing on how a subject performs an action rather removing it from the direct action. For more information about active and passive voice, see Clear and Effective Sentences.

### Imagery



In personal narratives and memoirs, imagery not only brings the experience to life but also engages readers through their senses. For example, Twain appeals to the sense of hearing when he describes "the leadsman's sepulchral cry:—'D-e-e-p four!'" The use of figurative language, such as similes, metaphors, hyperbole, or personification, often enhances these descriptions. Think of images and figurative language as ways of *showing* versus *telling*. Consider Twain's recounting of the moment he loses his nerve: "I began to climb the wheel like a squirrel." Certainly, he could have said instead, "I spun the wheel back and forth." But the use of figurative language, in this case a simile comparing his action to a squirrel's, helps readers imagine and share Twain's terror as if they are experiencing the event in the same way. Within a scene in your story, choose an

event, moment, or place, and practice using imagery to describe it. Then use a graphic organizer like Figure 4.8 to imagine how you might use each sense to describe the same event or another event, moment, or place from your story.

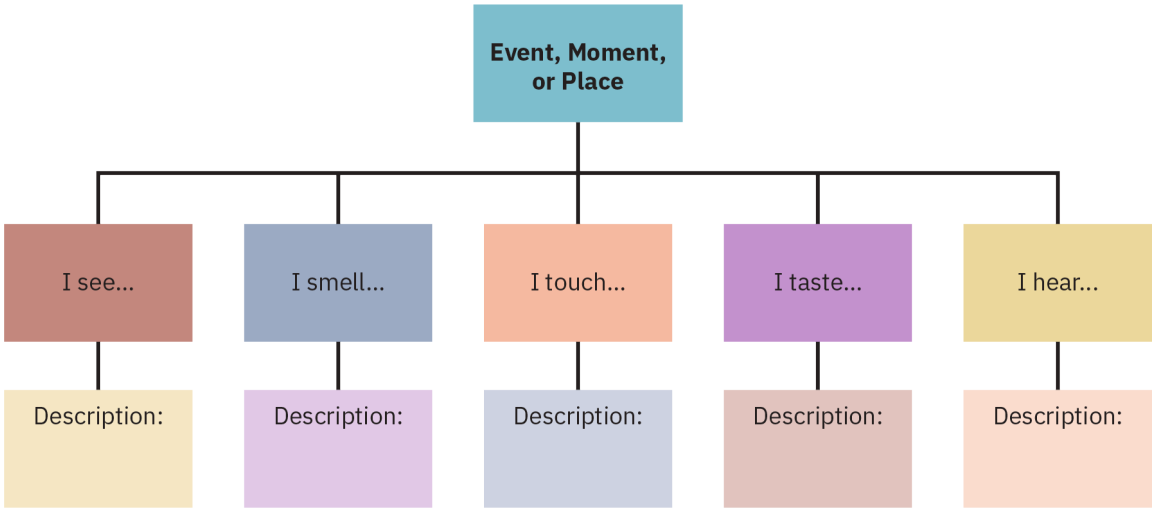



**FIGURE 4.8** Senses chart (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

For your narrative, you do not have to use all the descriptions in the graphic organizer, and doing so would likely clutter your story. Choose the best, most powerful details to enhance your writing and help readers viscerally experience the event, moment, or place.

### Sentence Structure

You can structure your text in various ways to achieve your intended mood, tone, and overall message. No matter what your form or style, sentences are your main units of composition, explaining the world in terms of subjects, actions, and objects: some force (a subject) does something (action) that causes something else to happen (an object). Narrative writing, like all prose, is built around complete and predictable sentences.

Sometimes, however, writers use sentences in less predictable and more playful ways. For example, **fragmented sentences** suggest fragmented stories. Fragmented sentences can be used judiciously in conventional writing, even academic writing, as long as their purpose is clear and your fragment is not mistaken for a grammatical error. Writers sometimes use fragments audaciously and sometimes with abandon to create the special effects they want: *A flash of movement. A bit of a story. A frozen scene.*

Fragments force quick reading, ask for impressionistic understanding, and suggest parts rather than wholes. Like snapshots, fragments invite strong reader participation to stitch information together and move toward clear meaning. Fragmented sentences suggest, too, that things are moving fast. Often used in dialogue as well to mimic real speech, purposeful fragments can be powerful: *Deliberate. Intentional. Careful. Functional. Usually brief.*

Consider British novelist Charles Dickens's (1812–1870) use of fragments in this story told in *The Pickwick Papers* (1836). The impact of the sentence fragments here conveys a sensory experience and creates a mood for the reader.

> "Heads, heads—take care of your heads!" cried the loquacious stranger, as they came out under the low archway, which in those days formed the entrance to the coach-yard. "Terrible place—dangerous work—other day—five children—mother—tall lady, eating sandwiches—forgot the arch—crash—knock—children look round—mother's head off—sandwich in her hand—no mouth to put it in—head of a family off—shocking, shocking!"

On the opposite pole of sentence structure are **labyrinthine sentences**. A labyrinthine sentence seems never

to end. Instead, it goes on and on and on, using all sorts of punctuational and grammatical tricks to create a compound sentence (two or more independent clauses joined by a comma and a conjunction such as *and*, *or*, or *but*) or a complex sentence (one independent clause with one or more dependent clauses). Such sentences are often written to suggest that events or time are running together and hard to separate. However, such writing may more often suggest error than experiment, so be careful.

Another type of sentence variation is achieved through repetition of words, phrases, or sentences for emphasis. Repeated words and ideas suggest continuity of idea and theme, help meld ideas and paragraphs, and sometimes create rhythms that are pleasing to the ear. While **refrain** is a term more often associated with music, poetry, and sermons, it is a form of repetition that is quite powerful in prose as well. A refrain is a phrase or group of words repeated throughout a text to remind readers (or listeners) of an important theme. For example, the words "I have a dream" are a refrain from American activist Martin Luther King Jr. 's (1929–1968) speech by the same name. Look at how Mark Twain uses repetition to increase the tension.

> I seized the bell-rope; dropped it, ashamed; seized it again; dropped it once more; clutched it tremblingly once again, and pulled it so feebly that I could hardly hear the stroke myself.

Variation in sentence structure, established through such techniques as fragments, labyrinthine sentences, and repetition, creates certain effects within the text because each technique conveys its information in an unmistakable way. These techniques are stylistic devices that add an emotional dimension to the typically factual material of narrative prose without announcing, labeling, or dictating what those emotions should be. The wordplay of alternate-style composing allows narrative prose to convey themes more often conveyed through more obviously poetic forms. These sentence variations are a large component of what constitutes voice. For more information about sentence structure, see Clear and Effective Sentences.

### Voice

As you write, focus on developing your **voice**, which in writing is the identity or personality of the narrator or writer. A writer's voice is sometimes equated with an individual's personal style—the elements that contribute to the way that person looks and acts. *Do you favor certain kinds of clothing? Do you walk in a certain way? Do you have certain characteristic gestures or speech patterns?* In writing, your voice is the sum total of the words you choose, the way you use them, the attitude you project by your word choice, the mood you create, the way your words describe characters, the way characters speak and behave, and the way you relate events. In personal writing, voice comes through via narration, dialogue, and characterization and the way you project your personality through them.

Further, writers often speak with more than one voice, or maybe with a single voice that has a wide range, varied registers, multiple tones, and different pitches. In any given composition, a writer may try to say two things at the same time. Sometimes writers question their own assertions, sometimes they say one thing aloud and think another silently to themselves, sometimes they say one thing that means two things, and sometimes they express contradictions, paradoxes, or conundrums.

Double voices in a text may be indicated by parentheses—the equivalent of an actor speaking an aside on the stage or in a film. In a film, the internal monologue of a character may be revealed as a voice-over or through printed subtitles while another reaction is happening on-screen. With text, you can change the type size or font or switch to *italic*, **boldface**, or CAPITAL LETTERS to signal a switch in your voice as a writer. The double voice can also occur without distinguishing markers at all or with simple paragraph breaks or spaces.

Effective voice can be achieved through sentence structure and word choices. Try to balance **descriptive language** and **dialogue**. You likely have heard the expression "Show, don't tell." Use narration to describe events, actions, and even the narrator's thoughts, but don't fall into the trap of feeling as though you need to describe *everything*. Allow events to flow naturally through the narration, weaving in action and dialogue. Precisely placed dialogue can reinforce the narration.

Because voice infuses personality into the composition, the lack of voice or a weak voice may make your story read like a timeline rather than selected events leading to a meaningful turning point. You want your voice to be consistent, reliable, and relatable to your readers. Often this voice will sound like you, infusing your personality or identity into the text. If you recreate authentic (or a good imitation of authentic) dialogue, narration, and description, your voice will likely be strongest, as it suggests a real connection with you.

### Mood

When expressing the narrator's emotions and point of view about the events of the text, voice is a major factor in creating **mood** (atmosphere). For example, a mood may be gloomy, happy, or tense. The same event told by a narrator with a casual, lighthearted voice can be read completely differently if narrated with a formal, argumentative voice. Consider these two sentences and the effect created by the word choice:

- The rain danced on the pavement, sparkling droplets falling from cotton balls above.
- The rain pounded the pavement, pouring buckets from thundering gray clouds above.

The mood in the first sentence reflects a positive disposition toward the rain. The second sentence, though it says nearly the same thing, shows a negative attitude, expressing the violence of the rain. The two distinct moods, developed through imagery, details, and language, influence the reader's perception of the rain.

### Conclusion and Reflection

At the end of your story, you will have the opportunity to reflect on the turning-point event, its impact on you, and perhaps its application to a universal theme. In the Twain example, the reflection is relatively straightforward.

> "Very well, then. You shouldn't have allowed me or anybody else to shake your confidence in that knowledge. Try to remember that. And another thing: when you get into a dangerous place, don't turn coward. That isn't going to help matters any."

> It was a good enough lesson, but pretty hardly learned. Yet about the hardest part of it was that for months I so often had to hear a phrase which I had conceived a particular distaste for. It was, "Oh, Ben, if you love me, back her!"

Twain uses Mr. Bixby's words to teach both himself and readers the lesson. Twain's reflection also points to a universal lesson, creating a relatable thread from which readers can learn. As you compose your reflection, ask yourself these questions:

- What have you learned from your turning point?
- What can readers learn from your turning point?
- How will you express this lesson?

You may reflect by using literary elements such as imagery or figurative language that help develop the theme or message. You will want to leave room for your readers' own interpretations so that they can apply the lesson to their own lives, as Twain does. Certainly, most people have doubted their knowledge and abilities at some point, and Mr. Bixby's directive "Don't turn coward" has universal meaning.

## Peer Review: Focus on Big-Picture Elements

After your first draft is complete, begin the process of peer review. In this initial review, peer reviewers should focus on big-picture elements, such as plot, point of view, organization, and reflection. Peer reviewers can use the following sentence starters to assess these elements.

- My first impression of the story is _____. From it, I learned _____.
- The story begins with/by _____. It could be made more engaging by _____.
- The author uses dialogue to _____.
- The narrative is organized by _____. Doing _____ could strengthen the organization.

- The author's main point is _____ and is developed by _____.
- The author wants to tell me _____.
- I think these details could be made stronger to better develop the main idea or theme of _____.

In addition, peer reviewers may choose to mark the manuscript in the following ways:

- Circle unnecessary details. Underline places where more vivid details would bring events or ideas to life.
- Mark places where transitions are needed.
- Place quotation marks in the margin to indicate places where dialogue might better develop the story.

### Revising: Let the Small Stuff Go for Now

After reading through your peer review, you now have the opportunity to revise your story. When you **revising**, reimagine your manuscript until it reaches your audience in the way you want it to. Begin this process by identifying the physical changes you want to make. These might include moving, adding, or deleting content and rewriting ideas. There are also nonphysical ways to revise. Focus on the big picture; think about whether the way you have told your story has delivered your intended message effectively. Avoid getting caught up in minute details before you have shaped the narrative to relate your intended ideas.

Use the following checklist to work through the revision process.

☐ **Introduction:** Does the introduction hook the reader and establish the background knowledge needed, including plot and setting?
☐ **Sequence of events:** Is the story told in a logical and consistent order?
☐ **Vivid details:** Do you provide vivid details that engage your readers' senses?
☐ **Tone and mood:** Are the tone and mood effective for your purpose?
☐ **Characterization, narration, and voice:** Have you developed consistent and specific characterization through your narration and voice?
☐ **Dialogue:** Does the dialogue help move the plot and reflect the characters?
☐ **Transitions:** Have you used clear transitions and time signals to establish chronology and connect important ideas?
☐ **Structure:** Have you developed a cohesive structure, including varying sentence lengths and structures? Can you improve sentences by restructuring, combining, or separating them?
☐ **Conclusion:** Does your conclusion clearly explain the significance of the turning-point event, including its relationship to the theme you want to develop?

## 4.6 Editing Focus: More on Characterization and Point of View

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Correctly identify and use conventions of the personal narrative genre, including structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics.
- Gain experience negotiating variations in genre conventions.

When you began writing your story, you likely concentrated on developing the plot and placing events and ideas in an order that made sense. Now, as you edit, work toward refining characterization and point of view in your narrative.

### The Storyteller's Personas: Characterization

After you have developed your narrative, consider the characterization you used to develop the narrator's voice. Characterization helps create a picture of the narrator as a character, drawing the reader in and giving life and interest to the story. **Persona**, from the Latin word for a type of mask worn by stage actors, develops the impression the narrator leaves on the reader.

A persona is actually a construct. Although the story is about you, the actual character on the page is *not* you.

Like the Latin word, it is a mask, or a stand-in for you. You can carefully choose a persona for your character to communicate more authentically and directly with your audience. In real life, your persona refers to your appearance, mannerisms, voice, and body language. In a personal narrative, it is similar—the voice of the narrator as developed through thoughts, actions, and dialogue. Just as you might have a different persona when interacting with a teacher than you would with a friend, your persona as narrator should be carefully crafted to create the most meaning. Use your inner life to help bring the narrator to life. You can be who you want (or do not want) to be.

Consider how Twain creates a persona at the beginning of the excerpt from *Life on the Mississippi*. The opening of the excerpt provides information about both the narrator and Mr. Bixby, and the characterization of each supports the other. The narrator is portrayed as the junior steersman. He is confident but perhaps slightly cross at doing the majority of the work while the more experienced Mr. Bixby plays "gentleman of leisure."

> I had become a good steersman; so good, indeed, that I had all the work to do on our watch, night and day; Mr. Bixby seldom made a suggestion to me; all he ever did was to take the wheel on particularly bad nights or in particularly bad crossings, land the boat when she needed to be landed, play gentleman of leisure nine-tenths of the watch, and collect the wages.

Like Twain, you can develop persona through characterization in your story. Keep in mind that characters are viewed through your eyes. Other people or characters may view them differently, but in your personal narrative, it is your opinion that counts most. Use the following tips to strengthen characterization:

- Observe and report on a character's surroundings.
- Relay a character's personality through mannerisms, style, physical appearance, and dialogue.
- Build characters on the basis of relationships and roles.
- Report on how characters interact with one another and how they confront events.
- Relate characters to time.
- Express a character's role in plot events.

## Choosing the First-Person Point of View

Remember that point of view has to do with the narrator of a story and how that narrator reports and understands events. A narrator may be biased or only have access to certain information and will relate and interpret events accordingly. You most likely have chosen or been assigned to write from the first-person point of view.

### First-Person Point of View

A **first-person narrator** is a character in the story, whether fiction or nonfiction. Memoirs and autobiographies, as well as personal narratives and many works of fiction, are narrated from the first-person point of view. In telling their stories, first-person narrators, whether real people or fictional characters, are part of the story. They participate in the action, share opinions, and provide descriptions and interpretations. It is important in writing to remember that these narrators know only what they observe around them—what they learn from dialogue, what they are told, and what actions or events occur. They do not know what other characters are thinking and cannot go beyond what they imagine regarding other characters. For example, as Mark Twain begins to steer the boat, he observes Mr. Bixby leave and the others arrive. He cannot know what they are thinking or what motivates them. First-person narrators use *I* and *me* to indicate that they are the ones speaking and observing.

First-person point of view is the most frequently used in memoirs and personal narratives and serves as an authentic and credible point of view.

### Third-Person Point of View

**Third-person narration** is also used frequently in narrative writing, but usually in fiction and nonpersonal narratives. In this point of view, a narrator who is not a character tells the story. In other words, the narrator is

outside the story and sees it from a broader angle. The narrator's point of view may be **limited point of view**, in which case the narrator aligns with one or several characters and knows only what they know—that is, the narrator reveals only the thoughts of that one or those several characters. Alternatively, the point of view may be **omniscient**, or all-knowing. Omniscient narrators know all characters' thoughts and actions regardless of whether the characters are present. Third-person narrators do not put themselves in the story, and they narrate with third-person pronouns such as *he*, *she*, and *they*. This point of view may provide more reliable and objective narration—but not always.

#### Second-Person Point of View

A final type of narration is the **second-person point of view**, in which the narrator uses the pronoun *you* to address readers directly. As in first-person narration, the narrator in this case is usually a character in the story; however, **second-person narration** folds the reader into the story as a character, a technique that draws them closer to the plot. Consider how American author Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864) draws in the reader in the opening of his short story "The Haunted Mind" (1835).

> What a singular moment is the first one when you have hardly begun to recollect yourself after starting from midnight slumber! By unclosing your eyes so suddenly, you seem to have surprised the personages of your dream in full convocation round your bed, and catch one broad glance at them before they can flit into obscurity.

The second-person point of view is used much less in literary writing than either first or third person. Although it sometimes can be an effective perspective for experienced authors, second person presents problems for both readers and writers. It is difficult to develop successfully, and it's easy to lose track of the narration, thus confusing the reader. You can be sure that if you as the author have difficulty following the narration as you work through the revision process, your readers have little chance. Also, use of the second-person point of view may not be clear to readers who might not notice a difference between addressing readers as *you* simply to provide some information and actually drawing readers into the story as characters. Finally, second person can be difficult for readers to trust, for you are essentially asking them to suspend disbelief and take on all the qualities and experiences that you, as the author, assign them.

You will mostly likely use first-person narration as you retell a turning point in your life, but whichever narration you choose, be consistent.

### Practice with Point of View

To become more familiar with first- and third-person points of view, rewrite a paragraph of your personal narrative using both types of third-person point of view, limited and omniscient. For the limited point of view, choose one of the characters for the narrator to focus on. For the omniscient point of view, focus on all of the characters. Then reflect on how the point of view changes the story. *Which point of view do you prefer—first, limited third, or omniscient third? Why?*

## 4.7 Evaluation: Structure and Organization

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Develop flexible strategies for reviewing and revising.
- Give and act on productive feedback for works in progress.
- Correctly identify and use conventions of the personal narrative genre, including structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics.

Ask your peer reviewer to evaluate your second draft by using the rubric in this section. The rubric can help you evaluate your writing regarding the conventions and style of a personal narrative. Though you may make personal writing choices that your peer reviewer doesn't agree with, a peer's perspective offers you a window into a reader's mind and can help you ensure that your story's impact matches your intentions. After

considering your peer reviewer's feedback, revise your paper by incorporating the changes you believe will strengthen it.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—characterization and point of view, discussed in Section 4.6—and reflects well-developed, relatable characters and a consistent point of view. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer creates a meaningful narrative and provides effective development of characters, vivid details, and reflection through a clear and organized sequence of events. Tenses are always consistent, and events are seamlessly connected with transitions. | The writer consistently demonstrates strong awareness of the rhetorical situation, including narrator, message, audience, purpose, context, and culture. The writer uses dialogue and action to bring readers into the scene. Sentences are varied appropriately. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—characterization and point of view, discussed in Section 4.6—and reflects developed, relatable characters and a consistent point of view. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer creates a consistent narrative and provides effective development of characters, some vivid details, and reflection through a fairly well- organized sequence of events. Tenses are usually consistent, and events are usually connected with transitions. | The writer usually demonstrates strong awareness of the rhetorical situation, including narrator, message, audience, purpose, context, and culture. The writer uses dialogue and action to bring readers into the scene. Some sentences are varied. |
| **3**<br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—characterization and point of view, discussed in Section 4.6—and reflects fairly developed, relatable characters and a somewhat consistent point of view. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer sometimes creates a consistent narrative and provides reasonably effective development of characters, some vivid details, and reflection through a somewhat organized sequence of events. Tenses may be inconsistent at times, and more transitions may be needed for coherence. | The writer sometimes demonstrates awareness of the rhetorical situation, including narrator, message, audience, purpose, context, and culture. The writer uses some dialogue and action to bring readers into the scene, but more of both are needed. Some sentences may be varied. |

**TABLE 4.3**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—characterization and point of view, discussed in Section 4.6—and reflects somewhat developed, relatable characters and a somewhat inconsistent point of view. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer rarely creates a consistent narrative and provides little development of characters, few details, and minimal reflection through a mostly disorganized sequence of events. Tenses are inconsistent or ineffective, and transitions are lacking or inappropriate. | The writer may occasionally demonstrate awareness of the rhetorical situation, including narrator, message, audience, purpose, context, and culture. The writer uses little dialogue and action to bring readers into the scene. Sentence structure shows little variation. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—characterization and point of view, discussed in Section 4.6—and reflects undeveloped, unrelatable characters and an inconsistent point of view. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer creates a disorganized narrative with little or no development of characters, details, and reflection. Tenses are inconsistent or ineffective, and transitions are lacking or inappropriate. | The writer demonstrates little or no awareness of the rhetorical situation, including narrator, message, audience, purpose, context, and culture. The writer uses little or no dialogue and action. Sentence structure is not varied. |

**TABLE 4.3**

## 4.8 Spotlight on … Multilingual Writers

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Respond to a variety of situations and contexts by recognizing diction, tone, formality, design, medium, or structure to meet the situation.
- Read a diverse range of texts, attending especially to patterns of organization, the interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements, and how these features function for different audiences and situations.

Multilingual writers are those who write in both first and second (or third . . . or more!) languages, as opposed to monolingual writers, who write in a single language. In the United States, it is not uncommon that English is the second language of multilingual authors, many of whom may have extensive familiarity and literacy in both their first and second languages. Colleges and universities, too, in their quest to include a more diverse population within their ranks, have seen an increase in multilingual writers and students.

Addressing the needs of multilingual students and writers deserves special attention, as these writers may experience a variety of differences between writing in their first languages and in English. In fact, the landscape and functions of various parts of writing—linguistics, audience, and rhetorical appeals, to name a few—vary across languages and cultures. While certain expectations exist in the academic sphere—for example, the way rhetorical appeals are incorporated within a position argument—different cultural practices and assumptions may require different processes for those writing from the perspective of multiple languages

or cultures. Understanding academic literacies can be challenging enough for students entrenched in the typical American classroom, and space should be carved out for those coming from different outlooks, particularly multilingual writers.

Multilingual writers have much to offer to classrooms and readers' literary experiences. In the past, languages have been viewed as occupying separate spaces in a multilingual writer's mind. It is commonly accepted that multilingual authors switch between the linguistic and cultural norms of each of their languages. But separate languages are also cohesive, allowing authors to draw on a wide variety of inventory from a different language as they compose, thus enhancing their writing.

### The Storyteller's Purpose: The Truth of the Human Experience





Consider adding multilingual elements to your writing if you are a multilingual author. Language can create a mood and atmosphere for your readers, helping communicate cultural and linguistic individualities. You might add narration or dialogue in a language other than English to the story of your personal turning point if it makes sense within the narrative. For example, you might use dialogue to convey a young woman's conversation with her Mexican grandmother:

*"Te amo, nieta," she whispered gently.*

This can be a more powerful use of language and culture than simply stating that the grandmother spoke in Spanish, allowing the reader to experience the culture through language. Or a character may ask a question or make a statement in another language, allowing the reader to understand through the context of surrounding narration or dialogue:

*"Vous avez des livres de Dickens?" the woman inquired. "Yes," I responded, "we have several books by Dickens."*

Alternatively, consider sharing your own thoughts in another language, retaining traces of that language's structure and grammar. Reflection Trailblazer: Sandra Cisneros does this in Spanish, and Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi-Adichie (b. 1977) does this in Igbo. Both serve as models of how to incorporate another language into writing. In addition, some professional authors write in the language of the country they live in. For example, Irish playwright, poet, and novelist Samuel Beckett (1906–1989) lived in France and wrote in both French and English. American author Jhumpa Lahiri (b. 1967), who was born in London to Indian parents, lived for years in Italy and has written in Italian as well as her native English.

### Publish Your Work

Publishing your personal writing is the next step you may want to take. In addition to your campus literary magazine, the following journals accept undergraduate creative work and are often looking for submissions.

- *The Allegheny Review (https://openstax.org/r/thealleghneyreview)*
- *Creative Nonfiction (https://openstax.org/r/creativenonfiction)*
- *Inquiries Journal (https://openstax.org/r/inquiriesjournal)*
- *International Journal of Undergraduate Research & Creative Activities (https://openstax.org/r/undergraduateresearch)*

## 4.9 Portfolio: Filtered Memories

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Reflect on the composition process.
- Reflect on how the composition process affects your writing.
- Use composition for learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical contexts.

As part of this course, you are creating a portfolio of your compositions to show your development as a writer.

As you add to this portfolio, you assess your growth as a writer. The portfolio of your work allows you not only to have a record of your compositions but also to reflect on those compositions and the process involved in writing them. In this section, you will write a reflection on the process you followed in writing your turning-point story, including revision and editing. Consider your original intention when creating your essay and how close your final composition comes to fulfilling that intention.

## Reflective Task

Answer the following questions before writing several paragraphs reflecting on the personal turning point you wrote about in this chapter. Consider both the process and the outcome of the writing assignment.

- Why did you choose the turning-point moment or event that you did?
- Which part of the writing process came the most naturally? Which was the most difficult?
- Which parts of the composition do you think are the strongest? Why?
- Which parts of the composition would you still like to improve?
- How did you develop your voice as a narrator as you wrote?
- If you were to write another turning-point story, what would you do differently? (Consider topic, organization, structure, point of view, and voice.)
- How did your story change through the revision and peer-editing processes? Name at least two changes you made, and reflect on how they made the piece stronger.
- What did you learn about yourself, both as a writer and as a person, from this exercise?

## Further Reading

The following titles are good examples of essays, memoirs, and poems that tell personal stories.

Akbar, Kaveh. "How I Found Poetry in Childhood Prayer: In the Presence of the Long Faultless Tongue of God." *Literary Hub*, 12 Sept. 2017, https://lithub.com/kaveh-akbar-how-i-found-poetry-in-childhood-prayer/.

Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Random House, 1969.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 4th ed., Aunt Lute Books, 2012.

Baldwin, James. *Notes of a Native Son*. 1955. Beacon Press, 2012.

Beasley, Sandra. *Don't Kill the Birthday Girl: Tales from an Allergic Life*. Crown, 2011.

Bryson, Bill. *I'm a Stranger Here Myself: Notes on Returning to America after 20 Years Away*. Broadway Books, 1999.

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. Pantheon Books, 1994.

McCourt, Frank. *Angela's Ashes*. Scribner, 1996.

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. Houghton Mifflin, 1990.

Pausch, Randy. *The Last Lecture*. With Jeffrey Zaslow, Hyperion, 2008.

Schutz, Samantha. *I Don't Want to Be Crazy*. Scholastic, 2006.

Walls, Jeanette. *The Glass Castle: A Memoir*. Scribner, 2006.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Brown Girl Dreaming*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2014.

Read some of Ta-Nehisi Coates' articles to study his writing style:

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "Ta-Nehisi Coates." *The Atlantic*, https://www.theatlantic.com/author/ta-nehisi-coates/. Accessed 17 Mar. 2022

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Guptill, Amy. *Writing in College: From Competence to Excellence*. Open SUNY, 2016, https://milneopentextbooks.org/writing-in-college-from-competence-to-excellence/.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "The Haunted Mind." *Twice-Told Tales*, American Stationers, 1837. *Project Gutenberg*, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/9209/9209-h/9209-h.htm.

Malcolm X. "Literacy behind Bars." *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Ballantine, 1964. *Northern Local School District*, https://www.nlsd.k12.oh.us/userfiles/63/Classes/4521/malcolm%20x%20-%20literacy%20behind%20bars.pdf.

Twain, Mark. *Life on the Mississippi*. James R. Osgood, 1883. *Project Gutenberg*, http://www.gutenberg.org/

files/245/old/orig245-h/245-h.htm.

# Profile: Telling a Rich and Compelling Story

5



**FIGURE 5.1** Writer Gay Talese (b. 1932) revolutionized both journalism and profile writing. His piece "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold" appeared in Esquire magazine's April 1966 issue and was among the earliest and most influential examples of the "new journalism" movement of the 1960s and '70s. A key element of the movement was journalists' use of literary techniques in longer pieces of media writing, aiming to get at "truth" rather than simply providing facts. Because Sinatra (shown here in a 1960 photo) refused interview requests, Talese built the profile entirely from field observations and interviews with others. (credit: 20th Century Fox/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**5.1** Profiles as Inspiration
**5.2** Profile Trailblazer: Veronica Chambers
**5.3** Glance at Genre: Subject, Angle, Background, and Description
**5.4** Annotated Sample Reading: "Remembering John Lewis" by Carla D. Hayden
**5.5** Writing Process: Focusing on the Angle of Your Subject
**5.6** Editing Focus: Verb Tense Consistency
**5.7** Evaluation: Text as Personal Introduction
**5.8** Spotlight on ... Profiling a Cultural Artifact
**5.9** Portfolio: Subject as a Reflection of Self


**INTRODUCTION** This chapter explores the process of **profile writing**. Writers compose these articles or essays to present some essential insight about the subject to the audience; subjects can span a wide variety of topics, including individuals, groups, places, and events. A good profile tells one clear, overarching story, chosen from other possible stories about the subject.

Although the central purpose of a profile is to convey a sense of the subject's significance, a profile may have a more specific goal. Profile writers may simply want to inform audiences about their subjects, or they may aim to inspire audiences with the examples their subjects provide, highlighting something overlooked or underappreciated about them. In all cases, though, the writer's goal is to share a crucial insight about the subject with the audience.

Profiles lie on a spectrum between two related forms: informal interviews and formal biographies. Like interviews, profiles usually depend on direct conversations with living people. Like biographies, they make use of other sources of information about the subject. Profiles such as those published in popular magazines are usually longer and more focused than interviews but considerably shorter than biographies. The material in this chapter will help you develop a profile that will show a new perspective on a subject of your choosing to inform and inspire your readers.

## 5.1 Profiles as Inspiration

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify characteristics of profile writing.
- Explain how the profile genre has developed.

Beginning with its first issue in 1925, *The New Yorker* magazine has run a regular feature called "Profiles." The earliest of this series of biographical sketches combined the elements still in use for profiles today: anecdotes (brief stories), interview data, descriptions of the subject and their surroundings, and researched information to provide background and context. In the early 1950s, then senator John F. Kennedy (1917–1963) had an idea to develop a similar article about U.S. senators who had shown moral courage in the face of opposition. He asked one of his speechwriters, Ted Sorensen (1928–2010), to research examples of senators who had displayed this quality. As he researched, Sorensen found so much information that he suggested Kennedy write a book about these individuals.

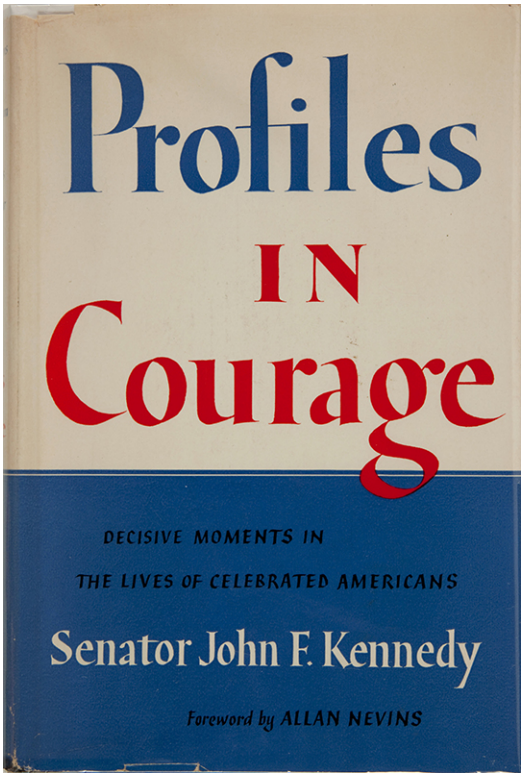



**FIGURE 5.2** Cover of Profiles in Courage (credit: "First edition front cover of *Profiles in Courage*" by Unknown

Author/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The 1956 volume, titled *Profiles in Courage*, spotlights eight senators who took unpopular stances against majority consensus; subjects range from John Quincy Adams (1767–1848) to Robert A. Taft (1889–1953). Many of the profiled senators lost political power as a result of their actions. The John F. Kennedy Library Foundation later established the Profile in Courage Award, given to "a public official (or officials) at the federal, state, or local level whose actions demonstrate the qualities of politically courageous leadership" ("About the Award (https://openstax.org/r/abouttheaward)"). Kennedy's book established a connection between the profile genre and the idea of courage, and other writers have continued drawing on this connection.

One such writer is Veronica Chambers, this chapter's trailblazer. In her book *Resist: 40 Profiles of Ordinary People Who Rose Up against Tyranny and Injustice*, Chambers includes profiles of individuals who displayed uncommon and often unpopular courage. Although profile pieces do not always focus on courageous people as subjects, that particular focus can provide a strong **angle**—a viewpoint or lens—for profile writing. Like Kennedy and Chambers, profile writers often communicate admiration for some attribute that their subject displays, whether courage or another quality that might provide an example to others.

Although other types of writing can inspire readers to develop admirable qualities, profiles do so particularly well. They are generally short enough to read in one sitting and strongly focus on one main idea for readers to absorb. They are compelling because they combine elements of both storytelling and reporting. Profiles of people who embody certain ideals or principles can provide models for readers to become better at living up to those principles.



## 5.2 Trailblazer

### Profile Trailblazer: Veronica Chambers

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in varying rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Determine how genre conventions are shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.
- Comment on the interplay among author, subject, and audience.



*"There is not a story where the oppressor wins forever."*

**FIGURE 5.3** In her profiling work, Veronica Chambers (https://openstax.org/r/veronicachampers) highlights ordinary heroes such as civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer, shown here as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegate at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, August 1964. (credit: "Fannie Lou Hamer, Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegate, at the Democratic National Convention, Atlantic City, New Jersey, August 1964" by Leffler, Warren K.,/Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Public Domain)

You may know Veronica Chambers (b. 1970) from having read *Mama's Girl*, her 1996 memoir about being raised in Brooklyn by her mother, who had immigrated with her from Panama. You may have seen one of the many books that Chambers has coauthored, such as *Yes, Chef* with Marcus Samuelsson, published in 2013; *Make It Messy*, also with Marcus Samuelsson, published in 2015; or *Thirty two (32) Yolks*, with Eric Ripert, published in 2016. Building on these successes, Chambers—who has served as senior editor at several major publications, including *Glamour*, *Newsweek*, and the *New York Times Magazine*—has recently focused on developing an array of young adult books highlighting the voices and histories of marginalized people, mainly Black women.

In the expanded paperback edition of *Resist: 40 Profiles of Ordinary People Who Rose Up against Tyranny and Injustice*, published in 2020, Chambers delves into the profile genre, covering a variety of well-known and influential subjects dating from as early as 1429 to the present day. While many of her subjects are Black American women, such as civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer (1917–1977) and Georgia politician Stacey Abrams (b. 1973), the collection includes people from around the world and from different cultures, among them Indian leader Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948), German industrialist Oskar Schindler (1908–1974), and

South African singer Miriam Makeba (1932–2008). In every chapter, Chambers uses the profile genre to highlight one key aspect of each of her subjects' lives.

### Paying Attention to the Subject's Voice

Profiles aim to help readers better understand their subject by focusing on one major idea. When the subject is a person, readers can better understand that person by reading their spoken or written words. Chambers uses this technique throughout her book. In the first chapter, Chambers tells the story of French heroine Joan of Arc (c. 1412–1431), centering on the idea that individuals are born for a purpose. Readers can better understand Joan of Arc's singlemindedness because of the chapter's **epigraph** (quotation provided at the beginning of a written piece that indicates how readers should approach the text), attributed to the subject: "I am not afraid.... I was born to do this" (Chambers, *Resist* 9). The profile itself offers an additional direct quote: "All battles are first won or lost in the mind"(10). Other chapters, such as those profiling Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) and former South African president Nelson Mandela (1918–2013), also begin with the subject's words in an epigraph or employ both strategies—epigraph plus direct quotes within the profile. (You may choose to use either or both of these strategies in your profile as well.)

### Recognizing the Author's Voice

Profile writers may choose to include themselves in the piece, referring to their own experiences and interactions with the subject. In this collection, Chambers instead speaks in her own voice in the "resist lesson" at the end of each chapter. These "resist lessons" distill each profile's focus into a short phrase, such as "We must speak for the voiceless" (the lesson for the profile of Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, 1879–1919) and "Honor the hands that harvest your crops" (the lesson for the combined profile of American labor leaders Dolores Huerta (b. 1930) and Cesar Chavez, 1927–1993).

### Negotiating among Author's Voice, Subject's Voice, and Genre Expectations

The profile genre enjoys considerable variety. While Chambers does not include her own experiences in this collection, other writers do insert themselves into the profiles they write. Yet even without first-person commentary, Chambers clearly communicates her opinions of the subjects with her word choices and "resist lessons." Either choice—including the author directly in the text or not—can be appropriate, depending on the rhetorical situation.

### Discussion Questions

1. Now that you have read the information provided in the chapter thus far, what do you think are the differences between a profile and a memoir or biography?
2. Why might you include or exclude your own voice or experiences in the profile you write?
3. Given that many of her subjects are historical figures, how do you think Chambers found the information for the profiles included in her book? How would research on someone who lived in the past differ from research on a living person?
4. How is the profile genre uniquely suited to showcase the idea of courage or some other admirable trait?
5. What profiles have you encountered that have inspired you? How have they done so? If you haven't read any inspiring profiles, what subjects—people, places, or events—would you like to see profiled? Why?

## 5.3 Glance at Genre: Subject, Angle, Background, and Description

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify elements of the profile genre.
- Identify research methods for writing profiles.

Profile writing are articles or essays in which the writer focuses on a specific trait or behavior that reveals something essential about the subject. Much profile material comes from interviews either with the subject or with people who know about the subject. However, interviews may not always be part of a profile, for profile writers also draw on other sources of information. In creating profiles, writers usually combine the techniques of narrative, or storytelling, and reporting, or including information that answers the questions of *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.

## Potential Profile Subjects and Angles



You can find profile subjects everywhere. The purpose of a profile is to give readers an insight into something fundamental about the subject, whether that subject is a person, a social group, a building, a piece of art, a public space, or a cultural tradition. Writers of profiles often conduct several types of research, including interviews and **field observations**, as well as consult related published sources. A profile usually reveals one aspect of the subject to the audience; this focus is called an **angle**. To decide which angle to take, profile writers look for patterns in their research, then consider their audience when making choices about both the angle and the **tone**, or attitude toward the subject.

## Defining Terms and Writing in the Genre



These terms, or **genre elements**, are frequently used in profile writing. The following definitions apply specifically to the ways in which the terms are used in this genre.

- **Anecdotes:** brief stories about specific moments that offer insights into the profile subject.
- **Background information:** key to understanding the profile's significance. Background information includes biographical data and other information about the history of the profile subject. It often helps establish context as well.
- **Chronological order:** information or a narrative presented in time order, from earliest to most recent.
- **Context:** the situation or circumstances that surround a profile subject. Situating profile subjects within their contexts can offer deeper insights about them.
- **Factual information:** accurate and verifiable data and other material gathered from research.
- **Field notes:** information gathered and recorded by observing the profile subject within a particular environment.
- **Location:** places relevant to the profile subject. For a person, location might include birthplace, place of residence, or place where events occurred.
- **Narrative structure:** text organized as narratives, or stories, weaving research into the story as applicable.
- **Quotation:** words spoken or written by the subject or from interviews about the subject.
- **Reporting structure:** structure that relays factual information and answers *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* questions.
- **Show and tell:** descriptive and narrative techniques to help readers imagine the subject combined with reporting techniques to relay factual information.
- **Spatial structure:** used in profiles of buildings, artworks, and public spaces. This structure reflects a "tour" of the space or image.
- **Thick description:** combination of sensory perceptions to create a vivid image for readers.
- **Tone:** the writer's attitude toward the subject. For example, tone can be admiring, grateful, sarcastic, disparaging, angry, respectful, gracious, neutral, and so on.
- **Topical structure:** structure that focuses on several specific topics within the profile.

# 5.4 Annotated Sample Reading: “Remembering John Lewis” by Carla D. Hayden

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Determine and articulate how conventions are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Analyze and evaluate relationships between ideas and patterns of organization in the profile genre.

## Introduction



**FIGURE 5.4** John Lewis, 2006 (credit: “Rep. John Lewis (D-GA)” by United States House of Representatives/ Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)



**FIGURE 5.5** Carla D. Hayden, 2020 (credit: "Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden, 2020" by Shawn Miller/Library of Congress Life/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

Just two days after the death of politician and civil rights icon John Lewis (1940–2020), Librarian of Congress Carla D. Hayden (b. 1952) published the following profile on the Library of Congress blog. As you will learn from the annotations, she uses a variety of profile genre elements in her piece. While reading Hayden's profile of Lewis, consider how you might use some of her strategies in your own work.

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### The Power of "Good Trouble"

***Angle and Choice of Subject.*** *Hayden signals her profile's angle in the title, linking Lewis's signature phrase "good trouble" with the idea of power. Additionally, important dates—deaths, current events, or anniversaries of such happenings—often provide the incentive for writing profiles.*

> Few people that you meet truly rouse the best in you. They are walking heroes, living historymakers. Their words and deeds have a thunderous impact on your soul. Congressman John Robert Lewis was such a person for me. I join the world in mourning the passing of this civil rights legend.

***Writer's Voice.*** *Hayden chooses to insert her own voice and experience to connect with her readers. She also expands on the theme of "power" introduced in the title, using words and phrases such as heroes, historymakers, thunderous impact, and legend.*

***Tone.*** *The words she uses to describe Lewis indicate a tone of respect and admiration.*

> The son of a sharecropper growing up in rural Alabama, he said as a little boy he was in constant fear because of signs that said "no colored boys, no colored girls." His parents and grandparents used to tell him "don't get in trouble." Nevertheless, as a young man he was inspired to activism by the Montgomery Bus Boycott that started when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat.

***Structure.*** *This paragraph features a chronological structure, beginning with Lewis’s childhood and creating a timeline from there to the beginning of his activism.*

***Theme and Background.*** *This paragraph also introduces the idea of “trouble,” which drove Lewis’s ideas about how to behave. Thus, it provides necessary background information for the points that follow, giving context for Lewis’s catchphrase of “good trouble.”*



This past December, the Library of Congress opened an extensive exhibition, “Rosa Parks: In Her Own Words,” where the congressman spoke. “Rosa Parks inspired us to get in trouble. And I’ve been getting in trouble ever since,” said Lewis. “She inspired us to find a way, to get in the way, to get in what I call good trouble, necessary trouble.” Over the years, he was able to meet and work with Rosa Parks who taught him about the philosophy and discipline of non-violence. “She kept on saying to each one of us, you too can do something,” he said. “And for people if you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, do something. We cannot afford to be quiet.” You can hear Lewis himself discuss the legacy of Parks (https://openstax.org/r/legacyofparks).

***Theme, Quotations, Audience.*** *This paragraph continues the theme of “trouble,” redefining the idea now in Lewis’s terms. The paragraph also continues the theme of power. This paragraph focuses almost entirely on quoted material from Lewis, giving readers a direct connection to his voice. The embedded video allows readers to see and hear Lewis speaking, reinforcing this strategy. Lastly, Hayden refers to an event at the Library of Congress; this event is relevant to readers of the Library of Congress blog.*

> During the exhibition opening, John Lewis told how he was inspired by Rosa Parks to write to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He was given a round trip bus ticket to Montgomery to meet with Dr. King and upon meeting him was nicknamed, “The Boy from Troy.”

***Location.*** *Hayden places Lewis in different locations; the mention of a location-specific nickname personalizes him further. Hayden also places Lewis at pivotal civil rights events.*

***Audience.*** *This final placement of Lewis in the Library of Congress on several occasions is an effective choice to connect with readers of the Library of Congress blog.*

> He risked his life countless times by organizing voter registration drives, sit-ins at lunch counters and was beaten and arrested for challenging the injustice of Jim Crow segregation in the South. While still a young man, John Lewis was already a nationally recognized leader and was named one of the Big Six leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. He was also the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and his papers and interviews from this time are held at the Library of Congress. At the age of 23, he was a keynote speaker at the historic March on Washington in 1963.

***Factual Information, Background, and Context.*** *This paragraph offers a series of facts to back Hayden’s points. It also provides more background and context for Lewis’s later political efforts. This information is common knowledge, repeated in a variety of credible sources. Hayden takes care to note that Lewis’s papers are housed at the Library of Congress, a relevant detail for her audience.*

> On March 7, 1965, John Lewis led more than 600 peaceful protestors across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma to demonstrate the need for voting rights in the state of Alabama. They were greeted by brutal attacks by Alabama State Troopers that became known as “Bloody Sunday.”

***Anecdote and Context.*** *This paragraph offers a brief anecdote about a defining moment of Lewis’s life, thus strengthening the power of the story and communicating the context of Lewis’s early activism.*

> Despite numerous arrests and physical injuries, John Lewis remained a devoted advocate of the philosophy of nonviolence. He was elected to the Atlanta City Council and then the representative of Georgia’s Fifth Congressional District. He stuck to Rosa Parks’ advice to never be quiet and to continue getting into “good trouble.”

***Angle and Secondary Research.*** *This paragraph continues the writer's angle of "good trouble" and offers information from secondary sources.*

> The congressman was a frequent guest at the Library of Congress. His generous spirit touched everyone he met in the halls of the Library—whether it was reading his graphic novel "March" or speaking at public events—his gentle temperament kept you at ease. His graphic novel allowed him to continue to connect with a new generation of young readers in the hope of inspiring them the way Rosa Parks had inspired him.

***Angle, Context, and Field Research.*** *In this paragraph, Hayden implies that part of Lewis's power came from his generosity and gentle temperament. She also shows readers that Lewis understood his work in the context of Parks's achievements and that he hoped to provide the same context for activists who followed him. Instead of providing direct quotes, Hayden offers details that come from field research.*

> In November, John Lewis celebrated the AIDS Memorial Quilt collection arriving at the Library of Congress. His message of peaceful resolve, perseverance and care still rings loud. "In the height of the civil rights movement, we spoke of love," Lewis said. "On one occasion Dr. King said to some of us, just love everybody. Love them who fail to love you, just love. Just love a little hell out of everybody."

***Quoted Material and Field Research.*** *Using Lewis's own words supports both his commitment to nonviolence and Dr. King's playfulness with language. Hayden was likely present at the event when Lewis spoke; videos of and articles about the event corroborate her report.*

> The world mourns. But we also celebrate a great warrior and fighter of injustice. Let us remember his story and listen to the words he passionately shared for more than a half a century. Congressman John Robert Lewis embodies the best in all of us. Let his legacy and spirit live on. I offer my prayers and condolences to his family and to the grateful people of his district in Georgia.

***Theme and Angle.*** *Hayden ends by reconnecting to the themes that run through the profile. In returning to these themes, Hayden confirms and completes the angle of this profile.*

### Discussion Questions

1. How does the title both focus the scope and signal the angle of this blog post?
2. How effective is Hayden's angle in this piece? Provide evidence for your assessment.
3. In what ways might Hayden, as librarian of Congress, have developed this profile further or differently?
4. How might you revise this piece to fit into a "profiles in courage" collection targeted at a more general audience?
5. How do the first and last paragraphs work differently from the other paragraphs in the text? How do Hayden's choices for these paragraphs affect the cohesiveness of the profile she has written?

## 5.5 Writing Process: Focusing on the Angle of Your Subject

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Plan a research calendar.
- Conduct primary research, including field observations and interviews.
- Conduct secondary research, drawing on credible academic and popular sources.
- Compose an email that meets professional standards of the genre.
- Synthesize research findings using elements of the profile genre to create a written profile.
- Give and receive constructive feedback in peer review exercises.
- Revise a draft in response to feedback.

Now that you are familiar with the structure and content of profiles, you are ready to write one of your own. This section will show you how to apply the ideas and genre elements presented earlier in this chapter to develop your profile essay.

## Summary of Assignment: A Profile in Courage or Other Admirable Trait

For this assignment, you will develop an essay that profiles the courage—or another admirable aspect—of someone or something associated with your college campus. You will create a profile of a person, group, place, or event that exemplifies the admirable aspect as you define it. For your profile, you will conduct the specific kinds of research done by profile writers: interviews, field research, and secondary research from credible sources.

Once you have compiled your research, you will decide on the focus and angle of your piece, then plan and develop your draft. You will also participate in peer review to receive guidance for any needed revisions. Throughout the process, you will focus on developing an essay that shows readers how your subject exemplifies the admirable trait you have chosen.

***Another Lens.*** Another option for this assignment is a group writing project for your class or smaller groups within the class. Your instructor will decide whether the project will be completed by the whole class or smaller groups. With your peers, you will write a collaborative profile in courage of your class or group as a whole, showing how you all exemplify courage together. All students will contribute anecdotes about courage from their own lives in addition to conducting all other research on which profiles are based. The class or group will then work together to organize, draft, revise, edit, and proofread the collective composition.

### Defining the Admirable Trait



Before beginning your profile, choose the admirable trait on which you will focus, and then create your own definition of it. This definition will help you select your subject and focus your research. Consider including the definition in your final product as well.

First, to decide on the trait, follow these steps:

- Set a timer for five minutes. During that time, write or record a comprehensive list of traits you admire in other people. Include a wide range of possibilities, such as “humor,” “generosity,” “patience,” and so on. To generate a robust list, think also of the people you admire, and then pinpoint the attributes you admire about them.
- Consider all of the traits you have listed, and select one to focus on for this project.

Next, use one or more of the following methods to begin defining the aspect of the subject that you admire:

- Think about the admirable trait you have chosen, and write down a few words or phrases that you associate with it.
- Assemble a collage of images that make you think of the admirable trait.
- Write brief notes about moments when you have personally shown the trait you are focusing on—or about times you have seen others exhibit this trait.

Looking at all of these notes, write your personal definition of the admirable trait. Your draft definition will probably evolve as you develop your profile. If so, great! That means you have been thinking more about the idea. Here is a sample definition of an admirable trait: *Kindness is grace in action; it shows itself when people are willing to truly listen to others and to understand the world from another vantage point. People embody kindness when they choose to respond gently rather than angrily or when they help others without complaining.*

### Choosing a Subject



Now that you have a working definition of the trait you are using to focus your profile, you can choose your subject. Members of the campus community are usually willing subjects: professors, librarians, resident

assistants, alumni, staff, and coaches, to name a few. You might also consider buildings, public spaces, or public art on campus. In addition, the local community may contain potential subjects—for example, business owners, city administrators, and other local individuals, groups, or events peripherally associated with your school. Also consider discussing your project with an archivist if one is available on campus or in your community; these specialist librarians always have interesting subjects to recommend for research. Follow these steps to choose a subject:

- Jot down notes about intriguing buildings, public spaces, pieces of public art, people, events, and groups on or near campus.
- Do a quick online search—perhaps on the campus website—to see what information is available about several potential subjects that most intrigue you. Remember that this research is simply to narrow your options; you will conduct more careful and thorough research after making your final choice.
- Having gathered preliminary information, think about which potential subject best connects to the definition of the admirable trait you have developed. Also, think about which subject most interests you.

Now weigh the factors you have considered here, and choose the subject you would most like to pursue. If you are having trouble choosing between two subjects, discuss your options with your instructor or with someone in the campus writing center. Once you have chosen a subject, you can plan your research. You will need to schedule interviews, field observations, and time for secondary research before you begin organizing your findings and drafting your paper.



**FIGURE 5.6** Carmichael Library, University of Montevallo, April 19, 2007. Professor Art Scott Stephens speaks to research students at the Prints and Poems program. (credit: "Prints and Poems 2007" by carmichaellibrary/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

## Preparing to Write: Conducting Research

Profile writers learn as much about their subjects as possible. Be sure to take advantage of all available sources of information, and follow up on new leads wherever you find them. After completing your research, you will be able to refine your angle and draft your piece. As you gather your research, keep your target audience in mind, and look for details about your subject that will interest them. For example, Carla D. Hayden included information about events in which John Lewis participated at the Library of Congress. These details would interest Library of Congress blog readers, the audience for this piece.

You will need to complete three kinds of research for your profile: interviews, field research and secondary research; see The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources and The Research Process: How to Create Sources. These types of research are outlined in Table 5.1 for efficient planning and discussed in detail

below.

**Plan Your Research Calendar**

**Interviews**

- If you can speak to your subject, find their contact information.
- If you cannot speak directly to your subject, make a list of professionals with knowledge about your subject, and decide which person to contact first. One or two interviews should provide enough information for this assignment.
- In either case, compose a **professional email** (see below) to respectfully ask for a brief phone call, video conference, or in-person meeting. Send these emails as soon as you have chosen your subject so that you have time to schedule the interview before you begin drafting.

**Field Research**

- If your subject is a person, send a professional email (see below) to ask when you might observe them doing their job.
- If your subject is not a person, decide when to be in the space to make your **field notes**. Be sure to obtain any needed permission to be in the space.
- In both cases, set aside 30 minutes to an hour to make your field notes, using **thick description** (explained below).

**Secondary Research**

- Set aside time for several research sessions to find credible information about your subject. Refer to Chapters Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources for research guidance.
- If you have trouble finding the information you need, contact one of your research librarians; they would be happy to help.

**TABLE 5.1** Research Planning Calendar

### Professional Email Standards



Before you begin to do research, you will need to contact people via email about setting up interviews or gathering other necessary information. To come across as a credible researcher, follow professional email protocol when contacting subjects for interviews or other information. Subjects will take you and your requests far more seriously when you follow the protocols in Table 5.2.

| Professional Email | |
|---|---|
| Take care to use professional email etiquette when contacting potential interview subjects. | |
| • **Subject Line.** Your subject line, like an essay title, should represent your main point. | |
| • **Salutation.** Open with a polite greeting; use the person's title or honorific (such as Mr., Ms., Mrs., or Dr.). | Subject: Interview Request<br><br>Dear Dr. Kamau, |
| • **Introduction.** Introduce yourself to the person. Your name will appear in the signature line; here, offer information that shows the relationship you have to the request. | I am a student in Dr. Liu's first-year composition class, and I am researching the English Language Institute (ELI) on campus in order to write a profile on tenacity in relation to the ELI. |
| • **Statement of Purpose.** State your purpose clearly. | I am writing to ask for a brief interview with you to find out more about the ELI. |
| • **Statement of Request.** Make a polite request. | Would you have 15 minutes within the next week to speak with me by phone or videoconference?<br><br>I hope to hear from you soon. |
| • **Next Steps.** Say what you would like to happen next. | Thank you for considering this request. |
| • **Closing.** Include a polite closing line, use a professional complimentary close, and type your full name. | [Best, Regards, Sincerely, Yours]<br><br>Sylvia Varela |

**TABLE 5.2** Email Protocols

### Interviews

Talking with your subject—or a professional who knows a great deal about your subject—is often the best place to start your research. Interviews generally fall into the category of **primary research**, or research you collect directly for yourself. Try to interview your profile subject directly if the subject is a person. You also may find interviews with or about your subject that journalists have completed and published, though these would not be primary research. If you are unable to interview your subject directly, try to interview someone who has credible information about your subject; such interviews would be primary research as well. People who know, live, and work with your subject can provide additional, helpful background information. Try to set up a few short interviews with these people to deepen your insights.



The easiest way to conduct an interview is to schedule a brief, informal conversation in a comfortable setting. For a successful interview, have questions prepared and be ready to take notes as you talk. Following in Table 5.3 are sample questions you might ask. To add to this list, think about your preliminary research as well as the definition of the admirable trait you are using for your profile.

Note that you will need to cite any interviews you conduct, both within the text and in the Works Cited list. The Works Cited entry for an interview will read as follows:

[Last name of interviewee], [First name of interviewee]. Personal interview. Day Month (abbreviated) Year.

**Interview Planning Worksheet**

| **If you are interviewing your subject:** | **If you are interviewing someone about your subject:** |
|---|---|
| • What have you been doing or thinking about recently?<br>• What about your work/hobby/area of focus is most interesting to you?<br>• What aspect of your work/hobby/area of focus has surprised you?<br>• What do you wish people knew about your work/hobby/area of focus?<br>• How might you define [the admirable trait]?<br>• How do you see the idea of [the admirable trait] relating to your work/hobby/area of focus?<br>• As I was preparing for this interview, I learned <WOL>. Could you tell me more about that? | • How did you learn about this subject?<br>• What is the most fascinating part about this subject for you?<br>• What should people know about this subject that may be overlooked?<br>• How might you define [the admirable trait]?<br>• Do you see the idea of [the admirable trait] relating to this subject? If so, how?<br>• As I was preparing for this interview, I learned <WOL>. Could you tell me more about that? |

**TABLE 5.3** Interview planning worksheet

### Thick Description



Another form of primary research is field observation. If at all possible, observe your subject in their element—watch them (with permission!) during their workday, spend an extended period of time in a related space, or watch available videos of your subject. In all cases, take thorough and detailed notes to create a **thick description**, or a careful record of every sensory detail you can capture—smells, sounds, sights, textures, physical sensations, and perhaps tastes. This thick description can provide meaningful details to illuminate the points in your piece. Meticulously record all sensory information about your subject and their setting, writing in-depth notes about what you see, smell, hear, feel, and taste. Remember to use words that express size, shape, color, texture, and sound. If you are taking notes on a person, describe their clothing, gestures, and physical characteristics. At the same time, take note of the interview setting. If the interview takes place in a neutral space, the setting can provide a backdrop for the profile. If the interview setting is a person's room or apartment, record the details that tell the most about your subject's special interests. If you are not used to

taking these kinds of notes, practice doing so by following the steps in Table 5.4.

**Practice Field Notes and Thick Description**

Practice creating field notes with a peer. Take about 10 minutes to record as much sensory information as possible.

- What do you hear, close by and farther away?
- What do you feel? Are there specific textures in your surroundings?
- What do you smell? What seems to be the source of the smells?
- Can you taste anything?
- What do you see? Describe the space as well as your peer (without judgment).

When the 10 minutes are up, discuss the experience with your peer. Use these techniques to enliven the points you make in your profile.

**TABLE 5.4** Field notes and thick description guide

You will also need to cite your field notes, both within the text and in the Works Cited list. The Works Cited entry for the field notes should be arranged according to this model:

[Your last name], [Your first name]. Field notes. [Name of the department you are affiliated with], [Name of your university], Day Month (abbreviated) Year. Raw data.

### Secondary Research and Other Written and Published Information

Profile writers supplement their primary research findings through **secondary research**, or research that others have completed and published. Ensure that any supplemental information you use comes from **credible sources**; these include peer-reviewed journals for academic sources and well-established, highly regarded organizations for public, nonacademic ones. Keep careful records of this research so that you can cite each source appropriately. Use the tools available from the Modern Language Association (https://openstax.org/r/modernlanguage) and in Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources for guidance in researching and managing source material. For more details on citing sources, see MLA Documentation and Format and APA Documentation and Format.

Additionally, ask your subject for their résumé and any writing samples they may have developed. While this type of research may not be available about your subject, as many ordinary people have not published anything, find and read any existing publications by or about your subject. Additionally, you can focus your secondary research on information related to your subject rather than about your subject specifically. For example, Carla D. Hayden, in writing the profile of John Lewis, could have researched Bloody Sunday more generally, or she could have found secondary research about the AIDS quilt to which she refers. To see how authors can use such secondary research, read the sample of student work later in this section as well as the blog post in Spotlight on . . . Profiling a Cultural Artifact.

### Synthesizing Research

After you have completed your research, the next step is to **synthesize** it, or put it all together. You can simplify this task by filling in a graphic organizer such as Table 5.5 with your findings and potential angles you might take in your profile.

**Synthesizing: Putting Your Research Together**

| Source | Element | Potential Angle |
|---|---|---|
| **List your sources by type:** | **List the elements you can draw from the sources—quotations, anecdotes, facts, background information, contextual information:** | **List potential angles you could take relating to the information in the other columns:** |
| Interview(s) | | |
| Field observation location and date | | |
| Sources from secondary research | | |

**TABLE 5.5** Synthesizing table

## Quick Launch: Consider the Angle

After completing and synthesizing your research, consider your information carefully to decide on the most compelling angle and supporting information for your audience. While your general angle is the idea of the admirable trait in relation to your subject, aim to develop a personal insight within that focus. Brainstorm different points you can make about the trait that may surprise and engage your audience. Review the table you completed for synthesizing information, and then complete a web diagram such as Figure 5.7 with possible ideas.

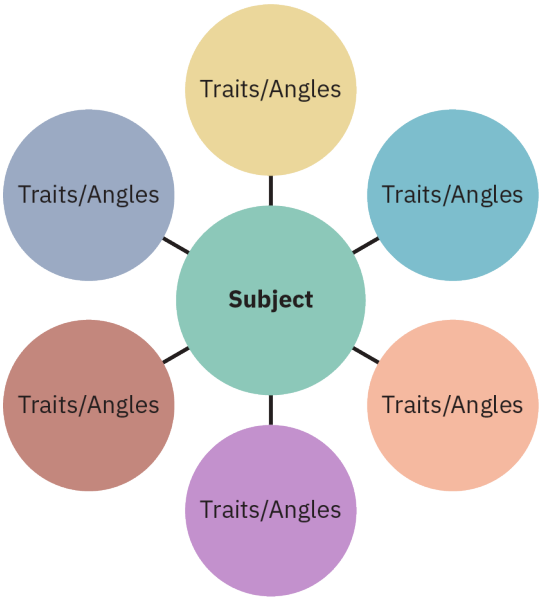



**FIGURE 5.7** Planning web (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

After considering your notes and the completed web, decide which angle will work best. To help you make that decision, think about the information you have gathered so far as well as potential audience appeal. Review the model texts in this chapter to determine how each presents a unique angle on its subject.

## Drafting: Finalizing and Supporting Your Angle

Remember that the writing process is **recursive**, meaning you will move back and forth among the steps in the process multiple times rather than progress through each step only once. For example, you may decide to conduct a bit more research while you are drafting or after you have received feedback from peer review. To include this new research, you may need to rearrange the structure of your draft. As you draft, keep focused on your angle at all times. Losing focus and including irrelevant material may weaken your profile and cause readers to lose interest in the subject.

### Organization

As discussed in Glance at Genre: Subject, Angle, Background, and Description, profiles can be organized in several ways: chronologically, spatially, or topically. Review the information you inserted in reponse to Table 5.1, along with your admirable trait definition, to decide which organizational strategy would work best for your piece. Then use the following sections to organize the introduction, body, and conclusion of your work. When organizing your draft, think about where to place each piece of information to convey your points most effectively. Rather than using a strict chronological structure throughout your draft, you may find your piece is more effective if you begin with a topical structure and then provide some information chronologically.

### Introduction and Thesis

Like introductions in most of the writing you do, the profile introduction establishes some background and context for readers to understand your main point. Think about what readers need to know in order to appreciate your angle, and include that information in the introduction. Some writers prefer to compose their introductions first, whereas others wait until after they have developed a draft of the body. Whichever strategy you use, be sure that the introduction engages readers so that they want to continue reading. Refer to the sample texts in this chapter for models of introductory texts.

Remember, too, that your thesis should appear as the last sentence, or close to the end, of the introduction. For the profile, your thesis would be a sentence or two explaining your angle. For example:

- [Name of subject] showed [the admirable trait] not only in [doing something that shows the trait] but even more so by refusing to [accept or participate in something].
- [Name of subject] plays a unique part in the [history, life, culture] of [place, group] because [reason for angle].

Try one of these models, or a variation of it, as the first draft of your thesis.

### Body Paragraphs

Each body paragraph should support the angle you have taken, advancing your thesis, or main point. For suggestions on developing body paragraphs in narrative writing, see Literacy Narrative: Building Bridges, Bridging Gaps and Memoir or Personal Narrative: Learning Lessons from the Personal. For each paragraph, synthesize details—examples, anecdotes, quotations, location, background information, or descriptions of events—from more than one source to support your angle. By including all of these elements, necessary explanations, and a combination of narrative and reporting, you will create the strongest possible profile piece. See the section See the section Spotlight on . . . Profiling a Cultural Artifact to explore examples of how these elements can work in the paragraphs of a blog post profiling a cultural artifact. In each paragraph, consider drawing on the following:

- **Show and Tell.** In balancing between interviews and biographies, profile writers use both narrative and reporting techniques—that is, they both show and tell readers information about the subject. As you read your notes, decide which elements you will use to show readers something about your subject and which elements you will simply report.
- **Quoted Material.** If your subject has said something in a memorable way, present their words directly to

readers. Doing so increases your readers' sense of the subject's voice.

- **Anecdotes.** Very brief scenarios or stories about something your subject has done, or about the subject itself, contribute to readers' understanding. Often, anecdotes reflect field research, showing the subject "in action" or reflecting what others think about the subject. For example, Carla D. Hayden relates anecdotes about John Lewis's actions leading 600 protesters in Selma, Alabama.
- **Background Information.** You may have one or more paragraphs in which you present background information—but only information that is relevant to the profile. If you highlight an individual's success or their contributions to society or a cause, then that person's humble beginnings may be relevant as a contrast. Hayden mentions Lewis's impoverished youth for this reason. Including background information helps readers place the subject in time and within their culture.
- **Location.** Placing your subject in a setting, in either the past or the present, helps readers understand and visualize the subject in a particular context. Be sure to include location in at least one body paragraph.

The sample texts in this chapter provide models for you to use when developing your draft. Use a graphic organizer like Table 5.6 to identify the following profile genre elements in one or more of the model texts featured in this chapter: Annotated Sample Reading, the student sample in this section, or Spotlight on … Profiling a Cultural Artifact. Remember that single paragraphs often synthesize more than one type of information and use more than one strategy.

| Strategies Used in This Chapter's Sample Texts | Example of the Strategy That You Found in One or More Sample Texts |
|---|---|
| Draw the reader in with a brief, compelling description of the subject. | |
| Offer quoted material. | |
| Connect to both current and historical contexts. | |
| Offer background information. | |
| Use narrative, or storytelling, techniques. | |
| Use reporting techniques, providing supporting facts and answering questions of who, what, when, where, why, and how. | |
| Provide a brief anecdote. | |
| Offer "thick description" from field notes. | |
| Synthesize information from multiple sources within a paragraph. | |

**TABLE 5.6** Strategy table

Additionally, tone, a writer's attitude toward their subject, is particularly important in profiles because it conveys authenticity to readers. If you praise a subject but your tone or attitude reflects detachment or lack of interest, readers will notice the discrepancy. Hayden's attitude toward her subject, John Lewis, is one of respect and admiration. If you are writing about someone courageous, then your tone will probably be similar to hers. Remember, though, that you are the narrator, and thus you set the tone. If you insert quotations by people who don't think as you do, make sure that doing so suits your purpose. By including information in the areas covered above and maintaining a consistent and appropriate tone, you will have the basis of a strong and engaging profile.

### Conclusion

The conclusion is your opportunity to pull all the points of the essay together. Many writers like to restate the main point they have sustained throughout the essay in the conclusion. Another strong move for the conclusion is to tell readers the **exigency** of the piece—in other words, why the information is important and why they should care about it. After your introduction and body are complete, read through your draft; this process will often give you a sense of what still needs to be said in the conclusion. Refer to the sample texts in this chapter for models of conclusion paragraphs.

### Review Your Draft

After you have written a rough first draft, including the introduction and conclusion, read the entire piece three times:

- **Revise.** Read once for the big picture to judge whether you have enough content and whether the content is arranged in a way that makes sense. Revise your work as needed.
- **Edit.** Read a second time for mid-level concerns such as sentence variety, word choice, and consistent use of tenses: Editing Focus: Verb Tense Consistency. Think about whether you need to break some sentences apart or combine some sentences for smoother flow. Follow the chronology of your profile to ensure that the narration stays in the present or past tense and that events are clearly set in time. Read your composition aloud to see whether you overuse some words. Edit your work as needed.
- **Proofread.** After editing, read through a third time with an eye on small details to proofread your work. Change spelling or punctuation as needed to meet the expectations of the rhetorical situation. Check that you have formatted according to the required **style guide**, or standards of writing, such as Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) style.

Revisit these three steps after you have received feedback from the peer review exercise that follows. If you have access to a campus writing center, you may consult with tutors there for support at any stage of your writing process.

## Peer Review: Written Responses

After you have developed a solid draft, you are ready to receive feedback from your peers. To prepare for peer review, reread the assignment prompt in Writing Process: Focusing on the Angle of Your Subject and the assessment rubric in Evaluation: Text as Personal Introduction. Then, read your peer's entire profile before giving feedback. In your feedback, strive to be both clear and kind—clearly state the strengths and weaknesses of the text in the most supportive way possible. If you need guidance, use the model sentences in Table 5.7 to structure your feedback.

**Peer Review Feedback Model Sentences**

- These three aspects of your draft work well: _____, _____, and _____.
- You might consider strengthening your draft _____ by doing these things: _____, _____, and _____.
- As you revise your work, I suggest addressing these three areas: _____, _____, and _____.

**TABLE 5.7** Feedback sentences

After reading your peer's profile all the way through, use Table 5.8 to provide thoughtful and detailed feedback.

| Date | Review of [peer]<br>by [insert your name] |
|---|---|
| **Profile Genre Element** | **Feedback for Your Peer** |
| **Subject** | What interests you about your peer's subject? What information could your peer provide to deepen that interest? |
| **Angle** | What angle has your peer taken in this draft? What suggestions do you have for refining the angle? |
| **Structure** | How has your peer organized the profile? If you would recommend a different structure, what would you recommend, and why? |
| **Paragraph Focus** (anecdote, quotes, facts, background, and context) | Has your peer included an array of genre elements in the paragraphs? How could your peer strengthen this aspect of the work? |
| **Tone, Tense, and Description** | Is your peer's tone, or written attitude, appropriate for the profile? Why or why not? What suggestions do you have for strengthening or changing the tone?<br>Are verb tenses consistent? If not, how might your peer adjust them?<br>How might your peer show readers aspects of the subject as well as tell about them? |
| **Research** | How does your peer's draft show evidence of<br>• interview research?<br>• field research and thick description?<br>• credible secondary research? How can you tell that the secondary research is credible? |
| **Audience** | What suggestions do you have for your peer to connect better with the intended audience? |
| **Additional Comments** | In what other ways might your peer strengthen the draft? |

**TABLE 5.8** Peer review guide

## Revising: Incorporating Written Responses

After you have received feedback from your peer(s), read it carefully. If you have received feedback from more than one peer, strongly consider addressing comments on which they agree. If you have received comments encouraging you to make revision, editing, and proofreading changes, prioritize revision—making major changes in content, structure, and organization. You may need to add, delete, or rearrange information or the way in which you present the material. You may rearrange information within paragraphs or add topic sentences if needed. Much of the feedback your peers give you based on the form above will probably fit into the category of revision.

### Evaluate Yourself

Another way to approach revision is to compare and contrast your work against the rubric for the assignment in Evaluation: Text as Personal Introduction, which guides you through the process of evaluating your work using the standards given in the assignment rubric.

**Use the Rubric to Improve Your Draft**

- Review the benchmarks for "Skillful" Critical Language Awareness, and then **make notes on your draft in response to the following questions**:
  - Have you carefully proofread your work to check especially for issues of subject-verb consistency?
  - Look at your sentence structures. Do you have sentences of different lengths and complexities in your text? Where might you improve the sentence variety throughout your draft?
  - Do you meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically challenging ways?

- Review the benchmarks for "Skillful" Clarity and Coherence, and then answer the following questions:
  - How might you revise the structure of your draft even more effectively? Should you consider reordering any elements or information?
  - Review your body paragraphs. Do you have a good balance of anecdotes, quotations, location, thick description, and background? If you have overused or omitted any of these elements, revise accordingly, making sure that ideas flow smoothly.
  - Where could you strengthen the use of interview research and field notes? Do you need to gather additional material?
  - Where could your secondary research better support the points you make throughout the draft? Do you need to gather additional secondary research?
  - Do you include elements of narrative, or storytelling, that help readers imagine the spaces or actions you cover? Where could you strengthen the narrative?
  - Do you include elements of reporting, or relaying information to readers? Where does this strategy need strengthening?
  - Have you used appropriate transitions to ensure coherence and connect ideas?
  - Do all your points support your thesis?

- Review the benchmarks for "Skillful" Rhetorical Choices, and then answer the following questions:
  - Think again about your subject choice. You should probably not consider changing your subject at this stage of your project, but do think about this question: Are you presenting the subject in the best light to appeal to your audience?
  - Think again about your angle. Do you need to refine or amend your angle to better connect with your audience?
  - Read your piece out loud to check the tone. Do you need to shift the tone to better reach your audience?
  - Read your piece all the way through, noting places that do not hold your interest as strongly as others. What can you do to make those places more compelling for your reader?

**Use your notes from this worksheet to revise, edit, and proofread your work.**

**TABLE 5.9** Revision guide

### Revised Draft Profile Sample

This section provides one example of a revised profile draft written by a first-year college student. As you will read, the admirable quality that Houston Byrd focuses on in this essay is that his subject, a bricks-and-mortar video store, offers "a crucial and important service to its community." You will also see the ways in which Byrd

both "shows and tells" readers about his subject, offering information drawn from each type of required research: interview, field observation, and secondary sources. Byrd has chosen to insert himself and his experiences of his subject fully into this profile. Review Glance at Genre: Subject, Angle, Background, and Description, and then read Byrd's essay to see how well he incorporates the narrative and reporting profile genre elements in his draft.

After Byrd received peer feedback, he decided that his previous draft did not need much revision; he was happy with his structure, and the organization made sense to his readers. One peer suggested that Byrd insert topic sentences in each paragraph, but he ultimately decided not to do so because he thought his paragraphs held together well as written. As you revise your work in response to peer feedback, you may also choose to accept some suggestions while rejecting others.

Byrd paid close attention to peer feedback indicating that his draft had many long, complicated sentences; in the draft below, the originals are noted after the edited sentences. He also acted on feedback about verb tense consistency. Furthermore, Byrd made proofreading changes, such as adding the MLA-required right header and changing the placement of some punctuation marks. As with all writing, this draft could be improved even more with further revision. After reading the essay, discuss with a peer the revision, editing, and proofreading changes you would recommend if you were reading this draft for peer review.

**Heaven Is in Toad Frog Alley**

> The realm of physical film, if not already dead, is dying. More so than decaying cellulose, the entire medium as an art form is declining. According to *The Guardian*, DVD and Blu-Ray sales were down this past holiday over 30% each (Sweney). Some say that streaming services and on-demand viewing are the culprits. Whatever the case, the answer is not so simple, and the notion is very alarming. The decrease in relevance of physical media is no secret. Mass closures of video rental powerhouses such as Blockbuster Video and Movie Gallery began at the turn of the decade.

*The original sentence read: It is no secret that physical media has been on the decline, especially with the mass closures of video rental powerhouses such as Blockbuster Video and Movie Gallery near the beginning of the decade. This example demonstrates a pattern throughout the revised draft in which Byrd broke apart some of his longer sentences and improved their wording. Notice that he changes tense in the last sentence for a reason: the trend is happening now, but video rental stores began closing in the past.*

> Though the memory lives on in millennial nostalgia, the world of physical movie sales is not completely irrelevant. Many of the large rental chains have since closed down, but beyond the major highways is an all-but-forgotten world of local video stores. In my home state, one store in particular, called Toad Frog Alley Videos, lives in that world, located in the small town of Cleveland, Alabama. I had the privilege of visiting the store and speaking with its owner, Kandy Little, about her experiences operating in a time when physical media is scarce. Through my visit and conversation, I have come to appreciate the importance of Toad Frog Alley Videos. I truly believe that the store provides a crucial and important service to its community, as well as highlights the nature of physical film and the need for preservation.

*In this introductory paragraph, Byrd establishes the stakes for his profile subject, offering both background and context for understanding the video store's importance to its community. He also makes some editing and proofreading changes to strengthen the draft and presents his main point, or thesis, here at the end of the introduction.*

> Miles off of I-65, a major Alabama interstate, Toad Frog Alley stands, an almost well-kept secret. The idea of such a welcoming business being hidden saddened me—and still does—but in turn gave the illusion of adventure. Driving through winding county roads to get there, I could feel the world almost disappearing into unexplored territory.

*Original: There is a moment, winding through country roads, where the world seems to disappear into unexplored*

*territory. Byrd corrected the sentence to get rid of a "there is" construction, a dangling modifier, and inconsistent verb tenses.*

> Suddenly, there were no street names, no lines on the pavement, and sometimes no pavement at all. At the end of one of these "not much of a road" roads stood Toad Frog Alley Videos.

*Byrd changed the underlined verb from is to stands for a more vivid verb. He then changed it to the past tense to maintain consistency with the verbs he uses in relating his visit to the store.*

> My first impression stepping inside was awe. Shelves lining the walls reached from floor to ceiling, each packed full of titles, perfectly alphabetized and separated by genre.

*Original: Lining the walls were shelves that reached from floor to ceiling. Each shelf was completely full of titles, which were perfectly alphabetized and separated by genre. In this case, Byrd combined, rather than separated, sentences to avoid repetition, substitute more active verbs, and vary sentence structure.*

> Between the walls were standalone shelves, organized in the same fashion. I expected a kind of personal collection, but I felt as if I had actually traveled back in time to the major rental stores of old (or rather of ten years ago). To community members, the setup meant another option for Saturday night, but for a film lover like me,

*Original: for me, a film lover,*

> this place was heaven.

*In the body of his draft, Byrd advances his thesis, drawing on information from each of the required types of sources.*

> After my initial feelings, I was hit with a second wave, one that can only be described as abysmal. At the front of the store was a counter, being worked by one employee. The register was clunky and archaic, which made

*Original: something that makes*

> a public library look like the headquarters of Google. In the center of the store was a foldable table that read "FOR SALE." On the table lay DVDs, either damaged or unwanted, strewn about with no rhyme or reason.

*Original: The table was filled with DVDs, some damaged and some unwanted, strewn about with no rhyme or reason like the rest of the store.*

> Aside from me, there was only one patron, a middle-aged woman, shopping as if she had been there before but did not know what she wanted. I started to become depressed. I was not sure exactly what I had imagined, but I knew this place was nowhere close. I had convinced myself I was on a journey to find the "last great video store," an oasis of film, flowing with patrons renting *Milk* and *American Honey*.

*Original: I did not know what exactly I had imagined, but with my passion for physical film and rental stores alike, I had convinced myself I was on a journey to find the "last great video store," an oasis of film, flowing with patrons renting Milk and American Honey. This sentence is another example in which Byrd broke a longer sentence apart and polished the wording.*

> Only when

*Original: It was not until*

> I took a breath and began looking around was I able to see Toad Frog Valley for what the store

*Original: it*

> was. Every blank wall space featured posters, equally sporting Oscar winners and underground art-house films.

*This sentence provides a solid example of revising a "there were" or "there are" sentence construction; the original*

*read: There were posters on every blank wall space, not just of each year's Oscar winner, but underground art-house films as well.*

> The endcaps of each standalone shelf were filled with top picks, recent releases, or staff choices.

*Here, Byrd revises for varied word choice; the original read: top picks, recent releases, or staff picks.*

> A television in the corner softly played a film of the employee's choice. Toad Frog Alley

*Original: This*

> may not have been the perfect haven for cinephiles and collectors that I had hoped, but it showed an undeniable element of care. The store was something of a museum, one that lets people borrow the items they love. I left with a smile on my face and a movie in my hand.

> I want to believe that everyone has experienced a similar video store moment. If that were true, though, why did so many close in the first place?

*Original: I want to believe that if everyone could experience a moment of awe in a video store, then the demand would resurface, but if that were true, why did so many close in the first place?*

> Why also are stores like Toad Frog Alley still operating? Back in 2010, when rental chains were beginning to close doors indefinitely, many entertainment news sites noticed a trend. Among them was *The Hollywood Reporter*, which noted that over 35% of independent video stores had tanning beds. They reported the trend, saying, "[Independents] use every niche they can think of to survive and be respected in their communities" (Bond). While tanning beds may look like the supplemental savior for many locally owned stores, this notion

*Here, Byrd defines the word this by inserting the word notion.*

> is not necessarily the case, says Kandy Little. Kandy is the owner of Toad Frog Valley Video Store and has been since 1995.

*The tense shifts to present when Kandy Little is discussed but returns to the past when Byrd relates her background.*

> Ironically, Kandy bought a tanning salon in hopes of opening a video store. At the time, there was a much higher demand for rentals in almost every community, and Toad Frog Alley was no exception. Though she admits tanning has increased over the years (with rentals, of course, declining), to Kandy, tanning was not the savior. "[Toad Frog Alley Videos] is still open because I work it myself most of the time," she says. "No one else will take care of your business as well as you do." With an inventory of over 5,000 films, Kandy believes that physical media is important for her community. Local business is important for creating jobs and city revenue, and Kandy provides both through her love of movies.

> Even though Toad Frog Alley is doing well, the scarcity of rental stores is something to consider. In the digital age, media is accessible to practically everyone. Streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu have made media available for viewers without requiring them to leave their homes. For physical rentals,

*Original: As far as physical rentals go,*

> nationwide kiosks called Redbox are set up in major grocery stores and pharmacies. In largely populated areas, these services have contributed to the downfall of video stores. In small towns across the country, however, many stores like Toad Frog Alley are still alive.

*Original: In largely populated areas, these services have contributed to the downfall of video stores, but in rural America, many stores like Toad Frog Alley are still alive. This revision heightens the contrast between populated areas and small towns.*

> In 2018, the *Harvard Political Review* looked into why rural areas are struggling socioeconomically. The research concluded that the problem comes from the inability to keep the attention of a younger generation. The idea of the "American Dream" is largely accompanied by main streets, small towns, and mom-and-pop shops. Unfortunately, countryside communities are suffering, despite featuring many of these elements.

*Original: Though the idea of the "American Dream" is largely accompanied by main streets, small towns, and mom-and-pop shops, rural communities have seen drastic population decreases even while holding many of these. The revision breaks the original sentence apart and makes stronger, clearer word choices.*

> Farming, a large majority of pastoral industry, has become increasingly mechanized with technological advancement. On top of that, failing education and inadequate healthcare in underfunded areas have contributed to population loss as well. Many young people are unwilling to live in rural America,

*Original: in these rural areas,*

> and thus jobs

*Deleted: , one of the largest incentives in most communities,*

> have become scarce. The *Review* states that "ultimately, the only way citizens will be attracted to small towns is if the quality of life is attractive and sustainable… [but] the growing demand of the U.S. economy will continue drawing people toward… [a] quality of life often deemed synonymous with urban living" (Elkadi). This cycle leaves many rural settings unappealing, not only to residents but also to businesses like Internet providers. In many cases, rural areas are deemed unprofitable for modern services. Descriptions so negative contribute to the lack of digital services available to communities. Businesses

*Original: Stores*

> such as Toad Frog Alley thus provide a necessary service for a town that may have little access to digital content.

> All of these factors raise

*Original: This raises*

> a question: Is physical media doomed to a state of limbo in rural communities? Some believe film was meant to die, and should. Following the controversial shutdown of the "classic films" streaming service FilmStruck, Professor Katherine Groo shared a perspective in *The Washington Post*: "The collapse of FilmStruck might go some way toward reminding us of the fundamental *virtuality* [sic] of film and film spectatorship" (Groo). Groo goes so far as to ask "whether [FilmStruck's catalog listings] are the works we need to rescreen or urge others to discover." Groo does not lament the death of FilmStruck as film "erosion" or "erasure."

*In the original, the previous sentence occurred later in the paragraph; Byrd moved it here in the revision to present the information in a way that made more sense for readers.*

> She mentions different film archives, like the Library of Congress and Kanopy, doing open-access experimentation, but overlooks an important factor. Groo asserts that only the privileged are able to access a paid service, but she neglects rural areas and others that cannot access archives, paid or free.

*Deleted: For people like Kandy Little,*

> Toad Frog Alley remains important for the enjoyment and education of people in the town that film provides. As technology keeps progressing, archaic forms of media consumption are necessary for areas that do not yet have access to the new technologies. Kandy predicts this, and more, when asked about the digital age and the coexistence of physical and online media:

*Original: Kandy predicts this, and more, when I asked her how she felt about the digital age, and the coexistence of physical and online media:*

> "Studios are already giving exclusive rights to different cable companies. Once the avenues are spread out, customers will have to pay more for accessing media. The video store is here offering better prices and more media in one place." To her, the transition back into physical media is only a matter of time.

> As a proponent of physical media, I am thankful that Kandy and Toad Frog Alley exist. Though nothing is wrong with enjoying the luxuries of streaming, and digital film preservation is admirable, the market is becoming saturated. Saturated markets lead to higher prices and necessitate multiple subscriptions just to access desired films.

*Original: Though it is not wrong to enjoy the luxuries of streaming, and digital film preservation is admirable, the market is becoming saturated, which leads to higher prices and necessitates multiple subscriptions just to access desired films.*

> Though people in rural communities are still able to rent videos, they would be left behind in the case of film becoming solely digital. Video stores provide important business and atmosphere to communities. Even though digitizing film is more affordable and accessible to many people, it may not be what is best for both films and consumers.

*In the original, these sentences were combined with , and.*

> For those like me, with a passion for film, the only reciprocity for the love that video stores instill is to show love in the form of support. As Kandy eloquently said at the end of our interview, "I really don't have a favorite film. I just love films."

*In referring a past event while he narrates in the present tense, Byrd uses the past tense.*

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## 5.6 Editing Focus: Verb Tense Consistency

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply various editing strategies to a draft in progress.
- Implement consistent use of verbs in a draft in progress.

When you edit, you make changes at the sentence level: phrasing, grammar, mechanics, and wording. Read your paper aloud to check for needed editing. Alternately, you could have your device read the paper to you if it has that feature. As you read or listen, if you notice that something does not sound quite right, your draft probably needs editing at that point. Additionally, if your electronic draft shows blue underlining, check whether you should accept the changes suggested by your software. Once you have thoroughly reviewed each sentence in your draft, read aloud or listen to the entire piece again to see how it flows, making any additional

needed changes as you go along.

## English Varieties and Verbs

This section focuses on English verb tense consistency when editing. Every English speaker converses in one or more forms of the language. In the past, people have referred to these forms as *dialects*. Today, linguists more commonly call them *English varieties*. Every **English variety** uses verbs, as do most languages. Verbs are the words that express the action in a sentence. Their most distinguishing feature is that they change according to tense—that is, they take on different forms to express action that happened in the past, happens in the present, or will happen in the future.

As you edit your profile, you will need to match the English variety you use to the expectations of your audience. If your instructor is your only reader, you will probably need to use an English variety appropriate for an academic setting. If the instructor has asked you to write a profile to appeal to another audience, think about how the English variety you choose might connect better with that audience.

In every English variety, the form of the verb changes to indicate whether something is happening currently or has happened already. These changes that indicate time differences are called **verb tenses**. If an action or description occurs now or occurs regularly, in the present time, writers use the **present tense**. Conversely, if the action occurred in the past and no longer occurs, writers use the **past tense**.

**Present tense:** She walks to class.
**Past tense:** She walked to class yesterday.

In simple sentences such as these, choosing a verb tense is fairly straightforward. The author decides when to place the event in time and chooses the corresponding verb form. Although people easily use different verb tenses every day, getting them right in writing can be tricky at times. Writers may accidentally change from past to present tense within a text—or even within the same sentence—for no particular reason. Consider these examples:

**Sentence 1:** I lost a glove on my walk, but I find it later.
**Sentence 2:** I lost a glove on my walk, but I found it later.

In Sentence 1, the verb *lost* places the action in the past; the present-tense verb *find* is not consistent with that pattern. The revision in Sentence 2 places all of the action in the same time frame: the past. Because changing the tense for no reason can confuse the audience, be sure to use the same verb tense throughout, whether events happen in the past or they happen in the present.

However, you *do* need to change tenses to indicate a difference in time, and such differences occur often. This situation is why choosing verb tenses in writing can sometimes pose challenges for writers. If you are using the present tense in writing but you want to tell about something that happened in the past, you need to change tenses to make that time difference clear. Look at these sentences:

**Sentence 1:** The artist **uses** bright colors in her paintings. She **says** that when she **is** a child, these colors **attract** her.
**Sentence 2:** The artist **uses** bright colors in her paintings. She **says** that when she **was** a child, these colors **attracted** her.

The writer is discussing the artist in the present tense, and the artist is speaking in the present tense. However, she is telling about her childhood, which took place in the past. Therefore, she and the writer use both past and present tense to make the time distinction clear. To put all events in the present tense would not make sense in such cases. Look at the verb tense consistency revisions Houston Byrd made to his essay in Focusing on the Angle of Your Subject. When he tells about his trip to the store, describes it, and refers to his interview with the owner, he generally uses—or has revised to use—the past tense, whereas most of the essay is written in the present tense.

### Proofreading

Another type of editing is proofreading. When you proofread, you check for small details, such as typing mistakes, that need fixing. If your instructor has asked you to follow a given style guide, such as MLA or APA, make sure your draft is formatted according to those guidelines. If any words are underlined in red on your electronic document (indicating a misspelling), address those issues as you complete your draft. Lastly, read each sentence individually, starting at the bottom of the draft, to make sure your spelling and punctuation meet the requirements for the genre and audience.

You may feel that you are not yet a strong enough writer to edit or proofread on your own. If so, take advantage of your instructor's office hours or your college's writing center for support in developing your work.

### Practice with Verb Tense Consistency

Depending on your writing context, you may be asked to write mainly in either the past or the present tense. For example, MLA style asks writers to refer to textual materials in the present tense, even though they have already been written.

With a peer partner, practice choosing the most effective verb forms in the following sentences. Complete the exercise twice—once for a text written mainly in the present tense, and once again for a text written mainly in past tense. Because events happen at different times, you may have a combination of tenses.

1. Carla D. Hayden (writes, wrote) _____ about John Lewis's courageous stance against injustice when he (led, leads) the Selma protests.
2. People throughout the country (admire, admired) _____ John Lewis and (mourn, mourned) _____ his death.
3. In 1995, Hayden (receives, received) _____ the Librarian of the Year Award, and in 2016, she (is, was) _____ listed by *Fortune* magazine as one of the world's 50 greatest leaders.

To check your draft for verb tense issues, read your profile aloud to a peer partner. If you notice that some verbs are in the past tense and some are in the present, make them all one consistent tense throughout the text—*unless* they indicate a change in time, which they often do. Making your verb tenses consistent will help clarify your ideas for readers.

## 5.7 Evaluation: Text as Personal Introduction

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply profile genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics to a draft in progress.
- Evaluate your text according to a given standard.

One way to think about a profile is this: you are personally introducing your subject to your readers. When making introductions in everyday life, people generally highlight preferences that will help the people being introduced relate more easily to one another. For example, you might mention a specific shared video game interest when introducing gamers, or you could mention an appreciation for a particular musician shared by the people being introduced. In a similar way, include information in your profile that will connect your subject to your audience.

In addition to making a personal introduction, you are striving to meet the standards of the profile genre. The following rubric will help you assess your use of interviews, field research, and secondary research. It will also help you evaluate how well you have organized, written, and revised the draft. Lastly, the rubric will help you determine whether your draft meets the criteria for the profile genre, including subject, angle, and tone. Aim to revise your draft to meet the "Skillful" criteria for each area of focus.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—verb tense consistency, as discussed in Section 5.6—and employs a variety of sentence structures. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The text presents robust interview research, carefully noted field research, and both credible and applicable secondary research. The profile reflects a thoughtful balance of narrative and reporting techniques through which the subject is clearly depicted. Effective and appropriate transitions help create a unified whole. Anecdotes, quotations, location, thick detail, and background flow together seamlessly and create a full and engaging profile. | The subject, angle, tone, and content have been carefully chosen and remain consistent throughout. Mastery of these elements powerfully holds the interest of the target audience throughout the piece. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—verb tense consistency, as discussed in Section 5.6—and employs a variety of sentence structures. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The text presents strong interview and field research and both credible and applicable secondary research. The profile usually reflects a thoughtful balance of narrative and reporting techniques through which the subject is depicted. Generally effective and appropriate transitions help create a unified whole. Some anecdotes, quotations, location, thick detail, and background flow together and create a generally engaging profile. | The subject, angle, tone, and content have been carefully chosen but may not always be consistent. Control of these elements generally holds the interest of the target audience throughout the piece. |
| **3**<br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—verb tense consistency, as discussed in Section 5.6—and employs some variety in sentence structures. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The text presents fairly thorough interview research, competent field research, and reasonably credible and applicable secondary research. The profile may reflect a balance of narrative and reporting techniques through which the subject is depicted, but it may tend toward too much reporting. Some effective and appropriate transitions connect ideas, but more are needed for a unified whole. Some anecdotes, quotations, location, thick detail, and background create an inconsistently engaging profile. | The subject, angle, tone, and content have been inconsistently chosen. The writer occasionally loses focus in one or more of these areas. Some control of these elements holds the interest of the target audience in parts of the piece. |

**TABLE 5.10**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—verb tense consistency, as discussed in Section 5.6—and employs little variety in sentence structures. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The information is frequently disorganized and reflects a minimal, if any, overall plan. Research is haphazard and usually undocumented. The writer shows little or no balance between narrative and reporting techniques and included only a few of the following: anecdotes, quotations, location, thick detail, and background. Some transitions may create unity in parts, but in general, the paper lacks effective and appropriate transitions. The uneven text ultimately creates a minimally clear profile. | The subject, angle, tone, and content do not appear well chosen. The writer frequently loses focus in one or more of these areas. The interest of the target audience would be lost in many parts of the piece. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—verb tense consistency, as discussed in Section 5.6—and employs little to no variety in sentence structures. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The information is consistently disorganized and reflects minimal, if any, overall planning. Research, if any, is haphazard and usually undocumented. The writer shows little or no balance between narrative and reporting techniques and has included only one or two of the following: anecdotes, quotations, location, thick detail, and background. The paper lacks effective and appropriate transitions and is, therefore, incoherent. The uneven text ultimately creates an unclear and unengaging profile.<br>. | The subject, angle, tone, and content appear poorly chosen if they are present at all. The draft lacks focus and consequently holds little or no audience interest. |

**TABLE 5.10**

## 5.8 Spotlight on … Profiling a Cultural Artifact

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read in the profile genre to understand how conventions are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Read one of a diverse range of texts, attending to relationships among ideas, patterns of organization, and interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements.
- Analyze a composition in relation to a specific historical and cultural context.

If you would like to profile a subject other than a person, you may be unsure of how to make such a focus work. This section features a profile of a cultural artifact and discusses how the elements of profile writing work within the piece.



First, here is some background to help you better understand the blog post: On December 7, 1941, Japanese

fighter planes attacked the United States military base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, damaging or destroying more than a dozen ships and hundreds of airplanes. In direct response to this bombing and to fears that Americans of Japanese descent might spy on U.S. military installations, all Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans living on America's West Coast—about 120,000 men, women, and children in all—were detained in internment camps for the remainder of the war.

As you will read in the profile, people living in the camps created newspapers for fellow detainees; the subject of this profile is the newspapers themselves. Author Mark Hartsell published his profile of the newspapers, Journalism, behind Barbed Wire (https://openstax.org/r/barbedwire) , on the Library of Congress blog on May 5, 2017. Look at these notes to find out how profile genre elements can work when the writer focuses on a cultural artifact such as these newspapers.




**FIGURE 5.8** Roy Takeno, editor of the Manzanar Free Press, reads the newspaper at the internment camp in Manzanar, California, 1943. (credit: Ansel Adams/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

*As you find when you click on the link above to visit the blog post, Hartsell uses images to show his subject to readers. Providing images can be a particularly strong choice for profiles of places or cultural artifacts.*

> For these journalists, the assignment was like no other: Create newspapers to tell the story of their own families being forced from their homes, to chronicle the hardships and heartaches of life behind barbed wire for Japanese-Americans held in World War II internment camps. "These are not normal times nor is this an ordinary community," the editors of the *Heart Mountain Sentinel* wrote in their first issue. "There is confusion, doubt and fear mingled together with hope and courage as this community goes about the task of rebuilding many dear things that were crumbled as if by a giant hand." Today, the Library of Congress places online a rare collection of newspapers that, like the *Sentinel*, were produced by Japanese-Americans interned at U.S. government camps during the war. The collection includes more than 4,600 English- and Japanese-language issues published in 13 camps and later microfilmed by the Library. "What we have the power to do is bring these more to the public," said Malea Walker, a librarian in the Serial and Government Publications Division who contributed to the project. "I think that's important, to bring it into the public eye to see, especially on the 75th anniversary.... Seeing the people in the Japanese internment camps as people is an important story."

*Although the blog places almost every sentence in its own "paragraph" for easier online readability, the first four sections function as a cohesive opening paragraph as presented here. Notice how the author supports his points with information synthesized from a variety of sources: quoted material from both the newspapers and one of the project's curators, background, historical context, and other factual information.*

> Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order that allowed the forcible removal of nearly 120,000 U.S. citizens and residents of Japanese descent from their homes to government-run assembly and relocation camps across the West—desolate places such as Manzanar in the shadow of the Sierras, Poston in the Arizona desert, Granada on the eastern Colorado plains. There, housed in temporary barracks and surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers, the residents built wartime communities, organizing governing bodies, farms, schools, libraries. They founded newspapers, too—publications that relayed official announcements, editorialized about important issues, reported camp news, followed the exploits of Japanese-Americans in the U.S. military and recorded the daily activities of residents for whom, even in confinement, life still went on. In the camps, residents lived and died, worked and played, got married and had children. One couple got married at the Tanforan assembly center in California, then shipped out to the Topaz camp in Utah the next day. Their first home as a married couple, the *Topaz Times* noted, was a barracks behind barbed wire in the western Utah desert.

*This section offers additional background information and information from secondary research, woven with specific details to help readers imagine the backdrop for the newspaper writing. Hartsell offers a brief overview of typical content found in these newspapers; this description indicates that he has reviewed primary documents. The section concludes with a brief anecdote to show the human face of the original camp newspaper audience.*

> The internees created their publications from scratch, right down to the names. The Tule Lake camp dubbed its paper the *Tulean Dispatch*—a compromise between *The Tulean* and *The Dusty Dispatch*, two entries in its name-the-newspaper contest. (The winners got a box of chocolates.) Most of the newspapers were simply mimeographed or sometimes handwritten, but a few were formatted and printed like big-city dailies. The *Sentinel* was printed by the town newspaper in nearby Cody, Wyoming, and eventually grew a circulation of 6,000.

*After covering background and context, Hartsell turns to focus on his profile subject. He discusses specific details of naming and producing the newspapers; he also includes information about the writers and their decisions regarding newspaper content.*

> Many of the internees who edited and wrote for the camp newspapers had worked as journalists before the war. They knew this job wouldn't be easy, requiring a delicate balance of covering news, keeping spirits up and getting along with the administration. The papers, though not explicitly censored, sometimes hesitated to cover controversial issues, such as strikes at Heart Mountain or Poston. Instead, many adopted editorial policies that would serve as "a strong constructive force in the community," as a *Poston Chronicle* journalist later noted in an oral history. They mostly cooperated with the administration, stopped rumors and played up stories that would strengthen morale. Demonstrating loyalty to the U.S. was a frequent theme. The *Sentinel* mailed a copy of its first issue to Roosevelt in the hope, the editors wrote, that he would "find in its pages the loyalty and progress here at Heart Mountain." A *Topaz Times* editorial objected to segregated Army units but nevertheless urged Japanese-American citizens to serve "to prove that the great majority of the group they represent are loyal." "Our paper was always coming out with editorials supporting loyalty toward this country," the *Poston* journalist said. "This rubbed some... the wrong way and every once in a while a delegation would come around to protest."

*People reading these newspapers in current times may be surprised that such newspapers often featured content with a focus on loyalty to the United States. While Hartsell does not dig deeply into alternative views held by internees, he does indicate that some disagreed with the emphasis on such content. Readers are often interested in learning surprising or counterintuitive information about a profile subject.*

> ... (section removed)

> As the war neared its end in 1945, the camps prepared for closure. Residents departed, populations shrank, schools shuttered, community organizations dissolved, and newspapers signed off with "–30–," used by journalists to mark a story's end. That Oct. 23, the *Poston Chronicle* published its final issue, reflecting on the history it had both recorded and made. "For many weeks, the story of Poston has unfolded in the pages of the Chronicle," the editors wrote. "It is the story of people who have made the best of a tragic situation; the story of their frustrations, their anxieties, their heartaches—and their pleasures, for the story has its lighter moments. Now Poston is finished; the story is ended. And we should be glad that this is so, for the story has a happy ending. The time of anxiety and of waiting is over. Life begins again."

*Hartsell closes with a chronological structure, concluding his piece with the closing of the internment camps and their newspapers. He allows the voices of the editors to have the last word.*

### Publishing Your Profile

Because your individual profile is about someone or something related to campus, once you have developed your final draft, you may want to share your work with others at your school. Here are some suggestions:

#### Group Publication

One option for sharing your work is to create a class book that includes the profiles each student has written. As an alternative, each class member might contribute their own autobiographical profile in which they highlight a moment when they witnessed or enacted an admirable trait. When the individual pieces are complete, class members will work in teams to collect, compile, introduce, and produce the essay collection. The instructor or one of the class teams might compose an afterword to explain the project. The final project could be housed in the campus archives or linked on the campus website.

#### Campus Newspaper

Another option is to work either individually or in a small group to build on your profile about someone or something of interest to other students, faculty, or staff at your school. Check with the editor of your campus newspaper to learn whether they have suggestions for a revised angle, if needed, and whether they would be interested in publishing your completed profile.

## 5.9 Portfolio: Subject as a Reflection of Self

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Reflect on the development of composing processes.
- Reflect on how those processes affect your final product.

As you develop a writing portfolio over the course of the semester, you will also reflect on your experience and writing process for each project. This section guides you in reflecting on your experience as you developed your profile.

### Reflective Task



Take a few moments to jot down notes—by hand or electronically—in response to the following questions:

- What have you learned about yourself in researching and drafting this profile?
- What did you learn in your research that surprised you?
- What challenges did you face in gathering your primary research from interviews and field observations?
- What challenges did you face in gathering your secondary research from academic and other credible sources?
- Do you now think differently about the trait you focused on in your profile? If so, how has your

understanding changed? If your thinking about that trait has not changed, how was it reinforced in this project?
- If you were to begin this project again, how would you approach it differently?
- With whom would you like to share your finished project? Why?
- What other audiences might be interested in this piece?

After reflecting on your writing process and experience, organize your thoughts thematically. For example, if some parts of the process were more challenging for you and other parts were less so, you could organize your reflection around those two ideas. Or you could separate your reflection into sections according to the parts of the writing process that were familiar and the parts that were new to you in this project.

Once you have organized your notes into sections focusing on coherent themes, draft a professional email to your instructor to report the insights you have gained from your reflection. Find out from your instructor whether you should actually send the reflection via email or if you should attach it to your final profile document instead.

## Further Reading

With their signature blend of narrative and reporting, profiles can be found in all sorts of media, including blogs, magazines, and podcasts. Once you start looking for profiles, you will find them everywhere. Here are several places to find profile writing:

- *Esquire (https://openstax.org/r/esquire)*. This magazine routinely runs profile features.
- *Humans of New York (https://openstax.org/r/humansofnewyork)*. Originally a photography project, this blog presents photographs of, interviews with, and short stories about people who live in New York. Although the pieces are not all profiles, many of them meet the criteria for this genre.
- *The New Yorker (https://openstax.org/r/thenewyorker)*. This magazine still runs profiles in each issue.
- *This American Life (https://openstax.org/r/thisamericanlife)*. This weekly public radio program focuses on storytelling about compelling people.

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# Proposal: Writing About Problems and Solutions

# 6



**FIGURE 6.1** Mathematician Katherine Johnson (https://openstax.org/r/katherinejohnson) (1918–2020) was a NASA employee. Her calculations of orbital mechanics led to the success of the first spaceflight and many others. One of the first Black women hired at the agency, she stood out for her curiosity and desire to fully understand the work she was assigned. She is best known for calculating the trajectory for the first moon landing. Given the problem of when to launch, she proposed solving the problem by saying: "You tell me when you want it and where you want it to land, and I'll do it backwards and tell you when to take off." Not only a mathematician, Johnson wrote or cowrote 26 research articles during her 33 years with the space program. She was made famous by Hidden Figures (2016), a book later made into a film. (credit: "Katherine Johnson at NASA, in 1966" by NASA/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**6.1** Proposing Change: Thinking Critically About Problems and Solutions
**6.2** Proposal Trailblazer: Atul Gawande
**6.3** Glance at Genre: Features of Proposals
**6.4** Annotated Student Sample: "Slowing Climate Change" by Shawn Krukowski
**6.5** Writing Process: Creating a Proposal
**6.6** Editing Focus: Subject-Verb Agreement
**6.7** Evaluation: Conventions, Clarity, and Coherence
**6.8** Spotlight on … Technical Writing as a Career
**6.9** Portfolio: Reflecting on Problems and Solutions


**INTRODUCTION** You are likely familiar with the term **proposal**—people propose toasts to celebrate occasions and make marriage proposals. Businesses create proposals to describe the services they will provide and at what cost—from electricians, plumbers, and decorators to advertising firms, website designers, and caterers.

Sometimes the proposals are for a specific project; sometimes they are general. In these types of real-world proposals, the problem being solved is straightforward, but often it is not stated directly: for example, someone needs an extra bathroom built in their house, a revision to their website, or food for a gathering, and the person needing a service will contact a provider.

The **purpose** of the kind of proposal you will write in this chapter is to propose, or suggest, a solution to a problem, usually one whose solution is not straightforward. Proposals of this type call on writers to explain the problem so that readers understand it is real and needs a solution. Because these problems are often complex, they usually have more than one solution, and sometimes the writer will recommend several possible solutions. For example, imagine you are studying food science. You likely pay more attention to food than most people do, and perhaps you've noticed a lot of food being thrown away in a cafeteria on your campus. You believe it is important to reduce food waste. Solving this problem of wasted food will require investigation and research into what food is being thrown away; why students, faculty members, and employees are throwing it away; possible ways to reduce the amount of wasted food; and a recommendation to the people who can put your proposal—that is, your proposed solution— into action. This is one example of the kind of problem you might write about in this chapter.

## 6.1 Proposing Change: Thinking Critically About Problems and Solutions

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Ask critical-thinking questions about problems to explore an idea for a proposal.
- Distinguish between fact and opinion.
- Recognize and locate bias in reading and in yourself.

As a proposal writer, you will offer factual evidence to show a problem exists and needs to be addressed. Then you will present and recommend one or more solutions, again providing evidence to show that your solution or solutions are viable. To accomplish this task, you'll need to think critically about problems and potential solutions, know the difference between fact and opinion, and identify bias.

### Adopting a Problem-Solving Mindset



As you start thinking about a problem you would like to explore, gather information by reading, viewing, or talking with others. Is there a local problem you have noticed—perhaps you think your campus needs better transportation, more diverse food options, more mental health services, or a new student organization related to a cause you care about? Or is there a larger issue that is important to you, such as funding for public schools, better access to health care, or helping the environment?

As you gather ideas, think critically about what you are learning. Asking questions like the ones below can help you get into a problem-solving mindset:

#### Questions about Problems

- What is/was the cause of the problem?
- What is/was the effect of the problem?
- What makes this problem a problem?

#### Questions about Solutions

- Have solutions to this problem been proposed in the past? What are they?
- Why have the solutions proposed in the past succeeded or not succeeded in solving the problem?
- Who can put the solutions into action?

The proposal that appears in Annotated Student Sample of this chapter, written by student Shawn Krukowski, takes on a large, complex problem: climate change. At the start of the project, Shawn thought about his topic in terms of the questions above:

- What is the cause of climate change?
- What is the effect of climate change?
- What makes climate change a problem?
- What are some possible solutions to climate change?
- What solutions to climate change have been tried in the past?
- Why have the solutions tried in the past been unsuccessful in solving climate change?
- Who can put the solutions into action?

In writing answers to these questions, Shawn identified what he needed to learn about climate change before he began his reading and research.

## Distinguishing Fact from Opinion

A proposal contains both fact and opinion. Proposal writers use facts as evidence to show that the problem they are writing about is real. They use facts to show that the proposed solution can work. They give opinions (based on evidence) when they recommend a solution to their audience and call them to action. See Argumentative Research: Enhancing the Art of Rhetoric with Evidence for more about facts and opinions.



It can sometimes be difficult to distinguish fact from opinion, allegations, and fake news. Social media platforms, in particular, make it hard for many people to distinguish between sources that are credible and those that are not. As a writer, you need to use a critical eye to examine what you read and see.

**Facts** are statements that can be proven or whose truth can be inferred. They are built on evidence and data. The following are examples of factual statements:

- The first mass-produced hybrid vehicle was the Toyota Prius, which was launched in Japan in 1997.
- Americans born after 1996 are considered Generation Z.

Facts that use numbers are called **statistics**:

- According to the Pew Research Center, 50 percent of Gen Z-ers aged 18–23 reported that they or someone in their household had lost a job or taken a pay cut in March 2020, the first month of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The six-year graduation rate for full-time undergraduate students was 62 percent in 2018.

**Opinions** are statements of belief or value. Opinions form the basis of recommended solutions in proposals. Below is an opinion that precedes a list of recommendations to raise the graduation rate:

- The six-year graduation rate for full-time undergraduate students, which was 62% in 2018, can and should be improved by taking the following steps...

## Recognizing Bias



Critical thinking and reading of information involve recognizing bias. **Bias** is commonly defined as a preconceived opinion, or a prejudice, about something—a subject, an idea, a person, or a group of people, for example. As a proposal writer, you will need to recognize bias in the information you read as you learn about the problem and to recognize possible bias in your own thinking as well.

### Bias in Sources

Some writing is intentionally biased and intended to persuade, such as editorials and opinion essays, also called op-eds (because of their placement *opposite* the *editorial* page in print newspapers). Writing meant to persuade is generally not used as source material in a proposal. Instead, seek out informative, neutral sources that consider more than one aspect of a problem. Be aware, however, that even sources that seem impartial may contain some bias. Bias becomes a problem when a source that seems objective and trustworthy contains language and images intended to sway your opinion, or when a source downplays or ignores one or more aspects of a topic.

The evidence you use to support the discussion of a problem or the worth of a solution should not be heavily biased. As you consider sources for your proposal, the following tips can help you spot bias and read critically:

- **Determine the purpose of the source.** Is the writing intended to inform you or to persuade you?
- **Distinguish between fact and opinion.** Mark facts and opinions when gathering information from the source.
- **Pay attention to the language and what the writer emphasizes.** Does the language include inflammatory words or descriptions intended to sway readers? What do the title, introduction, and any headings tell you about the author's approach to the subject?
- **Research the author.** Is the writer an impartial expert? Or is the writer known for being biased?
- **Read multiple sources on the topic.** Learn whether the source is omitting or glossing over important information and credible views.
- **Look critically at the images and any media that support the writing.** How do they reinforce positive or negative treatment of the subject?

### Bias in Yourself

Most individuals bring what psychologists call **cognitive bias** to the interactions in their lives, whether with information or with other people. Cognitive bias refers to how humans' thinking patterns affect how they take in and process new information. As you research information for a proposal, also be aware of **confirmation bias**, which is the tendency to seek out and accept information that supports (or confirms) a belief you already have and to ignore or dismiss information that challenges that belief.

For example, perhaps you believe strongly that the graduation rate at the college you attend is too low and that more students would graduate if the college provided more financial aid in the form of grants. With that belief, you would likely be more receptive to facts and statistics showing that students who receive financial aid in the form of grants, not loans, are more likely to graduate. However, if you believe that more students would graduate if they took advantage of the academic support services the college offers, then you would likely be more receptive to facts and statistics showing that students who work hard and use academic support services graduate in higher numbers.

As you read about problems and solutions, the best way to guard against bias is to be aware that bias exists, to question what you read, and to challenge your own beliefs. You can learn more about bias, especially in language, in Spotlight on … Bias in Language and Research.



## 6.2 Trailblazer

### Proposal Trailblazer: Atul Gawande

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe a particular problem and a proposed solution.
- Discuss the process of identifying a problem and proposing a solution.
- Articulate how proposals to solve problems reach their intended audience.




**FIGURE 6.2** Atul Gawande (https://openstax.org/r/atulgawande) thinks graphically about solving problems. (credit: "Sketched Book - The Checklist Manifesto - How to Get Things Right" by Sacha Chua/ flickr, CC BY 2.0)

*"What do you do when expertise is not enough?"*

## Medical Problem Solver

Born in New York City, surgeon and author Atul Gawande (b. 1965) graduated from Stanford University in 1987 with a degree in biology and political science. A Rhodes Scholarship enabled him to study at the University of Oxford, where he earned a master's degree in philosophy, politics, and economics. Returning to the United States from England, Gawande entered politics and worked for Al Gore**'s** (b. 1948) presidential campaign and later served as a health care adviser during the Clinton administration (1993–2001). Gawande graduated from Harvard Medical School with an MD in 1995 and an MPH (master of public health) in 1999. Among his main concerns and frequent topics of his written work have been patient care and medical ethics.

In the mid-2000s, Dr. Gawande came across a simple idea for improving medical care. Another physician, Peter Pronovost (b. 1965), a critical care specialist, had identified a solution to the problem of patients in intensive care units (ICUs) developing infections after having central intravenous lines inserted. The cause of the problem was human error. Doctors knew the steps they needed to follow to prevent infection when they inserted a central line, but some of them skipped at least one of the steps. When they did, the risk of a dangerous infection increased, which in turn increased the likelihood of a poor outcome for the patient—longer illness, additional surgery, or death.

Borrowing a method from airplane pilots, who must go through a checklist before being cleared for takeoff, Dr. Pronovost proposed a similar solution for ICU doctors: a checklist of five things they needed to do when inserting a central intravenous line. Dr. Pronovost ran an experiment in the ICU at the hospital where he worked. Doctors were instructed to follow the steps on the checklist, and nurses who assisted during the procedure were told to observe and speak up if a doctor skipped a step.

The checklist worked. The infection rate dropped dramatically, reducing ICU stays, saving lives, and saving money. Dr. Pronovost began writing checklists for other ICU situations. These checklists were successful as well in addressing particular problems.

Approached by the World Health Organization, Dr. Gawande worked with a team around the world to develop a checklist to improve the safety of surgery. As a surgeon, he was well aware of complications that could occur as a result of mistakes before, during, and after surgery. The team created a 19-point "safe surgery" checklist that was tested at eight hospitals around the world, including one in the United States. The checklist worked again—all eight hospitals saw the rate of significant postsurgical complications and deaths drop by an average

of more than 35 percent, with no additional costs.

The problem the two doctors identified is both simple and complex. The problem is not that doctors lack knowledge; the problem is that because the situations they encounter are often complicated and urgent, doctors do not always correctly apply what they know.

The solution proposed by Dr. Gawande and Dr. Pronovost is similarly both simple and complex: to improve accuracy, use a checklist. However, other doctors needed to be convinced that a simple change like this would improve medical care. To persuade others, Gawande and Pronovost wrote articles for medical journals in which they presented the problem they studied, the methods they used, the results of their experiments, and the solution they recommended. Dr. Gawande then went on to apply the checklist solution to preventable problems in fields outside of medicine in his book *The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right* (2009), which became a best seller.

### Discussion Questions

1. How did Drs. Pronovost and Gawande define the problems they were trying to solve?
2. What evidence did Drs. Pronovost and Gawande use to support their proposed solutions?
3. Who was the audience for the doctors' proposals? Why might some audience members be hesitant about accepting the checklist solution?
4. Think about the relationship between doctors and nurses. Who has more authority in a medical setting? How might the doctors' and nurses' reactions to using the checklist differ?
5. In what ways is the problem the doctors tackled both simple and complex?
6. In what ways is the solution the doctors proposed both simple and complex?

## 6.3 Glance at Genre: Features of Proposals

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss the roles of purpose and audience in writing a proposal.
- Define key features and characteristics of proposals.

As you think about the problem for your proposal, it is important to understand the rhetorical situation, or the circumstance in which a writer communicates with an audience of readers, including your purpose, audience expectations, and the key elements of the proposal genre. The rhetorical situation and its relationship to writing your proposal is discussed more fully in Writing Process: Creating a Proposal.

### Defining Your Purpose

Your purpose is your reason for writing. The broad purpose for most academic and real-world proposals is to offer a solution to a problem. You, the writer, are tasked with identifying a problem and recommending a solution. You may need to write a proposal for a research project in a sociology class, or you may need to write a business proposal for a marketing class or a business you've started. Many topics are suitable for a proposal in a college writing class. For example, some problems are local and can be acted on directly, such as improving access to mental health services on your campus, offering a new food delivery option to campus buildings, designating quiet study spaces in your library, or bringing a farmer's market to your campus. Others are large-scale, research-oriented proposals such as reducing automobile emissions, providing broadband Internet access nationwide, or reforming immigration policies in the United States. Read your assignment carefully, and be sure you know the requirements and the amount of flexibility you have.

## Tuning in to Audience Expectations

The **audience** for your writing consists of the people who will read it or who could read it. *Are you writing for your instructor? For your classmates? For students or administrators on your campus or people in your community?* Think about the action they can take to solve the problem. For example, if the problem you're presenting is a lack of diverse food options on your campus, a proposal to other students would perhaps ask students to join you in calling for change in dining options, whereas a proposal to administrators would request specific changes.

Whoever your readers are, they expect you to do the following:

- **Address a specific, well-defined problem.** As the writer, ensure that your readers know what the problem is and why it needs to be solved. Some problems are well-known, whereas others need to be explained.
- **Have an idea of what they already know.** It is up to you as the writer to learn as much as possible about your audience. You need to know how receptive your audience may be to your suggestions and what they know about the problem you're proposing to solve. Their knowledge—or lack thereof—will require you to adjust your writing as needed. If readers are new to the problem, they expect you to provide the necessary background information. If they are knowledgeable about the problem, they expect you to cover background information quickly.
- **Provide reliable information.** in the form of specific facts, statistics, and examples. Whether you present your own research or information from sources, readers expect you to have done your homework and present trustworthy information about the problem and the solution.
- **Structure your proposal in a logical way.** Open with an introduction that tells readers the subject of the proposal, and follow with a logical structure.
- **Adopt an objective stance.** Writing objectively means adopting a position and tone that are neutral and free from bias, personal feelings, and emotional language. In doing so, you show respect for your readers' knowledge and intelligence, and you build credibility and trust, or **ethos**, with your readers.
- **Tell them what you want them to do in response to your proposal.** Do you want them to engage other members of the community? Build something? Contact their legislators? Although they may not do what you want, they are unlikely to act at all if you don't tell them what you would like them to do.

## Exploring the Genre

A formal proposal may include the components addressed in Analytical Report: Writing from Facts. If you're writing a business proposal (a document that proposes a transaction between a business and a client and also spells out deliverables, a schedule, costs, and payment), you can find a full discussion in OpenStax's forthcoming *Business Communications* text.

The following are key terms and characteristics of problem-solution proposals:

- **Abstract or executive summary:** paragraph that summarizes the problem and recommended solution. The purpose is to present information in the most concise and economical way possible for your readers.
- **Audience:** readers of a proposal or any piece of writing.
- **Bias:** a preconceived opinion about something, such as a subject, an idea, a person, or a group of people. As a reader, be attentive to potential bias in sources; as a writer, be attentive to bias in yourself.
- **Body:** main part of a proposal; appears between the introduction and the conclusion and recommendation. The body of a proposal consists of paragraphs that discuss the problem and present a solution or solutions.
- **Citation of sources:** references in the text of a proposal to sources the writer has used as evidence. The sources are also listed, with full bibliographic information, at the end of the proposal. Citing sources is essential to avoid plagiarism.
- **Conclusion and recommendation:** last part of a proposal. The conclusion restates the problem and recommends a solution. This paragraph often issues a call to action.

- **Critical thinking:** ability to look beneath the surface of words and images to analyze, interpret, and evaluate.
- **Ethos:** also known as ethical appeal; the sense that the writer or other authority is trustworthy and credible.
- **Evidence:** statements of fact, statistics, examples, and expert opinion or knowledge that support the writer's points.
- **Facts:** statements whose truth can be proven or verified.
- **Introduction:** first part of a proposal, in which the writer introduces the problem to be addressed. Often, the thesis appears at the end of the introduction.
- **Objections:** questions or opposition readers may have about a proposed solution. These also are known as **counterclaims**.
- **Objective stance:** writing that is free from bias, personal feelings, and emotional language. An objective stance is especially important in a proposal.
- **Problem:** central topic to be discussed in a proposal.
- **Purpose:** reason for writing the proposal, usually to examine a problem and propose a solution.
- **Solution or solutions:** proposed resolution or resolutions to the problem, the central topic of a proposal.
- **Statistics:** factual statements that include numbers and often serve as evidence in a proposal.
- **Synthesis:** making connections between ideas and combining them to arrive at an original conclusion. Synthesizing draws from others' opinions and ideas, facts, statistics, and the writer's information based on research or original thought.
- **Thesis:** the main idea you will convey in your proposal and to which all paragraphs in the paper should relate.
- **Topic sentence:** a sentence that states the main idea of each paragraph.

## 6.4 Annotated Student Sample: "Slowing Climate Change" by Shawn Krukowski

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the features common to proposals.
- Analyze the organizational structure of a proposal and how writers develop ideas.
- Articulate how writers use and cite evidence to build credibility.
- Identify sources of evidence within a text and in source citations.

### Introduction




**FIGURE 6.3** Student author Shawn Krukowski (credit: "Reading in Tulane University Library New Orleans July

2003" by Tulane Public Relations/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

The proposal that follows was written by student Shawn Krukowski for a first-year composition course. Shawn's assignment was to research a contemporary problem and propose one or more solutions. Deeply concerned about climate change, Shawn chose to research ways to slow the process. In his proposal, he recommends two solutions he thinks are most promising.



**FIGURE 6.4** This U.S. Coast Guard photograph shows the flooding in New Iberia, Louisiana, after Hurricane Ike in September 2008. Scientists attribute increased hurricane severity to climate change. (credit: "Hurricane Ike New Iberia" by Coast Guard Jayhawk 6031/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### A Call to Action

> The earth's climate is changing. Although the climate has been changing slowly for the past 22,000 years, the rate of change has increased dramatically. Previously, natural climate changes occurred gradually, sometimes extending over thousands of years. Since the mid-20th century, however, climate change has accelerated exponentially, a result primarily of human activities, and is reaching a crisis level.

> Critical as it is, however, climate change can be controlled. Thanks to current knowledge of science and existing technologies, it is possible to respond effectively. Although many concerned citizens, companies, and organizations in the private sector are taking action in their own spheres, other individuals, corporations, and organizations are ignoring, or even denying, the problem. What is needed to slow climate change is unified action in two key areas—mitigation and adaptation—spurred by government leadership in the United States and a global commitment to addressing the problem immediately.

***Introduction.*** *The proposal opens with an overview of the problem and pivots to the solution in the second paragraph.*

***Thesis Statement.*** *The thesis statement in last sentence of the introduction previews the organization of the proposal and the recommended solutions.*

### Problem: Negative Effects of Climate Change

***Heading.*** *Centered, boldface headings mark major sections of the proposal.*

***Body.*** *The three paragraphs under this heading discuss the problem.*

***Topic Sentence.*** *The paragraph opens with a sentence stating the topics developed in the following paragraphs.*

> For the 4,000 years leading up to the Industrial Revolution, global temperatures remained relatively constant, with a few dips of less than 1°C. Previous climate change occurred so gradually that life forms were able to adapt to it. Some species became extinct, but others survived and thrived. In just the past 100 years, however, temperatures have risen by approximately the same amount that they rose over the previous 4,000 years.

***Audience.*** *Without knowing for sure the extent of readers' knowledge of climate change, the writer provides background for them to understand the problem.*

> The rapid increase in temperature has a negative global impact. First, as temperatures rise, glaciers and polar ice are melting at a faster rate; in fact, by the middle of this century, the Arctic Ocean is projected to be ice-free in summer. As a result, global sea levels are projected to rise from two to four feet by 2100 (U.S. Global Change Research Program [USGCRP], 2014a). If this rise actually does happen, many coastal ecosystems and human communities will disappear.

***Discussion of the Problem.*** *The first main point of the problem is discussed in this paragraph.*

***Statistics as Evidence.*** *The writer provides specific numbers and cites the source in APA style.*

***Transitions****. The writer uses transitions here (first, as a result, and second in the next paragraph) and elsewhere to make connections between ideas and to enable readers to follow them more easily. At the same time, the transitions give the proposal coherence.*

> Second, weather of all types is becoming more extreme: heat waves are hotter, cold snaps are colder, and precipitation patterns are changing, causing longer droughts and increased flooding. Oceans are becoming more acidic as they increase their absorption of carbon dioxide. This change affects coral reefs and other marine life. Since the 1980s, hurricanes have increased in frequency, intensity, and duration. As shown in Figure 6.5, the 2020 hurricane season was the most active on record, with 30 named storms, a recording-breaking 11 storms hitting the U.S. coastline (compared to 9 in 1916), and 10 named storms in September—the highest monthly number on record. Together, these storms caused more than $40 billion in damage. Not only was this the fifth consecutive above-normal hurricane season, it was preceded by four consecutive above-normal years in 1998 to 2001 (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2020).

***Discussion of the Problem.*** *The second main point of the problem is discussed in this paragraph.*

***Visual as Evidence.*** *The writer refers to "Figure 6.4" in the text and places the figure below the paragraph.*




**FIGURE 6.5** An overview of the 2020 hurricane season in the Atlantic Ocean. From "Record-Breaking Atlantic Hurricane Season Draws to an End," NOAA National Weather Service. Copyright 2020 by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

***Source Citation in APA Style: Visual.*** *The writer gives the figure a number, a title, an explanatory note, and a source citation. The source is also cited in the list of references.*

## Solutions: Mitigation and Adaptation

***Heading.*** *The centered, boldface heading marks the start of the solutions section of the proposal.*

***Body.*** *The eight paragraphs under this heading discuss the solutions given in the thesis statement.*

***Topic Sentence.*** *The paragraph opens with a sentence stating the topics developed in the following paragraphs.*

> To control the effects of climate change, immediate action in two key ways is needed: mitigation and adaptation. Mitigating climate change by reducing and stabilizing the carbon emissions that produce greenhouse gases is the only long-term way to avoid a disastrous future. In addition, adaptation is imperative to allow ecosystems, food systems, and development to become more sustainable.

> Mitigation and adaptation will not happen on their own; action on such a vast scale will require governments around the globe to take initiatives. The United States needs to cooperate with other nations and assume a leadership role in fighting climate change.

***Objective Stance.*** *The writer presents evidence (facts, statistics, and examples) in neutral, unemotional language, which builds credibility, or ethos, with readers.*

### Mitigation

***Heading.*** *The flush-left, boldface heading marks the first subsection of the solutions.*

***Topic Sentence.*** *The paragraph opens with a sentence stating the solution developed in the following paragraphs.*

> The first challenge is to reduce the flow of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The Union of Concerned Scientists (2020) warns that "net zero" carbon emissions—meaning that no more carbon enters the atmosphere than is removed—needs to be reached by 2050 or sooner. As shown in Figure 6.6, reducing carbon emissions will require a massive effort, given the skyrocketing rate of increase of greenhouse gases since 1900 (USGCRP, 2014b).

***Synthesis.*** *In this paragraph, the writer synthesizes factual evidence from two sources and cites them in APA style.*

***Visual as Evidence.*** *The writer refers to "Figure 6.5" in the text and places the figure below the paragraph.*

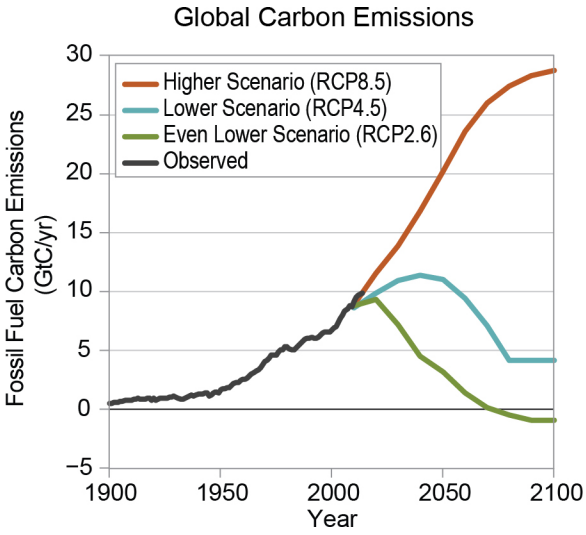



**FIGURE 6.6** Increases in carbon by the burning of fossil fuels since 1900. From "Our Changing Climate," National Climate Assessment (https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/2/). Copyright 2014 by the U.S. Global Change Research Program.

***Source Citation in APA Style: Visual.*** *The writer gives the figure a number, a title, an explanatory note, and a source citation. The source is also cited in the list of references.*

> Significant national policy changes must be made and must include multiple approaches; here are two areas of concern:

***Presentation of Solutions.*** *For clarity, the writer numbers the two items to be discussed.*

> 1. Transportation systems. In the United States in 2018, more than one-quarter—28.2 percent—of emissions resulted from the consumption of fossil fuels for transportation. More than half of these emissions came from passenger cars, light-duty trucks, sport utility vehicles, and minivans (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], 2020). Priorities for mitigation should include using fuels that emit less carbon; improving fuel efficiency; and reducing the need for travel through urban planning, telecommuting and videoconferencing, and biking and pedestrian initiatives.

***Statistics as Evidence.*** *The writer provides specific numbers and cites the source in APA style.*

***Source Citation in APA Style: Group Author.*** *The parenthetical citation gives the group's name, an abbreviation to be used in subsequent citations, and the year of publication.*

> Curtailing travel has a demonstrable effect. Scientists have recorded a dramatic drop in emissions during government-imposed travel and business restrictions in 2020. Intended to slow the spread of COVID-19, these restrictions also decreased air pollution significantly. For example, during the first six weeks of restrictions in the San Francisco Bay area, traffic was reduced by about 45 percent, and emissions were roughly a quarter lower than the previous six weeks. Similar findings were observed around the globe, with reductions of up to 80 percent (Bourzac, 2020).

***Statistics as Evidence.*** *The writer provides specific numbers and cites the source in APA style.*

***Source Citation in APA Style: One Author.*** *The parenthetical citation gives the author's name and the year of publication.*

> 2. Energy production. The second-largest source of emissions is the use of fossil fuels to produce energy, primarily electricity, which accounted for 26.9 percent of U.S. emissions (EPA, 2020). Fossil fuels can be replaced by solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal sources. Solar voltaic systems have the potential to become the least expensive energy in the world (Green America, 2020). Solar sources should be complemented by wind power, which tends to increase at night when the sun is absent. According to the Copenhagen Consensus, the most effective way to combat climate change is to increase investment in green research and development (Lomborg, 2020). Notable are successes in the countries of Morocco and The Gambia, both of which have committed to investing in national programs to limit emissions primarily by generating electricity from renewable sources (Mulvaney, 2019).

***Synthesis.*** *The writer develops the paragraph by synthesizing evidence from four sources and cites them in APA style.*

> A second way to move toward net zero is to actively remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Forests and oceans are so-called "sinks" that collect and store carbon (EPA, 2020). Tropical forests that once made up 12 percent of global land masses now cover only 5 percent, and the loss of these tropical forest sinks has caused 16 to 19 percent of greenhouse gas emissions (Green America, 2020). Worldwide reforestation is vital and demands both commitment and funding on a global scale. New technologies also allow "direct air capture," which filers carbon from the air, and "carbon capture," which prevents it from leaving smokestacks.
>
> All of these technologies should be governmentally supported and even mandated, where appropriate.

***Synthesis.*** *The writer develops the paragraph by synthesizing evidence from two sources and cites them in APA style.*

**Adaptation**

***Heading.*** *The flush-left, boldface heading marks the second subsection of the solutions.*

***Topic Sentence.*** *The paragraph opens with a sentence stating the solution developed in the following paragraphs.*

> Historically, civilizations have adapted to climate changes, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Our modern civilization is largely the result of climate stability over the past 12,000 years. However, as the climate changes, humans must learn to adapt on a national, community, and individual level in many areas. While each country sets its own laws and regulations, certain principles apply worldwide.
>
> 1. Infrastructure. Buildings—residential, commercial, and industrial—produce about 33 percent of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide (Biello, 2007). Stricter standards for new construction, plus incentives for investing in insulation and other improvements to existing structures, are needed. Development in high-risk areas needs to be discouraged. Improved roads and transportation systems would help reduce fuel use. Incentives for decreasing energy consumption are needed to reduce rising demands for power.

***Statistics as Evidence.*** *The writer provides specific numbers and cites the source in APA style.*

***Source Citation in APA Style: One Author.*** *The parenthetical citation gives the author's name and the year of*

*publication.*

> 2. Food waste. More than 30 percent of the food produced in the United States is never consumed, and food waste causes 44 gigatons of carbon emissions a year (Green America, 2020). In a landfill, the nutrients in wasted food never return to the soil; instead, methane, a greenhouse gas, is produced. High-income countries such as the United States need to address wasteful processing and distribution systems. Low-income countries, on the other hand, need an infrastructure that supports proper food storage and handling. Educating consumers also must be a priority.

***Statistics as Evidence.*** *The writer provides specific numbers and cites the source in APA style.*

***Source Citation in APA Style: Group Author.*** *The parenthetical citation gives the group's name and the year of publication.*

> 3. Consumerism. People living in consumer nations have become accustomed to abundance. Many purchases are nonessential yet consume fossil fuels to manufacture, package, market, and ship products. During World War II, the U.S. government promoted the slogan "Use It Up, Wear It Out, Make It Do, or Do Without." This attitude was widely accepted because people recognized a common purpose in the war effort. A similar shift in mindset is needed today.

> Adaptation is not only possible but also economically advantageous. One case study is Walmart, which is the world's largest company by revenue. According to Dearn (2020), the company announced a plan to reduce its global emissions to zero by 2040. Among the goals is powering its facilities with 100 percent renewable energy and using electric vehicles with zero emissions. As of 2020, about 29 percent of its energy is from renewable sources. Although the 2040 goal applies to Walmart facilities only, plans are underway to reduce indirect emissions, such as those from its supply chain. According to CEO Doug McMillon, the company's commitment is to "becoming a regenerative company—one that works to restore, renew and replenish in addition to preserving our planet, and encourages others to do the same" (Dearn, 2020). In addition to encouraging other corporations, these goals present a challenge to the government to take action on climate change.

***Extended Example as Evidence.*** *The writer indicates where borrowed information from the source begins and ends, and cites the source in APA style.*

***Source Citation in APA Style: One Author.*** *The parenthetical citation gives only the year of publication because the author's name is cited in the sentence.*

### Objections to Taking Action

***Heading.*** *The centered, boldface heading marks the start of the writer's discussion of potential objections to the proposed solutions.*

***Body.*** *The writer devotes two paragraphs to objections.*

***Topic Sentence.*** *The paragraph opens with a sentence stating the topics developed in the following paragraphs.*

> Despite scientific evidence, some people and groups deny that climate change is real or, if they admit it exists, insist it is not a valid concern. Those who think climate change is not a problem point to Earth's millennia-long history of changing climate as evidence that life has always persisted. However, their claims do not consider the difference between "then" and "now." Most of the change predates human civilization, which has benefited from thousands of years of stable climate. The rapid change since the Industrial Revolution is unprecedented in human history.

> Those who deny climate change or its dangers seek primarily to relax or remove pollution standards and regulations in order to protect, or maximize profit from, their industries. To date, their lobbying has been successful. For example, the world's fossil-fuel industry received $5.3 trillion in 2015 alone, while the U.S. wind-energy industry received $12.3 billion in subsidies between 2000 and 2020 (Green America, 2020).

***Statistics as Evidence.*** *The writer provides specific numbers and cites the source in APA style.*

***Source Citation in APA Style: Group Author.*** *The parenthetical citation gives the group's name and the year of publication.*

## Conclusion and Recommendation

***Heading.*** *The centered, boldface heading marks the start of the conclusion and recommendation.*

***Conclusion and Recommendation.*** *The proposal concludes with a restatement of the proposed solutions and a call to action.*

> Greenhouse gases can be reduced to acceptable levels; the technology already exists. But that technology cannot function without strong governmental policies prioritizing the environment, coupled with serious investment in research and development of climate-friendly technologies.

> The United States government must place its full support behind efforts to reduce greenhouse gasses and mitigate climate change. Rejoining the Paris Agreement is a good first step, but it is not enough. Citizens must demand that their elected officials at the local, state, and national levels accept responsibility to take action on both mitigation and adaptation. Without full governmental support, good intentions fall short of reaching net-zero emissions and cannot achieve the adaptation in attitude and lifestyle necessary for public compliance. There is no alternative to accepting this reality. Addressing climate change is too important to remain optional.

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https://nca2014.globalchange.gov/highlights/report-findings/our-changing-climate#tab1-images

***References Page in APA Style.*** *All sources cited in the text of the report—and only those sources—are listed in alphabetical order with full publication information. See the Handbook for more on APA documentation style.*

The following link takes you to another model of an annotated sample paper (https://openstax.org/r/annotatedsamplepaper) on solutions to animal testing posted by the University of Arizona's Global Campus Writing Center.

### Discussion Questions

1. How is the proposal organized? Make an informal outline of the main points.
2. Identify types of evidence that the writer uses in the text of the proposal, such as statements of fact, statistics, examples, and visuals. What are the sources of his evidence? Are the sources credible and reliable?
3. Analyze the writer's stance. Is he objective? Does he reveal bias? Give examples of objectivity and/or bias that you see.
4. Climate change is a broad topic for a proposal of this length. In fact, Shawn Krukowski's instructor suggested that he narrow it. What advice would you give about narrowing the topic?
5. Discuss the proposal in terms of its purpose and audience. What is the purpose of the proposal? What action does Shawn want readers to take after reading it? How effective is his call to action?
6. What are three strengths of the proposal? What are three weaknesses?

## 6.5 Writing Process: Creating a Proposal

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the elements of the rhetorical situation for your proposal.
- Apply prewriting strategies to discover a problem to write about.
- Gather and synthesize information from appropriate sources.
- Draft a thesis statement and create an organizational plan.
- Compose a proposal that develops your ideas and integrates evidence from sources.
- Implement strategies for drafting, peer reviewing, and revising.

Sometimes writing a paper comes easily, but more often writers work hard to generate ideas and evidence, organize their thoughts, draft, and revise. Experienced writers do their work in multiple steps, and most engage in a **recursive** process that involves thinking and rethinking, writing and rewriting, and repeating steps multiple times as their ideas develop and sharpen. In broad strokes, most writers go through the following steps to achieve a polished piece of writing:

- **Planning and Organization.** Your proposal will come together more easily if you spend time at the start considering the rhetorical situation, understanding your assignment, gathering ideas and evidence, drafting a thesis statement, and creating an organizational plan.
- **Drafting.** When you have a good grasp of the problem and solution you are going to write about and how you will organize your proposal, you are ready to draft.
- **Review.** With a first draft in hand, make time to get feedback from others. Depending on the structure of your class, you may receive feedback from your instructor or your classmates. You can also work with a tutor in the writing center on your campus, or you can ask someone else you trust, such as a friend, roommate, or family member, to read your writing critically and give honest feedback.
- **Revising.** After reviewing feedback from your readers, plan to revise. Focus on their comments: Is your

thesis clear? Do you need to make organizational changes to the proposal? Do you need to explain or connect your ideas more clearly?

## Considering the Rhetorical Situation

Like other kinds of writing projects, a proposal starts with assessing the **rhetorical situation**—the circumstance in which a writer communicates with an audience of readers about a subject. As a proposal writer, you make choices based on the purpose for your writing, the audience who will read it, the **genre**, and the expectations of the community and culture in which you are working. The brainstorming questions in Table 6.1 can help you begin:

| Rhetorical Situation Element | Brainstorming Questions | Your Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **Topic**<br>Are you free to choose your own problem and solution to write about, or is your topic specified? | What do you want to know more about? What requirements do you have? Do you need to do research? | |
| **Purpose**<br>What is the purpose of the proposal? | Is the purpose to examine a problem and explain possible solutions? Or is it to recommend a specific solution? | |
| **Audience**<br>Who will read your writing? | Who is your primary audience—your instructor? Your classmates? Other students or administrators on your campus? People in your community? How will you shape your writing to connect most effectively with this audience? Do you need to consider secondary audiences, such as people outside of class? If so, who are those readers? | |
| **Presentation**<br>In what format should you prepare your proposal? | Should you prepare a written proposal or use another medium? Should you include visuals and other media along with text, such as figures, charts, graphs, photographs, audio, or video? What other presentation requirements do you need to be aware of? | |

**TABLE 6.1** Brainstorming Questions about the Rhetorical Situation

| Rhetorical Situation Element | Brainstorming Questions | Your Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **Context**<br>How do the time period and location affect decisions you make about your proposal? | What problems in your city, county, state, area, nation, or the world need a solution? What current events or new information might relate to the problem? Is your college or university relevant to the problem? | |
| **Culture and Community**<br>What social or cultural assumptions do you or your audience have? | How will you show awareness of your community's social and cultural expectations in your writing? | |

**TABLE 6.1** Brainstorming Questions about the Rhetorical Situation

## Summary of Assignment

Write a proposal that discusses a problem you want to learn more about and that recommends a solution. The problem you choose must be a current problem, even though it may have been a problem for many years. The problem must also affect many people, and it must have an actual solution or solutions that you can learn about through research. In other words, the problem cannot be unique to you, and the solution you recommend cannot be one you only imagine; both the problem and the solution must be grounded in reality.

One way to get ideas about a problem to write about is to read a high-quality newspaper, website, or social media account for a week. Read widely on whatever platform you choose so that you learn what people are saying, what a newspaper's editorial board is taking a stand on, what opinion writers are making cases for in op-eds, and what community members are commenting on. You'll begin to get a handle on problems in your community or state that people care about. If you read a paper or website with a national or international audience, you'll learn about problems that affect people in other places.

You will need to consult and cite at least five reliable sources. They can be scholarly, but they do not have to be. They must be credible, trustworthy, and unbiased. Possible sources include articles from reputable newspapers, magazines, and academic and professional journals; reputable websites; government sources; and visual sources. Depending on your topic, you may want to conduct a survey, an interview, or an experiment. See Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources for information about creating and finding sources. Your proposal can include a visual or media source if it provides appropriate, relevant evidence.

***Another Lens.*** Another way to approach a proposal assignment is to consider problems that affect you directly and affect others. Perhaps you are concerned about running up student loan debt. Or perhaps you worry about how to pay your rent while earning minimum wage. These concerns are valid and affect many college students around the United States. Another way is to think about problems that affect others. Perhaps students in your class or on your campus have backgrounds and experiences that differ from yours—*what problems or challenges might they have encountered during their time in college that you don't know about?*

As you think about the purpose and audience for your proposal, think again about the rhetorical situation, specifically about the audience you want to reach and the mode of presentation best suited to them and your purpose. For example, say you're dissatisfied with the process for electing student leaders on your campus. If your purpose is to identify the problems in the process and propose a change, then your audience would include other students, the group or committee that oversees student elections, and perhaps others. To reach other students who might also be dissatisfied, you might write an article, editorial, or letter for the campus newspaper, social media page, or website, depending on how students on your campus get news. In addition, you might organize a meeting of other students to get their input on the problem. To reach the decision makers, which may include elected students, faculty, and administrators, you might need to prepare an oral presentation and a slide deck.

Below in Figure 6.7 are three slides from Shawn Krukowski's proposal that he adapted for a presentation: the title slide, a slide on one aspect of the problem, and a slide introducing one of the proposed solutions.

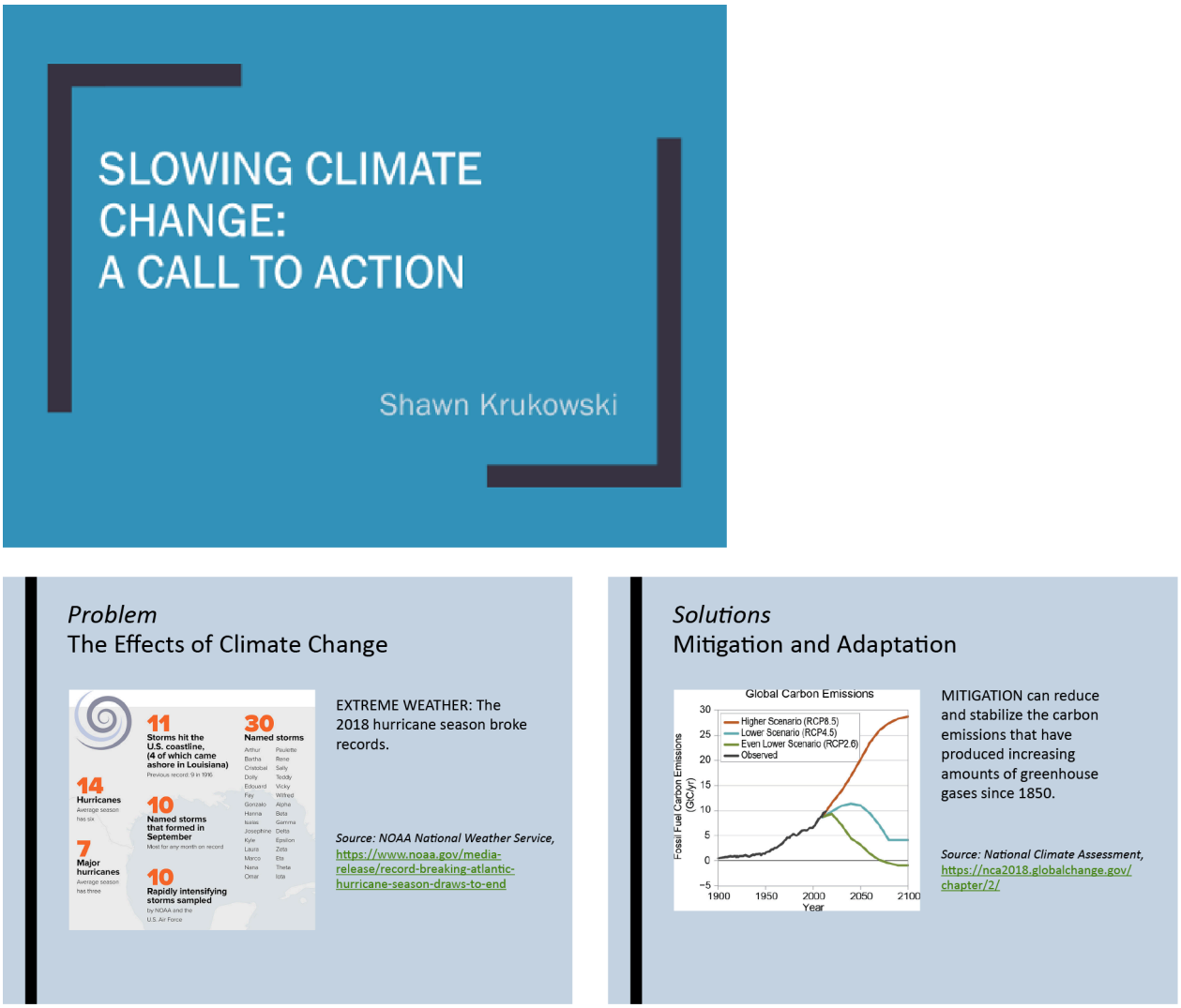



**FIGURE 6.7** Presentation Slides (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

## Quick Launch: Finding a Problem to Write About

A proposal must address a real-life problem and present one or more workable solutions. Usually, problems worth writing about are not easily solved; if they were, they would no longer be considered problems. Indeed, problems in proposals are often complex, and solutions are often complicated and involve trade-offs.

Sometimes people disagree about whether the problem is a problem at all and whether any proposed solutions are viable solutions.

### Exploring a Problem

One way to generate ideas about a problem is to brainstorm. To explore a topic for your proposal, use a graphic organizer like Table 6.2 to write responses to the following statements and questions:

| Exploring Questions | Your Responses |
|---|---|
| What problem am I interested in learning about? | |
| How do I know this is a problem? | |
| What are a few examples of the problem? | |
| What causes the problem? | |
| Who is affected by the problem? | |
| What are some negative effects of the problem? | |
| Why should the problem be solved? | |
| What are the potential consequences of the problem if nothing is done? | |
| What are some realistic solutions to the problem? | |

**TABLE 6.2** Exploration Questions

For example, perhaps you're considering a career in information technology, and you're taking an IT class. You might be interested in exploring the problem of data breaches. A data breach is a real-world problem with possible solutions, so it passes the first test of being an actual problem with possible solutions. Your responses to the questions above might look something like those in Table 6.3:

| Exploring Questions | Sample Responses |
|---|---|
| A problem I'm interested in learning more about is... | Data breaches |
| How I know data breaches are a problem... | In my class, we're spending a lot of time on data security and breaches. Also, data breaches are in the news almost constantly, and a Google search turns up many that don't make the news. |
| What are a few examples of data breaches? | I've heard about people getting their information stolen. I've heard about foreign governments, like Russia, stealing national security information and trying to interfere in recent elections. In my class, I'm learning about businesses that have customer and employee information stolen. |

**TABLE 6.3** Exploration Questions on Data Breaches

| Exploring Questions | Sample Responses |
|---|---|
| What causes data breaches? | Hackers have a variety of methods to break into websites, to get people to click on links, and to lure people to give out information. |
| Who is affected by data breaches? | Individual people, businesses, utility companies, schools and universities, governments (local, state, and national)—pretty much anyone can be affected. |
| What are some negative effects of data breaches? | Identity theft, financial theft, national security, power shutdowns, and election interference. Data breaches cause chaos and cost a lot of money. |
| Why should the problem of data breaches be solved? | People need the personal, financial, and medical information they share with businesses and other organizations to remain private. Businesses and organizations need to keep their operations secure. Governments need to keep national security secrets from getting into the hands of people who want to harm them. |
| What are the potential consequences of data breaches if nothing is done? | People will continue to be victims of identity theft and all that goes with it, including losing money, and they will lose trust in institutions they used to trust, like banks, hospitals, and the government. |
| What are some realistic solutions to data breaches? | Increased security for individuals, like two-factor authentication, stronger passwords, and education to avoid getting scammed. For companies and governments, stronger protections on websites. I need to learn more. |

**TABLE 6.3** Exploration Questions on Data Breaches

### Narrowing and Focusing

Many problems for a proposal can be too broad to tackle in a single paper. For example, the sample above reveals that data breaches are indeed a problem but that several aspects can be explored. If you tried to cover all the aspects, you would be left writing general paragraphs with little specific information. The topic needs to be narrowed and focused.

The data breaches example above could be narrowed to the following problems—and possibly even more. Note that the questions start to zero in on possible solutions, too. In your own writing, as you brainstorm, try placing subtopics you discover into their own categories and asking more questions, as shown in Table 6.4.

| Narrowing a Problem | Focusing Questions |
|---|---|
| Problem: Hackers get into computer systems and steal information. | What tactics do hackers use? What do they steal? What do they do with what they steal? How successful are they? How can hacking be stopped or reduced? |
| Problem: Data breaches harm individuals. | What happens to people when their information is stolen? In what ways is their information used? What should people do when they discover their information has been stolen? Are there steps they can take to protect their information? |
| Problem: Data breaches harm businesses, organizations, and medical systems. | What happens to businesses, organizations, and medical systems when hackers break in? What kind of information is stolen? How is the information used? What do businesses, organizations, and medical systems do, or what should they do, when they know about a breach? How can data breaches be prevented? |
| Problem: Data breaches harm governments. | What happens to governments when hackers break into their systems? What kind of information is stolen? How is the information used? What should governments do when they know about a breach? How can data breaches be prevented? |

**TABLE 6.4** Focusing on a Topic

### Sample Proposal Topics



The following broad topics are potentially suitable as a start for a proposal. Choose one of these or one of your own, and ask the exploring questions. Then look at your responses, and ask focusing questions. Continue to focus until you have a specific problem that you can discuss in sufficient depth and offer a concrete solution or solutions.

- **Health fields:** cost of medical and dental care for uninsured people, management of chronic conditions and diseases, infection control, vaccinations, access to mental health care, drug use and addiction, sports injuries, workplace safety
- **Education:** gaps in academic achievement, curriculum, recruitment and retention of staff and/or students, buildings and grounds, graduation rates, cocurricular activities
- **Environment:** forest management and fires, hurricanes and other extreme storms, water and air pollution, sustainable development, invasive species, waste management, recycling and composting, community gardening
- **Engineering and computer science:** robotics, vehicles and transportation, digital divide, online privacy, misinformation and misbehavior on social media, video games
- **Business and manufacturing:** quality improvement, process improvement, cost control, communication, social media, pay equity, fundraising, sourcing of materials, net-zero energy processes, workplace safety
- **Policy and politics:** public institutions, such as public schools, libraries, transportation systems, and parks; taxes, fees, and services; donations to political campaigns; healthcare, such as Medicare and Medicaid; social security; unemployment insurance; services for active military and veterans; immigration policy
- **Society and culture:** social media and free speech; inequality in housing, employment, education, and more; cancel culture; bullying; wealth and poverty; support for the arts; athletes and sports; disparities related to race, sex, gender identity and expression, age, and/or ability

## Gathering Information

Proposals are rooted in information and evidence; therefore, most proposal assignments require you to conduct research. Depending on your assignment, you may need to do formal research, an activity that involves finding sources and evaluating them for reliability, reading them carefully and taking notes, and citing all words you quote and ideas you borrow. See Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources for detailed instruction on conducting research. If you are proposing a solution to a problem in your local community or on your campus, you may need to conduct primary research as well, such as a survey or interviews with people who live or work there.

Whether you conduct in-depth research or do background reading, keep track of the ideas that come to you and the information you learn. You can write or dictate notes using an app on your phone or computer, or you can jot notes in a journal if you prefer pen and paper. Then, when you are ready to begin to organize what you have learned, you will have a record of your thoughts and information. Always track the source of the information you gather, whether from your reading or a person you interviewed, so that you can return to that source if you need more information and can credit the source in your paper.

### Kinds of Evidence

You will use **evidence** to demonstrate that the problem is real and worthy of being solved and that your recommended solution is workable. Choose evidence for your proposal that is rooted in facts. In addition, choose evidence that best supports the angle you take on your topic and meets your instructor's requirements. Cite all evidence you use from a source. Consider the following kinds of evidence and examples of each:

- **Definition:** an explanation of a key word, idea, or concept.

  *The Personal Data Notification & Protection Act of 2017 defines a security breach as "a compromise of the security, confidentiality, or integrity of, or the loss of, computerized data that results in… (i) the unauthorized acquisition of sensitive personally identifiable information; or (ii) access to sensitive personally identifiable information that is for an unauthorized purpose, or in excess of authorization."*

- **Example:** an illustration of an idea or concept.

  *Every month, university staff members receive a fake phishing email from the IT department. The goal is to train employees of the university to be critical readers of every email they receive.*

- **Expert opinion:** a statement by a professional whose opinion is respected in the field.

  *In* The Sixth Extinction, *science writer Elizabeth Kolbert observes that humans are making the choice about "which evolutionary pathways will remain and open and which will be forever closed" (268).*

- **Fact:** information that is true and can be proven correct or accurate. Statements of fact are built on evidence and data.

  *In March and April of 2020, 43 states in the United States issued orders directing residents to stay home except for essential activities.*

- **Interview:** a person-to-person, phone, or remote conversation that involves an interviewer posing questions to another person or group of people.

  *During an interview, I asked about parents' decisions to vaccinate their children. One pediatrician said, "The majority of parents see the benefits of immunizations for their children and for public health. For those who don't, I talk to them and try to understand why they feel the way they do."*

- **Quotation:** the exact words of an author or speaker.

  *According to the Federal Aviation Administration, SpaceX was required to conduct a "comprehensive*

*review of the company's safety culture, operational decision-making, and process discipline," in addition to investigating the crash of its prototype spacecraft (Chang).*

- **Statistics:** numerical fact or item of data.

  *According to the Environmental Protection Agency, more than 40 million tons of food waste were generated in 2017, comprising 15.2% of all trash sent to landfills (DeSilver).*

- **Survey:** a structured interview in which respondents are all asked the same questions and their answers are tabulated and interpreted. Surveys reveal attitudes, beliefs, or habits of the general public or segments of the population.

  *In a survey of adults conducted in July 2020, 64 percent of respondents said that social media have a mostly negative effect on American society (Auxier).*

- **Visuals** and other media**:** graphs, figures, tables, photographs, diagrams, charts, maps, videos, audio recordings, etc.

## Thesis and Organization

### Drafting a Thesis

When you have a solid grasp of the problem and solution, try drafting a **thesis**. A thesis is the main idea that you will convey in your proposal and to which all the paragraphs in the paper should relate. In a proposal, you will likely express this main idea in a **thesis statement** of one or two sentences toward the end of the introduction.

For example, in the thesis statement Shawn Krukowski wrote for his proposal on climate change, he identifies the problem and previews the solutions he presents:

> *What is needed to slow climate change is unified action in two key areas—mitigation and adaptation—spurred by government leadership in the United States and a global commitment to addressing the problem immediately.*

Here is another example that identifies a problem and multiple solutions:

> *The number of women employed in the IT field is decreasing every year, a trend that can be changed with a multifaceted approach that includes initiatives in middle schools, high schools, and colleges; active recruitment; mentoring programs; and flexible work arrangements.*

After you draft a thesis statement, ask these questions and revise it as needed:

- Is it engaging? A thesis for a proposal should pique readers' interest in the problem and possible solutions.
- Is it precise and specific? If you are interested in curbing the spread of invasive plant species, for example, your thesis should indicate which environment the plant or plants are invading and that you are proposing ways to stop the spread.

### Organizing Your Ideas



A proposal has a recognizable shape, starting with an introduction, followed by discussions of the problem, possible solutions, potential objections to the solutions, and a conclusion with a recommendation. A graphic organizer like Table 6.5 can help you organize your ideas and evidence.

| Proposal Section | Content | Your Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Introduction (usually one paragraph, but can be two) | Draw readers in with an overview. Provide necessary background here or in the description of the problem, defining terms as needed.<br>State the thesis. | |
| Description of the Problem (one or more paragraphs) | Explain the problem, establishing it as a problem in need of a solution.<br>Develop the paragraph(s) with evidence. | |
| Possible Solution or Solutions (one or more paragraphs) | Describe possible solutions, one at a time.<br>Develop the paragraph(s) with evidence. | |
| Objections (one or more paragraphs) | Explain objections readers are likely to raise to the solutions given in the previous paragraph(s).<br>Develop the paragraph(s) with evidence. | |
| Conclusion and Recommendations (one or more paragraphs) | Conclude with a summary of the points and recommend a solution or a course of action. | |

**TABLE 6.5** Proposal Organization

## Drafting a Proposal

With a tentative thesis, an organization plan, and evidence, you are ready to begin drafting your proposal. For this assignment, you will discuss a problem, present possible solutions, address objections to the solutions, and conclude with a recommendation.

### Introduction

You may choose to write the introduction first, last, or midway through the drafting process. Whenever you choose to write it, use it to draw readers in. Make the proposal topic clear, and be concise. End the introduction with your thesis statement.

Opening a proposal with an overview of your topic is a reliable strategy, as shown in the following student-written example on women working in IT. The thesis statement, which appeared earlier in this section, is underlined:

> People who work in the information technology (IT) field often start their careers fixing computers and other electronic devices for others. Through experience and education, an IT worker's career path can branch out to specialize in everything from programming new software to setting up and maintaining networks. The IT field is growing because of the constant development of technology, and the demand for employees also is growing. Yet the number of women employed in the IT field is decreasing every year, a trend that can be changed with a multifaceted approach that includes initiatives in middle schools, high schools, and colleges; active recruitment; mentoring programs; and flexible work arrangements.

### Body Paragraphs: Problem, Solutions, Objections

The body paragraphs of your proposal should present the problem, the solution or solutions, and potential

objections to the proposed solution(s). As you write these paragraphs, consider using the **point**, **evidence**, and **analysis** pattern:

- The point is the central idea of the paragraph, usually given in a topic sentence stated in your own words at or toward beginning of the paragraph.
- With the evidence you provide, you develop the paragraph and support the point given in the topic sentence. Include details, examples, quotations, paraphrases, and summaries from sources. In your sentences and paragraphs, synthesize the evidence you give by showing the connections between sources. See Position Argument: Practicing the Art of Rhetoric and Argumentative Research: Enhancing the Art of Rhetoric with Evidence for more information on quoting, summarizing, paraphrasing, and synthesizing.
- The analysis comes at the end of the paragraph. In your own words, draw a conclusion about the evidence you have provided and relate it to the topic sentence.

The paragraphs that follow show the point-evidence-analysis pattern in practice.

### Body Paragraphs: Problem

Follow the introduction with a discussion of the problem. Using paragraph structure, define the problem and discuss it, drawing on evidence from your sources. This paragraph (or paragraphs) should answer these questions: *What is the problem? Why is this a problem?* The following example, from the proposal on women working in IT, answers the first question:

> The information technology (IT) field is continuously expanding, with many more positions available than workers to fill them. In fact, the pool of IT professionals was so small that in 2001, Congress raised the visa limit in an effort to fill the gap with employees from overseas (Varma, 2002). And yet the number of women represented in the occupation is decreasing. From 1990 to 2020, the percentage of women in IT declined from 31 percent to 25 percent, even though women make up 47 percent of all employed adults in the United States. According to White (2021), only 19 percent of women pursue a computer science major in college, compared to 27 percent in 1997. Of those women who graduated with a computer science degree, 38 percent are working in the field compared to 56 percent of men, a statistic that indicates women are not staying in the field. Although gender diversity supposedly is valued in the workplace, the underrepresentation of women in IT is clearly a problem.

The writer then goes on to answer the second question: *Why is this a problem?* The writer discusses stereotypes, lack of encouragement and role models, workplace culture, pay, and prospects for advancement (not shown here).

### Body Paragraphs: Solutions

After presenting and explaining the problem, use specific information from the sources you consulted to present the solution or solutions you have discovered through your research. If you are proposing more than one solution, present them one at a time, using headings as appropriate.

The solutions section will likely be the longest part of your proposal. Below are two paragraphs from the proposal about women working in IT. Note how the first paragraph introduces the solutions and how the second paragraph uses evidence to develop the first proposed solution. Also note the informative boldface headings.

> The following suggestions are ways to encourage women to enter IT and build their careers, with the eventual goal of achieving gender balance in the field. The solutions discussed include encouraging interest in computer technology among girls in middle school and high school, actively recruiting college-age women to study IT, and within the field, mentoring women and expanding workplace flexibility to improve retention.

> The National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) is an organization that encourages girls in middle school and high school to explore their interest in IT. One program, the NCWIT's Aspirations in Computing, supports women in high school by showing them that they can succeed in technology and introducing them to other students with similar interests. The same program matches middle-school girls with female high-school and college students and awards scholarships for computing and programming competitions. In addition, internships and IT courses in middle school and high school provide opportunities to learn what a career in IT entails, with or without a degree in IT. Opportunities like these give girls and women support and a sense of belonging.

The paragraphs that follow (not shown here) continue the discussion of the possible solutions.

### Body Paragraphs: Objections

Depending on the problem and solution, consider the objections readers may raise, and explain why your proposal is necessary and worthwhile. For example, the proposal on women in IT does not discuss objections because few people would object to the writer's proposal. Shawn Krukowski, however, in his proposal on climate change, includes a section on objections to taking action. He focuses the discussion on people who deny that climate change is a problem. *Would you do the same?* Consider whether this section of Shawn's proposal might have been stronger had he addressed objections to the solutions he proposed—mitigation and adaptation—instead of objections to the problem.

> Despite scientific evidence, some people and groups deny that climate change is real or, if they admit it exists, insist it is not a valid concern. Those who think climate change is not a problem point to Earth's millennia-long history of changing climate as evidence that life has always persisted. Most of the change, however, predates human civilization, which has benefited from thousands of years of stable climate. The rapid change since the Industrial Revolution is unprecedented in human history.

> Those who deny climate change or its dangers seek primarily to relax or remove pollution standards and regulations in order to protect, or maximize profit from, their industries. To date, their lobbying has been successful. For example, the world's fossil-fuel industry received $5.3 trillion in 2015 alone, while the U.S. wind-energy industry received $12.3 billion in subsidies between 2000 and 2020 (Green America, 2020).

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The conclusion and recommendation section of your proposal is the part in which you interpret your findings and make a recommendation or give a call to action. At this point, focus on the solution that will best solve the problem, suggesting or summarizing specific actions.

Below is the recommendation section from the proposal about women in IT. In the full conclusion (not shown here), the writer summarizes the main points of the proposal. In the recommendation paragraph that follows, the writer calls for specific actions:

> Many researchers have studied why few women choose IT as a career and why some decide to leave the field. Although the numbers cannot be improved immediately, the following changes in school and the workplace could recruit and retain more women in IT:

- Include technology education courses and formal IT programs in middle- and high-school curricula to give girls and young women opportunities to develop an interest at an early age.
- Develop internship and mentor programs in high schools and colleges to combat stereotyping and encourage women to enter the field.
- Develop and encourage workplace mentor programs, flexible work options, and open communication for professional growth and retention.

> With time and effort, these actions may result in more women seeing themselves in long-term IT careers.

### References or Works Cited Page

Including any data you gathered through primary research, such as a survey you created and administered, interviews you conducted, or observational notes you took, you must cite the sources you consulted. These sources appear in the text of your proposal and in a bibliography at the end. The paragraphs in the previous section, including Shawn Krukowski's proposal, use APA documentation style. For more on documenting sources, see Index and Guide to Documentation, MLA Documentation and Format, and APA Documentation and Format.

### Abstract or Executive Summary

An abstract (or executive summary) summarizes your proposal. The purpose is to present information briefly and economically so that readers can decide whether they want to read further. Include your main points, but not the evidence.

Although an abstract or executive summary comes first in a proposal, it is advisable to write it after you have completed your proposal and are certain of your main points. The example below is the abstract from the proposal about women in IT.

> The purpose of this proposal is to raise awareness of the small number of women working in the information technology (IT) field, to examine the factors that contribute to discouraging women from entering IT, and to propose ways to draw women into the field and retain them. Although the IT field is growing, the number of women employed within it remains low. Women may be reluctant to pursue a career in IT because of stereotypes, few role models, and lack of encouragement. Women who have already established a career in IT report leaving the field for these reasons, as well as family responsibilities and lack of advancement. There are several potential ways to raise the number of women in IT. Encouraging interest in computer technology among girls in middle school and high school, recruiting college-age women to study IT, mentoring young professional women, and improving workplace flexibility will, over time, break down stereotypes and increase the number of women in the IT field.

## Peer Review: Getting Feedback from Readers

With a complete draft in hand, you may engage in **peer review** with your classmates, giving feedback to each other about the strengths and weaknesses of your drafts. For peer review within a class, your instructor may provide a list of questions or a form for you to complete as you work together.

### Conferencing in Writing Groups

Other people can provide feedback on your writing beside your classmates. If you have an on-campus writing center, it is well worth your time to make an online or in-person appointment with a tutor at any point in your writing process. You will get valuable comments and improve your ability to review your own writing.

Another way to get fresh eyes on your writing is to ask a friend or family member to read your draft. To get useful feedback, provide a list of questions or a form such as the one shown in Table 6.6 for them to complete as they read.

| Question for Reviewer | Comment or Suggestion |
|---|---|
| Does the introduction interest you in the problem? | |
| Can you find the thesis statement? Underline it for the writer. | |

**TABLE 6.6** Peer Review Questions

| Question for Reviewer | Comment or Suggestion |
|---|---|
| Does the thesis state the problem and suggest that a solution will be proposed? | |
| Can you identify a paragraph or paragraphs that define and explain a problem? | |
| Can you identify a paragraph or paragraphs that propose one or more solutions to the problem? | |
| Does the writer address possible objections to the solution or solutions? If not, are there objections the writer should consider? | |
| Does each paragraph start with a point stated in the writer's own words, and does that point relate to the thesis? Mark paragraphs that don't have a clear point. | |
| Does each paragraph support the main point of the paragraph with details and evidence, such as facts, statistics, or examples? Mark paragraphs that need more support and/or explanation. | |
| Does each paragraph end with analysis, in the writer's own words, that draws a conclusion? Mark paragraphs that need analysis. | |
| Is there a clear conclusion that makes a recommendation and connects to the thesis statement? | |
| Where do you get lost or confused? Mark anything that is unclear. | |
| Does the proposal flow from one point to the next? | |
| Does the essay have a clear, descriptive title? | |

**TABLE 6.6** Peer Review Questions

## Revising Your Proposal

A strong college paper is rarely written in a single draft, so build in time to revise your work. Take time with the comments you receive from your readers, and read your own work with a critical eye.



**FIGURE 6.8** Whether you choose to do all your work on a computer or do some by hand, writing is nonetheless recursive, and revising is a major part of the process. (credit: Geschäftsfrau sitzt am Laptop und schreibt auf Notizblock mit Stift by Ivan Radic/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

### Responding to Reviewers' Feedback

When you receive feedback from readers—whether from your instructor, your classmates, a writing tutor, or someone else—read each comment carefully to understand what the reader is communicating. Do your best not to become defensive, and be open to suggestions for improvement. Remind yourself that your readers are trying to help. As someone who hasn't thought about your proposal as much as you have, a new reader can often see strengths and weaknesses that you cannot. Analyze each response, and decide whether acting on a suggestion will make your writing better. Remember that you remain the author, and you make the final call on your writing.

As you read, keep track of the comments your readers make. Pay special attention to strengths and weaknesses that more than one reader identifies. Use that information to improve later assignments as well as your proposal.

### Revising on Your Own

The following revising strategies can help you read your draft critically and carefully:

- **Read your draft aloud.** Read the entire text from the beginning slowly and carefully, marking spots that need revision. Reading in this way allows you to see areas that need clarification, explanation, or development that you may have missed when you wrote the first draft. You can also have someone read your draft aloud to you.
- **Make a paragraph outline.** The most common unit of thought in writing is the paragraph, a group of sentences set off from other groups because they focus on a single idea. Writing a paragraph outline creates a map of your whole paper that can help you determine whether the organization is effective or needs changing. Number each paragraph and write a phrase describing its topic or focus. Check that each paragraph has a topic sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph.
- **Test your evidence.** Check whether each piece of evidence is factual and supports the main idea of the paragraph. Check that each piece of evidence is introduced, woven into your sentences, and cited.
- **Listen for your voice.** In most college papers, your language should sound like a real person. If your instructor requires a formal style for the assignment, the language should be objective and in **third-person point of view**.
- **Let go if you need to.** View change as good. Learn to let go of words, sentences, paragraphs, and maybe even your entire first draft. Sometimes the best way to revise is to start fresh. The knowledge you have built in writing a first draft will serve you well if you need to start over.
- **Create a new file for each revision.** Each time you revise a draft, save the new version with a new file name so that you don't lose your previous work. That way, you can return to an earlier version of your draft if you are not happy with the revision.
- **Edit and proofread.** When you are satisfied with the overall shape of your paper, reread it once again to check for sentence-level errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and source citations.

## Taking It Public: Publishing or Presenting Your Proposal

Publishing is a final step in the writing process. You may want to consider publishing your full proposal in your campus newspaper (or rewriting it as a letter to the editor) if your topic is related to your school. Or you may want to present it to an organization or committee on campus that can help you make your solution a reality. If your topic is related to the community in which you live, consider submitting your proposal to the local newspaper or presenting it at a city council meeting. (Note that if you decide to present your proposal orally, you'll need to figure out in advance the procedure for speaking or getting on a meeting agenda.) If your topic is more general and involves substantial research, consider submitting your proposal to one of these journals that publish undergraduate research work in all fields:

- American Journal of Undergraduate Research (https://openstax.org/r/americanjournalofugreasearch)
- *Midwest Journal of Undergraduate Research* (https://openstax.org/r/midwestjournalugreasearch)

- *PURSUE Undergraduate Research Journal* (https://openstax.org/r/pursuejournalugreasearch)

## 6.6 Editing Focus: Subject-Verb Agreement

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify subjects and verbs in sentences.
- Distinguish between subjects and verbs that agree and those that do not.

Readers of formal documents such as proposals expect writers to be aware of the conventions of grammar and punctuation. One such convention is **subject-verb agreement**.

The **subject** of a sentence names something. The predicate contains the **verb**, which expresses an action, an occurrence, or a state of being. The subject and verb in a sentence must agree. In standard English, "agreement" means that a singular subject must have a singular verb (*The bus leaves in five minutes*) and a plural subject must have a plural verb (*The buses leave in five minutes*). However, some English dialects omit the *-s* ending for singular verbs or use a singular verb with a plural subject: *The man ask for help. Property taxes was raised last year.*

Subject-verb agreement gets tricky in several sentence constructions, which are described below. To check for subject-verb agreement in your writing, proofread your final draft by finding each subject and verb. Then use the following questions to test whether the subject and verb agree. For more on subject-verb agreement, see Verbs.

***Is the subject compound?*** Two or more subjects joined by *and* take a plural verb in most sentences:

> Basketball and wrestling are my favorite sports.

However, when the parts of the subject form a single idea or unit, the verb is singular:

> Red beans and rice is my favorite meal.
>
> Ten dollars is enough money for lunch.

When compound subjects are joined by *or* or *nor,* the verb should agree with the word closest to it:

> Either your uncles or your mother remembers your grandmother's gumbo recipe.
>
> Either your mother or your uncles remember your grandmother's gumbo recipe.

***Do other words come between the subject and verb?*** The verb must agree with the subject even when words and phrases come between them:

> The price of these shoes at all stores is unbelievable.
>
> A suitcase containing sweaters, coats, and jackets was found in the street.

***Does the verb come before the subject?*** The subject and verb must agree even when the verb comes before the subject:

> Are Daniela and Juliana waiting at the restaurant?
>
> There were three dogs in the yard, all barking at the same time.
>
> In my pocket are a wallet and two pens.

***Is the subject an indefinite pronoun, such as* everyone*?*** Indefinite pronouns do not refer to specific people or things. Most indefinite pronouns take a singular verb, but not all.

The indefinite pronouns that take a singular verb include *anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, one, somebody, someone,* and *something.*

Everyone on the team practices all season.

Neither of the wide receivers feels ready for the season to end.

These indefinite pronouns take a plural verb: *both, few, many, others,* and *several.*

Several of the athletes on the team come from the same high school.

Both wide receivers have excellent stats.

A few indefinite pronouns take a singular or plural verb depending on whether the word they refer to is singular or plural. These include *all, any, enough, more, most, none,* and *some.* With these pronouns, use a singular or plural verb that fits the context of your sentence.

All of these students take at least one class in science or math. (plural)

Most of his work is original. (singular)

***Is the subject a collective noun?*** Collective nouns, such as *audience, band, class, crowd, family, group,* or *team,* can take a singular or a plural verb depending on the context. When group members act individually, use a plural verb. Writers often add the word *members* for clarity. When the group acts as a single unit, which is the most common construction, use a singular verb:

The band rehearses every Thursday.

The union (members) still disagree on the contract terms.

### Practice Subject-Verb Agreement

Select the correct verb to complete each sentence.

1. Under the table _____ his slippers and socks. (is, are)
2. The choir usually _____ in the auditorium. (meets, meet)
3. Some of the actors _____ two roles. (performs, perform)
4. Some of this song _____ familiar. (sounds, sound)
5. Either my brother or my sisters _____ the keys to the truck. (has, have)
6. _____ Whitney and her friend need a ride to the station? (does, do)
7. The situation concerning the reports and their authors _____ under investigation. (is, are)
8. Fifteen dollars and 40 cents _____ the amount of change she received. (is, are)

## 6.7 Evaluation: Conventions, Clarity, and Coherence

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Evaluate and implement formal feedback on all aspects of your writing.
- Reflect on another reader's response to the rhetorical choices you made as a writer.

When you have revised and edited your proposal, ask a friend or classmate to read and evaluate the final draft using the following rubric, which is similar to one your instructor might use. The rubric is designed to be a critical review based on the instruction and suggestions given in this chapter. At the end of the rubric is a section for your reader to offer additional comments. Read feedback closely, reflecting on suggestions and asking any questions you have. Then read your paper again, implementing the feedback you find helpful to revise.

## Rubric

| Narrowing a Problem | Focusing Questions | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: subject-verb agreement as discussed in Section 6.6. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The introduction sparks interest and leads expertly to the thesis. Problem-and- solution paragraphs have a central point and are developed fully; the recommendation is appropriate. Evidence is integrated smoothly and skillfully into sentences; transitions clearly connect ideas and evidence. The language is consistently clear and appropriate. | The proposal topic demonstrates a superior understanding of purpose. The proposal itself shows expert awareness of audience, context, and community expectations. The presentation is highly appropriate to the content. The writer's voice is consistently objective and trustworthy. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: subject-verb agreement as discussed in Section 6.6. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The introduction sparks interest and leads smoothly to the thesis. Problem-and- solution paragraphs have a central point and are developed adequately; the recommendation is appropriate. Evidence is integrated smoothly into most sentences; transitions make some connections among ideas and evidence. The language is usually clear and appropriate. | The proposal topic demonstrates understanding of purpose. The proposal itself shows awareness of audience, context, and community expectations. The presentation is appropriate to the content. The writer's voice is sufficiently objective and trustworthy. |
| **3**<br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: subject-verb agreement as discussed in Section 6.6. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The introduction is somewhat interesting; the transition to the thesis could be smoother. Problem-and-solution paragraphs have a central point but are marginally developed; the recommendation is fairly clear. Evidence is integrated into sentences inconsistently; the connections among ideas and evidence are inconsistent. Language may be confusing or inappropriate at times. | The proposal topic demonstrates some understanding of purpose. The proposal itself shows some awareness of audience, context, and community expectations. The presentation is mostly appropriate to the content. The writer's voice strays occasionally from objectivity and trustworthiness. |

TABLE 6.7

| Narrowing a Problem | Focusing Questions | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: subject-verb agreement as discussed in Section 6.6. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The introduction may be mildly interesting; the transition to the thesis is lacking. Problem-and-solution paragraphs often lack a central point and are poorly developed; the recommendation is weak. Evidence is poorly integrated into sentences, with few connections among ideas and evidence. The language is often confusing or inappropriate. | The proposal topic demonstrates a weak understanding of purpose. The proposal itself shows minimal awareness of audience, context, and community expectations. The presentation is somewhat appropriate to the content. The writer's voice is only occasionally objective and trustworthy. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: subject-verb agreement as discussed in Section 6.6. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The introduction may be mildly interesting; no discernible thesis is stated. Problem-and-solution paragraphs lack a central point and are undeveloped; the recommendation is either inappropriate or absent. Evidence is not integrated into sentences; there are no clear connections among ideas and the minimal amount of evidence that is present. The language is confusing or inappropriate. | The proposal topic demonstrates little or no understanding of purpose. The proposal itself shows little or no awareness of audience, context, and community expectations. The presentation is inappropriate to the content. The writer's voice is neither objective nor trustworthy. |

**TABLE 6.7**

## 6.8 Spotlight on … Technical Writing as a Career

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe technical writing as a career path.
- Explore the field of technical writing in greater depth.

If you like science and technical fields and you like to write, you may want to explore technical writing as a career path. Technical writers usually have a degree in English, journalism, or communication. Often, they also have knowledge, college coursework, or a degree in a specialized field such as computer science, engineering, medicine, biology, agriculture, and other technical fields, such as manufacturing, construction, welding, and plumbing; however, companies will usually train technical writers on the subject needed and the style in which the writers they employ need to write.



**FIGURE 6.9** Technical writers create a variety of content, including texts such as detailed procedural guides and various government publications. Though technical writers often face tight deadlines, they usually have flexibility in their working environments. (credit: "Woman working behind computer" by Pxhere/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

Although the work varies depending on the industry, organization, and specific position, technical writers typically perform the following tasks:

- **Create content.** Technical writers create an array of documents, such as product information, operating and assembly instructions, "how-to" and "owner's" manuals, technical documentation, business proposals (solicited and unsolicited), lists of frequently asked questions (FAQs), grant proposals, and journal articles. (For more on how to write a business proposal, which contains specific sections that often are not included in an academic proposal paper, see the OpenStax *Business Communications* text.)
- **Research.** Technical writers conduct research to gather the information they need to write accurate, professional, and helpful content.
- **Edit.** Technical writers edit and standardize content prepared by other writers in their organization.
- **Adapt content for multiple platforms.** Technical writers create paper-based and digital content, using text, graphics, images, sound, and video to be distributed across different platforms, including an organization's website and social media.

In addition, technical writers develop and use the following skills:

- **Writing.** Technical writers spend extended periods of time in front of a computer writing complicated information in clear and concise language.
- **Audience awareness.** Technical writers are highly aware of the audience for their writing. They plan, organize, and distribute the content they create with their readers, viewers, and users in mind.
- **Communication and collaboration.** Technical writers typically work on teams and collaborate with technical experts, coworkers, and clients.
- **Problem-solving.** Technical writers often need to figure out how something works in order to write documents their audience can understand.
- **Time management.** Technical writers often work on multiple projects with tight deadlines. Setting priorities to keep projects on track is a key skill.

To learn more about technical writing as a career, including average pay, employment outlook, and more, see the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics *Occupational Outlook Handbook (https://openstax.org/r/occupationaloutlookhandbook)*. You can also read job descriptions and search for internship opportunities at job sites such as Indeed, Monster, or Snagajob.

## 6.9 Portfolio: Reflecting on Problems and Solutions

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Reflect in writing on the development of your writing process.
- Reflect in writing on how the writing process affected your work.
- Reflect in writing on your objectivity as a writer.

As you complete your proposal, think critically about your writing process. Reflect on what you created from the first steps of discovering ideas to the last steps of writing and editing the final draft.

### Reflecting on Your Proposal

Respond to the following questions to reflect on your writing process for your proposal:

- How did you choose the problem you wrote about? Did you have to narrow or expand it?
- What methods did you use to gather ideas about the problem and possible solutions? What outside sources did you consult for information?
- How did you settle on your thesis? Did you rewrite it multiple times?
- What strategies did you use to organize the information for your proposal?
- What strategies did you use to develop paragraphs? What difficulties, if any, did you encounter?
- Were you satisfied with the recommendation(s) you made and how you ended the proposal?
- How challenging was it for you to adopt an objective stance? How did you adapt your language as you drafted and revised your proposal?
- How did input from peers and other readers affect your drafting and revising processes? What specific constructive criticism did you receive that helped you?
- In what ways was this proposal easier or harder to write than other papers you have written?
- What could you have done differently to make writing your proposal easier or more effective?

## Further Reading

These texts might be useful for you when writing proposals.

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# Evaluation or Review: Would You Recommend It?

7



**FIGURE 7.1** One of the most common types of reviews are film reviews. With their wide appeal, films are reviewed by professional critics and everyday people alike. The influential critics Gene Siskel (1946–1999) and Roger Ebert (1942–2013) would give "two thumbs up" to a film they both recommended, and the website Rotten Tomatoes takes the reviews of moviegoers to label a film "rotten" for bad or "fresh" for good. (credit: "Game Design Expo 2011 Open House" by Vancouver Film School/ flickr, CC BY 2.0)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**7.1** Thumbs Up or Down?
**7.2** Review Trailblazer: Michiko Kakutani
**7.3** Glance at Genre: Criteria, Evidence, Evaluation
**7.4** Annotated Student Sample: "Black Representation in Film" by Caelia Marshall
**7.5** Writing Process: Thinking Critically About Entertainment
**7.6** Editing Focus: Quotations
**7.7** Evaluation: Effect on Audience
**7.8** Spotlight on ... Language and Culture
**7.9** Portfolio: What the Arts Say About You


**INTRODUCTION** You have likely visited an unfamiliar city or neighborhood. When you aren't in familiar surroundings, what do you do if you want to find something to eat or do for fun? You probably open your phone and search on *Yelp*, *TripAdvisor*, *Google*, or another app or website dedicated to providing **film reviews**, or critical appraisals. Even when closer to home, many people, whether looking for a unique local restaurant, a new hiking trail, or an auto mechanic, may base their decisions on online reviews.

You may even have written a review of a product or service and posted it online yourself. In your review, you

shared your **evaluation**—your overall thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses—of the customer service, atmosphere, prices, quality, and so on. You decided on a set of **criteria**, or characteristics that determine a positive experience, and made your evaluation of the business according to those criteria and your experiences with similar products or services. Ultimately, you used the evidence you gathered from your interaction with the product or service to make an evaluation, or judgment. Maybe you used a rating system to give five stars or used the phrase "would not recommend" to make your negative judgment clear.

In performing these tasks, you engaged in the **review genre**, or form of writing, used to evaluate businesses, products, and art forms—including restaurants, health care, cell phones, cars, video games, books, films, and more. Throughout this chapter, you will learn about the characteristics of reviews and how to write them.

## 7.1 Thumbs Up or Down?

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the role of the review genre in personal, professional, and academic contexts.
- Articulate what differentiates the review genre from other genres.

Developing evaluation skills can help you in everyday life. Just about anything you buy or use will require you to evaluate a range of choices based on criteria that are important to you. For example, writing a good paper or making a good presentation necessitates locating and evaluating sources. See Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources for more information. You also may be asked to evaluate the effectiveness of your courses at the end of the semester. Or you may be asked to evaluate the work of your peers to help them revise their compositions. In the professional world, you may be asked to evaluate solutions to problems, employees you supervise, and in some cases, even yourself. Evaluating effectively makes you not only a better consumer but also a better student, employee, and possible supervisor.

### Using Evidence to Make a Judgment

When you review or evaluate something, the end result is your judgment about it. *Should your readers see the film? Are the food and service good at the restaurant? Should you use this source in your essay? Does your employee deserve a raise?* Making a clear judgment about the subject of your evaluation provides guidance for the actions that audience members may take on the basis of the information you provide.

Ultimately, your judgment is your opinion. For example, it is expected that some people will love *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) and others will not. In fact, because some people may disagree with you, reviews provide a perfect opportunity to use evidence to defend your judgment. You are probably familiar with some ways in which reviewers present their judgments about their subjects. Reviews on *Facebook*, *Google*, and *Yelp* have a star rating system (the more stars the better). The film review site *Rotten Tomatoes* shows the percentage of reviewers that recommend the film. The review site *The AV Club* rates films and TV episodes by using an A-to-F grading scale.

While it is important to present your overall judgment in a review, a simple "I liked it" or "I didn't like it" is not enough to help your audience make their own judgments. It is also important to explain *why* you arrived at the judgment you did. Think about some of the titles of reviews you have seen online. One might simply read "DIRTY!" about an experience staying in a hotel. Other reviews might present a **thesis**, or debatable main idea, as a title, such as *Slate* culture critic Willa Paskin's "In Its Immensely Satisfying Season Finale, *Game of Thrones* Became the Show It Had Always Tried Not to Be." In both examples, the title provides an overall reason for the author's judgment.

Although a simple rating might be effective when reviewing a business, reviews of creative works such as films, TV shows, visual arts, and books are more complex. Critics —professional writers who review creative works—like Willa Paskin try to review their subjects and at the same time analyze their subjects' cultural significance. In addition to providing an overall judgment, critics guide audiences on how to view and

understand a work within a larger cultural context. Critics provide this guidance by answering questions such as these:

- In what genre would I place this work? Why?
- What has this work contributed to its genre that other works have not?
- How does the creator (or creators) of this work show they understand the culture (audience) that will view the work?
- How does this work reflect the time in which it was created?

People look to critics not only to judge the overall quality of a work but also to gain insights about it.

Other writing genres feature characteristics similar to the review genre, using criteria and evidence to analyze and sometimes evaluate the effectiveness of written or visual text: Rhetorical Analysis: Interpreting the Art of Rhetoric, Print or Textual Analysis: What You Read, and Image Analysis: Writing About What You See.



## 7.2 Trailblazer

### Review Trailblazer: Michiko Kakutani

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read for inquiry, learning, and critical thinking.
- Make judgments about the role of credibility and bias in the review genre.
- Identify characteristics of review writing, including evaluation criteria and attention to historical context.




**FIGURE 7.2** Michiko Kakutani (https://openstax.org/r/MichikoKakutani) is the former New York Times chief book critic. (credit: "New York Times" by mike/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

*"Think about [reviewing] as a form of reporting . . . with the addition of your . . . carefully considered opinion."*

#### Consistently Objective

Born in New Haven, Connecticut, Michiko Kakutani (b. 1955) is an American author and a literary critic. She graduated from Yale University in 1976 and began her career with *The Washington Post* as a reporter. She moved to *Time* magazine in 1977, then in 1979 began working for *The New York Times*, first as a reporter and then as a literary critic. She is probably best known for the position she held as chief book critic at *The New*

*York Times* until her retirement in 2017. Highly respected—and often feared—as a critic, Kakutani won a Pulitzer Prize for criticism in 1998. Her book reviews for *The New York Times* were highly influential, with some reviews creating as much discussion and debate as the book being reviewed. American authors Jonathan Franzen (https://openstax.org/r/JonathanFranzen) (b. 1959) and Norman Mailer (https://openstax.org/r/NormanMailer) (1923–2007), for instance, feuded publicly with Kakutani after she published negative reviews of their works.

Kakutani is also known as an author, having published two books since her retirement: *The Death of Truth: Notes on Falsehood in the Age of Trump* (2018) and *Ex Libris: 100+ Books to Read and Reread* (2020)—a collection of essays about books that have been influential and illuminating.

One reason for Kakutani's effectiveness as a reviewer might be the air of mystery she maintained in the eyes of authors and publishers. Unafraid to say exactly what she thought about a literary work—and seemingly undaunted by the reactions of angry writers—she would praise an author for one book and pan the author's next one. Shunning industry events, she curried neither access nor favor with authors and publishers and rarely gave interviews. Her refusal to get too close to authors and publishers added to her credibility and objectivity, possibly allowing her more freedom to review books honestly.

Instead of a simple thumbs-up or thumbs-down, Kakutani would make her evaluations clear in more subtle and comprehensive ways. For example, she referred to former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) James Comey (https://openstax.org/r/JamesComey)'s (b. 1960) book *A Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies, and Leadership* (2018) as "absorbing" and the characters in Jamaican author Marlon James (https://openstax.org/r/MarlonJames)'s (b. 1970) book *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* (2019) as "compelling." Instead of a formula or template, Kakutani sought to read books as a reader, rather than a critic, would read and understand them. She tended to pick examples of what she liked and disliked and what she found notable about the book, without preconceived notions of what it "should" be. It might be fair to say that Kakutani's evaluation criteria were never clear-cut; more often they were implied rather than explicit. However, decades of experience imbued Kakutani with historical knowledge and genre expertise that have provided the backbone of her reviews.

### Discussion Questions

1. How does Michiko Kakutani establish her credibility as a reviewer? In what ways does she demonstrate her knowledge of the subject she is reviewing?
2. What evaluation criteria does Michiko Kakutani use to review a work?
3. How does Michiko Kakutani avoid appearing biased? Do you think she is successful in her attempts?
4. How would you respond to a writer who thought you reviewed their work unfairly?

## 7.3 Glance at Genre: Criteria, Evidence, Evaluation

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify and define common characteristics, mediums, key terms, and features of the review genre.
- Identify criteria and evidence to support reviews of different primary sources.

Reviews vary in style and content according to the subject, the writer, and the medium. The following are characteristics most frequently found in reviews:

- **Focused subject:** The subject of the review is specific and focuses on one item or idea. For example, a review of all Marvel Cinematic Universe movies could not be contained in the scope of a single essay or published review not only because of length but also because of the differences among them. Choosing one specific item to review—a single film or single topic across films, for instance—will allow you to provide a thorough evaluation of the subject.

- **Judgment or evaluation:** Reviewers need to deliver a clear judgment or evaluation to share with readers their thoughts on the subject and why they would or would not recommend it. An evaluation can be direct and explicit, or it can be indirect and subtle.
- **Specific evidence:** All reviews need specific evidence to support the evaluation. Typically, this evidence comes in the form of quotations and vivid descriptions from the primary source, or subject of the review. Reviewers often use **secondary sources**—works about the primary source— to support their claims or provide context.
- **Context:** Reviewers provide context, such as relevant historical or cultural background, current events, or short biographical sketches, that help readers understand both the primary source and the review.
- **Tone:** Writers of effective reviews tend to maintain a professional, unbiased tone—attitude toward the subject. Although many reviewers try to avoid sarcasm and dismissiveness, you will find these elements present in professional reviews, especially those in which critics pan the primary source.

## Key Terms

These are some key terms to know and use when writing a review:

- **Analysis:** detailed examination of the parts of a whole or of the whole itself.
- **Connotation:** implied feelings or thoughts associated with a word. Connotations can be positive or negative. Reviewers often use words with strong positive or negative connotations that support their praise or criticism. For example, a writer may refer to a small space positively as "cozy" instead of negatively as "cramped."
- **Criteria:** standards by which something is judged. Reviewers generally make their evaluation criteria clear by listing and explaining what they are basing their review on. Each type of primary source has its set of standards, some or all of which reviewers address.
- **Critics:** professional reviewer who typically publishes reviews in well-known publications.
- **Denotation:** the literal or dictionary definition of a word.
- **Evaluation:** judgment based on analysis.
- **Fandom:** community of admirers who follow their favorite works and discuss them online as a group.
- **Genre:** broad category of artistic compositions that share similar characteristics such as form, subject matter, or style. For example, horror, suspense, and drama are common film and literary genres. Hip hop and reggae are common music genres.
- **Medium:** way in which a work is created or delivered (DVD, streaming, book, vinyl, etc.). Works can appear in more than one medium.
- **Mode:** sensory method through which a person interacts with a work. Modes include linguistic, visual, audio, spatial, and gestural.
- **Primary Sources:** in the context of reviewing, the original work or item being reviewed, whether a film, book, performance, business, or product. In the context of research, primary sources are items of firsthand, or original, evidence, such as interviews, court records, diaries, letters, surveys, or photographs.
- **Recap:** summary of an individual episode of a television series.
- **Review:** genre that evaluates performances, exhibitions, works of art (books, movies, visual arts), services, and products
- **Secondary source:** source that contains the analysis or synthesis of someone else, such as opinion pieces, newspaper and magazine articles, and academic journal articles.
- **Subgenre:** category within a genre. For example, subgenres of drama include various types of drama: courtroom drama, historical/costume drama, and family drama.

## Establishing Criteria

All reviewers and readers alike rely on evidence to support an evaluation. When you review a primary source, the evidence you use depends on the subject of your evaluation, your audience, and how your audience will use your evaluation. You will need to determine the criteria on which to base your evaluation. In some cases, you

will also need to consider the genre and subgenre of your subject to determine evaluation criteria. In your review, you will need to clarify your evaluation criteria and the way in which specific evidence related to those criteria have led you to your judgment. Table 7.1 illustrates evaluation criteria in four different primary source types.

| Smartphone | Academic Source | Film | Employment |
|---|---|---|---|
| Camera quality | Author's credentials | Writing/script | Punctuality |
| Battery life | Publication's reputation | Acting | Ability to meet goals |
| Screen resolution | Sources cited | Special effects | Ability to work on a team |
| Screen size | Timeliness of research (up to date) | Sound/music | Communication skills |
| Durability | Relevance to subject | Directing | Professional development |
| Phone reception | Quality of writing | Subject | Competence in subject area |

**TABLE 7.1** Evaluation criteria across subjects

Even within the same subject, however, evaluation criteria may differ according to the genre and subgenre of the film. Audiences have different expectations for a horror movie than they do for a romantic comedy, for example. For your subject, select the evaluation criteria on the basis of your knowledge of audience expectations. Table 7.2 shows how the evaluation criteria might be different in film reviews of different genres.

| Horror | Action | Romantic Comedy | Drama |
|---|---|---|---|
| Makeup | Special effects | Jokes | Script/writing |
| Cinematography | Stunt work | Conflict/resolution | Acting |
| Type of horror depicted (jump scares, gore, etc.) | Pace of story | Chemistry between main characters | Accuracy/believability of plot |
| Music | Relatability of "hero" | Satisfaction/happy ending | Scenery/setting/ costumes |

**TABLE 7.2** Evaluation criteria across film genres

## Providing Objective Evidence

You will use your established evaluation criteria to gather specific evidence to support your judgment. Remember, too, that criteria are fluid; no reviewer will always use the same criteria for all works, even those in the same genre or subgenre.

Whether or not the criteria are unique to the particular task, a reviewer must look closely at the subject and note specific details from the primary source or sources. If you are evaluating a product, look at the product specifications and evaluate product performance according to them, noting details as evidence. When evaluating a film, select either quotations from the dialogue or detailed, vivid descriptions of scenes. If you are evaluating an employee's performance, observe the employee performing their job and take notes. These are examples of primary source evidence: raw information you have gathered and will analyze to make a judgment.

Gathering evidence is a process that requires you to look closely at your subject. If you are reviewing a film, you certainly will have to view the film several times, focusing on only one or two elements of the evaluation criteria at a time. If you are evaluating an employee, you might have to observe that employee on several occasions and in a variety of situations to gather enough evidence to complete your evaluation. If you are evaluating a written argument, you might have to reread the text several times and annotate or highlight key evidence. It is better to gather more evidence than you think you need and choose the best examples rather than try to base your evaluation on insufficient or irrelevant evidence.

### Modes of Reviews



Not all reviews have to be written; sometimes a video or an audio review can be more engaging than a written review. *YouTube* has become a popular destination for project reviews, creating minor celebrities out of popular reviewers. However, a written review of a movie might work well because the reviewer can provide just enough information to avoid spoiling the movie, whereas some reviews require more visual interaction to understand.

Take reviewer Doug DeMuro (https://openstax.org/r/DougDeMuro)'s popular *YouTube* channel. DeMuro reviews cars—everything from sports cars to sedans to vintage cars. Car buyers need to interact with a car to want to buy it, and *YouTube* provides the next best thing by giving viewers an up-close look.

Technology is another popular type of review on *YouTube*. YouTube creators like Marques Brownlee (https://openstax.org/r/MarquesBrownlee) discuss rumors about the next Apple iPhone or Samsung Galaxy and provide unboxing videos to record their reactions to the latest phones and laptops. Like DeMuro's viewers, Brownlee's audience can get up close to the product. Seeing a phone in Brownlee's hands helps audience members imagine it in their hands.

On the other hand, reviews don't always need to be about products you can touch, as Paul Lucas (https://openstax.org/r/PaulLucas) demonstrates on his *YouTube* channel "Wingin' It!" Lucas reviews travel experiences (mainly airlines and sometimes trains), evaluating the service of airlines around the world and in various ticket classes.

What do these reviews have in common? First, they are all in the video medium. *YouTube*'s medium is video; a podcast's medium is audio. They also share a mode. *YouTube*'s mode is viewing or watching; a podcast's mode is listening.

These examples all use the genre conventions of reviews discussed in this chapter. The reviewers present a clear evaluation: *should you buy this car, phone, or airline ticket?* They base their evaluation on evidence that fits a set of evaluation criteria. Doug DeMuro might evaluate a family sedan on the basis of seating, trunk storage, and ride comfort. Marques Brownlee might judge a phone on the basis of battery life, design, and camera quality. Paul Lucas might grade an airline on service, schedules, and seat comfort. While the product or service being reviewed might be different, all three reviewers use similar frameworks.

## 7.4 Annotated Student Sample: "Black Representation in Film" by Caelia Marshall

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Recognize key terms and features of review writing.
- Explain how conventions of the review genre are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Analyze relationships between ideas and patterns of organization in written texts.

### Introduction

In her essay "The Black Experience: What We See and Hear in Film," Caelia Marshall reviews *Rear Window* (1954), *Number 37* (2018), and *Black Panther* (2018), looking at them through the context of representation of

Black people in film. She uses some traditional film-review criteria but focuses primarily on the films' social and historical contexts. Marshall presents her judgment and provides specific evidence from primary and secondary sources.

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### What We See and What We Hear

The global film industry, worth nearly $50 billion dollars (Watson), is a powerhouse of social influence, affecting people's perceptions, ideologies, values, and language on both conscious and subconscious levels. Phrases such as "Winter is coming" infiltrate the modern lexicon in areas of public life ranging from advertising to politics. Problematically, however, highly popular and influential shows like the HBO series *Game of Thrones* lack diversity, unapologetically perpetuating the dominant White cultural narrative. For the most part, audiences catapult shows that portray such skewed narratives to popularity, failing to notice or care about the lack of diversity. Through both production and consumption, the lack of diversity that exists in the entertainment industry works as an arm of oppression, complicit in keeping Black characters and Black stories hidden from view. This lack of representation of Black people and culture in film and television is more dangerous than the stereotypical racist representations of mammies, servants, and criminals in the past because it allows audiences to dismiss Black experiences entirely, making these audience members less empathetic to diverse points of view.

***Purpose.*** *Marshall achieves two important objectives for the opening paragraph of her essay: getting her audience's attention and presenting her thesis. Marshall begins with an important statistic (the film industry is worth nearly $50 billion globally) and uses a specific example of a popular expression from a television show with which the audience is likely familiar ("Winter is coming" from the HBO series Game of Thrones) to illustrate the power and widespread influence of film and TV on American culture.*

***Thesis.*** *Marshall then points out the lack of diversity in Game of Thrones and in film and TV more generally that leads to her thesis: This lack of diversity is harmful to society ("This lack of representation of Black people and culture . . . diverse points of view.").*

> Like many movies of the early and mid-20th century, director Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rear Window* (1954) lacks authentic Black characters.

***Criteria.*** *Marshall elaborates on her evaluation criteria: the lack of authentic Black characters.*

> In *Rear Window,* the Black experience is evident only when the presumably White female babysitter character talks for a few brief seconds to the police chief, whose children she watches, from an off-screen position using slurred, stereotypical southern Black dialect, with incorrect grammar. Dr. James Ivy calls this interjection the "audio version of blackface."

> Blackface is an American theatrical minstrel practice that dates to the mid to late 1800s, in which White traveling musicians painted their faces black and for comic effect mimicked the singing and dancing of slaves.

***Definition of Terms.*** *Marshall clarifies the terms she uses; "audio version of blackface" is taken from a secondary source, whereas "mammy" reflects Marshall's own interpretation.*

> In this scene, the babysitter responds to her White male employer in the voice of the stereotypical mammy—a Black nursemaid who took care of White children, particularly in the south. Hitchcock appears to offer the scene as comic relief, expecting audiences to laugh during a tense confrontation between protagonist L. B. Jefferies and the police chief. The fact that Hitchcock calls upon this stereotypical minstrel tradition to create a moment of comedy illustrates the inherent racism of a script that uses the Black experience as a punch line rather than attempts to reflect the Black experience as it is. Somehow, Hitchcock manages both to exclude Black people from his film and to make use of Black stereotypes. However, as insidious as Hitchcock's choice to call upon this stereotype for comic effect may be, it is not as dangerous as his exclusion of Black characters. This exclusion has the effect of erasing the authentic Black experience altogether, making it meaningless within the discourse of popular culture. Yet Hitchcock himself was rewarded for his efforts, earning critical praise and Academy Award nominations for his masterful ability to create suspense in this film, regardless of his shoddy characterization of racial issues in 1950s America.

***Evidence.*** *In this paragraph, Marshall highlights another specific example of the lack of diversity in film. With this example, she goes into more detail to illustrate the harmful stereotyping and exclusion of Black characters.*

> While some may argue that as a White filmmaker Hitchcock does not have a responsibility to reflect the Black experience accurately in his films, their argument falls apart with Hitchcock's use of "audio blackface." Hitchcock accepts the responsibility of including the Black perspective, but he fails in his presentation, and the film suffers for it when Hitchcock goes for a laugh at the expense of the Black community. Instead of elevating Black culture and experiences through his use of Black characters, he portrays their point of view as invalid and perpetuates their oppression. Hitchcock doesn't just ignore the existence of Black people, he uses them to promote a racist agenda.

***Addressing a Counterclaim.*** *Marshall admits some people might argue that Hitchcock is not writing a social drama and thus accept his exclusion of Black characters. But she then counters this opinion.*

> This moral failure becomes clear when *Rear Window* is contrasted with its counterpart *Number 37*, a remake of the original as envisioned by South African writer and director Nosipho Dumisa. In *Number 37*, the disabled spectator, Randal, is confined to his apartment in a notoriously dangerous area of post-apartheid South Africa when he notices a criminal murder a cop. He descends into a voyeuristic frenzy as he uses the crime to figure out how to resolve his debt to a former gang mate. By adding layers of violence, an African setting, and the inclusion of a paralyzed Black protagonist, Dumisa creates a film that transcends the plot to comment on the social narrative of poor Black people following the end of apartheid in South Africa.

***Thesis.*** *This paragraph introduces the film Number 37 to illustrate the thesis that underrepresentation of Black people in film is harmful to society.*

***Evidence.*** *Marshall briefly summarizes plot events so that readers unfamiliar with the film know something about the plot and how it differs from Hitchcock's Rear Window. She also provides information about the main character and setting but indicates that these are not her focus, as she mentions that the film "transcends" plot. The implication is that it transcends certain other film criteria as well.*

> While both Hitchcock's Jefferies and Dumisa's Randal make light of a murder, Randal's response is mired in his social situation as a Black man in South Africa, whereas Jefferies's response is mired in his social situation as a privileged White man in America. Dumisa's film reflects a cultural depth that Hitchcock compromises for a joke. She understands that "you can entertain while still teaching the audience something" (Obenson).

***Structure.*** *Marshall uses this paragraph to contrast the original Rear Window with a remake of the film. Comparing and contrasting similar works is an effective technique for illustrating a point when the purpose is to evaluate a work.*

***Criteria.*** *As criteria for comparison, she chooses characters, plot elements, and most important here, social context. In her comparison, she uses a relevant secondary source, as she does in the paragraph that follows and introduces*

*Black Panther.*

> Malian writer, filmmaker, and cultural theorist Manthia Diawara describes the "manner in which black spectators may . . . resist the persuasive elements of Hollywood narrative" as a "challenge to . . . spectatorship and the aesthetics of Afro-American independent cinema" (845). The 2018 movie *Black Panther* may be understood as an answer to Diawara's challenge. Skillfully directed by African American screenwriter Ryan Coogler, *Black Panther* is an example of the aesthetic beauty and financial success that art can achieve when not only are Black characters cast but also when Black storylines are expressed by the people who have had firsthand experiences.

***Criteria.*** *Using a genre criterion of directing, Marshall notes director Coogler's "skill."*

***Criteria.*** *Marshall praises the performance of American actor Chadwick Boseman (1976–2020).*

***Social Context.*** *She also quotes from a secondary source as an opportunity to respond to and engage with the scholar quoted.*

> *Black Panther* chronicles the origin of the Marvel superhero Black Panther—played compellingly by Chadwick Boseman—who is descended from a line of black panthers living in the fictional African region of Wakanda. Wakanda is technologically advanced because of its rich store of a fictional metal called Vibranium. While the Wakandans have benefited from Vibranium, they have kept it from the outside world by cloaking their society in the stereotypical poverty expected of Africans by Western nations. In *Black Panther*, this reversal of the roles of the advanced and the underprivileged serves as a critique of the historical actions of Western nations.

***Social Context.*** *In the paragraph above and the one that follows, the author focuses on social context. She wants readers to see the possibilities in Black Panther when Black people's authentic stories are shown to a wider audience.*

> Although mythological and thus fictional, the movie features many references to African American history and the African American experience: slavery and the slave trade, colonization, the exploitation of Africa, civil rights, Black militancy, systemic poverty, and the loss of Black men—especially fathers—to violence and incarceration. These topics are usually whitewashed or ignored in popular cinema because of their graphic and racially charged nature.

***Comparison to Other Films.*** *Marshall broadens the scope of her statement by bringing in the problem as it relates to other films.*

> However, because diverse audiences viewed and welcomed this film, the movie registered as valuable not only for the people it reflected but for non-Black people as well. This effect supports Dumisa's argument that Black art has the power both to entertain and to instruct when representation is not only present but authentic.

> The film reinvents the representation of Black people in American cinema through its characterization of Black superheroes. Although the villain of *Black Panther,* Erik Killmonger, is Black, the character is not the stereotypical Black criminal of movies past. Despite his last name and the negative connotation of *monger*, this intense and angry antihero, played by Michael B. Jordan, captures the sympathy of viewers.

***Connotation.*** *Marshall explains Killmonger's name. Monger, meaning "vendor," has a negative connotation, implying dealing aggressively in an undesirable product.*

> While young, Killmonger loses his Black militant father who was living in the United States as a Wakandan emissary. Killmonger's anger and his fight against Wakanda represent an effort to take back what he views as his father's loss—the ability to arm poor Black people throughout the world in a fight for civil rights. Although his anger may be misguided, viewers are able to understand its source and empathize. If the Killmonger villain were purely evil or unintelligent, he would have embodied the criminal stereotype who has appeared in a lot of movies. In this film, however, he becomes someone who cannot find a positive outlet for his Black rage, something that is relatable to many Black people today.

***Evidence Based on Criteria.*** *Using specific details from the film, Marshall illustrates how Black Panther "reinvents the representation of Black people in American cinema." She describes Killmonger in detail and connects those traits to her point that the character represents a villain whose motivations are relatable to the audience.*

> When the Black Panther, T'Challa, reclaims Wakanda from Killmonger at the end of the movie, he shows his cousin Killmonger grace by inviting him back into the Wakandan community, an ideal that is characteristic of the Black communal experience. T'Challa offers Killmonger a place in their society, which Killmonger rejects, lamenting, "Just bury me in the ocean with my ancestors who jumped ships, 'cause they knew death was better than bondage." Killmonger's frustration mirrors the modern-day frustration with the exploitation and degradation of Black people in all aspects of life. The incarceration of Black citizens, primarily men, is the simple answer to the complex problem that crime is often the manifestation of poverty, social oppression, and systemic racism, and even Wakanda is not immune from this problem. In this sense, Wakanda is not a utopia, but a working model of purposeful Black agency within the international community.

***Evidence.*** *Marshall continues her analysis with more specific examples, this time quoting from her primary sources to illustrate her point.*

> A systematic form of racism is perpetuated by producers and filmmakers intentionally distorting or excluding the Black experience from art. These racist intentions have the effect of teaching, or brainwashing, audiences to dismiss Black perspectives, thus contributing further to the racist structure of the film industry. When films leave out Black characters, they create a narrative reality in which Black people are not essential. This situation translates into a physical reality where Black experiences and stories are not seen as profitable or valid by the public.

***Connotation and denotation****. Marshall uses words with strong connotations: short-sighted and narrow, when used in certain contexts (relating to a vision problem and to width). These words take on negative connotations when placed in a cultural context. So do words like brainwashing, which has negative connotations as opposed to a more positive or neutral word like teaching or instilling. Diverse, however, has positive connotations in this same context, despite its neutral denotation of "varied."*

> However, when the short-sighted and narrowly representative *Rear Window* is contrasted with the diverse and highly successful *Black Panther*, the act of dismissing Black characters appears outdated and not economically necessary. Yet the practice of exclusion continues in many high-budget films because Hollywood is still controlled largely by the White male point of view. These male executives have a stake in producing films that support and facilitate the status quo of the perpetuation of a narrative that they can relate to. They have no reason to emphasize story lines that compete with or threaten their authority unless audiences become critically aware of the power of media to legitimize and delegitimize social groups. Audiences must "resist the persuasive elements of Hollywood narrative" (Diawara 845) with their pocketbooks.

***Conclusion.*** *Marshall ends with a rewording of her thesis, as well as a summary of her evidence. She issues a call to action through a quotation from one of her secondary sources.*

## Works Cited

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Watson, Amy. "Film Industry—Statistics and Facts." *Statista*, 10 Nov. 2020, www.statista.com/topics/964/film/.

***Citation:*** *Marshall uses MLA style to document her sources.*

### Discussion Questions

1. What criteria does Caelia Marshall use to evaluate the films she reviews in her essay?
2. How does Marshall provide background and context behind the films *Rear Window and Black Panther*?
3. Why has Marshall chosen to focus on criteria other than those listed in Figure 7.3? Do you think her choice is effective? Why or why not?
4. How does Marshall's use of secondary sources help support or hinder her review of the films she discusses?
5. What are the advantages or disadvantages of films with characters to whom the audience can or cannot relate? Which do you prefer? Why?

## 7.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically About Entertainment

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Compose a review based on a thesis supported by analysis and evaluation.
- Demonstrate the steps of the writing process: invention, drafting, revising, and editing.
- Participate in the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.
- Give and act on productive feedback to works in progress.
- Adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities.

Throughout this chapter, you have learned about the review genre. You have learned that reviews evaluate a variety of items. In addition to books, films, and TV shows, people look to reviews to buy cars, choose restaurants, hire plumbers, and more. In this section, you will have the opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the review genre by composing your own review.

### Summary of Assignment: Review of Primary Media Source

Write a review of a specific film, book, TV series, podcast, play, or video game that you think contributes something significant to the genre and to the culture at large. Show how the subject—the primary source—of your review illustrates something compelling or exceptional about a particular idea or theme common to the genre. For example, the CW series *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* (2015–2019) is a romantic comedy that eschews and even satirizes traditional romantic comedy tropes such as the "grand gesture," doing something out of love for someone. Use specific evidence from your primary source to support a central idea, or thesis. In an essay of about 1,200 to 1,500 words, provide an overall judgment about your subject and support it with evidence from the primary source and from secondary sources if applicable. In addition, explore how your specific source has contributed something significant to its genre. In other words, *why is this subject interesting, different, or worthy of analysis?* Be sure to demonstrate awareness of your source's cultural and historical context as well. For example, if your review is about a romantic comedy, provide relevant information about the history, conventions, or expectations of that genre. Think about and explain the ways your topic adheres to or breaks from audience expectations.

***Another Lens 1.*** Create a three-to-five-minute podcast review of a specific film (https://openstax.org/r/film),

book (https://openstax.org/r/book), TV series, album (https://openstax.org/r/album), podcast, play, or video game. *How does the subject of your review illustrate something interesting or unique about a particular idea or theme common to the genre?* Integrate specific evidence from the primary source and secondary sources, if applicable, to support a main idea, or thesis.

To record your podcast review, use either a simple recording method, such as the voice memo app on your smartphone, or something more sophisticated, such as *Garage Band* or *iMovie.* To become more familiar with this genre of reviewing, listen to one or two of the examples linked above. Note how this genre is somewhat different from an academic essay. For example, the speaker's voice is more conversational and engages the audience auditorily by stressing particular words or syllables. In your review podcast, take advantage of the opportunity to present a more informal tone than you might use in an academic essay. Podcast hosts are often successful because of their personality and ability to connect with their audience. Draft a script for your review podcast that reflects your personality and use of language, rather than formal language. For example, use contractions, first- or second-person pronouns, and appropriate slang.

Finally, to maximize the effect of your podcast, consider incorporating short clips from the subject of your review. Upload your podcast review to SoundCloud (https://openstax.org/r/SoundCloud) and share your review with the class. For more direction on public speaking, consult Scripting for the Public Forum: Writing to Speak.

***Another Lens 2.*** Instead of a straightforward review of a single primary source, review several sources in the same genre, as Caelia Marshall has done in her essay. Or compare a film to the book on which it is based and evaluate it. Select your sources from films, books, television programs, video games, or any other form of entertainment, focusing your review essay on a single area, such as social context, character development, or screenplay vs. original text. Choose other genre-specific evaluation criteria as well, and address them in your essay, as Marshall does. Use specific evidence from your primary sources and secondary sources, as needed, to support your main idea, or thesis. In other words, *why is this source interesting, different, or worthy of analysis?*

### Quick Launch: Developing Evaluative Criteria

To write an effective review, you need clear and relevant evaluation criteria. To help you establish your review criteria, fill in a table similar to Table 7.3 by following these steps:

1. Write the name of your primary source.
2. In the left-hand column, write the genre category to which your topic belongs (horror, action, biography, etc.).
3. Under the genre, brainstorm as many characteristics of the genre as you can.
4. In the right-hand column, write "Examples."
5. Brainstorm as much evidence from your primary source as you can think of.
6. Create a second table called "Subgenre." For example, if your topic is a horror film, some possible subgenres might be "ghost horror," "monster horror," or "slasher horror." Add a colon after *Subgenre*, and write the subgenre type.
7. Label the left-hand column "Subgenre Elements" and the right-hand column "How to Evaluate."
8. In the Subgenre Elements column, brainstorm for as many characteristics of the subgenre as you can. You can use some relevant characteristics from step 3, but try to focus on unique characteristics of the subgenre. For example, what makes a horror film about a ghost, such as *The Grudge* (2020), different from a slasher horror film, such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003)?
9. In the right-hand column, develop questions to assess characteristics.
10. Select three to five genre characteristics with the most evidence, and focus on them as you look closely at your primary sources. Take notes and gather evidence to support your evaluation.

| Primary Source: *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003 Film) | |
|---|---|
| **Genre Characteristics: Horror** | **Examples** |
| Script/plot: Scary story | Presented as a "true" story, scary ending |
| Characters: "Monster" or "thing" that kills | Leatherface, a masked killer who wields a chainsaw |
| Characters: Victims, usually multiple | Young people stranded on a road trip |
| Setting: Rural Texas | Creepy locations with potential for violence |
| Special effects: (gore, jump scares, etc.) | Gore: blood and guts |
| Sound effects: Screaming | Many victims and screaming from road trippers |
| Cinematography: "Gross" or "creepy" images | Meat plant, creepy house |
| **Subgenre: Slasher Horror** | |
| **Subgenre Elements** | **How to Evaluate** |
| One deranged killer | Is the killer believable in the moment? Does the killer scare me? |
| One weapon characteristic to the killer | Is the weapon creative? Does it fit the killer's character? |
| Killer with a backstory | Does the backstory tell me why the killer is deranged? Does it convince me it's the reason they kill? |
| Killer hunts the victims | Victims' terror should be convincing: realistic screaming, fear, etc. |
| Creepy images: setting, props, etc. need to be realistic | Are they realistic? How? How do the images add to the sense of fear? |

**TABLE 7.3** Genre and subgenre evaluation criteria

**Evaluation Criteria for *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*:**

**The Killer (Leatherface):** How effective is he at scaring the audience? How does he scare the audience (backstory, appearance, weapon, etc.)?

**Images/Setting:** How do the filmmakers create a creepy setting? How does the setting add to the fear?

**The Victims:** How do they project fear (screaming, etc.)? How effective or convincing is their fear?

## Drafting: Thesis Statement, Analysis, and Supporting Examples

After you have selected a topic and decided on the evaluation criteria, spend some time looking closely at your primary source (the film, TV show, book, etc. you have chosen to review). With these criteria in mind, view/read/listen to your primary source. Take notes on how your selected evaluation criteria apply to your source. When you come across strong and relevant examples, write down vivid, detailed descriptions of the scene and quote applicable dialogue. By looking closely at your primary source and taking notes now, you will have solid and specific examples to illustrate your points later when you draft your review.

Also, while you are looking closely at your primary source, think about the features that appeal to you. *Is there*

*a character that is particularly interesting? Do you see an interesting viewpoint on a theme or idea? Is the writing or the use of language interesting, different, or clever? How does it keep your attention or provide something unexpected?* The answers to these questions can lead you to your overall evaluation and thesis.

### Thesis

Use a graphic organizer like Table 7.4 to plan your draft. Then, you will use the notes you took earlier to help you brainstorm for the main points that support the thesis and provide specific, concrete evidence.

| Primary Source | Title of work(s) being reviewed |
|---|---|
| **Angle of Analysis** | Overall way you will organize your review: aspects of the source you will analyze or criteria on which you plan to focus.<br>Example: female romantic-comedy leads. |
| **Filters** | Ways to narrow your focus, such as time, place, cultural context, comparison to similar sources.<br>Examples: the female lead in *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* versus other female romantic comedy leads or how the 1961 film version of *A Raisin in the Sun* depicts Lena Younger as a "tyrant." |
| **Main Argument** | The idea you'll use to draft a working thesis; must be a debatable point about your topic.<br>Example: Rebecca Bunch, the female lead in *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, is flawed and not virtuous. Her shortcomings make her character more engaging than traditional romantic-comedy female leads. |
| **Thesis** | One sentence (sometimes two) that clearly states your argument.<br>Example: Although most romantic-comedy female leads are virtuous and have admirable character traits, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend's* Rebecca Bunch is flawed and sometimes unsympathetic; however, the audience still roots for her to find love. |

**TABLE 7.4** Preliminary drafting plan sample

### Planning the Main Points and Body Paragraphs

Your main points should be your topic sentences, expressed as one sentence at the beginning of each paragraph. Preview these main points by adding *because* to your thesis statement as illustrated below.

**Examples**

- Because romantic comedies such as *Knocked Up* (2007) depict their leads as unquestionably "good" people . . .
- Because Rebecca Bunch is sometimes selfish . . .
- Because Rebecca Bunch is sometimes promiscuous . . .
- Because despite these flaws, men still seek her attention . . .
- Because the audience sees Rebecca as realistic, they root for her . . .

Now complete a graphic organizer like Table 7.5 by adding your main points from your primary source.

| | |
|---|---|
| Point 1. Because . . . | Explanation:<br>Example: |
| Point 2. Because . . . | Explanation:<br>Example: |
| Point 3. Because . . . | Explanation:<br>Example: |
| Point 4. Because . . . | Explanation:<br>Example: |

**TABLE 7.5** Main points organizer

As you continue to plan your review, consider these questions: *Depending upon your audience, how much background or context should you provide about your topic? Are they likely or unlikely to have knowledge about the topic? Do you need to summarize anything about your primary source? Do you need to provide historical or cultural context?* Use the notes you took earlier as your draft your essay. Remember, you can change things! It is up to you to decide how to organize your argument and where to present specific evidence.

Your review will contain both summary/observation (objectivity) and evaluation/analysis (subjectivity). Practice determining whether statements are summary or observation as opposed to evaluation or analysis.

Access multimedia content (http://openstax.org/books/writing-guide/pages/7-5-writing-process-thinking-critically-about-entertainment)

### Secondary Source Evidence

Once you form your own opinions, you may want to look for additional sources to support your review. Secondary sources, or sources that contain the opinions and analyses of others, are frequently used in academic writing to help writers support a point or provide background and context. Scholarly, peer-reviewed secondary sources give your review greater credibility because the articles are written by experts in their fields. Use your college library's databases, or ask a librarian whether your college provides access to journals that publish articles on movies, television, and culture. Most colleges have access to JSTOR, a database search engine focused on the humanities. In addition, the MLA International Bibliography is a common database of journals related to culture. Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources provide more information about finding sources.

Another, less academic, place to look for secondary sources is in **Recap**. In recent years, recapping has become a popular way to join the conversation about TV shows, with sites such as *The AV Club, The Huffington Post*, *Slate* (https://openstax.org/r/slate), *The Verge* (https://openstax.org/r/theverge), and *Vox* (https://openstax.org/r/vox) dedicating staff to summarizing and discussing popular shows. Fans engage with each other and recap writers by commenting on and sharing the articles.

Note, too, that well-known publications, such as *The New York Times* (https://openstax.org/r/thenewyorktimes), review not only movies and TV shows but also products such as those you may have chosen to write your review about. In addition, *Consumer Reports* (https://openstax.org/r/consumerreports) is one of the longest-running magazines dedicated to reviewing products of all kinds. Many websites, as well, review

video games and consoles.

### Drafting the Introduction

The **introduction** should interest readers in your topic and make them eager to learn more about it. If you were proposing this idea to a company, *what would your "elevator pitch" be? What might you say to quickly pique audience interest?* You might describe the part that convinced you it was good. You might explain why your audience would find the topic relatable.

Be sure readers know by the end of the introduction what specifically you are reviewing. Provide the title and necessary background/context: when it was made, the medium (film, book, podcast), the genre, and how to find it (Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu). Include your overall evaluation: *Did you like it or not, and why overall?*

Then present your thesis at the end of your introduction.

> ***Introduction example.*** Many people love romantic comedies, but what happens when real life isn't like the movies? We are conditioned to believe there is one person we are destined to be with. Disney movies, TV shows like *The Office*, Hallmark Channel Christmas movies, and traditional romantic comedies reinforce the notion that for the believer, true love is right around the corner. But everyone knows the pain of rejection or of pining for a person who doesn't seem to notice them. The CW series *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* shows what it's like when love is more complicated than what we see in the movies. The show follows Rebecca Bunch, a successful but unhappy—and far from virtuous or admirable—New York lawyer who instantly abandons her life to move to West Covina, California, to pursue Josh Chan, her summer-camp crush from long ago. Rebecca cooks up crazy, desperate schemes to get the attention of the aloof and clueless Josh. *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* masterfully taps into our inner crazy ex by making good comedy out of Instagram stalking, relationship sabotage, and infatuation.

Now, write your introduction:

General statement: _____

Background or context: _____

Brief summary: _____

Evaluation: _____

Thesis: _____

### Drafting the Body

For the body of the review, provide more background and context wherever you think such information is necessary. Because the purpose of this part of the review is to present the main points that support the thesis, be sure to show how these points explain the criteria on which you have based your evaluation. Back up the main points with specific, concrete evidence from your primary source. At this point, return to your early notes and use the descriptions and quotations you gathered. You will likely have collected more evidence as well. Use a graphic organizer like Table 7.6 to create your draft. Main points 1 and 2 should be your topic sentences.

| | |
|---|---|
| Main point 1 | Explanation:<br>Evidence:<br>Examples:<br>Quotations:<br>Secondary source evidence (if needed): |
| Main point 2 | Explanation:<br>Evidence:<br>Examples:<br>Quotations:<br>Secondary source evidence (if needed): |
| Main point 3 | Explanation:<br>Evidence:<br>Examples:<br>Quotations:<br>Secondary source evidence (if needed): |
| Main point 4 | Explanation:<br>Evidence:<br>Examples:<br>Quotations:<br>Secondary source evidence (if needed): |
| Main point 5 | Explanation:<br>Evidence:<br>Examples:<br>Quotations:<br>Secondary source evidence (if needed): |

**TABLE 7.6** Drafting the body

### Drafting the Conclusion

For the conclusion, summarize briefly how the criteria you used led you to your evaluation, rephrase or validate your thesis, and make a recommendation.

> ***Conclusion example.*** *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend is a refreshing take on the romantic comedy genre. It elevates comedy by using catchy, original songs to accompany clever dialogue. Though Rebecca is intense and extreme, her situation is relatable, and she comes across as more sympathetic than not, proving that people don't have to be perfect to be deserving of love. The departures from the romantic comedy playbook leave the audience guessing what will happen next, ensuring the show never feels tired or stale. What comes after the grand gesture and big kiss? That's a question this show tries to answer, and sooner than you might expect. If you're looking for a new binge-worthy show, clear your calendar for the next week and give Crazy Ex-Girlfriend a try.*

Now, write your conclusion.

Brief summary of criteria and evaluation: _____

Restate or validate thesis: _____

Make a recommendation: _____

## Peer Review: Conferencing with a Partner

After you finish your draft, receiving feedback from a peer will help you identify the strengths and weaknesses in your review. Because writers sometimes find it hard to review their work from the perspective of their audience, peer feedback will help you see your writing in ways not obvious to you. As a peer reviewer yourself, try to offer suggestions to make the essay more like something you would want to read.

To give and receive the most effective feedback, use the following guidelines:

1. On your own draft, note the areas you are unsure about and where you especially want feedback. It's a good idea to have specific questions so that your peer can focus on what you think will help you.
2. When you are assigned a peer, read their essay at least once without commenting, just to get a sense of what the essay is about.
3. Read the essay a second time. In the margins, add any comments or reactions to the essay.
4. Focus on the introduction and comment on its effectiveness.
    1. In what ways are the first few sentences engaging?
    2. Would you want to keep reading to learn more? Why or why not?
    3. In what ways does the introduction clearly establish what is being reviewed? Does it provide sufficient background information? In what ways does the thesis make a judgment or an evaluation with a reason that leads to the judgment or evaluation?
    4. Mark what you think the thesis is. If you find no clear thesis, mark something for the writer to focus on to arrive at a thesis.
    5. Jot down one or two prodding, open-ended questions to help the writer develop or revise the thesis.
5. Next, focus on the body paragraphs.
    1. Is enough background provided, either in the introduction or early in the body, to give you a complete sense of what the writer is evaluating?
    2. If there is not enough background, jot down a few questions that could be answered with additional background and context.
    3. What is the main point of each body paragraph?
    4. In what ways do the main points support the thesis (my thesis is true because . . .)?
    5. Do the body paragraphs contain specific, concrete details from the primary source to support the main points?
    6. If the body needs more specific details, mark places where the writer can add more detail.
6. Next, focus on the conclusion.
    1. Does the conclusion clearly tie up the main points?
    2. If not, how might the writer revise the conclusion?

7. Although your task is not to edit the essay or mark every error, point out any consistent patterns of grammatical errors.
8. When you have finished, summarize your comments at the end of the review by writing three things on which your peer can focus when revising.

As you work, be detailed and specific in your comments so that your peer can use them to make revisions:

- What specifically is working or not working?
- Why is it working or not working?
- What can the writer do specifically to revise?

If you are having trouble finding something to comment on, remember that you can make comments about what the writer does well. Be sure to explain in detail why you think it's working. Be sure to consult Evaluation: Effect on Audience as well.

### Revising: Maintaining Ownership

When you receive your reviewed essay, look over the comments. Remember that they are merely suggestions; your revisions are ultimately up to you. For example, a sentence fragment, while technically incorrect, could be an effective way to emphasize a point. It is your call to decide whether your use of language is appropriate for your audience and purpose. With that said, however, it's possible your peer pointed out something you did not notice.

As you revise, keep in mind the following success criteria. Ensure your essay has them:

- **Specific topic:** The essay is about a specific TV show, film, book, podcast, video game, or other primary source(s).
- **Interesting lead:** You show your audience why this topic interests you and try to capture their attention.
- **Thesis:** You present a clear, debatable, and specific thesis about your topic.
- **Body:** The body supports the thesis with clear main points. Summary is used effectively to provide background and context.
- **Specific details:** You support your main points with relevant and ample details (in the form of quotations, paraphrases, vivid descriptions, etc.) from the primary source or sources as well as secondary sources, if you have used them.
- **Citation:** Sources are cited correctly in the text.

## 7.6 Editing Focus: Quotations

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the role direct quotations play in writing.
- Select and integrate direct quotations into your writing.

**Direct quotation**, or someone's exact words, provide specific, concrete evidence from your primary and secondary sources. When reviewing a film or book, for example, you are likely to incorporate a number of direct quotations into your writing. Quotations are effective when they are used appropriately and correctly. For example, a general statement of observation such as "The candidate for senate gave a disastrous interview on TV last night" should be backed up with concrete evidence from the interview. To demonstrate how and why the interview was "disastrous," you might give examples such as these: "When asked whether she supported ethics reform, Ms. Simpson did not give a direct answer. She stated, 'I think ethics are important, and I hold myself to a high ethical standard.'"

While quotations are covered more extensively in Punctuation, this section will introduce you to using quotations in a review.

## When to Use Quotations

Use quotations to support a point you are making. Avoid using them to *present* a point. Don't pepper your essay with randomly selected quotations because you think they make your essay look well researched. Instead, present your point, and back it up with a quotation.

Using a direct quotation is effective in the following instances:

- Because of its source, the quotation adds credibility to your point.
  - Wearing a mask is the easiest thing we can do as individuals to stop the spread of COVID-19. According to Dr. Anthony Fauci, "There should be universal wearing of masks." (Castillejo and Yang)

    Because Fauci is the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), his statement on mask wearing is credible evidence that supports the point.
- Because the author makes a statement in a particular way, its meaning would be less effective if paraphrased.
  - In his review of the Microclimate Air Helmet, critic Drew Magary injects humor by quipping, "No one at the vape shop cared that I was dressed like I was in an old Moby video."

    Using a direct quotation from Magary's review illustrates his style of humor more effectively than a description or paraphrase of the joke.
- Because the quotation contains important information, it is more effective than a paraphrase.
  - Hurricane Harvey brought a record amount of flooding when it hit the Houston, Texas, area in 2017. Harvey's rainfall "dumped an estimated 27 trillion gallons of rain over Texas and Louisiana during a 6-day period." (Griggs)

    The direct quotation contains the exact statistics that show the record amount of flooding.
- Because the quotation adds variety to the language and voice of the essay, it makes the most impact on the audience in its original form. For example, quote directly from a person you are writing about so that the audience imagines them speaking.

A teacher may have suggested you use details to "show instead of tell." Quotations are one way to *show* your audience what you mean rather than *tell* them.

Practice finding quotations to illustrate the following point. You can search the web or your college library's article databases.

> Personal computing has evolved from a single desktop computer for the whole family to a truly "personal" relationship each individual has with their devices.

Hint: Look for information about how the size of personal computers has changed, how the industry has introduced new devices, how many Internet-connected devices an average person owns, and how many different people use an Internet-connected device on average.

## Embedding Quotations

In reviews particularly, you may want to use dialogue or narration as evidence to support a point. Because a quotation should illustrate or support your point, be sure to state clearly and in your own words the point you are making. A properly formatted quotation will contain the following:

- **Quote in exact words:** Use ellipses (. . .) to omit irrelevant sections of a quotation or to shorten it. Use brackets ([]) to add information to a quotation to help it make sense.
  - Original Quotation: "Cybersecurity is an important issue for businesses of all sizes. Every business from Fortune 500 companies to mom-and-pop stores has an obligation to protect customers' sensitive data. Data breaches, such as the Target breach in 2014, have been known to erode trust." (Flynn)

    - Quotation using ellipses and brackets: “Cybersecurity is an important issue for businesses . . . Data breaches, such as the Target breach in 2014, have been known to erode [consumers’] trust [in the company].” (Flynn)

- **Correct punctuation:** Use quotation marks (“”) to show exactly where the quotation begins and ends. This punctuation helps separate the quotation from your words and ideas and helps you avoid plagiarism.
- **Signal phrase:** Simple attribution phrases like “Smith says” or “As Jones argues” are important to use with quotations so that the quotation is integrated into your own sentence. When quoting directly, set off the quoted material from the **signal phrase**, or speaker tag, with a comma, as in Example 1 below. When the quotation is broken up by a signal phrase, use quotation marks around the quotation and commas around the signal phrase. Place periods and commas that belong to the quotation inside the quotation marks.
    - Example 1: Smith shows us the importance of good time management skills when she says, “90% of A and B students begin their essays at least two weeks before they are due” (Flynn).
    - Example 2: “Many students,” Smith says, “leave insufficient time for writing assignments” (Flynn).
- **Parenthetical citation:** Cite the source of your quotation with a correct parenthetical citation. See the MLA Documentation and Format to learn more about citation.

Practice using a quotation you found in the previous exercise by introducing the quotation with a signal phrase, stating the quotation, and punctuating it correctly. Then introduce the signal phrase in the middle of the quotation, and punctuate it correctly.

## 7.7 Evaluation: Effect on Audience

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how your writing uses common elements of the review genre.
- Evaluate reviews for thesis, evidence, rhetorical choices, clarity, and language awareness by using a rubric.

Essays follow a structure that includes the introduction and thesis, body paragraphs with main points supported by relevant evidence, and a conclusion. In addition, academic essays are generally written with a formal tone, use precise wording, and are carefully edited. Essays should be written with a specific audience and purpose in mind and adhere to the conventions of the discipline’s formatting guide (MLA in this case). However, as you have worked to develop your writing voice during this course, you may have elected to challenge some of these conventions for rhetorical purposes. Beyond following the typical structure of an academic essay, a good review essay will demonstrate knowledge of the elements of the review genre, as discussed in Glance at Genre: Criteria, Evidence, and Evaluation clear evaluation, specific criteria, and understanding of genre and context. The following rubric reflects the characteristics of an effective evaluation essay.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: when and how to use quotations as discussed in Section 7.6. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | All paragraphs are unified under a single, clear thesis and connected with appropriate transitions. The topic of each paragraph is consistently clear and supports the thesis. Abundant and relevant supporting evidence in the form of concrete details from the primary source(s) and secondary sources, if used, gives readers a sense of completeness. No major questions from the assignment instructions are unanswered. | The writer fully engages the audience. Strategies such as thought-provoking questions, interesting statistics, or detailed anecdotes or vignettes draw readers into the essay, keep them interested, and make them think about the topic. The writer consistently shows concern for audience knowledge and beliefs about the topic and shows appreciation for multiple perspectives. The writer demonstrates an understanding of the cultural context and genre of the subject of the review. The writing throughout demonstrates a sophisticated command of language. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: when and how to use quotations as discussed in Section 7.6. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | Most paragraphs are unified under a single, clear thesis and connected with appropriate transitions. The topic of each paragraph is usually clear and supports the thesis. Relevant, if not always abundant (and vice versa), supporting evidence in the form of concrete details from the primary source(s) and secondary sources, if used, gives readers a sense of completeness. No major questions from the assignment instructions are unanswered. | The writer generally engages the audience. Some strategies such as thought-provoking questions, interesting statistics, or detailed anecdotes or vignettes draw readers into the essay, keep them interested, and make them think about the topic. The writer generally shows concern for audience knowledge and beliefs about the topic and may acknowledge multiple perspectives. The writer often demonstrates understanding of the cultural context and genre of the subject of the review. The writing usually demonstrates a sophisticated command of the language. |

**TABLE 7.7**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3**<br><br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: when and how to use quotations as discussed in Section 7.6. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | Most paragraphs are fairly unified under a single thesis, though some may lack appropriate transitions. The topic of each paragraph is usually clear; some or all of the paragraphs support the thesis. Relevant supporting evidence in the form of concrete details from primary source(s) and secondary sources, if used, may be lacking so that readers do not have a sense of completeness. One or two major questions from the assignment instructions may be unanswered. | The writer sometimes engages the audience. Occasional use of strategies such as thought-provoking questions, interesting statistics, or detailed anecdotes or vignettes may or may not succeed in drawing readers into the essay, keeping them interested, and making them think about the topic. The writer generally shows some concern for audience knowledge and beliefs about the topic but may not acknowledge multiple perspectives. The writer sometimes demonstrates understanding of the cultural context and genre of the subject of the review. The writing demonstrates a fair command of the language in word choice and sentence structure. |

**TABLE 7.7**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: when and how to use quotations as discussed in Section 7.6. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | Some paragraphs are fairly unified under a single thesis, but transitions are lacking or inappropriate. The topics of some paragraphs are clear, but not all support the thesis. Relevant and sufficient supporting evidence in the form of concrete details from the primary source(s) and secondary sources, if used, is lacking so that readers do not have a sense of completeness. Major questions from the assignment instructions may be unanswered. | The writer occasionally engages the audience and makes little or no use of strategies such as thought-provoking questions, interesting statistics, or detailed anecdotes or vignettes. With such omissions, the writer does not draw readers into the essay, keep them interested, or make them think about the topic. The writer generally shows little or no concern for audience knowledge and beliefs about the topic and ignores multiple perspectives. The writer may demonstrate some understanding of the cultural context and genre of the subject of the review. The writing demonstrates little command of language in word choice and sentence structure. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: when and how to use quotations as discussed in Section 7.6. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | Most paragraphs lack unity under a single thesis. Transitions are lacking or inappropriate. The topics of most paragraphs are unclear, and not all support the thesis. Relevant and sufficient supporting evidence in the form of concrete details from the primary source(s) and secondary sources, if used, is lacking so that readers have no sense of completeness. Major questions from the assignment instructions are unanswered or are addressed with little attention. | The writer rarely, if ever, engages the audience and makes little or no use of strategies such as thought-provoking questions, interesting statistics, or detailed anecdotes or vignettes. The writer does not draw readers into the essay, keep them interested, or make them think about the topic. There is little or no concern for audience knowledge and beliefs about the topic and little or no attention to multiple perspectives. The writer demonstrates little or no understanding of the cultural context and genre of the subject of the review and minimal command of language in word choice and sentence structure. |

**TABLE 7.7**

## 7.8 Spotlight on … Language and Culture

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the role of sociohistorical context, including cultural and linguistic variations, in the review genre.
- Identify and act on opportunities to publish a review.

Reviewing, and evaluation and analysis more generally, often involves showing understanding of sociohistorical context. In other words, the work you are reviewing was created at a particular time for a specific audience. The film *Black Panther*, for example, was released in 2018 for a primarily American audience, but viewers and reviewers can delve further into this film's cultural context.

For one thing, this film can be placed in the context of other films from the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). The MCU features characters from Marvel comic books and began with the release of *Iron Man* in 2008. In addition to the *Avengers* films, the MCU includes character-specific "origin story" films of which *Black Panther* is a part. Characters from one film may appear as characters in other MCU films.

In addition, *Black Panther* is part of a touchstone cultural moment. Since the beginning of the Black Lives Matter (2013–present) movement, more attention has been called to the lack of Black representation in films and TV. The film's Black Panther, played by Chadwick Boseman, is a Black superhero who gives Black moviegoers a chance to see a superhero who looks like them. The film also comments on Black poverty and questions whether power and wealth should be shared or hoarded. The film also provides audiences of other backgrounds and ethnicities with the opportunity to witness characters who are developed beyond their stereotypes, as Caelia Marshall points out regarding the character of Killmonger in the Annotated Student Sample. These elements work to create empathy within a multicultural society.

### Offensive Language: When Is It Offensive and When Is It Artful?

The question of language as a reflection of culture often surfaces in writing and reviewing dialogue, whether in film or books. *When is offensive language gratuitous, and when does it serve an artistic purpose?* The answer is never clear-cut in such areas, but as a reviewer you can ask yourself certain questions to determine whether you think it enhances the work. The basic, if simplified, question is this: *Does the work lose its strength, honesty, sense of reality, or characterization if offensive language is removed?* If the answer is *yes,* then the language serves an artistic purpose. Imagine, for example, dramas dealing with criminals involved in organized crime. The offensive language seems natural and contributes to the drama's realism. Take away the language, and that realism is lost. Other films, however, would lose nothing in character depiction or realism if offensive language were omitted—not substituted for something less offensive.

### Diversity in Hollywood

Recently, more attention is being paid to diversity in television and movies. The #OscarsSoWhite controversy began after the 2015 Oscars, following two consecutive years of all White nominees in the leading and supporting actor categories. The uproar brought awareness to the lack of diversity in Hollywood, and not just in terms of actors. Conversations about diversity behind the scenes began as well.

One criticism the #OscarsSoWhite controversy brought to light was about the stories Hollywood tells. *Whose stories get told, and who gets to tell those stories?* While a limited number of people of color have been nominated for and even won Oscars, traditionally they have been for movies about racism and slavery (written by White writers or directed by White directors) and stereotypical roles such as the "magic negro" (a Black character who helps a White character). Who gets to decide what stories are made into movies became a major subject of conversation, as the people who fund movies are also typically White.

The movie *Green Book* (2018) illustrates the backlash that can happen when movies fail to include enough diverse voices. The film is about a Black pianist (played by Mahershala Ali, b. 1974) and his White driver (played by Viggo Mortensen, b. 1958) traveling the country in 1962. The movie won the Oscar for Best Picture

that year, and Ali won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor. However, criticism of the movie was aired both before and after the Oscars ceremony. The family of the real-life pianist, Don Shirley (1927–2013), said the filmmakers worked with them very little. Some criticized the movie for seeming to be more about the driver, Frank Vallelonga (1930–2013), than about Shirley. The movie's director, Peter Farrelly (b. 1956), is a White man better known for directing raunchy comedies than movies about the Civil Rights era.

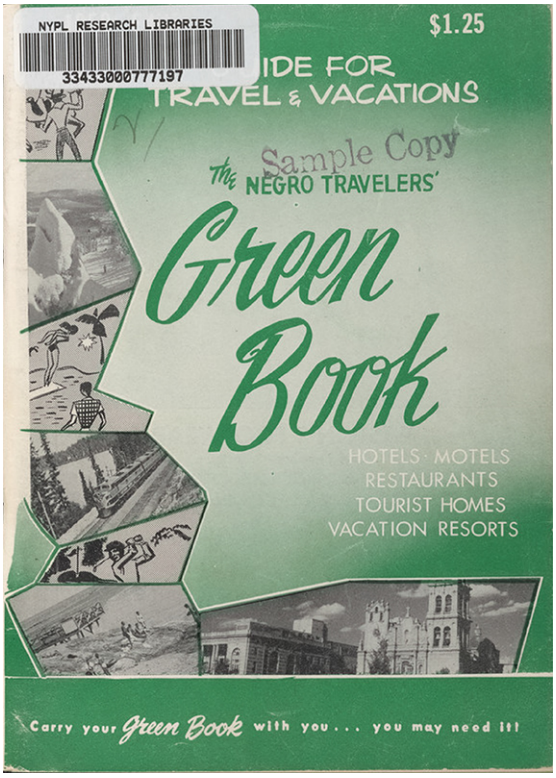



**FIGURE 7.3** The film's title refers to The Green Book, a travel guide published from 1936 to 1966 that listed hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and other places that welcomed Black travelers. This issue is from 1959. (credit: "The Negro Travelers' Green Book 1959" by Victor Hugo Green [1892–1960]/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

All of these points highlighted the importance of diversity not only on set, but among those who participate in the voting bodies of the Oscars and Golden Globe Awards. As a result, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which chooses the nominees and winners of the Oscars, and the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which chooses the nominees and winners of the Golden Globe Awards, introduced measures to diversify their ranks. Despite promises to diversify, however, it was revealed in 2021 that the HFPA had no Black members. As a result, NBC decided to stop broadcasting the Golden Globe awards, and some prominent celebrities, such as Tom Cruise (b. 1962), sent their awards back.

Hollywood has been a White, male-dominated industry. Movie critics Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, were two of the most influential critics in film history. For most of Hollywood's history, White men have influenced how television and movies have been received. This situation has been changing, as the Internet and increased cultural awareness are helping to create more diversity. For example, National Public Radio Pop Culture Happy Hour (https://openstax.org/r/popculturehappyhour) regularly invites people of color, women, and LGBTQ people onto its panel. Their views on gender, race, and queerness in movies and television provide perspectives often missing from mainstream criticism.

## Publish Your Work

After you have written and revised your essay, share it with the world. One easy way to share is to post a condensed version of your essay online. Here are some sites to consider, depending on the genre and medium of your review subject.

**Books**

- Amazon (https://openstax.org/r/booksamazon)
- Good Reads (https://openstax.org/r/booksgoodreads)
- Barnes and Noble (https://openstax.org/r/bornesandnoble)

**Films**

- Rotten Tomatoes (https://openstax.org/r/rotentomatoes)
- Internet Movie Database (https://openstax.org/r/internetmoviedatabase)
- The AV Club (https://openstax.org/r/theavclub)
  - For *The AV Club*, consider participating in a conversation about the subject of your review by posting in the comments section of a review.

**Video games**

- GameStop (https://openstax.org/r/GameStop)
- Amazon (https://openstax.org/r/videogameamazon)

**Podcasts**

- Google Podcasts (https://openstax.org/r/googlepodcasts)
- Stitcher (https://openstax.org/r/stitcher)

**TV shows**

- Amazon (https://openstax.org/r/tvshowsamazon)
- The AV Club (https://openstax.org/r/theavclub)
- Internet Movie Database (https://openstax.org/r/internetmoviedatabase)

You can also seek out other opportunities to share your writing in local newspapers and magazines. Contact the editor of your college, alternative weekly, or daily newspaper and ask whether they accept freelance work.

## 7.9 Portfolio: What the Arts Say About You

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Reflect in writing on the development of composing processes.
- Explain how those processes affect your work.

As you prepare to place this chapter's writing task in your portfolio, reflect on your review by answering the following questions.

- On what basis did you choose your topic? Did you choose it because of a long-standing interest in films, TV, books, or video games or because of something else?
- Did your evaluation and thesis seem obvious from the beginning, or did you have to think for a long time before settling on them?
- What made this topic personally appealing?
- What was easy about composing your essay? What was hard?
- What would you do differently if you could start over again?
- In what ways did you revise your essay between the first and final drafts?
- How did you get ideas for revision? Was it from peer feedback, your instructor, or a tutor?

### Reflective Task

Now write a reflection for your portfolio, adding a section about your interest in the genre of the primary source you chose. Discuss your reflection with another student, noting areas of similarities and differences.

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# Analytical Report: Writing from Facts

# 8



**FIGURE 8.1** Engineer, physician, researcher, and NASA astronaut Mae Carol Jemison (b. 1956) was the first Black woman to travel in space. As an astronaut aboard the Space Shuttle *Endeavour* in 1992, Jemison conducted scientific research on the production of saline solution and frog reproduction. She also was a co-investigator on two bone cell experiments. More recently, she published a scientific report on biomaterials for human space exploration. (credit: NASA Image and Video Library/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**8.1** Information and Critical Thinking
**8.2** Analytical Report Trailblazer: Barbara Ehrenreich
**8.3** Glance at Genre: Informal and Formal Analytical Reports
**8.4** Annotated Student Sample: "U.S. Response to COVID-19" by Trevor Garcia
**8.5** Writing Process: Creating an Analytical Report
**8.6** Editing Focus: Commas with Nonessential and Essential Information
**8.7** Evaluation: Reviewing the Final Draft
**8.8** Spotlight on ... Discipline-Specific and Technical Language
**8.9** Portfolio: Evidence and Objectivity


**INTRODUCTION** The writing **genre** for this chapter is the **analytical report**. The broad purpose of an analytical report is to inform and analyze—that is, to teach your readers (your audience) about a subject by providing information based on **facts** supported by **evidence** and then drawing conclusions about the significance of the information you provide. As an academic and professional genre, reports are necessarily objective, which can make for dry reading. Consider the writing identity that you have been developing throughout this course as you tackle this genre. *In what ways can you give your report voice? In what ways can you acknowledge or challenge the conventions of the genre?*

You have likely written or presented a report at some point in your life as a student; perhaps you wrote a lab report on a science experiment, presented research you conducted, or analyzed a book you read. While some reports seek to inform readers about a topic, an analytical report examines a subject or an issue by considering its causes and effects, by comparing and contrasting, or by discussing a problem and proposing one or more solutions. See Reasoning Strategies: Improving Critical Thinking for more about using these reasoning and organizational strategies in your writing.

## 8.1 Information and Critical Thinking

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Distinguish between fact and opinion.
- Recognize bias in reading and in yourself.
- Ask critical thinking questions to explore an idea for a report.

Knowledge in the social and natural sciences and technical fields is often focused on data and ideas that can be verified by observing, measuring, and testing. Accordingly, writers in these fields place high value on neutral and **objective case** analysis and inferences based on the careful examination of data. Put another way, writers describe and analyze results as they understand them. Likewise, writers in these fields avoid **subjectivity**, including personal opinions, speculations, and bias. As the writer of an analytical report, you need to know the difference between fact and opinion, be able to identify bias, and think critically and analytically.

### Distinguishing Fact from Opinion

An analytical report provides information based on facts. Put simply, facts are statements that can be proven or whose truth can be inferred.

It may be difficult to distinguish fact from opinion or allegation. As a writer, use a critical eye to examine what you read. The following are examples of factual statements:

- Article I, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution specifies that the legislative branch of the government consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives.
- The school board voted to approve the administration's proposal.

Facts that use numbers are called **statistics**. Some numbers are stated directly:

- The earth's average land and ocean surface temperature in March 2020 was 2.09 degrees Fahrenheit higher than the average surface temperature during the 20th century.
- The total number of ballots cast in the 2020 presidential election was approximately 159 million.
- The survey results showed that 45 percent of first-year students at this university attended every class, whether in person or online.

Other numbers are implied:

- Mercury is the planet closest to the sun.
- College tuition and fees have risen in the past decade.

Factual statements such as those above stand in contrast to **opinions**, which are statements of belief or value. Opinions form the basis of claims that are supported by evidence in argumentative writing, but they should be avoided in informative and analytical writing. Here are two statements of opinion about an increase in college tuition and fees:

- Although tuition and fees have risen, the value of a college education is worth the cost.
- The increase in college tuition and fees over the past 10 years has placed an unreasonably heavy financial burden on students.

Both statements indicate that the writer will make an argument. In the first, the writer will defend the increases in college tuition and fees. In the second, the writer will argue that the increases in tuition and fees have made college too expensive. In both arguments, the writer will support the argument with factual evidence. See Proposal: Writing about Problems and Solutions for more information about fact and opinion.

Want to know more about facts? Read the blog post Fact-Checking 101 (https://openstax.org/r/fact-checking101) by Laura McClure, posted to the TED-Ed website.

## Recognizing Bias

In addition to distinguishing between fact and opinion, it is important to recognize bias. **Bias** is commonly defined as a preconceived opinion about something—a subject, an idea, a person, or a group of people. As the writer of a report, you will learn to recognize bias in yourself and in the information you gather.

### Bias in What You Read

Some writing is intentionally biased and intended to persuade, such as the editorials and opinion pieces described above. However, a report and the evidence on which it is based should not be heavily biased. Bias becomes a problem when a source you believe to be neutral, objective, and trustworthy presents information that attempts to sway your opinion. *Identifying Bias (https://openstax.org/r/identifyingbias)*, posted by Tyler Rablin, is a helpful guide to recognizing bias.

As you consider sources for your report, the following tips can also help you spot bias and read critically:

- **Determine the writer's purpose.** Is the writer simply informing you or trying to persuade you?
- **Research the author.** Is the writer known for taking a side on the topic of the writing? Is the writer considered an expert?
- **Distinguish between fact and opinion.** Take note of the number of facts and opinions throughout the source.
- **Pay attention to the language and what the writer emphasizes.** Does the author use emotionally loaded, inflammatory words or descriptions intended to sway readers? What do the title, introduction, and any headings tell you about the author's approach to the subject?
- **Read multiple sources on the topic.** Learn whether the source is leaving out or glossing over important information and credible views.
- **Look critically at the images and any media that support the writing.** Do they reinforce positive or negative aspects of the subject?

### Bias in Yourself

Most individuals bring what psychologists call **cognitive bias** to their interactions with information or with other people. Cognitive bias influences the way people gather and process new information. As you research information for a report, also be aware of **confirmation bias**. This is the tendency to seek out and accept information that supports (or confirms) a belief you already have and may cause you to ignore or dismiss information that challenges that belief. A related bias is the **false consensus effect**, which is the tendency to overestimate the extent to which other people agree with your beliefs.

For example, perhaps you believe strongly that college tuition is too high and that tuition should be free at the public colleges and universities in your state. With that belief, you are likely to be more receptive to facts and statistics showing that tuition-free college benefits students by boosting graduation rates and improving financial security after college, in part because the sources may seem more mainstream. However, if you believe strongly that tuition should *not* be free, you are likely to be more receptive to facts and statistics showing that students who don't pay for college are less likely to be serious about school and take longer to graduate—again, because the sources may seem more mainstream.

### Asking Critical Questions about a Topic for a Report

As you consider a topic for a report, note the ideas that occur to you, interesting information you read, and what you already know. Answer the following questions about potential topics to help you understand a topic in a suitably analytical framework for a report.

- What is/was the cause of _____?
- What is/was the effect of _____?
- How does/did _____ compare or contrast with another similar event, idea, or item?
- What makes/made _____ a problem?
- What are/were some possible solutions to _____?
- What beliefs do I have about _____?
- What aspects of _____ do I need to learn more about to write a report about it?

In the report that appears later in this chapter, student Trevor Garcia analyzes the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Trevor began thinking about his topic with the question *What was the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic?* Because he had lived through 2020, he was able to draw upon personal experience: his school closed, his mother was laid off, and his family's finances were tight. As he researched his question, he moved beyond the information he gathered from his own experiences and discovered that the United States had failed in several key areas. He then answered the questions below to arrive at an analytical framework:

- What was the cause of the poor U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020?
- What was the effect of the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020?
- How did the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic compare/contrast with the responses of other countries?
- What are some possible solutions to the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What do I already believe about the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What aspects of the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic do I need to learn more about?

For his report, Trevor chose to focus on the first question: *What was the cause of the poor U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020?*



## 8.2 Trailblazer

### Analytical Report Trailblazer: Barbara Ehrenreich

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define the term *myth buster* and its connection to field research.
- Answer questions about what it means to investigate and report information.
- Gather information from a biographical text.



**FIGURE 8.2** Barbara Ehrenreich (https://openstax.org/r/barbaraehrenrich) worked as a waitress as part of her research for Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America (2001). (credit: "Customer service" by Alan Cleaver/ flickr, CC BY 2.0)

*"As a journalist, I search for the truth."*

## Myth-Buster

Self-described "myth buster by trade" Barbara Ehrenreich (b. 1941) has tackled many myths during her years as an activist and a writer, most often confronting widely held beliefs related to health and wealth.

Ehrenreich was born in 1941 in Butte, Montana, the daughter of a copper miner who finished college after she and her siblings were born. The family moved frequently when Ehrenreich was young and finally settled in Los Angeles. Ehrenreich attended Reed College in Portland, Oregon, and went to graduate school at Rockefeller University in New York City, where she earned a PhD in cell biology. Ehrenreich became involved in the women's health movement in the 1970s and at that point decided to become a full-time writer. Her work life settled into three tracks: "journalism, . . . book-length projects on subjects, . . . [and] activism." Over her long career, she has written for magazines and newspapers and has published more than 20 books, the most recent of which is *Natural Causes: An Epidemic of Wellness, the Certainty of Dying, and Killing Ourselves to Live Longer* (2018).

Ehrenreich is perhaps best known for *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (2001), a first-person account of her three-month experiment trying to make ends meet on minimum wage. She went undercover, leaving her middle-class home behind, and moved around the United States from Florida to Maine to Minnesota. Ehrenreich worked as a waitress, hotel maid, house cleaner, nursing home aide, and Walmart salesperson. On the wages and tips she made at her various jobs, she attempted to find healthy food, health care, and affordable housing in trailer parks and residential hotels.

In *Nickel and Dimed*, Ehrenreich busts the myth that poor people have figured out how to live well on less money than middle-class people. No such "secret economies" exist, Ehrenreich writes. Instead, poor people pay "a host of special costs," whether for renting a room by the week because they cannot save up two months' rent to get an apartment, buying restaurant food because the weekly room doesn't have a stove, or going to the emergency room for a toothache because they can't afford to go to the dentist.

As a piece of writing, *Nickel and Dimed* falls into the genre of memoir. However, the book is also a report; Ehrenreich conducted extensive on-the-ground field research, recording the tasks she performed at her jobs, interactions with managers, and conversations with coworkers about their lives. She recorded her findings when she was not working. Although some readers have criticized Ehrenreich for not being honest about her background and education, most have praised the light she shines on the other side of American prosperity—the people who work hard but who never manage to get ahead. Her work as a "myth buster" to

expose the hardships faced by poor working people in America illustrates the problem of accepting opinions as facts.

In the introduction to *Nickel and Dimed*, Ehrenreich describes the research methods. She also discusses *Nickel and Dimed* on C-Span (https://openstax.org/r/C-span).

### Discussion Questions

1. What does Barbara Ehrenreich mean when she describes herself as a "myth buster"? If you were to bust a myth, what would it be?
2. What facts do you think Ehrenreich discovered during her time working undercover? What opinions do you think she formed?
3. What do you think were Ehrenreich's sources of information, and how did she obtain such information?
4. If you went undercover to investigate and report on an issue that you think people should know about, what would it be? How would you go about your undercover reporting?
5. Could someone live on minimum wage in your community? What information about the cost of housing, food, transportation, and medical care would you need to answer the question? How could you find it?

## 8.3 Glance at Genre: Informal and Formal Analytical Reports

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Determine purpose and audience expectations for an analytical report.
- Identify key features of informal and formal reports.
- Define key terms and characteristics of an analytical report.

It is important to understand the purpose of your report, the expectations of the audience, any specific formatting requirements, and the types of evidence you can use.

### Defining a Specific Purpose

Your **purpose** is your reason for writing. The purpose of a report is to inform; as the writer, you are tasked with providing information and explaining it to readers. Many topics are suitable for informative writing—how to find a job, the way a disease spreads within a population, or the items on which people spend the most money. Some textbooks are examples of informative writing, as is much of the reporting you find on reputable news sites.

An analytical report is a type of report. Its purpose is to present and analyze information. An assignment for an analytical report will likely include words such as *analyze*, *compare*, *contrast*, *cause*, and/or *discuss*, indicating the specific purpose of the report. Here are a few examples:

- Discuss and **analyze** potential career paths with strong employment prospects for young adults.
- **Compare and contrast** proposals to reduce binge drinking among college students.
- Analyze the **Cause-and-effect** of injuries on construction sites and the effects of efforts to reduce workplace injuries.
- Discuss the **Effect** of the 1965 Voting Rights Act on voting patterns among U.S. citizens of color.
- Analyze the success and failure of strategies used by the major political parties to encourage citizens to vote.

### Tuning In to Audience Expectations

The **audience** for your report consists of the people who will read it or who could read it. *Are you writing for your instructor? For your classmates? For other students and teachers in professional fields or academic*

*disciplines? For people in your community?* Whoever your readers are, they expect you to do the following:

- Have an idea of what they already know about your topic, and adjust your writing as needed. If readers are new to the topic, they expect you to provide necessary background information. If they are knowledgeable about the topic, they will expect you to cover the background quickly.
- Provide reliable information in the form of specific facts, statistics, and examples. Whether you present your own research or information from other sources, readers expect you to have done your homework in order to supply trustworthy information.
- Define terms, especially if audience members may be unfamiliar with your topic.
- Structure your report in a logical way. It should open with an introduction that tells readers the subject and should follow a logical structure.
- Adopt an objective stance and neutral tone, free of any bias, personal feelings, or emotional language. By demonstrating objectivity, you show respect for your readers' knowledge and intelligence, and you build credibility and trust, or **ethos**, with them.
- Present and cite source information fairly and accurately.

## Informal Reports

An **informal** analytical report will identify a problem, provide factual information about the problem, and draw conclusions about the information. An informal report is usually structured like an essay, with an introduction or summary, body paragraphs, and a conclusion or recommendations. It will likely feature headings identifying key sections and be presented in academic essay format, such as MLA Documentation and Format or APA Documentation and Format. For an example of an informal analytical report documented in APA style, see Trevor Garcia's paper on the U.S. response to COVID-19 in 2020 in the Annotated Student Sample.

Other types of informal reports include journalism reports. A traditional journalism report involves a reporter for a news organization reporting on the day's events—the results of an election, a political crisis, a plane crash, a celebrity marriage—on TV, on radio, or in print. An investigative journalism report, on the other hand, involves reporters doing original research over a period of weeks or months to uncover significant new information, similar to what Barbara Ehrenreich did for her book *Nickel and Dimed*. For sample traditional and investigative journalistic reports, visit the website of a reliable news organization or publication, such as the *New York Times (https://openstax.org/r/newyorktimes)*, the *Washington Post (https://openstax.org/r/washingtonpost)*, the *Wall Street Journal (https://openstax.org/r/wallstreetjournal)*, the *Economist (https://openstax.org/r/economist)*, the *New Yorker (https://openstax.org/r/newyorker)*, or the *Atlantic (https://openstax.org/r/atlantic)*.

## Formal Reports

Writers in the social sciences, the natural sciences, technical fields, and business often write **formal** analytical reports. These include lab reports, research reports, and proposals.

Formal reports present findings and data drawn from experiments, surveys, and research and often end with a conclusion based on an analysis of these findings and data. These reports frequently include visuals such as graphs, bar charts, pie charts, photographs, or diagrams that are captioned and referred to in the text. Formal reports always cite sources of information, often using APA Documentation and Format, used in the examples in this chapter, or a similar style.

If you are assigned a formal report in a class, follow the instructions carefully. Your instructor will likely explain the assignment in detail and provide explicit directions and guidelines for the research you will need to do (including any permission required by your college or university if you conduct research on human subjects), how to organize the information you gather, and how to write and format your report. A formal report is a complex, highly organized, and often lengthy document with a specified format and sections usually marked by headings.

Following are the components of a formal analytical report. Depending on the assignment and the audience, a formal report you write may include some or all of these parts. For example, a research report following APA format usually includes a title page, an abstract, headings for components of the body of the report (methods, results, discussion), and a references page. Detailed APA guidelines are available online, including at the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (https://openstax.org/r/purdueuniversity).

### Components of Formal Analytical Reports

- **Letter of transmittal**. When a report is submitted, it is usually accompanied by a letter or email to the recipient explaining the nature of the report and signed by those responsible for writing it. Write the letter of transmittal when the report is finished and ready for submission.
- **Title page**. The title page includes the title of the report, the name(s) of the author(s), and the date it was written or submitted. The report title should describe the report simply, directly, and clearly and should not try to be too clever. For example, *The New Student Writing Project: A Two-Year Report* is a clear, descriptive title, whereas *Write On, Students!* is not.
- **Acknowledgments**. If other people and/or organizations contributed to the report, include a page or paragraph thanking them.
- **Table of contents**. For long reports (10 pages or more), create a table of contents to help readers navigate easily. List the major components and subsections of the report and the pages on which they begin.
- **Executive summary or abstract**. The executive summary or abstract is a paragraph that highlights the findings of the report. The purpose of this section is to present information in the quickest, most concentrated, and most economical way possible to be useful to readers. Write this section after you have completed the rest of the report.
- **Introduction or background**. The introduction provides necessary background information to help readers understand the report. This section also indicates what information is included in the report.
- **Methods**. Especially in the social sciences, the natural sciences, and technical disciplines, the methods or procedures section outlines how you gathered information and from what sources, such as experiments, surveys, library research, interviews, and so on.
- **Results**. In the results section, you summarize the data you have collected from your research, explain your method of analysis, and present this information in detail, often in a table, graph, or chart.
- **Discussion or Conclusion**. In this section, you interpret the results and present the conclusions of your research. This section also may be called "Discussion of Findings."
- **Recommendations**. In this section, you explain what you believe should be done in response to your research findings.
- **References and bibliography**. The references section includes every source you cited in the report. The bibliography contains, in addition to those cited in the report, sources that readers can consult to learn more.
- **Appendix**. An appendix (plural: *appendices*) includes documents that are related to the report or contain information that can be culled but are not deemed central to understanding the report.

The following links take you to sample formal reports written by students and offer tips from librarians posted by colleges and universities in the United States. These samples may help you better understand what is involved in writing a formal analytical report.

- Product review report (https://openstax.org/r/productreviewreport), from the University/College Library of Broward College and Florida Atlantic University
- Business report (https://openstax.org/r/businessreport), from Wright State University
- Technical report (https://openstax.org/r/technicalreport), from the University of Utah
- Lab report (https://openstax.org/r/labreport), from Hamilton College
- Field report (https://openstax.org/r/fieldreport), from the University of Southern California

### Exploring the Genre

The following are key terms and characteristics related to reports.

- **Audience**: Readers of a report or any piece of writing.
- **Bias**: A preconceived opinion about something, such as a subject, an idea, a person, or a group of people. As a reader, be attentive to potential bias in sources; as a writer, be attentive to your own biases.
- **Body**: The main part of a report between the introduction and the conclusion. The body of an analytical report consists of paragraphs in which the writer presents and analyzes key information.
- **Citation** of sources: References in the written text to sources that a writer has used in a report.
- **Conclusion and/or recommendation**: The last part of a report. In this section, the writer summarizes the significance of the information in the report or offers recommendations—or both.
- **Critical thinking**: The ability to look beneath the surface of words and images to analyze, interpret, and evaluate them.
- **Ethos**: The sense that the writer or other authority is trustworthy and credible; also known as *ethical appeal*.
- **Evidence**: Statements of fact, statistics, examples, and expert opinions that support the writer's points.
- **Facts**: Statements whose truth can be proved or verified and that serve as evidence in a report.
- **Introduction**: The first section of a report after any front matter, such as an abstract or table of contents. In an analytical report, the writer introduces the topic to be addressed and often presents the thesis at the end of the introduction.
- **Logos**: The use of facts as evidence to appeal to an audience's logical and rational thinking; also known as *logical appeal*.
- **Objective stance**: Writing in a way that is free from bias, personal feelings, and emotional language. An objective stance is especially important in report writing.
- **Purpose**: The reason for writing. The purpose of an analytical report is to examine a subject or issue closely, often from multiple perspectives, by looking at causes and effects, by comparing and contrasting, or by examining problems and proposing solutions.
- **Statistics**: Factual statements that include numbers and often serve as evidence in a report.
- **Synthesis**: Making connections among and combining ideas, facts, statistics, and other information.
- **Thesis**: The central or main idea that you will convey in your report. The thesis is often referred to as the central claim in argumentative writing.
- **Thesis statement**: A declarative sentence (sometimes two) that states the topic, the angle you are taking, and the aspects of the topic you will cover. For a report, a thesis indicates and limits the scope of the report.

## 8.4 Annotated Student Sample: "U.S. Response to COVID-19" by Trevor Garcia

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the genre conventions of an informal analytical report.
- Analyze the organizational structure of a report and how writers develop ideas.
- Recognize how writers use evidence and objectivity to build credibility.
- Identify sources of evidence within a text and in source citations.



**FIGURE 8.3** Doctors, nurses, and corpsmen aboard the Navy hospital ship USNS *Comfort* provided intensive care for patients in spring 2020 to relieve the New York City medical system, which was overwhelmed by cases of COVID-19. (credit: "U.S. Navy Doctors, Nurses and Corpsmen Treat COVID Patients in the ICU Aboard USNS Comfort" by Navy Medicine from Washington, DC, USA/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## Introduction

The analytical report that follows was written by a student, Trevor Garcia, for a first-year composition course. Trevor's assignment was to research and analyze a contemporary issue in terms of its causes or effects. He chose to analyze the causes behind the large numbers of COVID-19 infections and deaths in the United States in 2020. The report is structured as an essay, and its format is informal.

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### Successes and Failures

> With more than 83 million cases and 1.8 million deaths at the end of 2020, COVID-19 has turned the world upside down. By the end of 2020, the United States led the world in the number of cases, at more than 20 million infections and nearly 350,000 deaths. In comparison, the second-highest number of cases was in India, which at the end of 2020 had less than half the number of COVID-19 cases despite having a population four times greater than the U.S. ("COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic," 2021). How did the United States come to have the world's worst record in this pandemic? An examination of the U.S. response shows that a reduction of experts in key positions and programs, inaction that led to equipment shortages, and inconsistent policies were three major causes of the spread of the virus and the resulting deaths.

***Introduction.*** *Informal reports follow essay structure and open with an overview.*

***Statistics as Evidence.*** *The writer gives statistics about infection rates and numbers of deaths; a comparison provides context.*

***Source Citation in APA Style: No Author.*** *A web page without a named author is cited by the title and the year.*

***Thesis Statement.*** *The rhetorical question leads to the thesis statement in the last sentence of the introduction. The thesis statement previews the organization and indicates the purpose—to analyze the causes of the U.S. response to the virus.*

### Reductions in Expert Personnel and Preparedness Programs

***Headings.*** *This heading and those that follow mark sections of the report.*

***Body.*** *The three paragraphs under this heading support the first main point in the thesis statement.*

> Epidemiologists and public health officials in the United States had long known that a global pandemic was possible.

***Topic Sentence.*** *The paragraph opens with a sentence stating the topic. The rest of this paragraph and the two that follow develop the topic chronologically.*

> In 2016, the National Security Council (NSC) published *Playbook for Early Response to High-Consequence Emerging Infectious Disease Threats and Biological Incidents*, a 69-page document on responding to diseases spreading within and outside of the United States. On January 13, 2017, the joint transition teams of outgoing president Barack Obama and then president-elect Donald Trump performed a pandemic preparedness exercise based on the playbook; however, it was never adopted by the incoming administration (Goodman & Schulkin, 2020). A year later, in February 2018, the Trump administration began to cut funding for the Prevention and Public Health Fund at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, leaving key positions unfilled. Other individuals who were fired or resigned in 2018 were the homeland security adviser, whose portfolio included global pandemics; the director for medical and biodefense preparedness; and the top official in charge of a pandemic response. None of them were replaced, thus leaving the White House with no senior person who had experience in public health (Goodman & Schulkin, 2020). Experts voiced concerns, among them Luciana Borio, director of medical and biodefense preparedness at the NSC, who spoke at a symposium marking the centennial of the 1918 influenza pandemic in May 2018: "The threat of pandemic flu is the number one health security concern," she said. "Are we ready to respond? I fear the answer is no" (Sun, 2018, final para.).

***Audience.*** *The writer assumes that his readers have a strong grasp of government and agencies within the government.*

***Synthesis.*** *The paragraph synthesizes factual evidence from two sources and cites them in APA style.*

***Expert Quotation as Supporting Evidence.*** *The expert's credentials are given, her exact words are placed in quotation marks, and the source is cited in parentheses.*

***Source Citation in APA Style: No Page Numbers.*** *Because the source of the quotation has no page numbers, the specific paragraph within the source ("final para."; alternatively, "para. 18") is provided in the parenthetical citation.*

> Cuts continued in 2019, among them a maintenance contract for ventilators in the federal emergency supply and PREDICT, a U.S. agency for international development designed to identify and prevent pandemics (Goodman & Schulkin, 2020). In July 2019, the White House eliminated the position of an American public health official in Beijing, China, who was working with China's disease control agency to help detect and contain infectious diseases. The first case of COVID-19 emerged in China four months later, on November 17, 2019.

***Development of First Main Point.*** *This paragraph continues the chronological development of the first point, using a transitional sentence and evidence to discuss the year 2019.*

> After the first U.S. coronavirus case was confirmed in 2020, the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) was named to lead a task force on a response, but after several months, he was replaced when then vice president Mike Pence was officially charged with leading the White House Coronavirus Task Force (Ballhaus & Armour, 2020). Experts who remained, including Dr. Deborah Birx and Dr. Anthony Fauci of the National Institutes of Health, were sidelined. Turnover of personnel in related government departments and agencies continued throughout 2020, leaving the country without experts in key positions to lead the pandemic response.

***Development of First Main Point.*** *This paragraph continues the chronological development of the first point, using a transitional sentence and evidence to discuss the start of the pandemic in 2020.*

### Inaction and Equipment Shortages

***Body.*** *The three paragraphs under this heading support the second main point in the thesis statement.*

> In January and February of 2020, the president's daily brief included more than a dozen detailed warnings, based on wire intercepts, computer intercepts, and satellite images by the U.S. intelligence community (Miller & Nakashima, 2020). Although senior officials began to assemble a task force, no direct action was taken until mid-March.

***Topic Sentences.*** *The paragraph opens with two sentences stating the topic that is developed in the following paragraphs.*

> The stockpile of medical equipment and personal protective equipment was dangerously low before the pandemic began. Although the federal government had paid $9.8 million to manufacturers in 2018 and 2019 to develop and produce protective masks, by April 2020 the government had not yet received a single mask (Swaine, 2020). Despite the low stockpile, a request by the head of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in early 2020 to begin contacting companies about possible shortages of necessary medical equipment, including personal protective equipment, was denied. This decision was made to avoid alarming the industry and the public and to avoid giving the impression that the administration was not prepared for the pandemic (Ballhaus & Armour, 2020).

***Topic Sentence.*** *The paragraph opens with a sentence stating the topic that is developed in the paragraph.*

***Objective Stance.*** *The writer presents evidence (facts, statistics, and examples) in mostly neutral, unemotional language, which builds trustworthiness, or ethos, with readers.*

***Synthesis.*** *The paragraph synthesizes factual evidence from two sources.*

> When former President Trump declared a national emergency on March 13, federal agencies began placing bulk orders for masks and other medical equipment. These orders led to critical shortages throughout the nation. In addition, states were instructed to acquire their own equipment and found themselves bidding against each other for the limited supplies available, leading one head of a coronavirus team composed of consulting and private equity firms to remark that "the federal stockpile was . . . supposed to be *our* stockpile. It's not supposed to be states' stockpiles that they then use" (Goodman & Schulkin, 2020, April 2, 2020).

### Policy Decisions

***Body.*** *The paragraph under this heading addresses the third main point in the thesis statement.*

> Policy decisions, too, hampered the U.S. response to the pandemic.

***Topic Sentence.*** *The paragraph opens with a sentence stating the topic that is developed in the paragraph.*

> Although the HHS and NSC recommended stay-at-home directives on February 14, directives and guidelines for social distancing were not announced until March 16, and guidelines for mask wearing were inconsistent and contradictory (Goodman & Schulkin, 2020). Implementing the recommendations was left to the discretion of state governors, resulting in uneven stay-at-home orders, business closures, school closures, and mask mandates from state to state. The lack of a consistent message from the federal government not only delegated responsibility to state and local governments but also encouraged individuals to make their own choices, further hampering containment efforts. Seeing government officials and politicians without masks, for example, led many people to conclude that masks were unnecessary. Seeing large groups of people standing together at political rallies led people to ignore social distancing in their own lives.

***Synthesis.*** *The paragraph synthesizes factual evidence from a source and examples drawn from the writer's observation.*

## Conclusion

> Although the first cases of COVID-19 were detected in the United States in January, genetic researchers later determined that the viral strain responsible for sustained transmission of the disease did not enter the country until around February 13 (Branswell, 2020), providing further evidence that the failed U.S. response to the pandemic could have been prevented. Cuts to public health staff reduced the number of experts in leadership positions. Inaction in the early months of the pandemic led to critical shortages of medical equipment and supplies. Mixed messages and inconsistent policies undermined efforts to control and contain the disease. Unfortunately, the response to the disease in 2020 cannot be changed, but 2021 looks brighter. Most people who want the vaccine—nonexistent at the beginning of the pandemic and unavailable until recently—will have received it by the end of 2021. Americans will have experienced two years of living with the coronavirus, and everyone will have been affected in some way.

***Conclusion.*** *The report concludes with a restatement of the main points given in the thesis and points to the future.*

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***References Page in APA Style.*** *All sources cited in the text of the report, and only those sources, are listed in alphabetical order with full publication information. See the Handbook for more on APA documentation style.*

## Discussion Questions

1. Trevor Garcia identifies three reasons for the failure of the United States to contain the coronavirus in 2020. What are they? Can you think of others he should have included?
2. What does Trevor use as evidence—facts, statistics, examples? What are the sources of his evidence? Are his sources credible and reliable?
3. Analyze Trevor's objectivity and bias as a writer. Is his language objective? Give examples of where he is objective and where he reveals his bias.

4. In what ways does Trevor view the U.S. response to the pandemic through the lens of critical, analytical thinking? Give examples.
5. What are three strengths of Trevor's report? What are three weaknesses?

## 8.5 Writing Process: Creating an Analytical Report

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the elements of the rhetorical situation for your report.
- Find and focus a topic to write about.
- Gather and analyze information from appropriate sources.
- Distinguish among different kinds of evidence.
- Draft a thesis and create an organizational plan.
- Compose a report that develops ideas and integrates evidence from sources.
- Give and act on productive feedback to works in progress.

You might think that writing comes easily to experienced writers—that they draft stories and college papers all at once, sitting down at the computer and having sentences flow from their fingers like water from a faucet. In reality, most writers engage in a **recursive** process, pushing forward, stepping back, and repeating steps multiple times as their ideas develop and change. In broad strokes, the steps most writers go through are these:

- **Planning and Organization**. You will have an easier time drafting if you devote time at the beginning to consider the rhetorical situation for your report, understand your assignment, gather ideas and information, draft a thesis statement, and create an organizational plan.
- **Drafting**. When you have an idea of what you want to say and the order in which you want to say it, you're ready to draft. As much as possible, keep going until you have a complete first draft of your report, resisting the urge to go back and rewrite. Save that for after you have completed a first draft.
- **Review**. Now is the time to get feedback from others, whether from your instructor, your classmates, a tutor in the writing center, your roommate, someone in your family, or someone else you trust to read your writing critically and give you honest feedback.
- **Revising**. With feedback on your draft, you are ready to revise. You may need to return to an earlier step and make large-scale revisions that involve planning, organizing, and rewriting, or you may need to work mostly on ensuring that your sentences are clear and correct.

### Considering the Rhetorical Situation

Like other kinds of writing projects, a report starts with assessing the **rhetorical situation**—the circumstance in which a writer communicates with an audience of readers about a subject. As the writer of a report, you make choices based on the purpose of your writing, the audience who will read it, the genre of the report, and the expectations of the community and culture in which you are working. A graphic organizer like Table 8.1 can help you begin.

| Rhetorical Situation Element | Brainstorming Questions | Your Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **Topic**<br>Is the topic of your report specified, or are you free to choose? | What topic or topics do you want to know more about?<br>How can you find out more about this topic or topics?<br>What constraints do you have? | |
| **Purpose**<br>What is the purpose of your report? | To analyze a subject or issue from more than one perspective?<br>To analyze a cause or an effect?<br>To examine a problem and recommend a solution?<br>To compare or contrast?<br>To conduct research and report results? | |
| **Audience**<br>Who will read your report? | Who is your primary audience—your instructor? Your classmates?<br>What can you assume your audience already knows about your topic?<br>What background information does your audience need to know?<br>How will you shape your report to connect most effectively with this audience?<br>Do you need to consider any secondary audiences, such as people outside of class?<br>If so, who are those readers? | |
| **Presentation**<br>What format should your report take? | Should you prepare a traditional written document or use another medium, such as a slide deck or video presentation?<br>Should you include visuals and other media along with text, such as figures, charts, graphs, photographs, audio, or video?<br>What other presentation requirements do you need to consider? | |

**TABLE 8.1** Considering the rhetorical situation

| Rhetorical Situation Element | Brainstorming Questions | Your Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **Context**<br>How do the time period and location affect decisions you make about your report? | What is happening in your city, county, state, area, or nation or the world that needs reporting on?<br>What current events or new information might relate to your topic?<br>Is your college or university relevant to your topic? | |
| **Culture and Community**<br>What social or cultural assumptions do you or your audience have? | How will you show awareness of your community's social and cultural expectations in your report? | |

**TABLE 8.1** Considering the rhetorical situation

## Summary of Assignment

Write an analytical report on a topic that interests you and that you want to know more about. The topic can be contemporary or historical, but it must be one that you can analyze and support with evidence from sources.

The following questions can help you think about a topic suitable for analysis:

1. Why or how did _____ happen?
2. What are the results or effects of _____?
3. Is _____ a problem? If so, why?
4. What are examples of _____ or reasons for _____?
5. How does _____ compare to or contrast with other issues, concerns, or things?

Consult and cite three to five reliable sources. The sources do not have to be scholarly for this assignment, but they must be credible, trustworthy, and unbiased. Possible sources include academic journals, newspapers, magazines, reputable websites, government publications or agency websites, and visual sources such as TED Talks. You may also use the results of an experiment or survey, and you may want to conduct interviews.

Consider whether visuals and media will enhance your report. *Can you present data you collect visually? Would a map, photograph, chart, or other graphic provide interesting and relevant support? Would video or audio allow you to present evidence that you would otherwise need to describe in words?*

***Another Lens.*** To gain another analytic view on the topic of your report, consider different people affected by it. Say, for example, that you have decided to report on recent high school graduates and the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the final months of their senior year. If you are a recent high school graduate, you might naturally gravitate toward writing about yourself and your peers. But you might also consider the adults in the lives of recent high school graduates—for example, teachers, parents, or grandparents—and how they view the same period. Or you might consider the same topic from the perspective of a college admissions department looking at their incoming freshman class.

## Quick Launch: Finding and Focusing a Topic

Coming up with a topic for a report can be daunting because you can report on nearly anything. The topic can easily get too broad, trapping you in the realm of generalizations. The trick is to find a topic that interests you and focus on an angle you can analyze in order to say something significant about it. You can use a graphic organizer to generate ideas, or you can use a concept map similar to the one featured in Writing Process:

Thinking Critically About a "Text."

### Asking the Journalist's Questions

One way to generate ideas about a topic is to ask the five W (and one H) questions, also called the **journalist's questions**: *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?* Try answering the following questions to explore a topic:

**Who** was or is involved in _____?

**What** happened/is happening with _____? **What** were/are the results of _____?

**When** did _____ happen? Is _____ happening now?

**Where** did _____ happen, or **where** is _____ happening?

**Why** did _____ happen, or **why** is _____ happening now?

**How** did _____ happen?

For example, imagine that you have decided to write your analytical report on the effect of the COVID-19 shutdown on high-school students by interviewing students on your college campus. Your questions and answers might look something like those in Table 8.2:

| Question | Sample Answer |
|---|---|
| **Who** was involved in the 2020 COVID-19 shutdown? | Nearly every student of my generation was sent home to learn in 2020. My school was one of the first in the United States to close. We were in school one day, and then we were all sent home, wondering when we would go back. |
| **What** happened during the shutdown?<br>**What** were/are the results of the shutdown? | Schools closed in March 2020. Students started online learning. Not all of them had computers. Teachers had to figure out how to teach online. All activities were canceled—sports, music, theater, prom, graduation celebrations—pretty much everything. Social life went online. Life as we knew it changed and still hasn't returned to normal. |
| **When** did the shutdown happen? Is it happening now? | Everything was canceled from March through the end of the school year. Although many colleges have in-person classes, many of us are doing most of our classes online, even if we are living on campus. This learning situation hasn't been easy. I need to decide whether I want to focus on then or now. |
| **Where** did the shutdown happen, or **where** is it still happening? | Schools were closed all over the United States and all over the world. Some schools are still closed. |

**TABLE 8.2** Journalist's questions and answers

| Question | Sample Answer |
|---|---|
| **Why** did the shutdown happen, or **why** is it happening now? | Schools closed because the virus was highly contagious, and no one knew much about how many people would get sick from it or how sick they would get. Many schools were still closed for much of the 2020–21 school year. |
| **How** was the shutdown implemented? **How** is it still in effect? | Governors of many states, including mine, issued orders for schools to close. Now colleges are making their own plans. |

**TABLE 8.2** Journalist's questions and answers

### Asking Focused Questions

Another way to find a topic is to ask focused questions about it. For example, you might ask the following questions about the effect of the 2020 pandemic shutdown on recent high school graduates:

- How did the shutdown change students' feelings about their senior year?
- How did the shutdown affect their decisions about post-graduation plans, such as work or going to college?
- How did the shutdown affect their academic performance in high school or in college?
- How did/do they feel about continuing their education?
- How did the shutdown affect their social relationships?

Any of these questions might be developed into a thesis for an analytical report. Table 8.3 shows more examples of broad topics and focusing questions.

| Broad Topics | Focusing Questions |
|---|---|
| Sports, such as college athletes and academic performance | How does participating in a sport affect the academic performance of college athletes?<br>Does participation help or hurt students' grades?<br>Does participation improve athletes' study habits? |
| Culture and society, such as cancel culture | Who is affected by cancel culture? Who is canceled, and who is empowered?<br>How do the lives of people who are canceled change? How do the lives of people who are canceling others change?<br>How does cancel culture affect community attitudes and actions? |

**TABLE 8.3** Broad topics and focusing questions

| Broad Topics | Focusing Questions |
|---|---|
| History and historical events, such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 | How did voting patterns change after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965?<br>How has the law been challenged?<br>How have voting patterns changed in the years since the law was challenged? |
| Health and the environment, such as a plant-based diet | What are the known health benefits of a plant-based diet?<br>What are the effects of a plant-based diet on the environment?<br>How much money can a person save (or not save) by adopting a plant-based diet, such as vegetarianism or veganism? |
| Entertainment and the arts, such as TV talent shows | How do TV talent shows affect the careers of their contestants?<br>How many of the contestants continue to develop their talent?<br>How many continue to perform several years after their appearance on a show? |
| Technologies and objects, such as smartphones | Do people depend on smartphones more than they did a year ago? Five years ago?<br>What has changed about people's relationships with their phones? |

**TABLE 8.3** Broad topics and focusing questions

## Gathering Information

Because they are based on information and evidence, most analytical reports require you to do at least some research. Depending on your assignment, you may be able to find reliable information online, or you may need to do primary research by conducting an experiment, a survey, or interviews. For example, if you live among students in their late teens and early twenties, consider what they can tell you about their lives that you might be able to analyze. Returning to or graduating from high school, starting college, or returning to college in the midst of a global pandemic has provided them, for better or worse, with educational and social experiences that are shared widely by people their age and very different from the experiences older adults had at the same age.

Some report assignments will require you to do formal research, an activity that involves finding sources and evaluating them for reliability, reading them carefully, taking notes, and citing all words you quote and ideas you borrow. See Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources for detailed instruction on conducting research.

Whether you conduct in-depth research or not, keep track of the ideas that come to you and the information you learn. You can write or dictate notes using an app on your phone or computer, or you can jot notes in a journal if you prefer pen and paper. Then, when you are ready to begin organizing your report, you will have a record of your thoughts and information. Always track the sources of information you gather, whether from printed or digital material or from a person you interviewed, so that you can return to the sources if you need more information. And always credit the sources in your report.

### Kinds of Evidence

Depending on your assignment and the topic of your report, certain kinds of evidence may be more effective than others. Other kinds of evidence may even be required. As a general rule, choose evidence that is rooted in verifiable facts and experience. In addition, select the evidence that best supports the topic and your approach to the topic, be sure the evidence meets your instructor's requirements, and cite any evidence you use that comes from a source. The following list contains different kinds of frequently used evidence and an example of each.

- **Definition**: An explanation of a key word, idea, or concept.

  *The U.S. Census Bureau refers to a "young adult" as a person between 18 and 34 years old.*

- **Example**: An illustration of an idea or concept.

  *The college experience in the fall of 2020 was starkly different from that of previous years. Students who lived in residence halls were assigned to small pods. On-campus dining services were limited. Classes were small and physically distanced or conducted online. Parties were banned.*

- **Expert opinion**: A statement by a professional in the field whose opinion is respected.

  *According to Louise Aronson, MD, geriatrician and author of* Elderhood*, people over the age of 65 are the happiest of any age group, reporting "less stress, depression, worry, and anger, and more enjoyment, happiness, and satisfaction" (255).*

- **Fact**: Information that can be proven correct or accurate.

  *According to data collected by the NCAA, the academic success of Division I college athletes between 2015 and 2019 was consistently high (Hosick).*

- **Interview**: An in-person, phone, or remote conversation that involves an interviewer posing questions to another person or people.

  *During our interview, I asked Betty about living without a cell phone during the pandemic. She said that before the pandemic, she hadn't needed a cell phone in her daily activities, but she soon realized that she, and people like her, were increasingly at a disadvantage.*

- **Quotation**: The exact words of an author or a speaker.

  *In response to whether she thought she needed a cell phone, Betty said, "I got along just fine without a cell phone when I could go everywhere in person. The shift to needing a phone came suddenly, and I don't have extra money in my budget to get one."*

- **Statistics**: A numerical fact or item of data.

  *The Pew Research Center reported that approximately 25 percent of Hispanic Americans and 17 percent of Black Americans relied on smartphones for online access, compared with 12 percent of White people.*

- **Survey**: A structured interview in which respondents (the people who answer the survey questions) are all asked the same questions, either in person or through print or electronic means, and their answers tabulated and interpreted. Surveys discover attitudes, beliefs, or habits of the general public or segments of the population.

  *A survey of 3,000 mobile phone users in October 2020 showed that 54 percent of respondents used their phones for messaging, while 40 percent used their phones for calls (Steele).*

- **Visuals**: Graphs, figures, tables, photographs and other images, diagrams, charts, maps, videos, and audio recordings, among others.

## Thesis and Organization

### Drafting a Thesis

When you have a grasp of your topic, move on to the next phase: drafting a thesis. The thesis is the central idea that you will explore and support in your report; all paragraphs in your report should relate to it. In an essay-style analytical report, you will likely express this main idea in a **thesis statement** of one or two sentences toward the end of the introduction.

For example, if you found that the academic performance of student athletes was higher than that of non-athletes, you might write the following thesis statement:

> *Although a common stereotype is that college athletes barely pass their classes, an analysis of athletes' academic performance indicates that athletes drop fewer classes, earn higher grades, and are more likely to be on track to graduate in four years when compared with their non-athlete peers.*

The thesis statement often previews the organization of your writing. For example, in his report on the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Trevor Garcia wrote the following thesis statement, which detailed the central idea of his report:

> *An examination of the U.S. response shows that a reduction of experts in key positions and programs, inaction that led to equipment shortages, and inconsistent policies were three major causes of the spread of the virus and the resulting deaths.*

After you draft a thesis statement, ask these questions, and examine your thesis as you answer them. Revise your draft as needed.

- **Is it interesting?** A thesis for a report should answer a question that is worth asking and piques curiosity.
- **Is it precise and specific?** If you are interested in reducing pollution in a nearby lake, explain how to stop the zebra mussel infestation or reduce the frequent algae blooms.
- **Is it manageable?** Try to split the difference between having too much information and not having enough.

### Organizing Your Ideas



As a next step, organize the points you want to make in your report and the evidence to support them. Use an outline, a diagram, or another organizational tool, such as Table 8.4.

| Report Section | Content | Your Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Introduction (usually one paragraph, but can be two) | Draw readers in with an overview; an anecdote; a question (open-ended, not yes-or-no); a description of an event, scene, or situation; or a quotation.<br>Provide necessary background here or in the first paragraph of the body, defining terms as needed.<br>State the tentative thesis. | |
| First Main Point | Give the first main point related to the thesis.<br>Develop the point in paragraphs supported by evidence. | |

**TABLE 8.4** Organization plan

| Report Section | Content | Your Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Second Main Point | Give the second main point related to the thesis.<br>Develop the point in paragraphs supported by evidence. | |
| Additional Main Points | Give the third and additional main point(s) related to the thesis.<br>Develop the points in paragraphs supported by evidence. | |
| Conclusion | Conclude with a summary of the main points, a recommended course of action, and/or a review of the introduction and restatement of the thesis. | |

**TABLE 8.4** Organization plan

## Drafting an Analytical Report

With a tentative thesis, an organization plan, and evidence, you are ready to begin drafting. For this assignment, you will report information, analyze it, and draw conclusions about the cause of something, the effect of something, or the similarities and differences between two different things.

### Introduction

Some students write the introduction first; others save it for last. Whenever you choose to write the introduction, use it to draw readers into your report. Make the topic of your report clear, and be concise and sincere. End the introduction with your thesis statement. Depending on your topic and the type of report, you can write an effective introduction in several ways. Opening a report with an overview is a tried-and-true strategy, as shown in the following example on the U.S. response to COVID-19 by Trevor Garcia. Notice how he opens the introduction with statistics and a comparison and follows it with a question that leads to the thesis statement (underlined).

> With more than 83 million cases and 1.8 million deaths at the end of 2020, COVID-19 has turned the world upside down. By the end of 2020, the United States led the world in the number of cases, at more than 20 million infections and nearly 350,000 deaths. In comparison, the second-highest number of cases was in India, which at the end of 2020 had less than half the number of COVID-19 cases despite having a population four times greater than the U.S. ("COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic," 2021). How did the United States come to have the world's worst record in this pandemic? An examination of the U.S. response shows that a reduction of experts in key positions and programs, inaction that led to equipment shortages, and inconsistent policies were three major causes of the spread of the virus and the resulting deaths.

For a less formal report, you might want to open with a question, quotation, or brief story. The following example opens with an anecdote that leads to the thesis statement (underlined).

> Betty stood outside the salon, wondering how to get in. It was June of 2020, and the door was locked. A sign posted on the door provided a phone number for her to call to be let in, but at 81, Betty had lived her life without a cell phone. Betty's day-to-day life had been hard during the pandemic, but she had planned for this haircut and was looking forward to it; she had a mask on and hand sanitizer in her car. Now she couldn't get in the door, and she was discouraged. In that moment, Betty realized how much Americans' dependence on cell phones had grown in the months since the pandemic began. Betty and thousands of other senior citizens who could not afford cell phones or did not have the technological skills and support they needed were being left behind in a society that was increasingly reliant on technology.

### Body Paragraphs: Point, Evidence, Analysis

Use the body paragraphs of your report to present evidence that supports your thesis. A reliable pattern to keep in mind for developing the body paragraphs of a report is *point*, *evidence*, and *analysis*:

- The **point** is the central idea of the paragraph, usually given in a **topic sentence** stated in your own words at or toward the beginning of the paragraph. Each topic sentence should relate to the thesis.
- The **evidence** you provide develops the paragraph and supports the point made in the topic sentence. Include details, examples, quotations, paraphrases, and summaries from sources if you conducted formal research. Synthesize the evidence you include by showing in your sentences the connections between sources.
- The **analysis** comes at the end of the paragraph. In your own words, draw a conclusion about the evidence you have provided and how it relates to the topic sentence.

The paragraph below illustrates the point, evidence, and analysis pattern. Drawn from a report about concussions among football players, the paragraph opens with a topic sentence about the NCAA and NFL and their responses to studies about concussions. The paragraph is developed with evidence from three sources. It concludes with a statement about helmets and players' safety.

> The NCAA and NFL have taken steps forward and backward to respond to studies about the danger of concussions among players. Responding to the deaths of athletes, documented brain damage, lawsuits, and public outcry (Buckley et al., 2017), the NCAA instituted protocols to reduce potentially dangerous hits during football games and to diagnose traumatic head injuries more quickly and effectively. Still, it has allowed players to wear more than one style of helmet during a season, raising the risk of injury because of imperfect fit. At the professional level, the NFL developed a helmet-rating system in 2011 in an effort to reduce concussions, but it continued to allow players to wear helmets with a wide range of safety ratings. The NFL's decision created an opportunity for researchers to look at the relationship between helmet safety ratings and concussions. Cocello et al. (2016) reported that players who wore helmets with a lower safety rating had more concussions than players who wore helmets with a higher safety rating, and they concluded that safer helmets are a key factor in reducing concussions.

### Developing Paragraph Content

In the body paragraphs of your report, you will likely use examples, draw comparisons, show contrasts, or analyze causes and effects to develop your topic.

Paragraphs developed with **Example** are common in reports. The paragraph below, adapted from a report by student John Zwick on the mental health of soldiers deployed during wartime, draws examples from three sources.

> Throughout the Vietnam War, military leaders claimed that the mental health of soldiers was stable and that men who suffered from combat fatigue, now known as PTSD, were getting the help they needed. For example, the *New York Times* (1966) quoted military leaders who claimed that mental fatigue among enlisted men had "virtually ceased to be a problem," occurring at a rate far below that of World War II. Ayres (1969) reported that Brigadier General Spurgeon Neel, chief American medical officer in Vietnam, explained that soldiers experiencing combat fatigue were admitted to the psychiatric ward, sedated for up to 36 hours, and given a counseling session with a doctor who reassured them that the rest was well deserved and that they were ready to return to their units. Although experts outside the military saw profound damage to soldiers' psyches when they returned home (Halloran, 1970), the military stayed the course, treating acute cases expediently and showing little concern for the cumulative effect of combat stress on individual soldiers.

When you analyze **causes and effects**, you explain the reasons that certain things happened and/or their results. The report by Trevor Garcia on the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 is an example: his report examines the reasons the United States failed to control the coronavirus. The paragraph below, adapted from another student's report written for an environmental policy course, explains the effect of white settlers' views of forest management on New England.

> The early colonists' European ideas about forest management dramatically changed the New England landscape. White settlers saw the New World as virgin, unused land, even though indigenous people had been drawing on its resources for generations by using fire subtly to improve hunting, employing construction techniques that left ancient trees intact, and farming small, efficient fields that left the surrounding landscape largely unaltered. White settlers' desire to develop wood-built and wood-burning homesteads surrounded by large farm fields led to forestry practices and techniques that resulted in the removal of old-growth trees. These practices defined the way the forests look today.

**Compare and contrast** paragraphs are useful when you wish to examine similarities and differences. You can use both comparison and contrast in a single paragraph, or you can use one or the other. The paragraph below, adapted from a student report on the rise of populist politicians, compares the rhetorical styles of populist politicians Huey Long and Donald Trump.

> A key similarity among populist politicians is their rejection of carefully crafted sound bites and erudite vocabulary typically associated with candidates for high office. Huey Long and Donald Trump are two examples. When he ran for president, Long captured attention through his wild gesticulations on almost every word, dramatically varying volume, and heavily accented, folksy expressions, such as "The only way to be able to feed the balance of the people is to make that man come back and bring back some of that grub that he ain't got no business with!" In addition, Long's down-home persona made him a credible voice to represent the common people against the country's rich, and his buffoonish style allowed him to express his radical ideas without sounding anti-communist alarm bells. Similarly, Donald Trump chose to speak informally in his campaign appearances, but the persona he projected was that of a fast-talking, domineering salesman. His frequent use of personal anecdotes, rhetorical questions, brief asides, jokes, personal attacks, and false claims made his speeches disjointed, but they gave the feeling of a running conversation between him and his audience. For example, in a 2015 speech, Trump said, "They just built a hotel in Syria. Can you believe this? They built a hotel. When I have to build a hotel, I pay interest. They don't have to pay interest, because they took the oil that, when we left Iraq, I said we should've taken" ("Our Country Needs" 2020). While very different in substance, Long and Trump adopted similar styles that positioned them as the antithesis of typical politicians and their worldviews.

### Conclusion

The conclusion should draw the threads of your report together and make its significance clear to readers. You

may wish to review the introduction, restate the thesis, recommend a course of action, point to the future, or use some combination of these. Whichever way you approach it, the conclusion should not head in a new direction. The following example is the conclusion from a student's report on the effect of a book about environmental movements in the United States.

> Since its publication in 1949, environmental activists of various movements have found wisdom and inspiration in Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*. These audiences included Leopold's conservationist contemporaries, environmentalists of the 1960s and 1970s, and the environmental justice activists who rose in the 1980s and continue to make their voices heard today. These audiences have read the work differently: conservationists looked to the author as a leader, environmentalists applied his wisdom to their movement, and environmental justice advocates have pointed out the flaws in Leopold's thinking. Even so, like those before them, environmental justice activists recognize the book's value as a testament to taking the long view and eliminating biases that may cloud an objective assessment of humanity's interdependent relationship with the environment.

### Citing Sources

You must cite the sources of information and data included in your report. Citations must appear in both the text and a bibliography at the end of the report.

The sample paragraphs in the previous section include examples of in-text citation using APA documentation style. Trevor Garcia's report on the U.S. response to COVID-19 in 2020 also uses APA documentation style for citations in the text of the report and the list of references at the end. Your instructor may require another documentation style, such as MLA or Chicago.

## Peer Review: Getting Feedback from Readers

You will likely engage in peer review with other students in your class by sharing drafts and providing feedback to help spot strengths and weaknesses in your reports. For peer review within a class, your instructor may provide assignment-specific questions or a form for you to complete as you work together.

If you have a writing center on your campus, it is well worth your time to make an online or in-person appointment with a tutor. You'll receive valuable feedback and improve your ability to review not only your report but your overall writing.

Another way to receive feedback on your report is to ask a friend or family member to read your draft. Provide a list of questions or a form such as the one in Table 8.5 for them to complete as they read.

| Questions for Reviewer | Comment or Suggestion |
|---|---|
| Does the introduction interest you in the topic of the report? | |
| Can you find the thesis statement? Underline it for the writer. | |
| Does the thesis indicate the purpose of the report? | |
| Does each body paragraph start with a point stated in the writer's own words? Does that point relate to the thesis?<br><br>Mark paragraphs that don't have a clear point. | |

**TABLE 8.5** Peer review questions

| Questions for Reviewer | Comment or Suggestion |
|---|---|
| Does each body paragraph support the main point of the paragraph with details and evidence, such as facts, statistics, or examples?<br>Mark paragraphs that need more support and/or explanation. | |
| Does each body paragraph end with an analysis in the writer's own words that draws a conclusion?<br>Mark paragraphs that need analysis. | |
| Where do you get lost or confused?<br>Mark anything that is unclear. | |
| Does the report flow from one point to the next? | |
| Does the organization make sense to you? | |
| Does the conclusion wrap up the main points of the report and connect to the thesis?<br>Mark anything in the conclusion that seems irrelevant. | |
| Does the report have an engaging title? | |

**TABLE 8.5** Peer review questions

## Revising: Using Reviewers' Responses to Revise your Work

When you receive comments from readers, including your instructor, read each comment carefully to understand what is being asked. Try not to get defensive, even though this response is completely natural. Remember that readers are like coaches who want you to succeed. They are looking at your writing from outside your own head, and they can identify strengths and weaknesses that you may not have noticed. Keep track of the strengths and weaknesses your readers point out. Pay special attention to those that more than one reader identifies, and use this information to improve your report and later assignments.

As you analyze each response, be open to suggestions for improvement, and be willing to make significant revisions to improve your writing. Perhaps you need to revise your thesis statement to better reflect the content of your draft. Maybe you need to return to your sources to better understand a point you're trying to make in order to develop a paragraph more fully. Perhaps you need to rethink the organization, move paragraphs around, and add transition sentences.

Below is an early draft of part of Trevor Garcia's report with comments from a peer reviewer:

> To truly understand what happened, it's important first to look back to the years leading up to the pandemic. Epidemiologists and public health officials had long known that a global pandemic was possible. In 2016, the U.S. National Security Council (NSC) published a 69-page document with the intimidating title *Playbook for Early Response to High-Consequence Emerging Infectious Disease Threats and Biological Incidents*. The document's two sections address responses to "emerging disease threats that start or are circulating in another country but not yet confirmed within U.S. territorial borders" and to "emerging disease threats within our nation's borders." On 13 January 2017, the joint Obama-Trump transition teams performed a pandemic preparedness exercise; however, the playbook was never adopted by the incoming administration.

***Peer Review Comment:*** *Do the words in quotation marks need to be a direct quotation? It seems like a paraphrase would work here.*

***Peer Review Comment:*** *I'm getting lost in the details about the playbook. What's the Obama-Trump transition team?*

> In February 2018, the administration began to cut funding for the Prevention and Public Health Fund at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; cuts to other health agencies continued throughout 2018, with funds diverted to unrelated projects such as housing for detained immigrant children.

***Peer Review Comment:*** *This paragraph has only one sentence, and it's more like an example. It needs a topic sentence and more development.*

> Three months later, Luciana Borio, director of medical and biodefense preparedness at the NSC, spoke at a symposium marking the centennial of the 1918 influenza pandemic. "The threat of pandemic flu is the number one health security concern," she said. "Are we ready to respond? I fear the answer is no."

***Peer Review Comment:*** *This paragraph is very short and a lot like the previous paragraph in that it's a single example. It needs a topic sentence. Maybe you can combine them?*

***Peer Review Comment:*** *Be sure to cite the quotation.*

Reading these comments and those of others, Trevor decided to combine the three short paragraphs into one paragraph focusing on the fact that the United States knew a pandemic was possible but was unprepared for it. He developed the paragraph, using the short paragraphs as evidence and connecting the sentences and evidence with transitional words and phrases. Finally, he added in-text citations in APA documentation style to credit his sources. The revised paragraph is below:

> Epidemiologists and public health officials in the United States had long known that a global pandemic was possible. In 2016, the National Security Council (NSC) published *Playbook for Early Response to High-Consequence Emerging Infectious Disease Threats and Biological Incidents*, a 69-page document on responding to diseases spreading within and outside of the United States. On January 13, 2017, the joint transition teams of outgoing president Barack Obama and then president-elect Donald Trump performed a pandemic preparedness exercise based on the playbook; however, it was never adopted by the incoming administration (Goodman & Schulkin, 2020). A year later, in February 2018, the Trump administration began to cut funding for the Prevention and Public Health Fund at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, leaving key positions unfilled. Other individuals who were fired or resigned in 2018 were the homeland security adviser, whose portfolio included global pandemics; the director for medical and biodefense preparedness; and the top official in charge of a pandemic response. None of them were replaced, leaving the White House with no senior person who had experience in public health (Goodman & Schulkin, 2020). Experts voiced concerns, among them Luciana Borio, director of medical and biodefense preparedness at the NSC, who spoke at a symposium marking the centennial of the 1918 influenza pandemic in May 2018: "The threat of pandemic flu is the number one health security concern," she said. "Are we ready to respond? I fear the answer is no" (Sun, 2018, final para.).

A final word on working with reviewers' comments: as you consider your readers' suggestions, remember, too,

that *you* remain the author. You are free to disregard suggestions that you think will not improve your writing. If you choose to disregard comments from your instructor, consider submitting a note explaining your reasons with the final draft of your report.

## 8.6 Editing Focus: Commas with Nonessential and Essential Information

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Distinguish between essential and nonessential information in sentences.
- Use commas for clearer, more effective sentences.

A comma is a mark of separation. It alerts readers to a brief pause or pauses within a sentence that is part of your analytical report.

### Nonessential and Essential information

**Nonessential information** refers to information within a sentence that is *not* necessary for the reader to understand its meaning. **Essential information** refers to information within a sentence that *is* necessary for the reader to understand its meaning.

#### Nonessential Information

Placing commas around a word or group of words within a sentence usually indicates that the information is not necessary for readers to understand the sentence's meaning. In the example below, the underlined words refer to and explain the phrase *current math curriculum*, but they can be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence: the math curriculum currently in use isn't meeting current needs. The information is interesting and perhaps useful, but it is "extra" and does not change the basic meaning of the sentence.

> The current math curriculum, which was adopted by the school district 10 years ago, no longer meets the needs of the students.

#### Essential Information

Certain words in a sentence are often necessary for readers to understand its meaning. In the example below, the word *current* was removed from between the words *The* and *math* and replaced by the underlined words that tell readers *which* curriculum no longer meets students' needs. It is essential because without it, confusion may arise about which math curriculum no longer meets students' needs.

> The math curriculum that the district adopted 10 years ago no longer meets the needs of the students.

### To Comma or Not to Comma?

Place commas around nonessential information, but not around essential information. You can test whether information is nonessential by removing the information. If the meaning of the sentence is unchanged, the information is nonessential. If the meaning becomes too general or changes in any way, the information is essential. Often, nonessential information is introduced with the word *which* and essential information with *that*.

#### Place Commas around Nonessential Information

Place commas around information that is not essential to the meaning of a sentence, as illustrated in the following sentences:

- The entire math department, which consists of 16 teachers and 7 staff members, has requested a review of the curriculum.
- The department chair, who has led the math department for 11 years, has agreed to the teachers' request.
- The curriculum will become effective in June, when the school year is finished.

### Do Not Place Commas around Essential Information

Do not place commas around information that is essential to the meaning of a sentence, as illustrated in the following sentences:

- According to the department chair, the math curriculum needs to focus on skills that students need after high school graduation.
- The math teachers who teach Algebra 1 and Algebra 2 have requested a review of the curriculum.
- The teachers are concerned that students are not retaining what they have learned.
- The department has consulted the curriculum expert Malcolm Green.

See Punctuation for more on commas.

### Practice Using Commas

Read each of the following sentences. Decide whether the underlined portion of each sentence is nonessential or essential. Place commas before, after, or around the nonessential information as appropriate.

1. The department has consulted the curriculum expert Malcolm Green whose textbook is widely used.
2. Two members of the math department Janelle Brady and Tye Lavalle are retiring next year.
3. The textbooks that are now in use are outdated.
4. Students have given feedback on the online classes that have replaced in-person classes.
5. The math department now offers more evening classes which attract more students and fewer summer classes.
6. Several instructors who teach math also teach computer science classes.

## 8.7 Evaluation: Reviewing the Final Draft

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Evaluate feedback on your report as a whole.
- Apply another reader's response to the rhetorical choices you made as a writer.

When you have finished revising and editing your report, have a friend or classmate evaluate it using the following rubric, which is similar to the one your instructor might use. At the end of the rubric is a section for your reader to offer additional feedback or expand on the reasoning behind their assessment. Pay attention to the feedback, and ask questions if something isn't clear. Then, revise your paper again, using the feedback you find helpful.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: commas with nonessential and essential information, as discussed in Section 8.6. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways | The introduction sparks interest and leads expertly to a clear, intriguing thesis. All main points are expertly developed in body paragraphs with clear central points and fact-based, reliable evidence, which is analyzed appropriately and thoroughly. Appropriate transitions clearly connect ideas and evidence, which is abundant and integrated smoothly into the sentences. | The topic of the report demonstrates superior understanding of the purpose. The report consistently shows expert awareness of audience, context, and community expectations. The presentation is highly appropriate to the content. The writer's voice is objective and trustworthy. Language is consistently clear and appropriate. Correct citations are included in the text and bibliography. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: commas with nonessential and essential information, as discussed in Section 8.6. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The introduction sparks interest and leads smoothly to a clear thesis. Most main points are well developed in body paragraphs with clear central points and solid, sufficient evidence, which is analyzed adequately. Appropriate transitions connect ideas and evidence, which is integrated smoothly into most sentences. | The topic of the report demonstrates comprehensive understanding of the purpose. The report usually shows awareness of audience, context, and community expectations. The presentation is appropriate to the content. The writer's voice is objective and trustworthy. Language is usually clear and appropriate. Correct citations are included in the text and bibliography |

**TABLE 8.6**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3**<br><br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: commas with nonessential and essential information, as discussed in Section 8.6. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The introduction may spark some interest and leads to a fairly clear thesis. Most main points are stated, but some may not be fully developed in body paragraphs, which may lack sufficient evidence or adequate analysis. Appropriate transitions connect some ideas and evidence, which is integrated inconsistently into sentences. | The topic of the report demonstrates understanding of the purpose. The report shows some, but possibly inconsistent, awareness of audience, context, and community expectations. The presentation is generally appropriate to the content. The writer's voice strays occasionally from objectivity and trustworthiness, but language is generally clear. Some citations may be incorrect or missing. |

**TABLE 8.6**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2 Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: commas with nonessential and essential information, as discussed in Section 8.6. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The introduction may be somewhat interesting but may lack a smooth transition to the thesis. Main points are missing from some body paragraphs, which may have no discernible central point and are insufficiently developed. Inappropriate or insufficient transitions minimally connect ideas and evidence, which is poorly integrated into sentences. Language is often confusing or inappropriate. | The topic of the report demonstrates a weak understanding of the purpose. The report shows little awareness of audience, context, and community expectations. The presentation may be somewhat appropriate to the content. The writer's voice is only occasionally objective and trustworthy. Citations are incomplete, incorrect, or missing. |
| **1 Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: commas with nonessential and essential information, as discussed in Section 8.6. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The introduction, if it is present, may be somewhat interesting but lacks a thesis. Most or all of the body paragraphs have no central point and are undeveloped. There are no clear connections among ideas and evidence, which is insufficient, unconvincing, and poorly integrated into the sentences. | The topic of the report demonstrates poor or no understanding of the purpose. The report shows little or no awareness of audience, context, or community expectations. The presentation is inappropriate to content. The writer's voice is neither objective nor trustworthy. Language is confusing or inappropriate. Citations are missing or incorrect. |

**TABLE 8.6**

## 8.8 Spotlight on … Discipline-Specific and Technical Language

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the role of discipline-specific and technical language in various situations and contexts.
- Implement purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, and word choice.
- Pursue options for publishing your report.

Proficient report writers in all academic disciplines and professions use language that is clear, direct, economical, and conventional. Moreover, they often use a specialized vocabulary to convey information to others in their field. These technical words allow specialists to communicate precisely and efficiently with other experts, but such terms can be confusing to nonspecialists. The following guidelines can help you shape the language of a report in a social science, natural science, or technical field:

- **Define disciplinary and technical terms.** For example, in a report about computer storage, you might

need to define terms such as *kilobyte*, *terabyte*, *gigabyte*, and *megabyte*. In the following example, the writer defines these terms.

> Computer storage space is measured in units called kilobytes (KB). Each KB equals 1,024 "bytes," or approximately 1000 single typewriter characters. Therefore, one KB equals about 180 English words, or a little less than half of a single-spaced typed page, or maybe three minutes of fast typing. One terabyte (TB) is 1024 gigabytes (GB), one GB is 1024 megabytes (MB), and one MB is 1024 KB.

- **Write out full names the first time you use them, followed by abbreviations or acronyms in parentheses.** Then you can use the abbreviation or acronym throughout the rest of the report. For example, write out *U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)* or *Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)* the first time you refer to it, and use *USDA* or *OSHA* subsequently. In the previous example about computer storage, the writer used the abbreviations for KB, TB, GB, and MB after writing out the full words. The sentence below, from Trevor Garcia's report, gives another example:

  > After the first U.S. coronavirus case was confirmed in 2020, the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) was named to lead a task force on a response, but after several months he was replaced when then vice president Mike Pence was officially charged with leading the White House Coronavirus Task Force (Ballhaus & Armour, 2020).

- **Write in third-person point of view.** Third-person point of view will help you use objective language that is free of value judgments and emotional responses, as demonstrated in the following examples:

  > The causes of obesity are complex and involve multiple factors, including genetics, underlying health conditions, cultural attitudes toward food and exercise, access to healthy food and health care, safe outdoor spaces, income, and leisure time.

  > The survey respondents self-identified as cisgender female (153), cisgender male (131), gender nonbinary (12), and transgender (4).

- **Consider occasional use of the passive voice.** Traditionally, writers in the sciences and technical fields have used the passive voice for objectivity and neutrality. In the **passive voice**, the subject of the sentence is acted upon; in the **active voice**, the subject acts. Increasingly, scientific and technical writers use the active voice in the introduction and conclusion sections of reports, which are more interpretative. They use the passive voice in the method and results sections, which are more straight-up reporting.

Notice that by using the passive voice, the writer is able to avoid naming the person or group who conducted the survey. The passive voice is a technique that writers often use when they don't want to make the name of an individual or group public. See Clear and Effective Sentences for more on passive and active voice.

**Passive voice:** A survey of 300 students was conducted at a large state university in the southern United States.

**Active voice:** We conducted a survey of 300 students at a large state university in the southern United States.

- **Pay attention to the details of meaning, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics.** Each discipline values precision and correctness, and each has its own specialized vocabulary for talking about knowledge. Writers are expected to use terms precisely and to spell them correctly. Your writing will gain greater respect when it reflects standard grammar, punctuation, and mechanics.

## Publish Your Report

Now that you have completed all stages of your report, you may want to think about sharing it with students at your school or other colleges. Your college may have a journal that publishes undergraduate research work. If so, find out about submitting your work. Also, listed here are some of the many publications that feature undergraduate student research. Check them out.

- *Papers & Publications: Interdisciplinary Journal of Undergraduate Research (https://openstax.org/r/papersandpublications)* (accepts work from students in the southeastern United States)
- *Journal of Undergraduate Research (https://openstax.org/r/journalofugresearch)* (peer-reviewed undergraduate journal; accepts research work in all subjects)
- *Journal of Student Research (https://openstax.org/r/journalofstudentresearch)* (accepts student work from high school through graduate school)
- *Crossing Borders: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Undergraduate Scholarship (https://openstax.org/r/crossingborders)* (published at Kansas State University; accepts student research in all disciplines from undergraduates throughout the country)
- *1890: A Journal of Undergraduate Research (https://openstax.org/r/1890UGresearch)* (accepts undergraduate works of research, creative writing, poetry, reviews, and art)

## 8.9 Portfolio: Evidence and Objectivity

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Write about the development of your composing processes.
- Write about how composing processes affect your work.
- Write about your objectivity as a writer.

As you complete your report, think critically about your writing process. Watch *An Introduction to Reflective Writing (https://openstax.org/r/anintroductionreflectivewriting)*, and reflect on what you created from the first step of discovering ideas to the last steps of composing and editing the final draft.

### Reflective Task: Lessons Learned

As you add your analytical report to your portfolio, write either a cover letter or a journal entry in which you respond to the following questions:

- How did you choose the topic for your report? Did you have to narrow or expand it?
- What methods did you use to gather ideas about your topic? What outside sources did you consult to gather information about your topic?
- How did you settle on your thesis? Did you rewrite it multiple times?
- What strategies did you use to organize your report?
- What strategies did you use to develop paragraphs? What difficulties, if any, did you encounter?
- How challenging was it for you to adopt an objective stance? Did you recognize your own biases? Was it difficult to write in third-person point of view?
- How did input from peers and other readers affect your drafting and revision processes? What specific constructive criticism did you receive that helped you?
- In what ways was this report easier or harder to write than other papers you have written?
- What could you have done differently to make writing your report easier or more effective?

## Further Reading

The following books are just a few examples of in-depth book-length reporting.

Boo, Katherine. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*. Random House, 2012.

Desmond, Matthew. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Crown, 2016.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. Metropolitan Books, 2001.

Macy, Beth. *Dopesick: Dealers, Doctors, and the Drug Company That Addicted America*. Little, Brown, 2018.

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. Random House, 2010.

## Works Cited

"About." *Barbara Ehrenreich*, Hachette Book Group, www.barbaraehrenreich.com/.

Fowler, H. Ramsey, and Jane E. Aaron. *The Little, Brown Handbook*. 13th ed., Pearson, 2016.

McClure, Laura. "Fact-Checking 101." *TED-Ed Blog*, TED-Ed, 30 Mar. 2017, blog.ed.ted.com/2017/03/30/factchecking-101/.

"Professional, Technical Writing." *OWL: The Purdue Online Writing Lab*, Purdue U, 2021, owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/professional_technical_writing/index.html.

"Reflective Writing in Education." *Research and Learning Online*, Monash U, www.monash.edu/rlo/assignment-samples/education/education-reflective-writing.

# Rhetorical Analysis: Interpreting the Art of Rhetoric

9

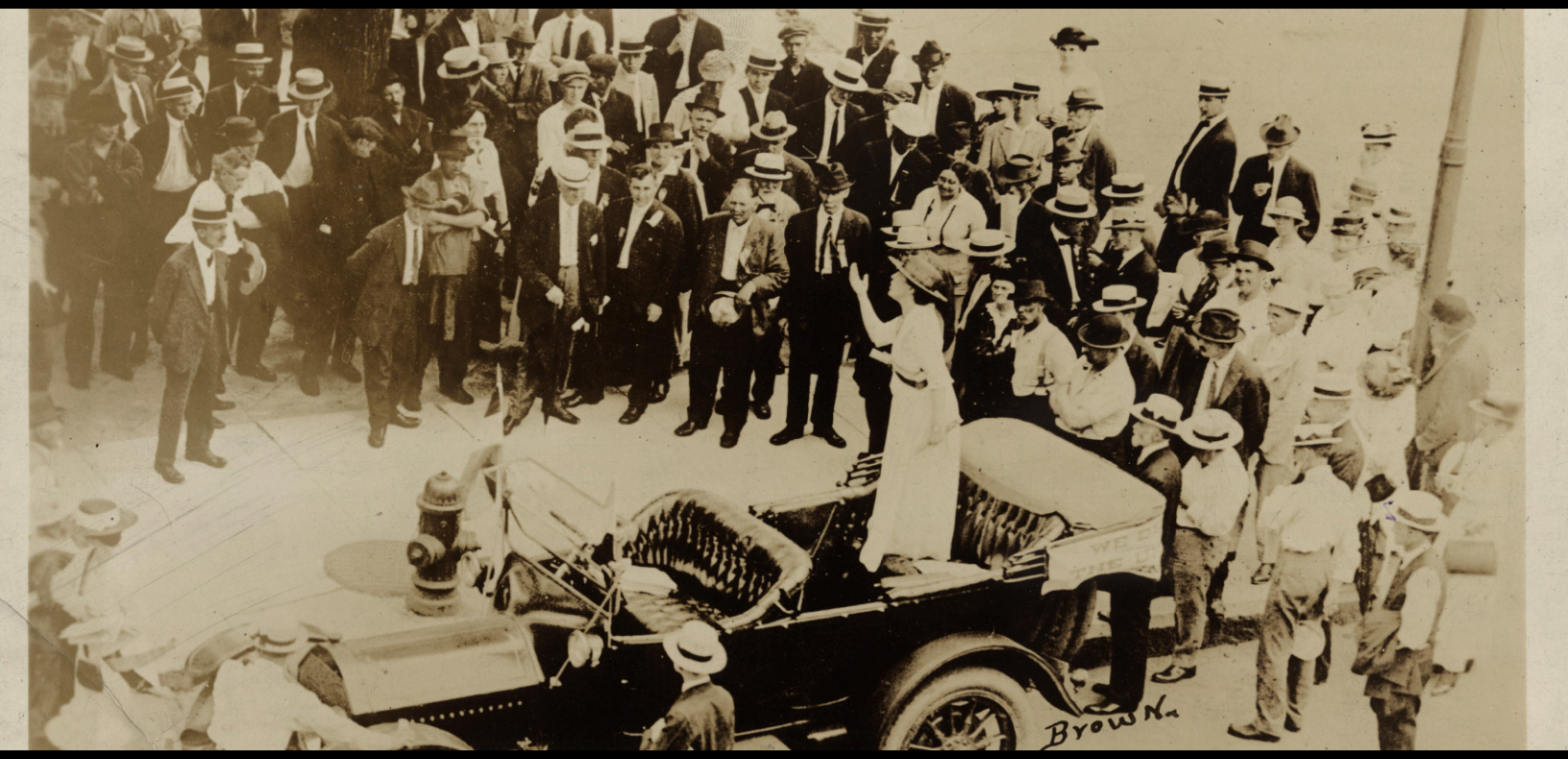


**FIGURE 9.1** To be effective, persuasive speeches depend on rhetoric. In this photograph, suffragist Elsie Hill (1883–1970) speaks forcefully to a street gathering in St. Paul, Minnesota, in July 1916. When advocating for women's suffrage, Hill, like other orators, relied on rhetorical strategies to persuade audiences that might have disagreed with her platform. Conversely, some audience members could recognize her strategies and know how she was using language to persuade them. Those people, consciously or not, were engaged in rhetorical analysis. (credit: "Elsie Hill speaking [at street meeting in St. Paul, Minn., during Prohibition Party convention that endorsed a plank advocating a suffrage amendment, July 1916]" by Harris & Ewing, Washington, D.C./Wikimedia Commons/ Library of Congress, Public Domain)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**9.1** Breaking the Whole into Its Parts
**9.2** Rhetorical Analysis Trailblazer: Jamil Smith
**9.3** Glance at Genre: Rhetorical Strategies
**9.4** Annotated Student Sample: "Rhetorical Analysis: Evicted by Matthew Desmond" by Eliana Evans
**9.5** Writing Process: Thinking Critically about Rhetoric
**9.6** Editing Focus: Mixed Sentence Constructions
**9.7** Evaluation: Rhetorical Analysis
**9.8** Spotlight on ... Business and Law
**9.9** Portfolio: How Thinking Critically about Rhetoric Affects Intellectual Growth


**INTRODUCTION** Because humans exist in social situations, communication has always been a part of what it means to be human. Basic forms of communication, such as smiling or adopting certain physical stances, may be considered instinctive. However, when language began to replace sounds and gestures, communication became more specific. People used language to give and seek information, to express and react to emotions,

and to persuade others to think or act in certain ways.

Beginning with the ancient Greeks, a large part of language education has focused on the ability to persuade. The Greeks used the word *rhetoric*, which originally meant "the act of speaking a language," and expanded its importance to include a focus on situations in which language was used for a persuasive purpose: to motivate an audience to action.

These ideas became central to Greek culture and patterns of behavior that characterized their way of life. This chapter will address persuasive techniques: how people use words to influence, lead, create new understanding, and rouse others to action. Your writing task will be to identify, explain, and analyze the strategies a particular writer uses to persuade readers. Analyzing the rhetorical strategies of other writers will help you develop your writing identity as you learn to incorporate some of these strategies into your own work while rejecting others.

## 9.1 Breaking the Whole into Its Parts

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify and explain ethos, logos, pathos, and kairos.
- Identify and analyze logical fallacies used in persuasion.
- Explain how rhetorical strategies are used in real-life situations.

Communicative situations nearly always contain **rhetoric**, the craft of persuading through writing or speaking. Think of your earliest instances of communication with parents or caregivers. Before you were proficient in language, you learned to navigate situations with your other senses, such as sight, sound, and touch. Consider people's facial expressions and tones of voice. How did you know when they were pleased, displeased, or confused by your actions? The emphasis is on the word *how*, because the *how* is what starts you on the path of analyzing the forms, intent, and effectiveness of communication. The point is that even facial expressions and tones of voice serve communicative functions and contain a rhetoric that one can observe, process, and analyze.

Now, as an adult, you have learned to use rhetoric to be persuasive and to recognize when others are trying to persuade you. Imagine the following situation. A basic question arises among roommates: *Where should we go for dinner?* Your roommates want to go to Emiliano's Pizza Pavilion again, and their reasoning seems sound. First, having tried all pizza places in town, they know Emiliano makes the tastiest pizza—just the right combination of spices, vegetables, and cheese, all perfectly baked in the right oven at the right temperature. Furthermore, the pizza is fairly cheap and probably will provide leftovers for tomorrow. And they add that you don't really want to stay home all alone by yourself.

You, on the other hand, are less keen on the idea; maybe you're tired of Emiliano's pizza or of pizza in general. You seem resistant to their suggestion, so they continue their attempts at persuasion by trying different tactics. They tell you that "everyone" is going to Emiliano's, not only because the food is good but because it's *the* place to be on a Thursday evening, hoping that others' decisions might convince you. Plus, Emiliano's has "a million things on the menu," so if you don't want pizza, you can have "anything you want." This evidence further strengthens their argument, or so they think.

Your roommates continue, playing on your personal experience, adding that the last time you didn't join them, you went somewhere else and then got the flu, so you shouldn't make the same mistake twice. They add details and try to entice you with images of the pizza—a delicious, jeweled circle of brilliant color that tastes like heaven, with bubbling cheese calling out to you to devour it. Finally, they try an extreme last-ditch accusation. They claim you could be hostile to immigrants such as Emiliano and his Haitian and Dominican staff, who are trying to succeed in the competitive pizza market, so your unwillingness to go will hurt their chances of

making a living.

However, because you know something about rhetoric and how your roommates are using it to persuade, you can deconstruct their reasoning, some of which is flawed or even deceptive. Your decision is up to you, of course, and you will make it independent of (or dependent on) these rhetorical appeals and strategies.

## Rhetorical Strategies

As part of becoming familiar with rhetorical strategies in real life, you will recognize three essential building blocks of rhetoric:

- **Ethos** is the presentation of a believable, authoritative voice that elicits an audience's trust. In the case of the pizza example, the roommates have tried all other pizzerias in town and have a certain expertise.
- **Pathos** is the use of appeals to feelings and emotions shared by an audience. Emiliano's pizza tastes good, so it brings pleasure. Plus, you don't want to be all alone when others are enjoying themselves, nor do you want to feel responsible for the pizzeria's economic decline.
- **Logos** is the use of credible information—facts, reasons, examples—that moves toward a sensible and acceptable conclusion. Emiliano's is good value for the money and provides leftovers.

In addition to these strategies, the roommates in the example use more subtle ones, such as personification and sensory language. **Personification** is giving an inanimate object human traits or abilities (the cheese is calling out). **Sensory language** appeals to the five senses (a delicious, jeweled circle of brilliant color).

## Logical Fallacies

Familiar with the three main rhetorical strategies and literary language, you also recognize the "sneakier" uses of flawed reasoning, also known as **logical fallacies**. Some of the roommates' appeals are based on these fallacies:

- **Bandwagon:** argument that everyone is doing something, so you shouldn't be left behind by not doing it too. "Everyone" goes to Emiliano's, especially on Thursdays.
- **Hyperbole:** exaggeration. Emiliano's has "a million things on the menu," and you can get "anything you want."
- **Ad hominem:** attacking the person, not the argument. Because you are hesitant about joining your roommates, you are accused of hostility toward immigrants.
- **Causal fallacy:** claiming or implying that an event that follows another event is the result of it. Because you ate elsewhere, you got the flu.
- **Slippery slope:** argument that a single action could lead to disastrous consequences. If Emiliano's misses your business, they may go bankrupt.

In a matter of minutes, your roommates use all these strategies to try to persuade you to act or to agree with their thinking. Identifying and understanding such strategies, and others, is a key element of critical thinking. You can learn more about logical fallacies at the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (https://openstax.org/r/Purdue_University_Online).

## Kairos

As a whole, rhetoric also depends on another Greek rhetorical strategy, **kairos**. Kairos is the idea that timing is important in trying to persuade an audience. An appeal may succeed or fail depending on when it is made. The moment must be right, and an effective communicator needs to be aware of their audience in terms of kairos. Going back to the roommates and pizza example, kairos might be an influence in your decision; if you were tired of pizza, had to save money, or wanted to study alone, your roommates would have less chance of persuasion. As a more serious example, if a recent series of car accidents has caused serious injuries on the freeway, an audience might be more receptive to a proposal to reassess speed limits and road signage. Awareness of rhetorical strategies in everyday situations such as this will help you recognize and evaluate them in matters ultimately more significant than pizza.

## 9.2 Trailblazer

# Rhetorical Analysis Trailblazer: Jamil Smith

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate the ability to think critically about a text.
- Identify and analyze rhetorical strategies.

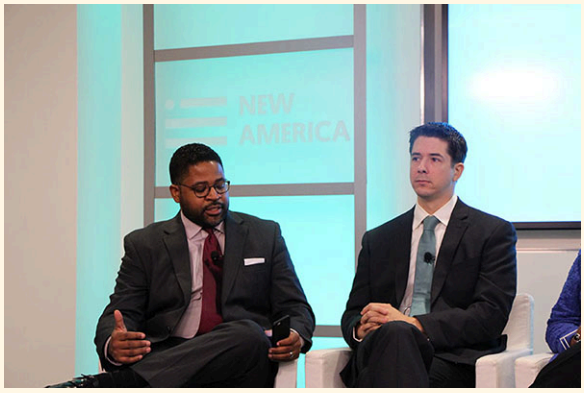



**FIGURE 9.2** Jamil Smith, left (credit: "The Color of Debt: Investigating Debt Collection and the Racial Wealth Gap" by New America/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

*"No matter what you do, you have to be able to process information and think critically."*

## Whose Rhetoric?

Jamil Smith (b. 1975) is a well-recognized print and television journalist and commentator on politics, culture, and sports. He has won three Emmys for sports journalism and is best known for his articles in *Rolling Stone* and the *New Republic* and as a producer for MTV News, CNN, MSNBC, and *The Rachel Maddow Show*.

Smith grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, where he attended Shaker Heights High School. He has often written about Cleveland and his work there with the Minority Achievement Committee (MAC), which pairs accomplished minority achievers with their younger peers to encourage greater participation in education. Smith graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1997 with a degree in English.

Smith often focuses on the full range of Black life in culture, politics, sports, and media. In guest appearances and interviews, he emphasizes the overriding need for minority journalists to use rhetorical powers of persuasion and to assert their place alongside traditionally White-dominated media voices. When Smith became senior editor at the *New Republic* in 2015, he explained his task as being "to help usher this magazine into a different era" (Connor). He recognized his presence there as an opportunity for his writing to serve as a moving force for social change and even the radical transformation of American journalism.

For the February 19, 2018, cover story of *Time* magazine, Smith wrote an extensive essay on the film *Black Panther* (2018) and its significance for Black American culture. The superhero film, based on a Marvel Comics story, grossed about $1.3 billion and was hailed as one of the outstanding films of the year, winning three Oscars out of a total of seven nominations. In his essay, Smith attaches great importance to the movie for its ability to address "what it means to be black in both America and Africa—and, more broadly, in the world" (Smith, "Revolutionary").

Smith used the film as a vehicle for expressing his belief in the compelling role that representation—being a presence, even an unexpected one—plays in communication. He has stated in an interview, "I really truly believe in the power of storytelling." His fervor and commitment to creating a new understanding of Black life are based on his taking the personal risk to establish credibility as someone proudly unafraid to open himself to the audience: "My mission is to reflect the experiences of and tell the stories of people who have been ignored and erased" (Smith, "Cleveland").

In his writings, Smith uses ethos to portray himself as a Black Clevelander, well acquainted with discrimination and prejudice, who speaks personally from his experiences and seeks to reach the general population as a whole. Smith wishes for readers to feel, as he does, that life needs to be complex, with "infinite versions" of the self, from executives to garbage collectors and all positions in between. He says that most White people know this already and see it reflected in films that represent their lives, but Black Americans have not yet experienced this and consequently are emotionally "poorer" without the "boundless" paths that White people have open to them (Smith, "Revolutionary").

Smith's review of *Black Panther*, which garnered an award from the New York chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, also relies on Smith's knowledge of culture and history. For example, he points out that the character King T'Challa, introduced in Marvel Comics in 1966, reappears in the film at a time when the United States still has not met demands for equal opportunities. Smith capsulizes the aims and key events of the Black Power movement of the 1960s and names its leaders. He also quotes the Federal Reserve statistic that in 2016, a typical Black family "had a median net worth of $17,600," whereas a White family "had a median net worth of $171,000." He uses such statistics to claim that the movie conceives and portrays a world in which Black people have the resources to "level the playing field" worldwide (Smith, "Revolutionary").

Given Smith's position and recognition in the journalistic profession, readers find his cultural criticism of subjects in Black life and culture both logical and convincing. The example of Smith as a **cultural critic**—a person who writes opinion pieces about the art, music, movies, and books of a particular culture—is especially relevant in contemporary times. As people's lives change continually, new influences on culture may emerge from the margins and come to be recognized. Language changes are a leading indicator of social change as well, especially in audiences that themselves are not one-dimensional and will interpret the language differently. In time, as with trends and fashions, diverse rhetoric may change a society and become widely accepted and even emulated. In this light, read Jamil Smith's entire review (https://openstax.org/r/review1).

Another important figure you may wish to explore is Ta-Nehisi Coates (https://openstax.org/r/Ta-Nehisi). Coates is a leading journalist and creative writer whose *Black Panther* graphic novels, written for Marvel Comics, closely parallel the film. His use of rhetorical language particular to the Black experience in America has won numerous awards and recognition. You can read more about Coates in Memoir Trailblazer: Ta-Nehisi Coates.

## Discussion Questions

1. How does Jamil Smith use contemporary culture to make persuasive points?
2. How has Smith established credibility with readers?
3. In what ways does Smith appeal to readers' emotions?
4. How does Smith's use of logos support his claims of racial inequality?

## 9.3 Glance at Genre: Rhetorical Strategies

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify key rhetorical strategies that authors use to persuade readers.
- Analyze texts to demonstrate understanding of key rhetorical concepts.
- Identify genre conventions and explain how they are shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.

**Rhetorical analysis** is the **genre**, or type of writing, that examines the way writers and speakers use language to influence readers. Rather than describing or summarizing content—the *what* of characters or themes—rhetorical analysis focuses on the individual parts of a text to show *how* language works to create the effects the writer wants. In other words, in addition to content, writers use rhetorical strategies to deliver and strengthen their ideas and thus influence their readers. A rhetorical analysis should, therefore, address the **rhetorical situation**, or conditions of communication that surround the rhetoric. These consist of the author (who), message (what), readers (to whom), purpose (why), means (how), context (where and when), and culture (community).

*Culture* refers to the way of life that a defined group of people establish. Their beliefs, laws, customs, and habits represent them as a group and may provide a signature to identify who they are and what they have accomplished. Rhetorical analysis must take these factors into full consideration, especially because cultural patterns are constantly changing and evolving with new knowledge and behaviors. Moreover, culture will vary greatly from group to group. Subgroups within a larger culture—for example, minorities within a majority population—may have distinct expressions of culture. When rhetorical analysis approaches language of a particular culture, questions may arise about who is best equipped to do the analysis and on what criteria, based on time and place.

Writers of rhetorical analyses consider these elements carefully and ask questions based on them. *What are the goals of the author of the text? What factors are at play in the author's choice of strategies used to make a rhetorical impact? What may occur in the interaction between the writer and reader? Will readers approach the piece neutrally, with no previous opinions? Are they likely to agree because they are of the same opinion, or are they hostile and ready to reject the arguments? Have they heard or read the ideas before? Will the ideas be too radical or too familiar? Are readers likely to see the author as sharing the field with them or as a stranger who must win their confidence?*

### The Workings of Rhetorical Analysis

The aim of rhetorical analysis is not to find agreement with or praise for the writer, although either may be implied or stated. The essential task of analyzing requires a detachment that will convince the readers of the *validity* and *effectiveness* (or lack thereof) of the writing by identifying the writer's tools and what they accomplish.

As you formulate your rhetorical analysis, be aware of the following approaches and strategies that writers use to persuade an audience. Your goal will be to identify them in your analysis, explain their use, and evaluate their effectiveness.

- **Establishing credibility.** Writers include their credentials or experience with the subject to ensure that readers will take them seriously as someone who knows what they're talking about. To reinforce their authority, they cite reliable sources as support for their points.
- **Sharing personal experience.** Sharing a personal experience related to the subject enhances credibility and may also appeal to readers' emotions.
- **Targeting emotional concerns.** By specifically addressing those incidents or outcomes that readers may fear or desire, the author can rally them to take a particular position. Emotional concerns also include appeals to the five senses and to broader sentiments such as love, loyalty, anger, justice, or patriotism.

- **Using devices that draw attention to claims.** These include literary devices such as parallelism, repetition, and rhetorical questions that writers and speakers use to emphasize points and unify a text.
- **Supporting claims with convincing evidence.** Ways of supporting claims include quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing expert opinions; relating anecdotes and examples; and citing appropriate statistics and facts.
- **Acknowledging the opposition.** If a writer makes a point of explaining other groups' positions carefully and respectfully, readers from those groups, as well as the target audience, are more likely to be responsive to the writer. By acknowledging the opposition, writers show they have considered opposing views and can then demonstrate that their position is preferable.
- **Questioning the motivation of the opposition.** By exposing others' possibly conflicting interests, the writer can undermine the credibility of an opponent's character or argument.

In addition to these, writers may use more questionable rhetorical devices to persuade readers. While the techniques of each strategy differ, all lead away from the actual argument and seek to persuade through means other than reasonable, logical thought. Such strategies include bandwagon, ad hominem (name-calling), bait and switch, and more. Recall the roommates' use of some of these in their efforts at persuasion in Breaking the Whole into Its Parts.

### Rhetorical Strategies in Advertising and Public Policy

The strategies and other devices of rhetorical writing that are open to analysis are present in many types of communication, including multimodal examples such as advertisements that combine visuals with carefully crafted texts, dialogue, and voice-over.



**FIGURE 9.3** M&Ms (credit: "Plain M&Ms Pile" by Evan-Amos/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Look at the M&Ms commercial, for example, in this collection (https://openstax.org/r/this-collection) of Super Bowl ads. Starting at minute 4:57, the prize-winning ad for M&Ms initially shows the widely recognizable candy in its multiple colors as both speaking cartoon figures and symbols of human behavior. The simple pitch: when people have offended others in one of a range of interpersonal blunders, the candy is offered as a peace offering. For example, the first image shows a man on a plane bumping into another passenger's seat, causing him to spill his drink. The offender then offers the passenger a package of M&Ms. What is the rhetorical strategy behind the situation and the gesture? The ad appeals to pathos in the sense that people feel the need

to be liked. Despite the humorous twist in the comment that he kicked the seat on purpose, the offending man nonetheless doesn't want to be disliked. Nor do the others who commit other blunders. The sense of taste—sweetness—also comes into play, appealing to the senses, as does the sense of sight in the images of the colorful candy.

Furthermore, placing the ad during the Super Bowl targets an audience of game watchers whose ages, interests, and habits have been studied. They may be in a snacking frame of mind, so the appeal of candy is timely (kairos). The ad combines sophistication, appropriate adult behavior, and childishly amusing animation and personification. Seeing the product makes it more memorable. On the other hand, note the subtle use of the bandwagon fallacy: different people in different situations are doing the same thing—offering M&Ms. The bandwagon implication is that if you do something you're sorry for or should be sorry for (or even if you don't), giving out M&Ms is the way to apologize and be likable. Because travelers, businesspeople, the religiously observant, and others from different walks of life are doing it, so should you.




**FIGURE 9.4** Smokey Bear has been the symbol of wildfire prevention since 1944. (credit: "Dear Smokey" by Rudy Wendelin/Special Collections, USDA National Agricultural Library, Public Domain)

Figure 9.4 is an image from the U.S. Forest Service that also reflects the use of rhetorical strategies. Smokey Bear is a symbol created in 1944 to raise awareness of the danger of forest fires. Images of this gentle, personified bear are often accompanied by the slogan "Remember . . . only you can prevent forest fires" or a variation of it. The image shows Smokey dressed in rolled-up jeans, a name belt, and a ranger's hat. He is reading letters delivered by a mail truck and sent to his own ZIP code, 20252, from children and adults promising to cooperate with his environmental efforts. The entire image is among the most recognizable of American cultural symbols.

The continuing identification of the bear and his appeal over decades is an example of the powerful use of rhetorical devices that speak without seeming to become dated and lose impact. First, a wild and dangerous animal is personified and made credible so that the credibility (ethos) of Smokey as a domesticated father figure with a fuzzy, playful cub climbing on the family mailbox removes any sense of danger and instead makes him into a believable voice for safety. No humans are emphasized in the illustration; the mail truck is seen only in the distance after having delivered another stack of fan mail. Other small animals are present in the background, as are familiar household items such as a shovel, a mailbox, an American flag, a boat on crystal clear water, and the playful images of the ranger's hat and rolled-up jeans on crossed legs. The drawing features bright primary colors and the dark forest green of bountiful nature. The print medium in the center of the illustration, the sign reading "Prevent forest fires," unifies the visual.

Because the images are emotionally accessible to children as well as adults, they appeal to widely shared pathos. The unspoken implication is that preventing forest fires will allow these young animals and forest plants to live rather than die in a carelessly started—and deadly—fire. In addition, it will allow human life to continue safely and pleasurably, as viewers can see, far in the background, people sailing and enjoying the water. If children's wisdom and receptivity to images are present, this idealized picture has great appeal. Rather than a harsh rebuke for adult negligence, the lesson of Smokey relies on the power of rhetoric to modify behavior with specific, carefully crafted appeals. Yet the most frequently used slogan, "Only you can prevent forest fires," is an example of hyperbole. Certainly "you" are not the sole person responsible for starting or preventing fires. Other people and other factors are at work aside from yourself.

More explicit, however, is this earlier image:




**FIGURE 9.5** Dating from about 1960, this image shows a member of the Boy Scouts and a member of the Camp Fire Girls with Smokey. (credit: "Smokey with Scouts" by United States Department of Agriculture/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The rhetorical strategy again is pathos, appealing to a sense of guilt. If these children can help prevent fires, then surely adults can do the same, as they are likely more knowledgeable and care for the safety and health of their children.

## Rhetorical Analysis: Key Terms

### Rhetorical Appeals

When doing a rhetorical analysis, notice these appeals writers use to persuade their audiences.

- **Ethos:** believable, authoritative voice that elicits credibility and audience trust.
- **Kairos:** sense of appropriate timing when attempting to persuade.
- **Logos:** credible information—facts, reasons, or examples—presented as evidence that moves toward a sensible and acceptable conclusion.
- **Pathos:** the use of appeals to feelings and emotions shared by an audience. Some of the general categories are fear, guilt, anger, love, loyalty, patriotism, and duty.

### Rhetorical Devices and Language Use

When doing a rhetorical analysis, notice these devices writers use to organize and emphasize their writing.

- **Figurative language:** similes and metaphors. Comparing one aspect of things that in other ways are completely different is an essential part of rhetorical language. Simile example: "The treasure chest of nature's wonders shone like a pirate's gold tooth." Metaphor example: "The pizza was a disk of saucy sunlight."
- **Numerical data:** statistics and figures. When accurate, numerical data can strengthen an argument.
- **Parallel structure:** repetition of the same pattern of words to show that ideas are equally significant. Parallel structure, or parallelism, calls attention to these ideas, achieves balance, and makes the statements more memorable. Example: "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country."
- **Personification:** giving an inanimate or nonhuman object human characteristics to make it seem alive and relatable. Examples: "The virus packed its bags and spread across the ocean"; "Twitter erupted in outrage."
- **Repetition:** repeating a single word or group of words to build emphasis. Example: "The first cause is poverty; the second cause is poor health; the third cause is discrimination. These causes have been studied, but to what effect?"
- **Rhetorical question:** a question that is not expected to be answered, one for which there is no answer, or one that creates a dramatic effect. Examples: "Has it occurred to you to ask why the economy is so unstable? A first point to consider is . . ."; "Do you think poverty will go away by itself?"
- **Understatement:** presenting something as less important than it is as a way of distancing from the truth. Understatement is often used sarcastically or ironically. Example: "It may not have occurred to politicians that poverty leads to a host of health-related issues."

### Rhetorical Fallacies

When doing a rhetorical analysis, notice these fallacies writers may use to unethically persuade their audiences.

- **Ad hominem:** logical fallacy that attempts to discredit a person, not an argument. *Ad hominem*, meaning "against the man," is often termed *name-calling*. Examples: "She's just a leftover from another era who can't accept change"; "He's a stupid bully and an outright thief."
- **Bait and switch:** logical fallacy that introduces a point about one thing that is likely to be accepted and then changes the terms once initial agreement occurs. Example: "Buy these phones at this price before they're all gone!" When you go to buy one, moments later, the phones are gone—and they're far more expensive.
- **Bandwagon:** logical fallacy often used in advertising and propaganda. It tries to make people do something or think a certain way because everyone is doing it, and if they don't go along, they will be excluded. Example: "Everyone is buying these sneakers; get yours now before you're left out." Negative example: "This style is so dated; no one wears things like this now."
- **Causal fallacy:** the faulty logic of claiming or believing that an event that follows another event is the result of it. For example, losing your keys after going to a concert does not mean the events are connected causally; going to the concert did not cause you to lose your keys.
- **Hyperbole:** exaggeration. Hyperbole is one of the staples of advertising language. Examples: "Season's Best Peppermint Glazed Delights"; "I have a ton of homework."

# 9.4 Annotated Student Sample: "Rhetorical Analysis: Evicted by Matthew Desmond" by Eliana Evans

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the ways a student writer has analyzed the rhetorical strategies in a persuasive text.
- Demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving when reading a rhetorical analysis.

## Introduction

Matthew Desmond (b. 1979 or 1980) is a sociology professor at Princeton University. He has published four books, each addressing issues of poverty or racial inequality in American life. He has been recognized by the Politico 50 list as an important contributing voice to national political debate. In the analysis that follows, student Eliana Evans examines Desmond's work from a rhetorical perspective.



**FIGURE 9.6** Matthew Desmond discusses *Evicted* at the Library of Congress. (credit: "Matthew Desmond at 2017 National Book Festival" by United States Library of Congress/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### Story as Persuasion

> Imagine it's Friday—payday. One American worker picks up her check for $637. Now, imagine that $550 will go toward rent, leaving only a small amount for everything else. The remaining $87 must be divided among food, utilities, childcare, and medical treatment. Unfortunately, many of the nation's poor don't have to imagine this troubling scenario because this is their reality. In his book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, ethnographer and author Matthew Desmond follows eight poor families in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as they struggle to establish and maintain one of humanity's most basic needs: housing. As an ethnographer, Desmond gathers research to promote the study and documentation of human culture: how people live under all kinds of conditions.

***Ethos.*** *By mentioning Desmond's qualifications as an ethnographer, Eliana Evans appeals to ethos: Desmond is an authority whose opinions can be taken seriously.*

***Introductory Anecdote.*** *By beginning with a real-life example and addressing the reader directly, the writer immediately emphasizes Desmond's hard-hitting point. This strategy engages readers from the start.*

> Living and working in the typical mid-size American city of Milwaukee in the early 2000s, Desmond highlights the source of the cyclical poverty he observes around him. He concludes that unstable housing is "deeply . . . implicated in the creation of poverty" (5).

***Thesis Statement.*** *The writer notes that Desmond offers his thesis statement, or the main point of his argument, without delay, building off the specific example in the introduction.*

> Throughout his book, Desmond explains that inflated rents and evictions— the forced loss of housing—create power imbalances between landlords and tenants. Legal and economic systems rigged against the poor are to blame for creating an unbreakable cycle of poverty for renters. To advance his deductive argument, Desmond largely employs emotional anecdotal evidence, introducing readers to the real-life circumstances of eight families, thus using pathos to reach his readers. To reinforce this anecdotal evidence, he also employs logical statistical evidence as well as emotional allusions to the nation's founding principle of equality.

> To bring his book to life, Desmond uses many quotations from the people he portrays in the cycle of poverty. Early in the book, he describes the life of Sherrena Tarver, an entrepreneur landlord who owns and manages numerous properties and has to evict nonpaying tenants in the most difficult circumstance. At one point, she faces a tough decision about Lamar, a legless man who occupies an apartment where he helps neighborhood boys stay in school and control their lives. He simply cannot meet his financial responsibilities, and Sherrena is torn between helping him and protecting her own bottom line. "I guess I got to stop feeling sorry for these people because nobody is feeling sorry for me," she states (11). She will have to pay her own mortgage on the property. No connection exists if others do not feel sorry for Sherrena, who has to face her own inner conflict about Lamar.

***Ethos, Pathos, and Logos.*** *Desmond speaks with authority as someone who cares deeply about the injustices of the housing situation. Evans notes that Desmond also relies on emotional and logical thought and examples, and she shows this in his quotations.*

> Although his book identifies unstable housing as a cause of poverty, Desmond writes for the purpose of creating empathy in voters and establishing facts that policy makers cannot ignore to remedy the housing trap. The moving description of eviction and its effects allows readers to fully appreciate his proposed solutions. As a main point, Desmond advocates for legislation that would establish a universal housing voucher program combined with government regulation to stabilize rents. He explains that voucher "programs lift roughly 2.8 million people out of poverty" each year (302). If these programs were expanded and supported by laws that would prevent landlords from establishing exploitative rents, many more people could be helped. Desmond hopes to convince voters who have been moved by his ethnographic discussion to elect candidates who are serious about ending poverty and creating a more equal America.

***Language Use.*** *Evans uses the phrase "as a main point" to emphasize to readers that Desmond strongly believes in the voucher system.*

> In support of his argument, Desmond presents multiple anecdotal examples to illustrate the root of the cyclical poverty his subjects face. For example, in Chapter 16, Kamala, a middle-aged mother of three, leaves her children for one evening in the care of Devon, their father. Later, a fire caused by a lamp kills their eight-month-old daughter. The apartment is uninhabitable, but the landlord, Sherrena, keeps the month's rent. The police report that the three children, abandoned by Devon, were alone in the apartment. The high cost of monthly rent leaves Kamala with few options for proper childcare, and without childcare, she has few options for employment. The exploitation by landlords such as Sherrena only intensifies the tenant's poverty. Kamala, who still has two children to support, is left with no home, no money, and little means of survival. Her story, and the stories of the many others Desmond chronicles, supports the argument that unstable housing is a cause of poverty, not a condition.

***Examples and Pathos.*** *Desmond's discussion gains emotional strength from the story of a child's needless death.*

***Pathos and Logos.*** *The logic of the situation is that a family must endure hardship with little support. The overwhelming need and the trap of poverty in poor housing make for strong logical and emotional persuasion.*

> Desmond relays the stories of Kamala and others to generate empathy with readers. These stories create emotional appeal in that they allow readers to experience the spiraling effects of poverty along with people they come to care about. Indeed, Desmond relies on the intensity of Kamala's story to give poverty a face. Kamala is no longer a nameless, faceless statistic. She is a real woman who experiences the loss of a child as a result of circumstances beyond her control. Kamala's story helps break the preconception that poor people are lazy and make individual choices to perpetuate their own poverty. Her situation illustrates a cycle of unbreakable tragedy and poverty that begins with her inability to secure affordable and stable housing. The details of her story make it hard for the public to ignore.

> Desmond does not rely on anecdotal evidence alone. He also includes statistical evidence to support his argument.

***Logical Evidence.*** *The writer notes Desmond's use of quantitative evidence—an appeal to logic. Readers are eager to learn facts that will strengthen the impact of Desmond's argument.*

> In the prologue, Desmond explains that Arleen pays "88 percent of [her] $628-a-month welfare check" in rent (3). This disproportionate sum creates a situation in which "1 in 8 poor renting families nationwide [are] unable to pay all of their rent" (5). In Milwaukee, "landlords evict roughly 16,000 adults and children each year" (4). Such numbers go beyond empathy and instead appeal to logic. Policy makers are likely to reject the idea of drafting laws to relieve poverty based on feelings or empathy. Statistics, however, provide hard numbers that are not subject to debate and that reinforce the need for logical and realistic solutions. Desmond also notes that eviction and its effects have been vastly ignored by sociologists. These statistics fight preconceptions such as *Why don't poor people just get jobs?* In addition, by using personification, Desmond explains that poverty is a formidable enemy that a minimum-wage job cannot defeat.

***Logos.*** *As a skilled writer, Desmond knows that if political action is called for, he will have to present a heavy dose of facts and numbers. Evans notes that readers are more likely to be persuaded by a combination of different rhetorical strategies, such as pathos and logos.*

***Personification.*** *Evans notes that Desmond uses figurative language to personify the idea of poverty, calling it "a formidable enemy."*

> Finally, Desmond appeals to his readers' sense of right and wrong when he asks a key rhetorical question: Is housing a fundamental American right? If readers answer "yes," then it is un-American to systematically lock poor people away from the founding ideals of the country through housing, banking, and legal systems that work to guarantee their poverty. The American dream is one of equal opportunity. Yet, despite the constitutional guarantee of civil rights, the poor people who struggle to maintain housing in Desmond's Milwaukee are further separated from the American dream by race.

> For example, in Chapter 3, Desmond describes the segregation that has long plagued Milwaukee: despite the "open housing measure" guaranteed by "the 1968 Civil Rights Act," Milwaukee "remain[s] one of the most racially divided cities in the nation" (34). The housing divide in Milwaukee not only keeps poor people from achieving the American dream of stable and affordable housing, but it also supports a system of segregation that goes against the founding ideal of equality.

***Logos and Pathos.*** *Desmond addresses the issue of right vs. wrong. He attempts to persuade readers by offering examples that make them think about the legal aspects of housing (logos) and the effects that deprivation have on individuals (pathos).*

> Desmond's argument is enticing in many ways. However, critics point out that he proposes a solution that fixes only the short-term problem of sustaining stable housing with a universal voucher program that provides no incentive for work. The long-term problem, which Desmond never addresses, would have to include a solution that would raise a massive number of people out of poverty by enabling them to sustain reliable housing, along with other living expenses, without relying heavily on government assistance. Vouchers may begin to eat away at the root of poverty, but they are a short-term, rather than a long-term, fix.

***Addressing Counterclaims.*** *Evans is careful to include some possibly negative views of Desmond's main points to indicate that she has considered all sides before reaching a final verdict on the validity of his argument.*

> In the end, though, Desmond's argument is effective because he provides ample evidence with varying appeals to support his claims. The use of anecdotes allows readers to feel the pain of poverty. Desmond's statistical research shows logical reasons to end poverty through universal housing. The mentions of founding principles such as equality show that readers have a moral obligation as Americans to participate in a solution to the housing crisis.

> Although much of Desmond's book relies on its anecdotal evidence and emotional appeal, it is his logic that ultimately proves convincing. He identifies a tangible cause of poverty, then offers an equally tangible solution to the problem he describes. If having stable and affordable housing will help end poverty and thus improve society, then the government should provide this through vouchers and rent regulation.

***Conclusion and Thesis Statement Reaffirmed.*** *Evans praises Desmond for his rhetorical ability to appeal to readers in different ways. She claims that his logical approach, presenting facts and figures along with emotional appeals, should be enough to convince the government to act.*

### Work Cited

Desmond, Matthew. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City.* Broadway Books, 2016.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Eliana Evans begins her rhetorical analysis with an example about the problems of paying rent and living on a reduced income?
2. How does Evans portray Desmond as someone worth listening to?
3. How does Evans evaluate Desmond's use of logic in arguing his points?
4. According to Evans, how does Desmond use pathos in persuading readers?
5. What is Evans's final opinion of Desmond's ability to persuade? Explain.

## 9.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically about Rhetoric

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Develop a rhetorical analysis through multiple drafts.
- Identify and analyze rhetorical strategies in a rhetorical analysis.
- Demonstrate flexible strategies for generating ideas, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, and editing.
- Give and act on productive feedback for works in progress.

The ability to think critically about rhetoric is a skill you will use in many of your classes, in your work, and in your life to gain insight from the way a text is written and organized. You will often be asked to explain or to express an opinion about what someone else has communicated and how that person has done so, especially if you take an active interest in politics and government. Like Eliana Evans in the previous section, you will develop similar analyses of written works to help others understand *how* a writer or speaker may be trying to reach them.

### Summary of Assignment: Rhetorical Analysis

The assignment is to write a rhetorical analysis of a piece of persuasive writing. It can be an editorial, a movie or book review, an essay, a chapter in a book, or a letter to the editor. For your rhetorical analysis, you will need to consider the rhetorical situation—subject, author, purpose, context, audience, and culture—and the strategies the author uses in creating the argument. Back up all your claims with evidence from the text. In preparing your analysis, consider these questions:

- What is the subject? Be sure to distinguish what the piece is about.
- Who is the writer, and what do you know about them? Be sure you know whether the writer is considered objective or has a particular agenda.
- Who are the readers? What do you know or what can you find out about them as the particular audience to be addressed at this moment?
- What is the purpose or aim of this work? What does the author hope to achieve?
- What are the time/space/place considerations and influences of the writer? What can you know about the writer and the full context in which they are writing?
- What specific techniques has the writer used to make their points? Are these techniques successful, unsuccessful, or questionable?

For this assignment, read the following opinion piece by Octavio Peterson, printed in his local newspaper. You may choose it as the text you will analyze, continuing the analysis on your own, or you may refer to it as a sample as you work on another text of your choosing. Your instructor may suggest presidential or other political speeches, which make good subjects for rhetorical analysis.

When you have read the piece by Peterson advocating for the need to continue teaching foreign languages in schools, reflect carefully on the impact the letter has had on you. You are not expected to agree or disagree with it. Instead, focus on the rhetoric—the way Peterson uses language to make his point and convince you of the validity of his argument.

***Another Lens.*** Consider presenting your rhetorical analysis in a multimodal format. Use a blogging site or platform such as WordPress or Tumblr to explore the blogging genre, which includes video clips, images, hyperlinks, and other media to further your discussion. Because this genre is less formal than written text, your tone can be conversational. However, you still will be required to provide the same kind of analysis that you would in a traditional essay. The same materials will be at your disposal for making appeals to persuade your readers. Rhetorical analysis in a blog may be a new forum for the exchange of ideas that retains the basics of more formal communication. When you have completed your work, share it with a small group or the rest of

the class. See Multimodal and Online Writing: Creative Interaction between Text and Image for more about creating a multimodal composition.

# GREENDALE DAILY COURIER

## READERS' VIEWS

I am writing as both a concerned parent and a citizen in response to the recently announced Board of Managers forum to be held at City Hall on the allocation of resources for education. Among the items for discussion is the likelihood that budget cuts for next year will result in the curtailment of foreign-language instruction—a move that needs serious reconsideration.

I've spent most of my life in Greendale and graduated from elementary and high school before going to Westover State for my engineering degree. For 18 years, I've worked in Greendale city management, and my children are in school here. I have always supported the heroic efforts of teachers and administrators in making our schools as fine as they have come to be, and I have tried to keep myself informed about school policies. Now, however, as an active and loyal member of this community, I am alarmed by the announcement that an integral part of the curriculum is under financial strain and might vanish like a puff of smoke. Once gone, soon forgotten—to the detriment of all of us.

What am I referring to, you ask? Look at the middle of page 4 in the recent publication of plans for a revised city budget: Some know-nothing, who dares not be identified, has stated that all foreign-language instruction may be stopped in the next school year. This very "unimportant" item, which another coward has sought to bury conveniently, actually counts for a lot with me, counts with many others, and should count a lot for you as well. Indeed, this looming catastrophe could actually be a great opportunity to *reinforce*—not *reduce*—a commitment that needs *renewing*, not canceling! Rather than end it, we must continue it. Rather than curtail it, we must make it as strong as neighboring school districts are doing. If we don't, we will be the only district without it. Do we want our children left with an educational disadvantage? Do we want property values and tax revenue to plummet as parents flee from an inferior school district?

Folks may think I'm just talking off the top of my head, but I've done some reading to find out what other states have going on. And what I see isn't good. Not good at all, in fact. Only 20% of K–12 students nationwide study a foreign language. We, however, have enjoyed the benefits of learning for so long because we are ranked among the "nation's finest" as far as educational opportunity. And that's a reason a lot of us live here.

Yet if the rest of the country trails us—and that is shameful, but there is nothing we can do about it—the rest of the world does not! Indeed, some countries in Europe have 100% of their elementary and secondary school students learning a second language, and many study a third! English is most often what they choose to learn. And in the good ol' U.S., over 10% of K–12 students are actually learning English as a second language while speaking another at home, all the way from California with almost 20% to West Virginia with less than 1%! This statistic proves that kids learn easily, and in fact it gives them a competitive edge over the other 80% of American kids who won't know a word of anything but English.

All over Europe, all over Asia, all over Africa and South America, millions of people know and use English. It has become an international language of commerce, travel, entertainment, and politics. They can communicate with us as well as they communicate in their first languages. That may be very convenient because we think we don't have to learn another language. But think about it: We are at a DIS-advantage here both in everyday communication and in business negotiations. We need to understand how business is done overseas, how people of other nationalities think and act, and be able to do that without relying on interpreters. Indeed, knowing another person's language is a great advantage, for you can understand what the interpreter doesn't translate.

Knowing only one language isolates us culturally and gives the impression we don't give a hang, that we are OK with being know-nothings and are somehow better than other people. Don't we care about that?

And forget business for a minute. In a global society, people will need to communicate in languages other than English. My sister is a doctor who uses Spanish every day in her work as she deals with patients in life-threatening situations. Fortunately, she has the skill of speaking another language. Whether we're doctors or anything else, at some point we will face a situation in which knowing another language will be helpful or even crucial.

Is ignorance and arrogance the impression we want to give others? We can do much better! I know budgets are limited by state cutbacks, and tough decisions must be made about how to allocate tax dollars. But for so long we have offered students something. Sure, some students are sitting at home secretly rejoicing in a watered-down curriculum that will free up some extra time for texting and hanging out. Sure, some dislike having to learn Spanish or Chinese and have never seen the need for it. But just like lots of things in life, we know it's "good for us" in the long run, don't we? I do know that some colleges have done away with foreign-language requirements for their own reasons, and many residents here and elsewhere think that is the road to travel now for financial reasons.

But I think just the opposite: we are shortchanging our future leaders, our city, our state, our country, and our place in the world if we shrink our horizons, pull in our horns, and build in narrow perspectives.

Please, won't you stand with me on this, as so many others already have, to use our resources in the best ways? Let's not allow our children to lag behind our neighbors here and abroad, for without knowledge and the ability to communicate, we are doomed.

Your neighbor,

*Octavio D. Peterson*

Octavio D. Peterson

octaviosemail@anyonesmail.com

### Quick Launch: Start with a Thesis Statement

After you have read this opinion piece, or another of your choice, several times and have a clear understanding of it as a piece of rhetoric, consider whether the writer has succeeded in being persuasive. You might find that in some ways they have and in others they have not. Then, with a clear understanding of your purpose—to analyze how the writer seeks to persuade—you can start framing a **thesis statement**: a declarative sentence

that states the topic, the angle you are taking, and the aspects of the topic the rest of the paper will support.

Complete the following sentence frames as you prepare to start:

1. The subject of my rhetorical analysis is _____.
2. My goal is to _____, not necessarily to _____.
3. The writer's main point is _____.
4. I believe the writer has succeeded (or not) because _____.
5. I believe the writer has succeeded in _____ (name the part or parts) but not in _____ (name the part or parts).
6. The writer's strongest (or weakest) point is _____, which they present by _____.

## Drafting: Text Evidence and Analysis of Effect

As you begin to draft your rhetorical analysis, remember that you are giving your opinion on the author's use of language. For example, Peterson has made a decision about the teaching of foreign languages, something readers of the newspaper might have different views on. In other words, there is room for debate and persuasion.

The context of the situation in which Peterson finds himself may well be more complex than he discusses. In the same way, the context of the piece you choose to analyze may also be more complex. For example, perhaps Greendale is facing an economic crisis and *must* pare its budget for educational spending and public works. It's also possible that elected officials have made budget cuts for education a part of their platform or that school buildings have been found obsolete for safety measures. On the other hand, maybe a foreign company will come to town only if more Spanish speakers can be found locally. These factors would play a part in a real situation, and rhetoric would reflect that. If applicable, consider such possibilities regarding the subject of your analysis. Here, however, these factors are unknown and thus do not enter into the analysis.

### Introduction

One effective way to begin a rhetorical analysis is by using an anecdote, as Eliana Evans has done. For a rhetorical analysis of the opinion piece, a writer might consider an anecdote about a person who was in a situation in which knowing another language was important or not important. If they begin with an anecdote, the next part of the introduction should contain the following information:

- Author's name and position, or other qualification to establish ethos
- Title of work and genre
- Author's thesis statement or stance taken ("Peterson argues that . . .")
- Brief introductory explanation of how the author develops and supports the thesis or stance
- If relevant, a brief summary of context and culture

Once the context and situation for the analysis are clear, move directly to your thesis statement. In this case, your thesis statement will be your opinion of how successful the author has been in achieving the established goal through the use of rhetorical strategies. Read the sentences in Table 9.1, and decide which would make the best thesis statement. Explain your reasoning in the right-hand column of this or a similar chart.

| Sentence | Why or Why Not? |
|---|---|
| Only 50 percent of the students have said they want to study Spanish or any other language, so statistics show a lack of interest in spite of Octavio Peterson's rhetorical claims. | |
| A public vote should be taken to see how many residents support Octavio Peterson's rhetoric and ideas on language and whether his divisive opinion can be considered as it stands. | |
| Because Octavio Peterson's ideas on foreign language teaching are definitely worthy of support, I will summarize his letter and show why he is correct. | |
| This analysis of Peterson's language shows how he uses rhetorical strategies to persuade readers to consider the future of language learning in the city's schools. | |

**TABLE 9.1** Thesis statement choices

The introductory paragraph or paragraphs should serve to move the reader into the body of the analysis and signal what will follow.

### Body

Your next step is to start supporting your thesis statement—that is, how Octavio Peterson, or the writer of your choice, does or does not succeed in persuading readers. To accomplish this purpose, you need to look closely at the rhetorical strategies the writer uses.

First, list the rhetorical strategies you notice while reading the text, and note where they appear. Keep in mind that you do not need to include every strategy the text contains, only those essential ones that emphasize or support the central argument and those that may seem fallacious. You may add other strategies as well. The first example in Table 9.2 has been filled in.

| Rhetorical Device/ Strategy | Paragraph(s) Location | Effect on Argument |
|---|---|---|
| Ethos, credibility | First, second, fourth | By referring to himself, his education, his job, and his community involvement as a parent and concerned resident and by saying he has researched the subject, the writer establishes credibility. |
| Pathos, emotion | | |
| Logos, reason | | |

**TABLE 9.2** Rhetorical strategies

| Rhetorical Device/ Strategy | Paragraph(s) Location | Effect on Argument |
|---|---|---|
| Kairos, timeliness | | |
| Repetition | | |
| Figurative language | | |
| Speaking familiarly or "folksily" | | |
| Rhetorical question | | |
| Parallel structure | | |
| Addressing counterclaims | | |
| Bandwagon | | |
| Ad hominem (name-calling) | | |
| Hyperbole (exaggeration) | | |
| Causal fallacy | | |

**TABLE 9.2** Rhetorical strategies

When you have completed your list, consider how to structure your analysis. You will have to decide which of the writer's statements are most effective. The strongest point would be a good place to begin; conversely, you could begin with the writer's weakest point if that suits your purposes better. The most obvious organizational structure is one of the following:

- Go through the composition paragraph by paragraph and analyze its rhetorical content, focusing on the strategies that support the writer's thesis statement.
- Address key rhetorical strategies individually, and show how the author has used them.

As you read the next few paragraphs, consult Table 9.3 for a visual plan of your rhetorical analysis. Your first body paragraph is the first of the analytical paragraphs. Here, too, you have options for organizing. You might begin by stating the writer's strongest point. For example, you could emphasize that Peterson appeals to ethos by speaking personally to readers as fellow citizens and providing his credentials to establish credibility as someone trustworthy with their interests at heart.

Following this point, your next one can focus, for instance, on Peterson's view that cutting foreign language

instruction is a danger to the education of Greendale's children. The points that follow support this argument, and you can track his rhetoric as he does so.

You may then use the second or third body paragraph, connected by a transition, to discuss Peterson's appeal to logos. One possible transition might read, "To back up his assertion that omitting foreign languages is detrimental to education, Peterson provides examples and statistics." Locate examples and quotes from the text as needed. You can discuss how, in citing these statistics, Peterson uses logos as a key rhetorical strategy.

In another paragraph, focus on other rhetorical elements, such as parallelism, repetition, and rhetorical questions. Moreover, be sure to indicate whether the writer acknowledges counterclaims and whether they are accepted or ultimately rejected.

The question of other factors at work in Greendale regarding finances, or similar factors in another setting, may be useful to mention here if they exist. As you continue, however, keep returning to your list of rhetorical strategies and explaining them. Even if some appear less important, they should be noted to show that you recognize how the writer is using language. You will likely have a minimum of four body paragraphs, but you may well have six or seven or even more, depending on the work you are analyzing.

In your final body paragraph, you might discuss the argument that Peterson, for example, has made by appealing to readers' emotions. His calls for solidarity at the end of the letter provide a possible solution to his concern that the foreign language curriculum "might vanish like a puff of smoke."

Use Table 9.3 to organize your rhetorical analysis. Be sure that each paragraph has a topic sentence and that you use transitions to flow smoothly from one idea to the next.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Body paragraph 1** | Write a topic sentence explaining your first point of analysis. If you begin with what you think is the writer's strongest point, state what it is and explain the rhetorical strategies used to support it. Provide appropriate quotations from the text.<br>Suggestion: Address ethos, pathos, and logos first. You may need more than one paragraph to cover them. |
| **Body paragraph 2** | If needed, continue your discussion of ethos, pathos, and/or logos, explaining how they function in the text and providing examples. Once you have completed your discussion, move on to your next point, which will address one or more specific strategies used. |
| **Body paragraph 3** | Following a transition, write a topic sentence to address another point or points in the text. Discuss the strategies used, provide examples and quotations as appropriate, and show how they support (or don't support) the writer's thesis statement. Consider rhetorical strategies such as parallelism, repetition, rhetorical questions, and figurative language. |
| **Body paragraphs 4–6 (or more if needed)** | Continue as needed. In this paragraph, you might point out rhetorical fallacies, such as bandwagon, ad hominem, or any others you notice, if you have not yet done so. Indicate how they strengthen or weaken the writer's position. If you have already addressed all the elements of your analysis, discuss the writer's approach to counterclaims. You may need more than four body paragraphs for your rhetorical analysis. |

**TABLE 9.3** Drafting organizer

### Conclusion

As you conclude your essay, your own logic in discussing the writer's argument will make it clear whether you have found their claims convincing. Your opinion, as framed in your conclusion, may restate your thesis

statement in different words, or you may choose to reveal your thesis at this point. The real function of the conclusion is to confirm your evaluation and show that you understand the use of the language and the effectiveness of the argument.

In your analysis, note that objections could be raised because Peterson, for example, speaks only for himself. You may speculate about whether the next edition of the newspaper will feature an opposing opinion piece from someone who disagrees. However, it is not necessary to provide answers to questions you raise here. Your conclusion should summarize briefly how the writer has made, or failed to make, a forceful argument that may require further debate.

For more guidance on writing a rhetorical analysis, visit the Illinois Writers Workshop website (https://openstax.org/r/Illinois) or watch this tutorial (https://openstax.org/r/this-tutorial).

### Peer Review: Guidelines toward Revision and the "Golden Rule"

Now that you have a working draft, your next step is to engage in peer review, an important part of the writing process. Often, others can identify things you have missed or can ask you to clarify statements that may be clear to you but not to others. For your peer review, follow these steps and make use of Table 9.4.

1. Quickly skim through your peer's rhetorical analysis draft once, and then ask yourself, *What is the main point or argument of my peer's work?*
2. Highlight, underline, or otherwise make note of statements or instances in the paper where you think your peer has made their main point.
3. Look at the draft again, this time reading it closely.

4. Ask yourself the following questions, and comment on the peer review sheet as shown.

**Peer Review: Rhetorical Analysis**

**Name of Writer: _____ Name of Reviewer: _____**

**Title**

- Is the title of this work straightforward and consistent with the content? If not, how can your peer revise their title?
- If the title is more creative, does it attract readers and make them want to read further? If not, how can your peer revise the title?

**Thesis Statement**

- Does the thesis statement succinctly communicate the purpose? If not, how can your peer better communicate this in a thesis statement?
- Does your peer offer an appropriate discussion of their chosen rhetorical topic, purpose, writer, reader(s), and context? If not, how can your peer better address these areas?
- Does your peer address the writer's success in persuading readers and explain how the writer succeeds or does not succeed? If not, how can your peer better provide reasoning and text evidence to support their evaluation?
- Depending on your peer's approach, does the thesis statement appear in an appropriate place? If not, how can your peer improve the placement or strength of the statement?

**Body**

- Does your peer mention the three major appeals and provide sufficient explanations and examples of their use? If not, what needs to be added or revised?
- Does your peer mention relevant rhetorical strategies and explain their functions? If not, how can your peer improve this part of the analysis?
- Does your peer note any logical fallacies, explain why the author uses them, and analyze their effects on the text? If not, what does your peer need to add or change?
- Does your peer note and explain the writer's counterclaims? If the writer doesn't address them, has your peer noted this omission? If not, what does your peer need to add?

**Conclusion**

- Does the conclusion support your peer's thesis statement? If not, what revisions does your peer need to make?

**TABLE 9.4**

### The Golden Rule

An important part of the peer review process is to keep in mind the familiar wisdom of the "Golden Rule": treat others as you would have them treat you. This foundational approach to human relations extends to commenting on others' work. Like your peers, you are in the same situation of needing opinion and guidance. Whatever you have written will seem satisfactory or better to you because you have written it and know what you mean to say.

However, your peers have the advantage of distance from the work you have written and can see it through their own eyes. Likewise, if you approach your peer's work fairly and free of personal bias, you're likely to be more constructive in finding parts of their writing that need revision. Most important, though, is to make

suggestions tactfully and considerately, in the spirit of helping, not degrading someone's work. You and your peers may be reluctant to share your work, but if everyone approaches the review process with these ideas in mind, everyone will benefit from the opportunity to provide and act on sincerely offered suggestions.

### Revising: Staying Open to Feedback and Working with It

Once the peer review process is complete, your next step is to revise the first draft by incorporating suggestions and making changes on your own. Consider some of these potential issues when incorporating peers' revisions and rethinking your own work.

- Too much summarizing rather than analyzing
- Too much informal language or an unintentional mix of casual and formal language
- Too few, too many, or inappropriate transitions
- Illogical or unclear sequence of information
- Insufficient evidence to support main ideas effectively
- Too many generalities rather than specific facts, maybe from trying to do too much in too little time

In any case, revising a draft is a necessary step to produce a final work. Rarely will even a professional writer arrive at the best point in a single draft. In other words, it's seldom a problem if your first draft needs refocusing. However, it may become a problem if you don't address it. The best way to shape a wandering piece of writing is to return to it, reread it, slow it down, take it apart, and build it back up again. Approach first-draft writing for what it is: a warm-up or rehearsal for a final performance.

#### Suggestions for Revising

When revising, be sure your thesis statement is clear and fulfills your purpose. Verify that you have abundant supporting evidence and that details are consistently on topic and relevant to your position. Just before arriving at the conclusion, be sure you have prepared a logical ending. The concluding statement should be strong and should not present any new points. Rather, it should grow out of what has already been said and return, in some degree, to the thesis statement. In the example of Octavio Peterson, his purpose was to persuade readers that teaching foreign languages in schools in Greendale should continue; therefore, the conclusion can confirm that Peterson achieved, did not achieve, or partially achieved his aim.

When revising, make sure the larger elements of the piece are as you want them to be before you revise individual sentences and make smaller changes. If you make small changes first, they might not fit well with the big picture later on.

One approach to big-picture revising is to check the organization as you move from paragraph to paragraph. You can list each paragraph and check that its content relates to the purpose and thesis statement. Each paragraph should have one main point and be self-contained in showing how the rhetorical devices used in the text strengthen (or fail to strengthen) the argument and the writer's ability to persuade. Be sure your paragraphs flow logically from one to the other without distracting gaps or inconsistencies.

## 9.6 Editing Focus: Mixed Sentence Constructions

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar and punctuation.
- Recognize and correct errors in mixed sentence construction.

A mixed-construction sentence contains parts that do not fit together because of grammatical structure or meaning. These sentence errors occur when writers begin a statement in one way, or one direction, and then unintentionally change grammatical paths. This kind of sentence construction can detract from an otherwise solidly analytical text.

- **Mixed Sentence 1:** Learning to ballroom dance it has shown increased agility, and you live longer.

**First Problem:** The reader expects a verb to follow "learning to ballroom dance" so that *learning* will mean something. But the word *it* interrupts before the verb appears. *It* collides with the first part of the sentence rather than completing it, and the sentence ends up making little sense.

**Second Problem:** The second part of the sentence, "and you live longer," is confusing because it introduces *you* instead of continuing the idea of learning to ballroom dance.

To eliminate confusion, you would have to rewrite either the first or the second part of the sentence.

**Revised:** Studies have shown that learning to ballroom dance increases agility and lengthens life span.

In fact, because it is the dancing itself and not the learning that has these effects, the sentence could be edited further.

**Further Revision:** Ballroom dancing has been shown to increase agility and lengthen life.

In the following examples, the writer needs to revise either the second part to fit with the first part or the first part to fit with the second.

- **Mixed Sentence 2:** By starting my general studies classes last semester gave me the opportunity to take classes in my major this fall.

  **Second Part Revised:** By starting my general studies classes last spring, I had the opportunity to take classes in my major this fall.

  **First Part Revised:** Starting my general studies classes last spring gave me the opportunity to take classes in my major this fall.

Read the following mixed-construction sentences, and note the ways they have been corrected.

- **Mixed Sentence 3:** For people who have hobbies, they are happier than others.

  **Revision:** People who have hobbies are happier than others.

- **Mixed Sentence 4:** The required qualification is someone who writes well.

  **Problem:** The qualification is the *ability to write well*, not the person.

  **Revision:** The required qualification is the ability to write well.

  **Further Revision:** The company requires someone who writes well.

- **Mixed Sentence 5:** Nurses, an excellent career choice, involves an extra semester.

  **Problem:** *Nurses* are not a profession, *nursing* is.

  **Revision:** Nursing, an excellent career choice, involves an extra semester.

### *Just Because… Doesn't Mean* and *Is When* Constructions

*Just because . . . doesn't mean* constructions are common in speech but should be avoided in writing. They are another example of mixed sentence construction.

- ***Just Because . . .*** *Construction:* Just because I want to work in Washington doesn't mean I'll get a good job there.

  **Revision:** Simply wanting to work in Washington doesn't guarantee a good job there. **Revision:** Although I want to work in Washington, I will need to find a good job there.

Another common mixed construction in spoken English involves the use of *is when*. This construction should also be avoided in writing.

- ***Is When*** *Construction:* A feeling of accomplishment is when I finish revising a paper.

**Problem:** "A feeling of accomplishment" is a noun phrase followed by a linking verb. This construction means that what follows the verb either describes the noun or renames it in different words. Therefore, to balance the sentence, you need an adjective or noun to complete the subject. *When*, however, is an adverb referring to time, and in this sentence, it begins an adverb clause. In other words, "a feeling" cannot be the same as or described in terms of time.

**Revision:** A feeling of accomplishment is finishing revising a paper.

**Revision:** I feel a sense of accomplishment when I finish revising a paper.

### Your Turn

Now, correct the following mixed-construction sentences. After you have finished, go back and check your rhetorical analysis for mixed-construction sentences, and revise them as needed.

1. Putting your computer to sleep is when you can save the most electricity.
2. If you plant your seeds too close, anyone knows tomatoes cannot grow with corn.
3. Swimming in deep water is the danger of tides.
4. Just because you like math doesn't mean to eliminate classes in the humanities.
5. For people who want to be firefighters may have to work long and often intense shifts.

## 9.7 Evaluation: Rhetorical Analysis

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Evaluate the elements of a rhetorical analysis.
- Identify and correct errors involving mixed sentence structures.
- Evaluate an essay for clarity, coherence, and language.

At various points in your writing, especially after you complete the first draft, check the rubric provided here. Your instructor is likely to use a similar rubric to evaluate your rhetorical analysis. Aligning your writing to applicable points in the rubric—especially to those reflecting a score of 5— will keep you focused and guide you in your work.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—mixed sentence constructions, as discussed in Section 9.6—and maintains consistency in constructing the grammatical paths of sentences. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The essay presents all information clearly and logically. Well-chosen transitions connect paragraphs and sections, and the essay focuses consistently on its thesis statement. Claims are fully supported with quoted or paraphrased evidence. | The writer skillfully identifies rhetorical strategies and writes with precision and insight. The writer maintains a consistent voice and an awareness of the rhetorical situation. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—mixed sentence constructions, as discussed in Section 9.6—and maintains consistency in constructing the grammatical paths of sentences. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The essay presents most information clearly and logically. Well-chosen transitions connect most paragraphs and sections, and the essay focuses on its thesis statement. Claims are well supported with quoted or paraphrased evidence. | The writer identifies rhetorical strategies and writes with precision and insight. The writer maintains a consistent voice and an awareness of the rhetorical situation, although there may be an occasional slip. |
| **3**<br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—mixed sentence constructions, as discussed in Section 9.6—and maintains consistency in constructing the grammatical paths of sentences. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The essay presents most information clearly and logically. Transitions connect most paragraphs and sections, but the essay may stray occasionally from its thesis statement. Claims are generally supported with quoted or paraphrased evidence. | The writer identifies most, if not all, rhetorical strategies and writes with some insight. The writer maintains a fairly consistent voice and an awareness of the rhetorical situation, although there may be slips. |

**TABLE 9.5**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—mixed sentence constructions, as discussed in Section 9.6—and maintains consistency in constructing the grammatical paths of sentences. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The essay presents some information clearly, but the organization is confusing and/or illogical. Transitions connect some paragraphs and sections, but the transitions may be confusing or misleading. The essay may stray from its thesis statement and is either too short or too long. Claims often lack the support of additional quoted or paraphrased evidence. | The writer identifies some rhetorical strategies but neglects to elaborate on them sufficiently. The writer maintains an inconsistent voice and awareness of the rhetorical situation. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—mixed sentence constructions, as discussed in Section 9.6—and does not maintain consistency in constructing the grammatical paths of sentences. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The essay lacks clarity, and the organization is confusing and/or illogical. Transitions connect some paragraphs and sections, but the transitions may be too few, confusing, or misleading. The essay often strays from its thesis statement, if it has one, and is either too short or too long.<br>Claims that do appear are not effectively supported. | The writer identifies few if any rhetorical strategies and neglects to elaborate on them. The writer maintains an inconsistent voice and shows little, if any, awareness of the rhetorical situation. |

**TABLE 9.5**

## 9.8 Spotlight on … Business and Law

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify factors that influence the ways that work is designed, documented, and disseminated.
- Apply methods and technologies commonly used for communication in various fields.
- Write an effective résumé and accompanying cover letter.
- Interpret legal language and rewrite it in plain English.

In the business and legal worlds, written and spoken rhetoric is crucial to successful outcomes and the internal workings of an organization.

### Rhetoric in Business

The ability to write persuasively by using rhetorical strategies is crucial to the success of a business, including its profitability, employee satisfaction, and efficient operations. More immediately, though, using rhetorical devices to get hired is no less crucial a skill. The purpose of business writing is often to sell, whether an idea, a candidate, a product, or a strategy. For most people, the first step in business writing is an effective application letter and résumé with the goal of obtaining an interview.



**FIGURE 9.7** A strong cover letter and résumé will impress prospective employers, who will be well disposed toward interviewing you. Remember the purpose of these written pieces is to obtain an interview, not the job—at least not yet. (credit: "Women in Tech - 82" by WOCinTechChat.com/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

### Application Letters and Résumés

When writing letters of application and résumés, keep in mind that you are writing to sell. In this case, you need to "sell" yourself to a company. Thus, you want to convey information rhetorically and persuasively. The most effective application letters have one element in common: they focus as much as possible *not* on you, the applicant, but on the *company* and the ways in which you could be an asset as an employee. Therefore, keep in mind that *your* need for work is not a real concern to a prospective employer. Rather, *their* needs and *your potential* are. If you are applying for a job, ask yourself these questions: What can you do to fill a present or future need? What exactly is the employer looking for (as opposed to what *you* are looking for)? If an employer has indicated criteria for applicants, what are those criteria, and how can you show you fulfill them?

Keep these ideas in mind when writing an application letter. Because you are focusing on your value to a company, do not start like this student did:

> My name is Brett Ellison. I am graduating this spring and would like to apply for the position you have advertised. It looks interesting and would suit me well.

It will take exciting and convincing writing to build interest after such a generic introduction. Your name, graduation date, and opinion of the job are of little interest to a future employer. Consider the difference with this opening:

> For the job opening you have advertised online in data management, you have asked for a recent graduate with skills in. . . . Four years of college with a major in computer science and an internship with Coverall Insurance have given me the skills you require.

The applicant mentions the required skills and follows with a statement indicating they possess the skills. When you begin this way, you emphasize the company's needs, not your own. The first paragraph should then end with a statement that you are attaching your current résumé and that you request the company's consideration.

In the next paragraph, highlight a specific achievement connected to that skill and your abilities. Include other aspects of your background as relevant. Try to keep each paragraph to no more than six lines. If possible, continue to focus on the company and its needs, showing that you know something about them. Keep it short; one page will be sufficient to highlight your skills. Avoid mentioning areas of weakness or skills you do not have. Conclude with an expression of gratitude for their consideration.

If you have a recommendation or lead for the job, you can naturally begin with that, as this student did in the following letter:

105 South Main Street
Lexington, KY 45678

February 10, 2021

Barbara Serrano, Director
Kentucky Council on the Arts
953 Versailles Road
Frankfort, Kentucky 45678

Dear Ms. Serrano:

Lorenzo Huff, one of my professors at the University of Kentucky, recommended that I write to you regarding openings in the Council's internship program this summer. He believes I am well qualified to join the program and work productively for you. I am grateful to Professor Huff and would like to apply for one of these positions. Attached you will find my current résumé for your consideration.

As you will note, my academic background combines a concentration in business administration with a minor in fine arts. My interest in the arts goes back to childhood when I first attended a performance by the Lexington Symphony of the *Eroica*, which awakened my interest in serious music. I have continued to pursue that interest, attending performances and taking part in community arts initiatives. My goal after graduation is to build a career in arts administration, focusing on fundraising and outreach for a major public institution such as the Kentucky Council.

I hope you'll agree that my experience, particularly my work with the local Community Concerts association, and my education, with classes such as Professor Huff's in European arts, is strong preparation for an internship with the Council.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss my qualification with you in greater detail. May I call your office within the next few weeks to see about setting up an appointment to meet with you?

Thank you for your consideration. I can be reached at the above address, by email at caleandr@greatmail.com, or by phone at (555) 555-3333.

With best wishes for continued success with the internship program,

*Mikaela Rodgers*

Mikaela Rodgers

A current résumé should always accompany your application letter. Try to tailor your résumé to highlight unique credentials you may have and ones that may set you apart from other applicants. Your résumé should complement the letter, meaning the two parts should fit together and not contradict each other. A good idea is to edit the résumé to fit the job you want by adding or highlighting parts that pertain specifically to the position; changing the order of details; or using italics, boldface type, or bullets for listing facts or dates. The résumé should not be a one-size-fits-all product or give the impression that it is a standard statement with no real pertinence to the specific job. Use your résumé as a selling tool to persuade a company or organization to grant you an interview. Actually getting the job comes later.

A key element in any résumé, following your identifying information, is a statement of your career goal. Although it is inevitable that others will have similar plans, try to stand out by sounding decisive or presenting a vision of what you can accomplish. Imagine being the reader of your résumé rather than the writer. That

person may devote only seconds to skimming it, and the first thing they will notice is the career goal, which you can change each time you send out a résumé. Your personal aim or goal gives you the chance to indicate something in one line that would make the reader want to continue. The following are effective statements:

- To use my programming skills to create innovative and useful content for a growing company
- To use what I have learned in management classes for the progress of a growing firm
- To contribute to a sales force based on best practices of marketing
- To work in the public sector for personal as well as social progress
- To combine a productive work ethic with openness to change and travel

### Sample Résumé

Below is Mikaela Rodgers's résumé:

**Mikaela Rodgers**
405 Main Street
Lexington, KY 40508
caleandr@greatmail.com

**Professional Goal:**

To work productively in a position that combines business skills with awareness of the arts

**Education:**

BA, University of Kentucky (expected May 2022)

Major: Business

Minor: Art history

Grade point average: 3.87

Honors Thesis: "The View of the Arts in Business"

Graduate, Henry Clay High School (Lexington, KY), 2018

Martin Perry Scholarship for Outstanding Business Major

Honors, School of Business

**Related Activities:**

**2021–22 Habitat for Humanity**

Co-chaired campus fundraising drive that raised $55,000

**2019–20 Community Concerts, Inc.**

Part-time promotion assistant; assisted with scheduling, publicity, subscription procedures, and fundraising

**2018–19 Art in the Schools Program Volunteer**

through the Education Division, Lexington Center for the Arts

Trained to conduct art appreciation presentations in school classrooms, visiting one school a month

**2016–18 Record City** (part time and summers):

Sales clerk and assistant manager in a music store

**Related Interests:**

Journalism, watercolor painting, digital photography, cross-country skiing

**Please request references.**

Previewing a wide variety of sample résumés (https://openstax.org/r/sample) will give you plenty of ideas.

## Language in Law



In the legal world, communication is equally or even more crucial. In addition to the ability to speak convincingly, the ability to use rhetorical strategies to write persuasively is of critical importance in legal professions and in everyday situations regarding disputes, contracts, and other matters involving legalities. In courtrooms and behind the scenes, the ability to persuade a judge to make a decision or ruling in favor of a particular client before or during a trial affects all aspects of a case, including the legal team's ability to persuade a jury of its position. Furthermore, disputes between family members, buyers and sellers, renters and landlords, and employees and managers are often settled with the help of appropriately used rhetorical strategies.




**FIGURE 9.8** Because contracts and similar binding agreements feature in many legal disputes, it is important to understand and interpret the language in which they are written. Arguing for your interpretation involves the use of rhetorical strategies. (credit: "Legal Contract & Signature - Warm Tones" by Blogtrepreneur [howtostartablogonline.net/legal]/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

Language use in the legal profession relies on *precedent*, meaning evidence or examples of past legal cases and their verdicts. Legal English aims to be consistent, complete, valid, and formal. It must correspond to what is expected by the court to which it will be communicated. Legal briefs, for example, are documents written to persuade the court to agree with the writer's position, whether for a plaintiff or a defendant. To gain judicial agreement, legal language must avoid open-ended interpretations because ambiguity (two valid points of view without a single resolution) is counterproductive. Instead, lawyers and those who write for them often adapt a writing template already familiar to and required by a court.

American legal English has its roots in history. It was adopted from England, where Roman rulers and later French invaders left an inheritance of terminology still used today. Many familiar legal terms are hundreds of years old. For example, the verb *shall* replaces *must* or *have to* ("The plaintiff shall . . ."). The word is an imperative, binding and unconditional, unlike its uncertain use in modern English ("Shall I do that?"). Also, the word *consideration* indicates a sum of money or settlement to be paid, not "the act of caring" ("The land shall be transferred for a consideration of . . ."). Antiquated expressions appear frequently—*heretofore*, *forthwith*, *until such time that*, *party of the first part*, *party of the second part*, *due process*—as do Latin expressions—*pro bono*, *pro se*, *ad hoc*, *bona fide*, *de facto*. Doubling of concepts is also common: *null and void*, *breaking and entering*, *pain and suffering*, *legal and binding*.

However, the linguistic situation has changed somewhat with the move toward "plain English," meaning avoidance of the jargon and excesses of legal writing. Rather than long sentences and paragraphs with minimal punctuation and spacing of text, "plain English" reforms and simplifies the terminology to make it readily understandable for people outside the legal profession.

### Plain English

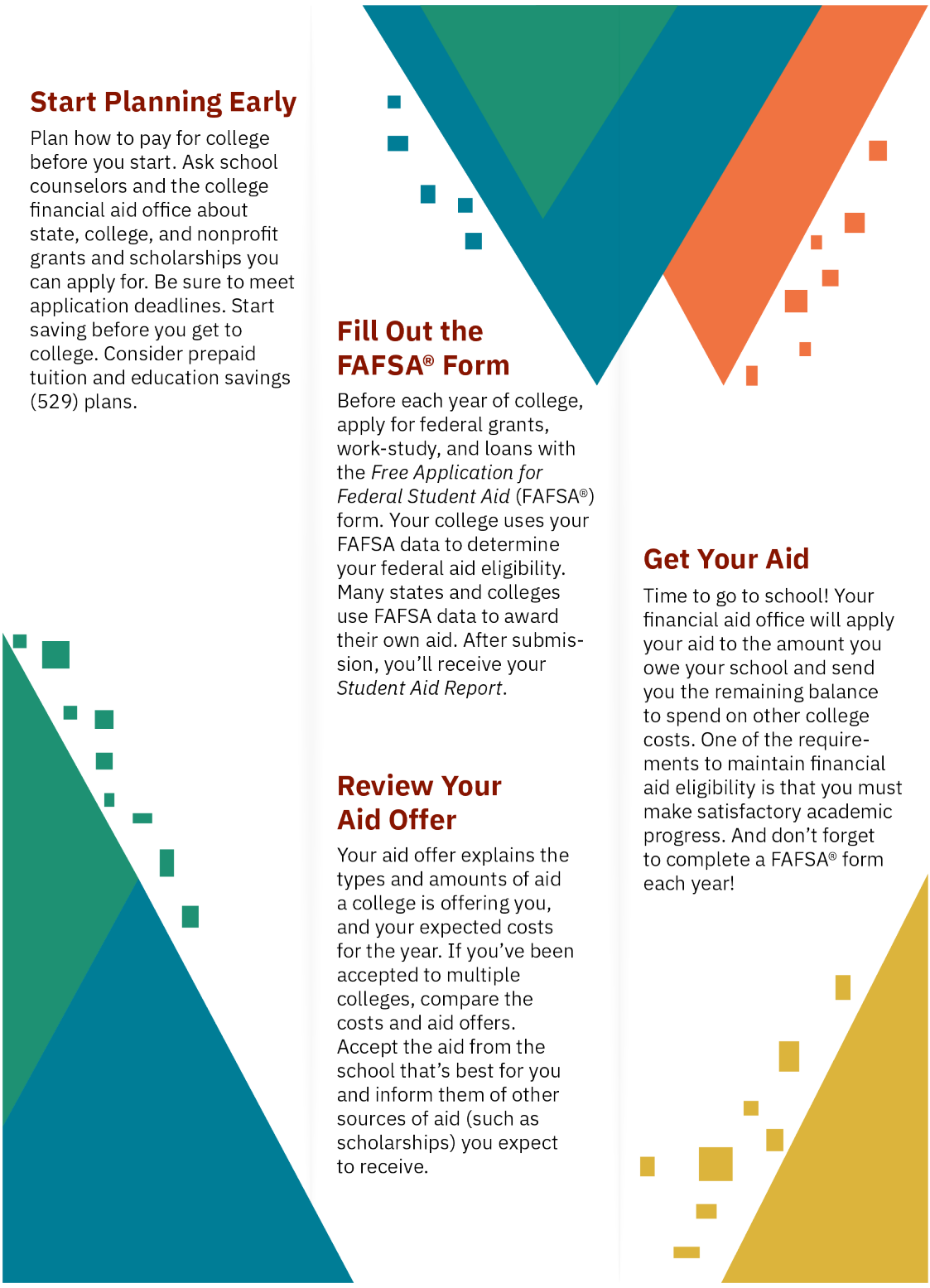
"Plain English" was formally introduced in the United States in 2010 by President Barack Obama in the official Plain Writing Act of 2010 adopted by Congress. It was part of a paperwork reduction program extending to all areas of government communication with the goal of reducing the amount of written communication issued by all agencies. Common opinion recognized that what needed to be said could be done more efficiently if people understood the content of laws and regulations.

As an example, the following regulations from the New Jersey state office for overseeing real estate

transactions are unclear and confusing. Despite the capital letters, the text consists of long, dense paragraphs that actually discourage reading and understanding. Because a situation in which someone breaks a lease is likely to be stressful, language such as this, with long sentences and legal terms, only worsens the possible confrontation. The assumption is that the tenant will have to either wade through the language independently or rely on a lawyer as a paid guide.

> **TERMINATION:** After expiration of the leasing period, this agreement is automatically renewed from month to month, but may be terminated by either party giving to the other a 30-day written notice of intention to terminate. Where laws require "just cause," such just cause shall be so stated on said notice. The premises shall be considered vacated only after all areas including storage areas are clear of all RESIDENT'S belongings, and keys and other property furnished for RESIDENT'S use are returned to OWNER. Should the RESIDENT hold over beyond the termination date or fail to vacate all possessions on or before the termination date, RESIDENT shall be liable for additional rent and damages which may include damages due to OWNER'S loss of prospective new renters.
>
> **POSSESSION:** If OWNER is unable to deliver possession of the residence to RESIDENTS on the agreed date, because of the loss or destruction of the residence or because of the failure of the prior residents to vacate or for any other reason, the RESIDENT and/or OWNER may immediately cancel and terminate this agreement upon written notice to the other party at their last known address, whereupon neither party shall have liability to the other, and any sums paid under this Agreement shall be refunded in full. If neither party cancels, this Agreement shall be prorated and begin on the date of actual possession.

On the other hand, the following document explains in plain English, with short sentences and paragraphs, the procedures for securing federal student aid. Not only are the instructions clear, but they also explain some of the reasoning for them.




The plain language of this document aims to make information easily comprehensible. It is broken into brief, concise paragraphs with short, clear sentences. Punctuation is basic and emphatic. Students already uncertain about financial security are made to feel welcome and have the sense that the procedure can be done without their becoming mired in dense language and regulations.

## Your Turn

**Business.** If you have a résumé, update and revise it according to the suggestions presented in this section. If

you do not have a résumé, now is the time to create one. Select a format and complete it with your information, including a professional objective. (You can access the site (https://openstax.org/r/site) provided earlier in this section or consult Microsoft Word for résumé templates.) Once you have revised or completed your résumé, find an announcement about a summer job or internship and write an appropriate application letter.

**Legal.** With the Plain Writing Act of 2010 in mind, rewrite the section of the New Jersey rental agreement reproduced in this section. Change sentence and paragraph length when appropriate to simplify language and clarify meaning. Remember that your readers consist of average people looking to rent an apartment.

## 9.9 Portfolio: How Thinking Critically about Rhetoric Affects Intellectual Growth

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate, through writing, the discovery and reconsideration of ideas.
- Reflect on the development of composing practices and how those practices influence your work.

In this reflection, think about your participation in the chapter as you learned about and completed a rhetorical analysis assignment. Participation includes thoughtful completion of work, working with other students in peer review, interacting with your instructor, and raising questions or concerns.

### Summing Up and Looking Ahead

An effective way to reflect productively is to compose a "Sum Up" entry for yourself that you can share with your instructor or peers. Your "Reflection on Analysis" may include what you knew of the genre before working on this chapter and what your initial reactions were to reading about Jamil Smith as this chapter's Trailblazer. *Will you look forward to reading more of his work?*

You also may note your writing of the rhetorical analysis and articulate any remaining questions about language use. *Might the experience lead you to express yourself in a similar public forum? Which issues interest you the most?*

While working through the sections of the chapter, *did you find any well suited to your pace and style of writing?* As you reflect, discuss in your own terms and in any format you choose what you learned from the material and what, specifically, you believe will be most useful for you in your education.

## Further Reading

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# Position Argument: Practicing the Art of Rhetoric

# 10



**FIGURE 10.1** This engraving by an unknown Italian artist from the 15th century personifies rhetoric as eloquence or "discourse marked by force and persuasiveness." Study the details. *What is the engraver suggesting about the characteristics of rhetoric or eloquence? Why might the artist have chosen a woman to personify rhetoric or eloquence?* (credit: "Mantegna Tarocchi E23, Rhetorica" by Unknown engraver of the late 15th century/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**10.1** Making a Case: Defining a Position Argument
**10.2** Position Argument Trailblazer: Charles Blow
**10.3** Glance at Genre: Thesis, Reasoning, and Evidence
**10.4** Annotated Sample Reading: "Remarks at the University of Michigan" by Lyndon B. Johnson
**10.5** Writing Process: Creating a Position Argument
**10.6** Editing Focus: Paragraphs and Transitions
**10.7** Evaluation: Varied Appeals
**10.8** Spotlight on ... Citation
**10.9** Portfolio: Growth in the Development of Argument


**INTRODUCTION** Around 350 BCE, the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE) defined **rhetoric** as the ability to recognize and use different means of persuasion in writing and speaking effectively. These means of persuasion include **ethos**, appeal to ethics; **logos**, appeal to logic; **pathos**, appeal to emotions; and **kairos**, or timeliness. In simple terms, rhetoric is the art of persuasion—explaining a position or side of an argument in order to convince others to adopt the writer's or speaker's viewpoint. More deeply, rhetoric is the study of how language is written, spoken, and visualized. For more on rhetoric, see Rhetorical Analysis: Interpreting the Art of Rhetoric.

Ethos, logos, pathos, and kairos are the foundation of persuasion strategies in Western civilization; other cultures rely on other types of appeals. In many Eastern civilizations, persuasive strategies are based on developing a sense of unity with the audience, promoting social responsibility, and working with the audience to increase knowledge.

This chapter presents a biography on position writer Charles Blow (b. 1970) and a speech by an American president Lyndon B. Johnson (1908–1973). It is a study in rhetoric, as its purpose is to persuade the audience (the American public) to agree with, support, and carry out his proposal for a Great Society. Later in the chapter, you will learn how to apply principles of rhetoric to create a position argument of your own.

## 10.1 Making a Case: Defining a Position Argument

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply key rhetorical concepts in presenting a position argument.
- Articulate how position and argument conventions are shaped by purpose, culture, and reasoning.

In writing, a **genre** is a category of literary composition. The genre for this chapter is a **position arguments**. In a position argument, your purpose is to present a **perspective**, or viewpoint, about a **debatable issue** and persuade readers that your perspective is correct or at least worthy of serious consideration. A debatable issue is one that is subject to uncertainty or to a difference of opinion; in college classes, a debatable issue is one that is complex and involves critical thinking. These issues are not rooted in absolutes; instead, they invite writers to explore all sides to discover the position they support. In examining and explaining their positions, writers provide reasoning and evidence about why their stance is correct.

Many people may interpret the word ***argument*** to mean a heated disagreement or quarrel. However, this is only one definition. In writing, *argument*—what Aristotle called *rhetoric*—means "working with a set of reasons and evidence for the purpose of persuading readers that a particular position is not only valid but also worthy of their support." This approach is the basis of academic position writing.

Your instructor likely will require your position argument to include these elements, which resemble those of Aristotle's classical argument. However, as you continue the development of your writing identity throughout this course, consider ways in which you want to support these conventions or challenge them for rhetorical purposes.

- Introduce the issue and your position on the issue.
- Explain and describe the issue.
- Address the opposition.
- Provide evidence to support your position.
- Offer your conclusion.

Position arguments must provide reasoning and **evidence** to support the validity of the author's viewpoint. By offering strong support, writers seek to persuade their audiences to understand, accept, agree with, or take action regarding their viewpoints. In a college class, an audience is usually an instructor and other classmates. Outside of an academic setting, however, an audience includes anyone who might read the argument—employers, employees, colleagues, neighbors, and people of different ages or backgrounds or with different interests.

Before you think about writing, keep in mind that presenting a position is already part of your everyday life. You present reasoning to frame evidence that supports your opinions, whether you are persuading a friend to go to a certain restaurant, or persuading your supervisor to change your work schedule. Your reasoning and evidence emphasize the importance of the issue—to you. Position arguments are also valuable outside of academia. Opinion pieces and letters to the editor are essentially brief position texts that express writers' viewpoints on current events topics. Moreover, government organizations and political campaigns often use

position arguments to present detailed views of one side of a debatable issue.



On a larger scale, arguing in favor of a position is deeply rooted in the American political and social systems, in which free speech and, by extension, open debate are the essence of the democratic process. They are also at the heart of the academic process, in which scholars investigate issues dealing with science, society, and **culture**, or shared values, customs, arts, and other traits of any social group. However, in the academic world, unlike the political and legal worlds, posing position arguments is usually less about winning or losing than about changing minds, altering perceptions, or defending beliefs and ideas.

It is most useful to look at a position argument as rational disagreement rather than as a quarrel or contest. Rational disagreements occur most often in areas of genuine uncertainty about what is right, best, or most reasonable. In disciplines such as literature and history, position arguments commonly take the form of interpretation or analysis, in which the meaning of an idea or text is disputed. In disciplines such as engineering and business, position arguments commonly examine a problem and propose a solution. For example, a position paper in engineering might focus on improvement recommendations for systems in the oil and gas industry; a position paper in business might focus on technological changes that would benefit a particular company or industry.

In college, position arguments aim to persuade readers to agree with a particular viewpoint. Assignments commonly require you to take a stance on an issue and defend your position against attacks from skeptics or naysayers. You are asked to choose an issue, present a viewpoint about it, and support it with reasoning and evidence. Remember these basic points:

- **Choose a debatable issue.** A position argument that states, for instance, that *three-year-old children can be left alone all evening* is one with no room for debate, so the topic would not lead to an effective argument. Without a debate, there is no argument.
- **Present a clear, definite viewpoint.** Readers do not want to guess your position. Although you present both sides of a position, readers must be clear about which side you support.
- **Support your viewpoint with reasoning and evidence.** If, for instance, you are writing about backing a local proposal to remove a statute of a Civil War general who fought for the Confederacy, readers need to know why you favor its removal, why the statue was first erected, and how removal will help the community. You would then support each with cause-and-effect reasoning and evidence. For example, details that explain why you favor removal might include the general's support of the Southern economic system sustained by enslavement. Details that explain why the statue was erected might include that the general was from the town and that his family was rich and influential enough to fund the creation and placement of the statue. Details that explain how the removal of the statue will affect the community might include the promotion of a feeling of solidarity with local citizens of all races and the end of negative publicity resulting from association with the general.
- **Identify counterclaims (dissenting opinions).** When you address differing or contradictory opinions, show **empathy**, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, for those with dissenting views. If, for instance, people oppose a proposed new law because they think it will cost too much money, then explain why the money will be well spent or offset by savings in the future. Neither antagonize nor dismiss the opposition.

## 10.2 Trailblazer

### Position Argument Trailblazer: Charles Blow

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate critical thinking when reading in varying rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Articulate and analyze rhetorical and cultural contexts in reading.
- Distinguish relationships between the interplay of verbal and nonverbal elements, and explain how these features function for different audiences and situations.

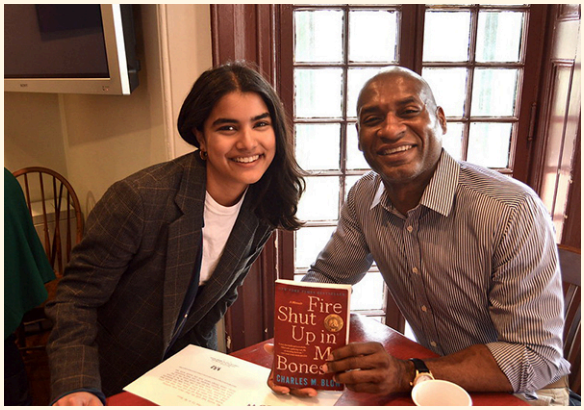



**FIGURE 10.2** Charles Blow (credit: **"Charles Blow and Jillian Karanda 4-23-18" by** Kelly Writers House/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

*"I . . . us[e] visual evidence . . . charts and maps and diagrams to support my positions."*

#### Trendsetter

Trendsetting journalist Charles Blow (b. 1970) attended Grambling State University in Louisiana, where he edited his college newspaper, founded a student magazine, and interned (worked as a trainee to gain experience) in various positions. While a student, he heard *The New York Times* was participating in a job conference in Atlanta and decided to attend. When he arrived, however, he learned he was supposed to have preregistered, paid a fee, filled out a form, and submitted an essay. Undeterred, Blow borrowed pencil from a guard, completed the form, paid the fee, and wrote the essay on the spot. He then gained entry into the conference. When he got to the booth sponsored by *The New York Times*, he was told he would not be interviewed because he had not signed up beforehand. Again undeterred, Blow decided to wait anyway, thinking someone who had signed up might not appear for their interview. He waited until early evening and eventually was granted an interview. At the end of his interview, he was told that he had been impressive but that *The New York Times* had no openings at the time. The next day, however, a representative from the paper approached him again and announced they had created an internship for him.

In 1991, Blow graduated *magna cum laude* (with great distinction) with a degree in mass communications and began a journalism career, working in various cities. In 2008, he returned to *The New York Times* as its first "visual" op-ed columnist, writing opinion pieces that feature graphic aids such as diagrams, charts, and tables. In his visual op-ed column, Blow presents his position or argument, with the intent to persuade readers to agree with him. To augment what he says in print, he includes graphic aids, which clarify and simplify data. Blow is cautious, too, about using visuals that are too complex, for he believes his readers respond better to "a

strong point . . . in a visual nugget that they can digest right away."

Blow's topics revolve around current events, and his readers—his audience—expect his columns to highlight his positions on, or arguments about, hot-button issues in current events. Blow calls himself a "trend spotter," someone on the cutting edge of what is happening in the nation and the world. To discover ideas for topics about current events, Blow keeps his office television tuned to news channels so he can learn of breaking news or of how news is being covered. That is where his writing process usually begins.

First, when an interesting news item comes over the airwaves, Blow decides his opinion on the subject. Then he thinks about whether his readers might care about the subject. He does not stop there, though. Because Blow is a visual op-ed columnist, he will not pursue the topic if he cannot think of a visual hook to support his position or argument. He then studies data about the topic and asks himself whether the data surprises him or might surprise readers. His audience expects solid graphic aids in his columns, and it is the combination of written prose and visual hooks that makes him stand apart from other op-ed writers.

In addition to writing for *The New York Times*, Blow is the author of the memoir *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* and *The Devil You Know: A Black Power Manifesto*.

### Discussion Questions

1. If you were to turn on the television today, what current topics might make interesting opinion columns?
2. How might Blow's use of graphics as evidence help support a point in a column?
3. What kinds of graphics could you use to support the topic(s) you identified in question #1?
4. Do you agree or disagree with Blow's claim that visuals should be simple and easily digestible rather than complex? Explain your thinking.
5. Blow calls himself a "trend spotter." In your college, your town, or the country as a whole, what is a current trend that might interest Blow?

## 10.3 Glance at Genre: Thesis, Reasoning, and Evidence

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Articulate and analyze key rhetorical concepts in presenting a position or an argument.
- Demonstrate awareness of context, audience, and purpose in a position argument.
- Identify the thesis and supporting evidence of a position argument.
- Distinguish different types of evidence used in a position argument.

The purpose of a position argument is to persuade readers to adopt a viewpoint. Writers of position arguments focus on a thesis that takes a stance on a debatable issue and support that thesis with reasoning and evidence. When writing persuasively, consider your audience and use the kinds of reasoning strategies and evidentiary appeals you believe will be convincing. In addition, use language with which your audience is most comfortable. In academic environments, academic language is generally most acceptable, although you may choose to challenge this notion for rhetorical purposes. Outside academic environments, tailor your language to connect best with your audience.

Reasoning is most effective when it is built on evidence that readers recognize as logical and practical. Suppose you want to persuade your audience that because of the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, additional police should be hired to protect the building and the people who work there. You could include information about the number of police on duty that day, the number of people injured, and the amount of damage done. You then could explain how the number of police on duty was insufficient to protect the people and the Capitol.

Additionally, you identify and refute the **counterclaims**. An example of a counterclaim against hiring additional police officers might be that the cost is too high. Your response, then, might be that the cost could easily be shifted from another nationally funded source.

## Characteristics of Position Arguments

The characteristics of a position argument include the following elements.

### Ethos (Ethical Appeal)

You establish credibility by showing readers that your approach to the issue is fair and that you can be trusted. One way to demonstrate fairness and trustworthiness is to use neutral language that avoids name-calling. For instance, in your paper about hiring additional police to defend the Capitol, you would avoid taking political sides and would use neutral language when describing police, workers in the Capitol, and demonstrators.

To show trustworthiness, always follow these guidelines:

- Use only respected, reliable sources as evidence. Avoid sources that lean heavily to the political right or left or that are otherwise questionable as to accuracy. Reliable sources include scholarly, peer-reviewed articles and books; professional articles and books; and articles from magazines, newspapers, websites, and blogs. For more information about credible sources, see Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources.
- Present evidence from sources in the same context in which it was originally presented. Do not change the original author's meaning or tone. Be especially careful of such changes when you paraphrase or summarize. See Spotlight on… Citation for more about paraphrasing and summarizing.
- Cite evidence to the proper sources. Use the citation style required by your instructor, usually MLA Documentation and Format or APA Documentation and Format Proper citations direct readers to more information about your sources and show you are not plagiarizing.
- Incorporate common ground between readers who support your position and those who do not. To do this, many authors use evidence pulled from patriotic or religious documents to create ethical appeal. For instance, regarding the activity that took place at the Capitol, both sides might find common ground in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which outlines rights of the people. The protestors might cite the section of the amendment that deals with freedom of assembly; those on the other side might point out that the amendment guarantees "the right of the people peaceably to assemble" and that the assembly was not peaceable.

### Logos (Logical Appeal)

You appeal to your audience's intelligence by showing that you understand the value of sound reasoning. To do this, state your position clearly and support it with rational arguments, critical thinking, and credible evidence. Also, avoid exaggerating or making claims you cannot support with reliable evidence. Many authors use facts and statistics to create logical appeal.

To appeal to logic, follow these guidelines:

- State your position clearly with easy-to-understand language. For example, to appeal to readers' intelligence in your paper about hiring additional police to defend the Capitol, avoid using vocabulary that would feel unnatural. Instead of writing "The verbiage from the campaigners importuned the dispossession of their statesmen," write "The protestors demanded the resignations of their congressional representatives."
- Support your position with reasoning that is neither incomplete nor faulty. Sound reasoning is that which all can agree makes sense. For example, you would not contend that to be ready for future protests, the Capitol police force must be doubled from 2,000 to 4,000 because you cannot know the number needed at any time. However, you could argue that the Capitol police force and government leaders should study the January 6, 2021, riot to determine how many additional police are needed, should such an occasion arise

again.
- Present your critical thinking through a well-constructed argument. By ordering your position argument in a manner that moves logically from one point to the next, you help guide readers through your thought process, which is reflected in the smooth flow of ideas that work together to support your thesis.
- Incorporate credible evidence from trusted and reliable academic, government, media, and professional sources. Using these sources shows readers that you recognize biased material and have excluded it from your paper.

### Pathos (Emotional Appeal)

You appeal to your audience's feelings—such as sympathy, anger, fear, insecurity, guilt, and conscience—to support your position.

For example, to appeal to your audience's emotions in your paper about the need for more Capitol police, you might do the following:

- Help your readers understand feelings of fear. One way to appeal to this emotion is to quote from interviews with government workers and bystanders who were hiding behind locked doors and had no police protection.
- Use vivid description and concrete language to recreate images that showed lone officers overwhelmed by crowds of people and beaten.
- Use nonaggressive language to address the positions of readers who do not support your stance. For example, some readers may believe that the federal government spends too much money already and should not allocate more. By using language that is not inflammatory, you can show your empathy for others, and this may help you convince them to support your position.

### Kairos (Timeliness)

The sense of timing—presenting your position at the right time—is critical in a position argument. The issue must be worthy of attention at the time it is presented for readers to feel a sense of urgency. For example, in an argumentative paper about the significance of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, you could do the following:

- Point out the history of the BLM movement, which began in 2013 after the acquittal of the man accused of killing Trayvon Martin (1995–2012) in 2012.
- Note that today, most of the speeches delivered in BLM rallies held across the country reference the May 2020 murder of George Floyd (1973–2020).
- Emphasize that Floyd's killing remains front and center in the minds of rally participants. In other words, the topic of Floyd's death is timely, and related circumstances indicate a favorable time for action.

You can find further discussion about these appeals in Rhetorical Analysis: Interpreting the Art of Rhetoric.

## Key Terms

These are key terms and characteristics of position arguments:

- **Allusion:** direct or implied reference to a person, place, work of literature, idea, event, or anything a writer expects readers to know about. Allusion is a frequently used literary device.
- **Citation:** reference to the source of information used in a writer's research.
- **Critical thinking:** ability to identify and solve problems by gathering information about a topic and then analyzing and evaluating evidence to form a judgment.
- **Counterclaim (dissenting opinion):** statement of what the other side might say in opposition to the stance the writer takes about an issue.
- **Ethos:** appeal to readers' ethical sense; establishing authority and credibility.
- **Evidence:** facts and other information that prove or disprove the validity of something written or stated.
- **Introduction:** first part of a paper. In position arguments, the writer alerts readers to the issue or problem

discussed and often presents the thesis at the end of the introduction.

- **Kairos:** appeal to timeliness of the subject matter.
- **Logos:** appeal to readers' sense of logic, or reason.
- **Pathos:** appeal to readers' emotions.
- **Purpose:** author's reason for writing the paper. In a position argument, the purpose is to persuade readers to agree with the writer's stance.
- **Reasoning:** logical and sensible explanation of a concept.
- **Recursive:** movement back and forth from one part of the writing process to another.
- **Rhetorical appeals:** methods of persuasion (ethos, logos, pathos, and kairos).
- **Rhetorical question:** questions intended to make a point rather than to get an answer. Rhetorical questions, which often have no answers or no obvious answers, appear frequently in argument writing as a way of capturing audience attention.
- **Topic:** subject of a paper. In this genre, the topic is a debatable issue.
- **Thesis:** declarative sentence (sometimes two) that states a writer's position about the debatable issue, or topic, of the paper.
- **Transitional words or phrases:** words and phrases that help readers connect ideas from one sentence to another or from one paragraph to another. Transitions establish relationships among ideas.

## 10.4 Annotated Sample Reading: "Remarks at the University of Michigan" by Lyndon B. Johnson

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate critical thinking about a reading passage related to position and argument writing.
- Explain and evaluate how conventions are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Assess material for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical and cultural contexts.

## Introduction



**FIGURE 10.3** President Lyndon B. Johnson (credit: “Lyndon Johnson” by Arnold Newman, White House Press Office (WHPO)/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

In a commencement speech at the University of Michigan (https://openstax.org/r/universityofmichigan) on May 22, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson (https://openstax.org/r/lyndonbjohnson) proposed a set of domestic programs that would become one of the foundations of his administration. He called these programs the Great Society. Today, many of the same problems that Johnson addressed continue, and programs that seek to remedy them are referred to as initiatives of **social justice**, such as those directed toward human rights, health care, alleviating poverty, and guaranteeing democratic practices. To persuade his audience to agree that the programs needed to be adopted, Johnson presented his argument about why they were needed and what they would achieve.



**FIGURE 10.4** On July 2, barely two months after the University of Michigan graduation speech, President Johnson

signed the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is among the onlookers. The Act forbids discrimination on the basis race, religion, gender, or national origin. Prohibiting the practice of "Jim Crow" laws, the Act also strengthened the enforcement of school desegregation and voting rights. (credit: "Lyndon Johnson signing Civil Rights Act, July 2, 1964" by Cecil Stoughton, White House Press Office/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### Testing Our Success as a Nation

President Hatcher, Governor Romney, Senators McNamara and Hart, Congressmen Meader and Staebler and other members of the fine Michigan delegation, members of the graduating class, my fellow Americans:

***Audience.*** *This speech, although given at the University of Michigan commencement, is addressed to the nation. Johnson first mentions the people in attendance but ends his introduction by including in his wider audience: "my fellow Americans."*

> It is a great pleasure to be here today. This university has been coeducational since 1870, but I do not believe it was on the basis of your accomplishments that a Detroit high school girl said, "In choosing a college, you first have to decide whether you want a coeducational school or an educational school." Well, we can find both here at Michigan, although perhaps at different hours. I came out here today very anxious to meet the Michigan student whose father told a friend of mine that his son's education had been a real value. It stopped his mother from bragging about him.

> I have come today from the turmoil of your Capital to the tranquility of your campus to speak about the future of your country. The purpose of protecting the life of our Nation and preserving the liberty of our citizens is to pursue the happiness of our people. Our success in that pursuit is the test of our success as a Nation. For a century we labored to settle and to subdue a continent. For half a century we called upon unbounded invention and untiring industry to create an order of plenty for all of our people. The challenge of the next half century is whether we have the wisdom to use that wealth to enrich and elevate our national life and to advance the quality of our American civilization.

***Kairos.*** *Johnson notes the mood of the nation and of the campus, a timely reference for those attending the graduation ceremony.*

***Context.*** *Johnson contextualizes the current challenges of the country within the history of the nation. This strategy calls upon the patriotism of his audience to take their rightful place in history.*

> Your imagination, your initiative, and your indignation will determine whether we build a society where progress is the servant of our needs or a society where old values and new visions are buried under unbridled growth. For in your time we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society.

***Purpose.*** *Johnson's purpose is to introduce the concept of the Great Society to the American public.*

> The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time. But that is just the beginning. The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents.

> It is a place where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect, not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness. It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community. It is a place where man can renew contact with nature. It is a place which honors creation for its own sake and for what it adds to the understanding of the race. It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods.

***Repetition.*** *Johnson repeats the clause "It is a place" to add emphasis to the various facets of the Great Society.*

***Definition.*** *Johnson also defines for the audience what he means by the term Great Society.*

***Allusion.*** *Johnson mentions "the city of man," a reference—or allusion—to St. Augustine's book The City of God, which gives ethical and religious significance to his Great Society.*

> But most of all, the Great Society is not a safe harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor.

> So I want to talk to you today about three places where we begin to build the Great Society—in our cities, in our countryside, and in our classrooms.

***Clear Viewpoint.*** *Johnson states that America needs reform and points out the three areas where the Great Society will focus: "in our cities, in our countryside, and in our classrooms." His choice of these places emphasizes where people live and where they learn.*

> Many of you will live to see the day, perhaps 50 years from now, when there will be 400 million Americans, four-fifths of them in urban areas. In the remainder of this century urban population will double, city land will double, and we will have to build homes, highways, and facilities equal to all those built since this country was first settled. So in the next 40 years we must rebuild the entire urban United States.

***Kairos.*** *Johnson addresses the timeliness of the concerns these college graduates have about their lives after graduation.*

***Logos.*** *Johnson will go on to provide a logical solution to the problems that Americans will face over the next 40 years.*

> Aristotle said: "Men come together in cities in order to live, but they remain together in order to live the good life." It is harder and harder to live the good life in American cities today.

***Quotation from an Expert.*** *This quotation from a revered classical philosopher (Aristotle) echoes Johnson's idea, giving it more strength and credibility.*

> The catalog of ills is long: there is the decay of the centers and the despoiling of the suburbs. There is not enough housing for our people or transportation for our traffic. Open land is vanishing, and old landmarks are violated. Worst of all, expansion is eroding the precious and time-honored values of community with neighbors and communion with nature. The loss of these values breeds loneliness and boredom and indifference.

***Kairos.*** *Johnson addresses the many concerns on Americans' minds.*

***Pathos.*** *Using strong words like decay, despoiling, vanishing, and violated, Johnson connects his argument to emotions—mostly fear—the audience would feel about such destruction of nature and values.*

***Culture.*** *Johnson addresses the need for a change in culture to improve the future of the country.*

> Our society will never be great until our cities are great. Today the frontier of imagination and innovation is inside those cities and not beyond their borders.

***Supporting Evidence.*** *Johnson states that he will begin to build the Great Society in three places—cities, countryside, classrooms. Then he gives supporting evidence for each place.*

*To support the need for change the Great Society will bring to cities, Johnson offers that*

- *many people in the audience will see a time when four-fifths of the American population will live in cities;*
- *since urban population and city land will double in the coming years, America needs homes, highways, and facilities;*

- *cities suffer from decay, and suburbs are being despoiled;*
- *the country must fulfill housing and transportation needs;*
- *open land is vanishing;*
- *old landmarks are violated; and*
- *values of community and communion with nature are eroding.*

> New experiments are already going on. It will be the task of your generation to make the American city a place where future generations will come, not only to live but to live the good life. I understand that if I stayed here tonight, I would see that Michigan students are really doing their best to live the good life. This is the place where the Peace Corps was started. It is inspiring to see how all of you, while you are in this country, are trying so hard to live at the level of the people.

> A second place where we begin to build the Great Society is in our countryside. We have always prided ourselves on being not only America the strong and America the free, but America the beautiful. Today that beauty is in danger. The water we drink, the food we eat, the very air that we breathe, are threatened with pollution. Our parks are overcrowded, our seashores overburdened. Green fields and dense forests are disappearing.

***Transition between Paragraphs.*** *By using the phrase "second place," Johnson alerts his audience that he is shifting to another facet of the Great Society.*

***Pathos.*** *Johnson appeals to the fears of his audience with examples of the tragedies that could result if the Great Society were not adopted.*

***Supporting Evidence.*** *To support the need for change the Great Society will bring to the countryside, Johnson offers that*

- *the beauty of America is in danger;*
- *pollution threatens water, food, and air;*
- *parks are overcrowded and seashores are overburdened;*
- *green fields and dense forests are disappearing; and*
- *if destroyed, natural splendor cannot be recaptured.*

> A few years ago, we were greatly concerned about the "Ugly American." Today we must act to prevent an ugly America. For once the battle is lost, once our natural splendor is destroyed, it can never be recaptured. And once man can no longer walk with beauty or wonder at nature his spirit will wither and his sustenance be wasted.

***Allusion and Play on Words.*** *Johnson alludes to a phrase in popular use that describes U.S. citizens as "ugly Americans": brash, conceited, and ignorant about cultures of other societies and matters of the world. He connects the phrase Ugly American with the phrase "ugly America," a play on how Americans are perceived with his desire that America not be perceived as "ugly America."*

> A third place to build the Great Society is in the classrooms of America. There your children's lives will be shaped. Our society will not be great until every young mind is set free to scan the farthest reaches of thought and imagination. We are still far from that goal.

***Transition between Paragraphs.*** *With the phrase "third place," Johnson alerts his audience that he is shifting to the third facet of the Great Society.*

> Today, eight million adult Americans, more than the entire population of Michigan, have not finished five years of school. Nearly 20 million have not finished eight years of school. Nearly 54 million—more than one-quarter of all America—have not even finished high school.

> Each year more than 100,000 high school graduates, with proved ability, do not enter college because they cannot afford it. And if we cannot educate today's youth, what will we do in 1970 when elementary school enrollment will be five million greater than 1960? And high school enrollment will rise by five million. College enrollment will increase by more than three million.

> In many places, classrooms are overcrowded and curricula are outdated.

***Statistics as Supporting Evidence.*** *To support the need for change the Great Society will bring to classrooms, Johnson uses statistics as evidence. He offers that*

- *eight million adult Americans have not finished five years of school;*
- *almost 20 million Americans have not finished eight years of school;*
- *more than one-quarter of Americans have not finished high school;*
- *yearly, more than 100,000 high school graduates do not enter college because they cannot afford it; and*
- *many classrooms are overcrowded.*

> Most of our qualified teachers are underpaid, and many of our paid teachers are unqualified. So we must give every child a place to sit and a teacher to learn from. Poverty must not be a bar to learning, and learning must offer an escape from poverty.

> But more classrooms and more teachers are not enough. We must seek an educational system which grows in excellence as it grows in size. This means better training for our teachers. It means preparing youth to enjoy their hours of leisure as well as their hours of labor. It means exploring new techniques of teaching, to find new ways to stimulate the love of learning and the capacity for creation.

> These are three of the central issues of the Great Society. While our Government has many programs directed at those issues, I do not pretend that we have the full answer to those problems.

***Thesis Restated.*** *Johnson briefly summarizes his thesis: three issues of the Great Society.*

> But I do promise this: We are going to assemble the best thought and the broadest knowledge from all over the world to find those answers for America. I intend to establish working groups to prepare a series of White House conferences and meetings—on the cities, on natural beauty, on the quality of education, and on other emerging challenges. And from these meetings and from this inspiration and from these studies we will begin to set our course toward the Great Society. The solution to these problems does not rest on a massive program in Washington, nor can it rely solely on the strained resources of local authority. They require us to create new concepts of cooperation, a creative federalism, between the National Capital and the leaders of local communities.

***Problem/Solution.*** *Johnson has pointed out the problems that America faces and now presents solutions to them.*

> Woodrow Wilson once wrote: "Every man sent out from his university should be a man of his Nation as well as a man of his time." Within your lifetime powerful forces, already loosed, will take us toward a way of life beyond the realm of our experience, almost beyond the bounds of our imagination.

***Quotation from an Authority.*** *This quotation from a political expert leads into Johnson's idea and acts as a transition, linking Wilson's and Johnson's audiences across time.*

> For better or for worse, your generation has been appointed by history to deal with those problems and to lead America toward a new age. You have the chance never before afforded to any people in any age. You can help build a society where the demands of morality, and the needs of the spirit, can be realized in the life of the Nation.

***Ethos.*** *Johnson uses ethos to appeal to the patriotic ideals his audience possesses for dealing with and finding a solution to America's problems.*

> So, will you join in the battle to give every citizen the full equality which God enjoins and the law requires, whatever his belief, or race, or the color of his skin?

> Will you join in the battle to give every citizen an escape from the crushing weight of poverty?

> Will you join in the battle to make it possible for all nations to live in enduring peace—as neighbors and not as mortal enemies?

> Will you join in the battle to build the Great Society, to prove that our material progress is only the foundation on which we will build a richer life of mind and spirit?

***Rhetorical Questions.*** *Johnson uses rhetorical questions (questions intended to make a point rather than to get an answer) to encourage the audience to get involved in the Great Society.*

> There are those timid souls who say this battle cannot be won, that we are condemned to a soulless wealth. I do not agree. We have the power to shape the civilization that we want. But we need your will, your labor, your hearts, if we are to build that kind of society.

***Addressing a Counterclaim.*** *Johnson identifies a counterclaim to the Great Society and then refutes it.*

> Those who came to this land sought to build more than just a new country. They sought a new world. So I have come here today to your campus to say that you can make their vision our reality. So let us from this moment begin our work so that in the future men will look back and say: It was then, after a long and weary way, that man turned the exploits of his genius to the full enrichment of his life.

> Thank you. Goodby.

## Discussion Questions

1. For what purpose might Johnson have chosen to address the American people under the guise of a graduation address?
2. What parts of Johnson's speech show that he is trying to connect with the students in the audience?
3. For what reasons has Johnson singled out the cities, countrysides, and schools as the locations of his Great Society?
4. Johnson acknowledges one main counterclaim to the ideas proposed in the Great Society. How does Johnson address that counterclaim?
5. In today's political climate, Johnson's Great Society might be labeled by some as *socialism,* an economic system in which production, distribution, and exchange of goods are owned or governed by the community as a whole rather than by individuals. In what way might Johnson have responded to this counterclaim?
6. Johnson ends with a reference to the founders of the country and says, "You can make their vision our reality." In your opinion, does he adequately explain what he means by "our reality"? Why or why not?

## 10.5 Writing Process: Creating a Position Argument

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate brainstorming processes and tools as means to discover topics, ideas, positions, and details.
- Apply recursive strategies for organizing drafting, collaborating, peer reviewing, revising, rewriting, and editing.
- Compose a position argument that integrates the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources.
- Give and act on productive feedback to works in progress.
- Apply or challenge common conventions of language or grammar in composing and revising.

Now is the time to try your hand at writing a position argument. Your instructor may provide some possible topics or a singular topic. If your instructor allows you to choose your own topic, consider a general subject you feel strongly about and whether you can provide enough support to develop that subject into an essay. For instance, suppose you think about a general subject such as "adulting." In looking back at what you have learned while becoming an adult, you think of what you wish you had known during your early teenage years. These thoughts might lead you to brainstorm about details of the effects of money in your life or your friends' lives. In reviewing your brainstorming, you might zero in on one topic you feel strongly about and think it provides enough depth to develop into a position argument. Suppose your brainstorming leads you to think about negative financial concerns you or some of your friends have encountered. Thinking about what could have helped address those concerns, you decide that a mandated high school course in financial literacy would have been useful. This idea might lead you to formulate your **working thesis statement**—first draft of your thesis statement—like this: *To help students learn how to make sensible financial decisions, a mandatory class in financial literacy should be offered in high schools throughout the country.*

Once you decide on a topic and begin moving through the writing process, you may need to fine-tune or even change the topic and rework your initial idea. This fine-tuning may come as you brainstorm, later when you begin drafting, or after you have completed a draft and submitted it to your peers for constructive criticism. These possibilities occur because the writing process is **recursive**—that is, it moves back and forth almost simultaneously and maybe even haphazardly at times, from planning to revising to editing to drafting, back to planning, and so on.




**FIGURE 10.5** Because the writing process is recursive, you can go from any step to another at any time to improve your paper. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

### Summary of Assignment

Write a position argument on a controversial issue that you choose or that your instructor assigns to you. If you are free to choose your own topic, consider one of the following:

- The legal system would be strengthened if _____.
- The growing use of technology in college classrooms is weakening _____.

- For safety reasons, public signage should be _____.
- For entrance into college, standardized testing _____.
- In relation to the cost of living, the current minimum wage _____.
- During a pandemic, America _____.
- As a requirement to graduate, college students _____.
- To guarantee truthfulness of their content, social media platforms have the right to _____.
- To ensure inclusive and diverse representation of people of all races, learning via virtual classrooms _____.
- Segments of American cultures have differing rules of acceptable grammar, so in a college classroom _____.

In addition, if you have the opportunity to choose your own topic and wish to search further, take the lead from trailblazer Charles Blow and look to media for newsworthy "trends." Find a controversial issue that affects you or people you know, and take a position on it. As you craft your argument, identify a position opposing yours, and then refute it with reasoning and evidence. Be sure to gather information on the issue so that you can support your position sensibly with well-developed ideas and evidence.



***Another Lens.*** To gain a different perspective on your issue, consider again the people affected by it. Your position probably affects different people in different ways. For example, if you are writing that the minimum wage should be raised, then you might easily view the issue through the lens of minimum-wage workers, especially those who struggle to make ends meet. However, if you look at the issue through the lens of those who employ minimum-wage workers, your viewpoint might change. Depending on your topic and thesis, you may need to use print or online sources to gain insight into different perspectives.

For additional information about minimum-wage workers, you could consult

- printed material available in your college library;
- databases in your college library; and
- online sources. For instance, you could use a search engine to find details about
  - pros and cons of raising the minimum wage;
  - what happens after the minimum wage is raised;
  - how to live on a minimum-wage salary;
  - how a raise in minimum wage is funded; and
  - minimum wage in various U.S. states.

To gain more insight about your topic, adopt a stance that opposes your original position and brainstorm ideas from that viewpoint. Begin by gathering evidence that would help you refute your previous stance and appeal to your audience.

## Quick Launch: Working Thesis Frames and Organization of Ideas



After you have decided on your topic, the next step is to arrive at your working thesis. You probably have a good idea of the direction your working thesis will take. That is, you know where you stand on the issue or problem, but you are not quite sure of how to word your stance to share it with readers. At this point, then, use brainstorming to think critically about your position and to discover the best way to phrase your statement.

For example, after reading an article discussing different state-funded community college programs, one student thought that a similar program was needed in Alabama, her state. However, she was not sure how the program worked. To begin, she composed and answered "**reporters' questions**" such as these:

- ***What*** *does a state-funded community college program do?* pays for part or all of the tuition of a two-year college student
- ***Who*** *qualifies for the program?* high school graduates and GED holders
- ***Who*** *benefits from this?* students needing financial assistance, employers, and Alabama residents

- ***Why** is this needed?* some can't afford to go to college; tuition goes up every year; colleges would be more diverse if everyone who wanted to go could afford to go
- ***Where** would the program be available?* at all public community colleges
- ***When** could someone apply for the program?* any time
- ***How** can the state fund this*? use lottery income, like other states

The student then reviewed her responses, altered her original idea to include funding through a lottery, and composed this working thesis:

> *To provide equal educational opportunities for all residents, the state of Alabama should create a lottery to completely fund tuition at community colleges.*

Remember that a strong thesis for a position should

- state your stance on a debatable issue;
- reflect your purpose of persuasion; and
- be based on your opinion or observation.

When you first consider your topic for an argumentative work, think about the reasoning for your position and the evidence you will need—that is, think about the "because" part of your argument. For instance, if you want to argue that your college should provide free Wi-Fi for every student, extend your stance to include "because" and then develop your reasoning and evidence. In that case, your argument might read like this: *Ervin Community College should provide free Wi-Fi for all students because students may not have Internet access at home.*

Note that the "because" part of your argument may come at the beginning or the end and may be implied in your wording.

As you develop your thesis, you may need help funneling all of your ideas. Return to the possibilities you have in mind, and select the ideas that you think are strongest, that recur most often, or that you have the most to say about. Then use those ideas to fill in one of the following sentence frames to develop your working thesis. Feel free to alter the frame as necessary to fit your position. While there is no limit to the frames that are possible, these may help get you started.

_____ is caused/is not caused by _____, and _____ should be done.

**Example:** A declining enrollment rate in college is caused by high tuition rates, and an immediate freeze on the cost of tuition should be applied.

_____ should/should not be allowed (to) _____ for a number of reasons.

**Example:** People who do not wear masks during a pandemic should not be allowed to enter public buildings for a number of reasons.

Because (of) _____, _____ will happen/continue to happen.

**Example:** Because of a lack of emphasis on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics) education in public schools, America will continue to lag behind many other countries.

_____ is similar to/nothing like _____ because _____.

**Example:** College classes are nothing like high school classes because in college, more responsibility is on the student, the classes are less frequent but more intense, and the work outside class takes more time to complete.

_____ can be/cannot be thought of as _____ because _____.

**Example:** The Black Lives Matter movement can be thought of as an extension of the Civil Rights movement from the 1950s and 1960s because it shares the same mission of fighting racism and ending violence against

Black people.

Next, consider the details you will need to support your thesis. The Aristotelian argument structure, named for the Greek philosopher Aristotle, is one that may help you frame the draft of your position argument. For this method, use something like the following chart. In Writing Process: Creating a Position Argument, you will find a similar organizer that you can copy and use for your assignment.

**Using the Aristotelian Argument for Organization**

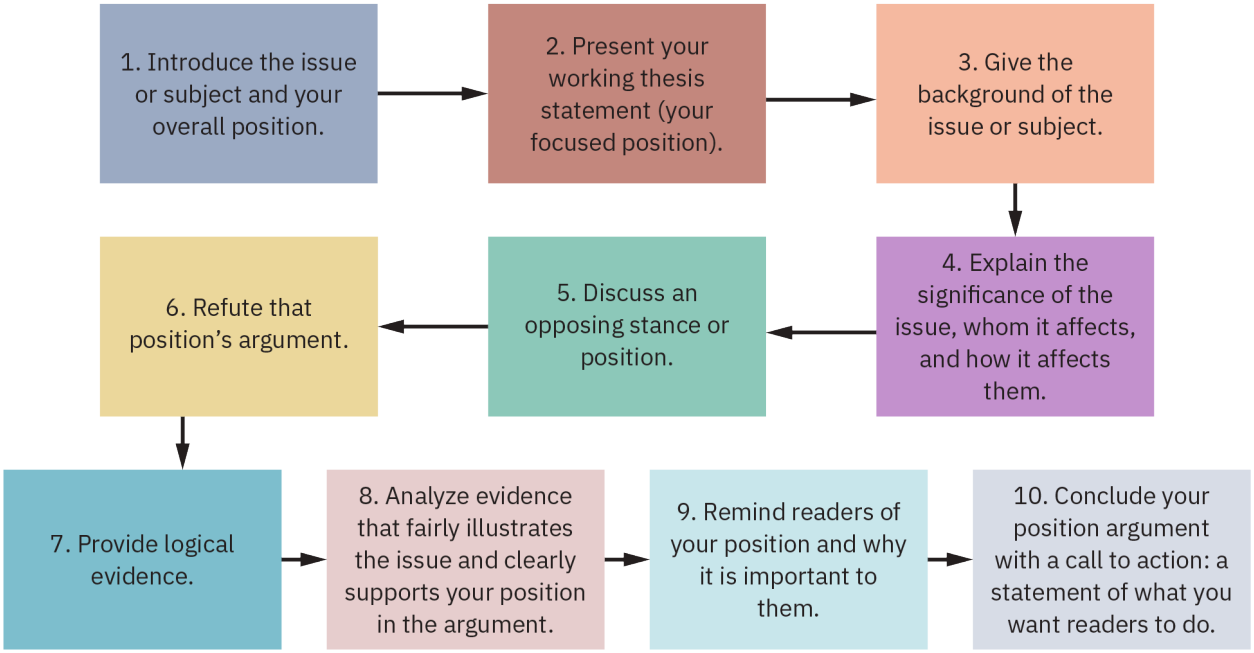



**FIGURE 10.6** Position argument essay planning chart. Follow the numbers sequentially to plan your draft. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

## Drafting: Rhetorical Appeals and Types of Supporting Evidence

To persuade your audience to support your position or argument, consider various rhetorical appeals— ethos, logos, pathos, and kairos—and the types of evidence to support your sound reasoning. See Reasoning Strategies: Improving Critical Thinking for more information on reasoning strategies and types of evidence.

### Rhetorical Appeals

To establish your credibility, to show readers you are trustworthy, to win over their hearts, and to set your issue in an appropriate time frame to influence readers, consider how you present and discuss your evidence throughout the paper.

- Appeal to **ethos**. To establish credibility in her paper arguing for expanded mental health services, a student writer used these reliable sources: a student survey on mental health issues, data from the International Association of Counseling Services (a professional organization), and information from an interview with a campus mental health counselor.
- Appeal to **logos**. To support her sound reasoning, the student writer approached the issue rationally, using data and credible evidence to explain the current situation and its effects.
- Appeal to **pathos**. To show compassion and arouse audience empathy, the student writer shared the experience of a student on her campus who struggled with anxiety and depression.
- Appeal to **kairos**. To appeal to kairos, the student emphasized the immediate need for these services, as more students are now aware of their particular mental health issues and trying to deal with them.

The way in which you present and discuss your evidence will reflect the appeals you use. Consider using sentence frames to reflect specific appeals. Remember, too, that sentence frames can be composed in countless ways. Here are a few frames to get you thinking critically about how to phrase your ideas while considering different types of appeals.

- **Appeal to ethos:** According to _____, an expert in _____, _____ should/should not happen because _____.

  **Appeal to ethos:** Although _____is not an ideal situation for _____, it does have its benefits.

- **Appeal to logos:** If _____ is/is not done, then understandably, _____ will happen.

  **Appeal to logos:** This information suggests that _____ needs to be investigated further because _____.

- **Appeal to pathos:** The story of _____ is uplifting/heartbreaking/hopeful/tragic and illustrates the need for _____.

  **Appeal to pathos:** _____ is/are suffering from _____, and that is something no one wants.

- **Appeal to kairos: _____** must be addressed now because **_____**.

  **Appeal to kairos:** These are times when _____ ; therefore, _____ is appropriate/ necessary.

### Types of Supporting Evidence

Depending on the point you are making to support your position or argument, certain types of evidence may be more effective than others. Also, your instructor may require you to include a certain type of evidence. Choose the evidence that will be most effective to support the reasoning behind each point you make to support your thesis statement. Common types of evidence are these:

- **Anecdotes:** short narrative.

  Renada G., a junior at Powell College South, worked as a waitress for 15 hours a week during her first three semesters of college. But in her sophomore year, when her parents were laid off during the pandemic, Renada had to increase her hours to 35 per week and sell her car to stay in school. Her grades started slipping, and she began experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety. When she called the campus health center to make an appointment for counseling, Renada was told she would have to wait two weeks before she could be seen.

- **Definition:** explanation that emphasizes the meaning of an idea, term, or concept.

  Here is part of how Lyndon B. Johnson defined the Great Society: "But most of all, the Great Society is not a safe harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor."

- **Description:** evidence that portrays a person, place, thing, or idea with sensory or other vivid details.

  Bowen Lake is nestled in verdant foothills, lush with tall grasses speckled with wildflowers. Around the lake, the sweet scent of the purple and yellow flowers fills the air, and the fragrance of the hearty pines sweeps down the hillsides in a westerly breeze. Wood frogs' and crickets' songs suddenly stop, as the blowing of moose calling their calves echoes across the lake's soundless surface. Or this was the scene before the deadly destruction of fires caused by climate change.

- **Example:** evidence that illustrates an idea.

When elaborating on America's beauty being in danger, Johnson says, "The water we drink, the food we eat, the very air that we breathe, are threatened with pollution. Our parks are overcrowded, our seashores overburdened. Green fields and dense forests are disappearing."

- **Expert opinion:** evidence or viewpoints provided by a professional in the field or someone whose ideas are respected on the subject.
  Speaking about President Lyndon B. Johnson and the Vietnam War, noted historian and Johnson biographer Doris Kearns Goodwin said, "It seemed the hole in his heart from the loss of work was too big to fill."
- **Fact:** information that is true and can be proven correct or accurate.
  Charles Blow has worked at the *Shreveport Times*, *The Detroit News*, *National Geographic*, and *The New York Times*.
- **Interview:** evidence gathered firsthand from a source person, usually in a person-to-person conversation, by phone, or through a remote meeting.
  When interviewed by George Rorick and asked about the identities of his readers, Charles Blow said that readers' emails do not elaborate on descriptions of who the people are. However, "the kinds of comments that they offer are very much on the thesis of the essay."
- **Quotation:** exact words repeated by someone other than the original author or speaker.
  In his speech, Lyndon B. Johnson says, "The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents."
- **Statistics:** numerical fact or item of data, usually from a study.
  To support the need for change in classrooms, Johnson uses these statistics: "Each year more than 100,000 high school graduates, with proved ability, do not enter college because they cannot afford it. And if we cannot educate today's youth, what will we do in 1970 when elementary school enrollment will be five million greater than 1960?"
- **Visuals:** graphs, photographs, charts, or maps used in addition to written or spoken information.

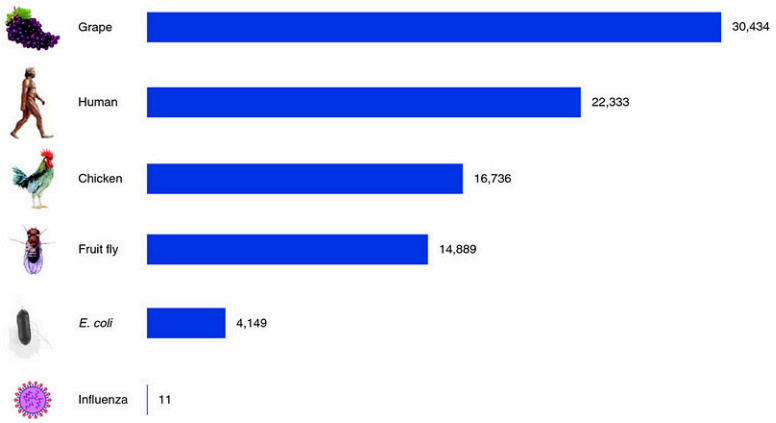



**FIGURE 10.7** Bar graph of gene counts. Graphics like this one present information visually and concisely. (credit: "Between a Chicken and a Grape: Estimating the Number of Human Genes," by Pertea, Mihaela, and Steven L. Salzberg/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

### Brainstorm for Supporting Points

Use one or more brainstorming techniques, such as a web diagram as shown in Figure 10.8 or the details generated from "because" statements, to develop ideas or particular points in support of your thesis. Your goal is to get as many ideas as possible. At this time, do not be concerned about how ideas flow, whether you will ultimately use an idea (you want more ideas than will end up in your finished paper), spelling, or punctuation.

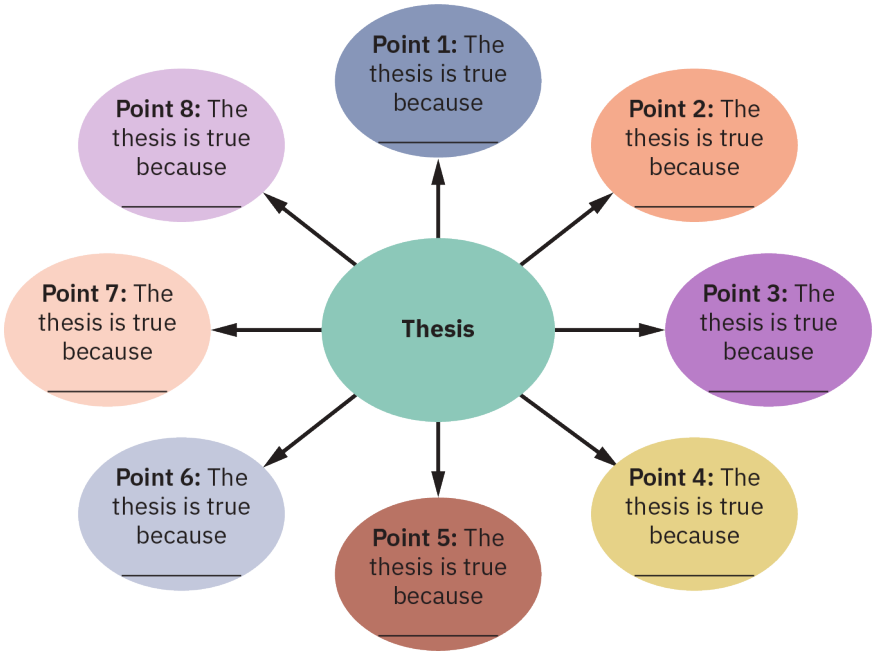



**FIGURE 10.8** Idea web (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

When you have finished, look over your brainstorming. Then circle three to five points to incorporate into your draft. Also, plan to answer "**reporters' questions**" to provide readers with any needed background information. For example, the student writing about the need for more mental health counselors on her campus created and answered these questions:

- ***What** is needed?* More mental health counseling is needed for Powell College South.

  ***Who** would benefit from this?* The students and faculty would benefit.
- ***Why** is this needed?* The college does not have enough counselors to meet all students' needs.
- ***Where** are more counselors needed?* More counselors are needed at the south campus.
- ***When** are the counselors needed?* Counselors need to be hired now and be available both day and night to accommodate students' schedules.
- ***How** can the college afford this*? Instead of hiring daycare workers, the college could use students and faculty from the Early Childhood Education program to run the program and use the extra money to pay the counselors.

### Using Logic

In a position argument, the appropriate use of **logic** is especially important for readers to trust what you write. It is also important to look for logic in material you read and possibly cite in your paper so that you can determine whether writers' claims are reasonable. Two main categories of logical thought are **inductive reasoning** and **deductive reasoning**.

- Inductive reasoning moves from specific to broad ideas. You begin by collecting details, observations, incidents, or facts; examining them; and drawing a conclusion from them. Suppose, for example, you are writing about attendance in college classes. For three weeks, you note the attendance numbers in all your Monday, Wednesday, and Friday classes (specific details), and you note that attendance is lower on Friday than on the other days (a specific detail). From these observations, you determine that many students prefer not to attend classes on Fridays (your conclusion).
- Deductive reasoning moves from general to specific ideas. You begin with a **hypothesis** or **premise**, a general concept, and then examine possibilities that would lead to a specific and logical conclusion. For instance, suppose you think that opportunities for foreign students at your college are inadequate (general

concept). You examine the specific parts of that concept (e.g., whether your college provides multicultural clubs, help with language skills, or work-study opportunities) and determine that those opportunities are not available. You then determine that opportunities for foreign students are lacking at your college.

### Logical Fallacies and Propaganda

**Fallacies** are mistakes in logic. Readers and writers should be aware of these when they creep into writing, indicating that the points the writers make may not be valid. Two common fallacies are hasty generalizations and circular arguments. See Glance at Genre: Rhetorical Strategies for more on logical fallacies.

- A **hasty generalization**is a conclusion based on either inadequate or biased evidence. Consider this statement: "Two students in Math 103 were nervous before their recent test; therefore, all students in that class must have text anxiety." This is a hasty generalization because the second part of the statement (the generalization about all students in the class) is inadequate to support what the writer noted about only two students.
- A **circular argument** is one that merely restates what has already been said. Consider this statement: "*The Hate U Give* is a well-written book because Angie Thomas, its author, is a good novelist." The statement that Thomas is a good novelist does not explain why her book is well written.

In addition to checking work for fallacies, consider **propaganda**, information worded so that it endorses a particular viewpoint, often of a political nature. Two common types of propaganda are **bandwagon** and **fear**.

- In getting on the **bandwagon**, the writer encourages readers to conform to a popular trend and endorse an opinion, a movement, or a person because everyone else is doing so. Consider this statement: "Everyone is behind the idea that 7 a.m. classes are too early and should be changed to at least 8 a.m. Shouldn't you endorse this sensible idea, too?"
- In using fear, the writer presents a dire situation, usually followed by what could be done to prevent it. Consider this statement: "Our country is at a turning point. Enemies threaten us with their power, and our democracy is at risk of being crushed. The government needs a change, and Paul Windhaus is just the man to see we get that change." This quotation appeals to fear about the future of the country and implies that electing a certain individual will solve the predicted problems.




**FIGURE 10.9** Propaganda is often used during times of war or crisis and is often presented visually. This World War I poster from the U.S. Navy appeals for men to enlist. It points out men in the navy have an opportunity to "see the world, save money, learn a trade, and serve their country" but avoids mentioning the likelihood of being in life-threatening situations during combat. (credit: "World War I Posters" by Ruttan, Charles E./Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Public Domain)

### Organize the Paper

To begin, write your thesis at the top of a blank page. Then select points from your brainstorming and reporters' questions to organize and develop support for your thesis. Keep in mind that you can revise your thesis whenever needed.

To begin organizing her paper on increased mental health services on her college campus, the student wrote this thesis at the top of a page:

> *Because mental health is a major concern at Powell College South, students could benefit from expanding the services offered.*

Next she decided the sequence in which to present the points. In a position or an argument essay, she could choose one of two methods: **thesis-first organization** or **delayed-thesis** organization.

### Thesis-First Organization

Leading with a thesis tells readers from the beginning where you stand on the issue. In this organization, the thesis occupies both the first and last position in the essay, making it easy for readers to remember.

- **Introduce the issue and assert your thesis.** Make sure the issue has at least two debatable sides. Your thesis establishes the position from which you will argue. Writers often state their thesis as the last sentence in the first paragraph, as the student writer has done:

> The problem of mental health has become front-page news in the last two months. *Hill's Herald*, Powell College South's newspaper, reported 14 separate incidents of students who sought counseling but could not get appointments with college staff. **Since mental health problems are widespread among the student population, the college should hire more health care workers to address this problem.**

- **Summarize the counterclaims.** Before elaborating on your claims, explain the opposition's claims. Including this information at the beginning gives your argument something to focus on—and refute—throughout the paper. If you ignore counterclaims, your argument may appear incomplete, and readers may think you have not researched your topic sufficiently. When addressing a counterclaim, state it clearly, show empathy for those who have that view, and then immediately refute it with support developed through reasoning and evidence. Squeezing the counterclaims between the thesis and the evidence reserves the strongest places—the opening and closing—for your position.

> *Counterclaim 1*: Powell College South already employs two counselors, and that number is sufficient to meet the needs of the student population.

> *Counterclaim 2*: Students at Powell College South live in a metropolitan area large enough to handle their mental health needs.

- **Refute the counterclaims.** Look for weak spots in the opposition's argument, and point them out. Use your opponent's language to show you have read closely but still find problems with the claim. This is the way the writer refuted the first counterclaim:

> While Powell College South does employ two counselors, those counselors are overworked and often have no time slots available for students who wish to make appointments.

- **State and explain your points, and then support them with evidence.** Present your points clearly and precisely, using Reasoning Strategies: Improving Critical Thinking to explain and cite your evidence. The writer plans to use a problem-solution reasoning strategy to elaborate on these three points using these pieces of evidence:

> Point 1: Wait times are too long.

> Kay Payne, one of the campus counselors, states that the wait time for an appointment with her is approximately 10 days.

> Point 2: Mental health issues are widespread within the student community.

> In a recent on-campus student survey, 75 percent of 250 students say they have had some kind of mental health issues at some point in their life.

> Point 3: The staff-to-student ratio is too high.

> The International Accreditation of Counseling Services states that the recommended ratio is one full-time equivalent staff member for every 1,000 to 1,500 students.

- **Restate your position as a conclusion.** Near the end of your paper, synthesize your accumulated evidence into a broad general position, and restate your thesis in slightly different language.

> The number of students who need mental health counseling is alarming. The recent news articles that attest to their not being able to schedule appointments add to the alarm. While Powell College South offers some mental health counseling, the current number of counselors and others who provide health care is insufficient to handle the well-being of all its students. Action must be taken to address this problem.

### Delayed-Thesis Organization

In this organizational pattern, introduce the issue and discuss the arguments for and against it, but wait to take a side until late in the essay. By delaying the stance, you show readers you are weighing the evidence, and

you arouse their curiosity about your position. Near the end of the paper, you explain that after carefully considering both pros and cons, you have arrived at the most reasonable position.

- **Introduce the issue.** Here, the writer begins with action that sets the scene of the problem.

> Tapping her foot nervously, Serena looked at her watch again. She had been waiting three hours to see a mental health counselor at Powell College South, and she did not think she could wait much longer. She had to get to work.

- **Summarize the claims for one position.** Before stating which side you support, explain how the opposition views the issue. This body paragraph presents evidence about the topic of more counselors:

> Powell College South has two mental health counselors on staff. If the college hires more counselors, more office space will have to be created. Currently Pennington Hall could accommodate those counselors. Additional counselors would allow more students to receive counseling.

- **Refute the claims you just stated.** Still not stating your position, point out the other side of the issue.

> While office space is available in Pennington Hall, that location is far from ideal. It is in a wooded area of campus, six blocks from the nearest dorm. Students who would go there might be afraid to walk through the woods or might be afraid to walk that distance. The location might deter them from making appointments.

- **Now give the best reasoning and evidence to support your position.** Because this is a delayed-thesis organization, readers are still unsure of your stance. This section should be the longest and most carefully documented part of the paper. After summarizing and refuting claims, the writer then elaborates on these three points using problem-solution reasoning supported by this evidence as discussed in Reasoning Strategies: Improving Critical Thinking, implying her position before moving to the conclusion, where she states her thesis.

> Point 1: Wait times are too long.

> Kay Payne, one of the campus counselors, states that the wait time for an appointment with her is approximately 10 days.

> Point 2: Mental health issues are widespread within the student community.

> In a recent on-campus student survey, 75 percent of 250 students say they have had some kind of mental health issues at some point in their life.

> Point 3: The staff-to-student ratio is too high.

> The International Association of Counseling Services states that one full-time equivalent staff member for every 1,000 to 1,500 students is the recommended ratio.

- **State your thesis in your conclusion.** Your rhetorical strategy is this: after giving each side a fair hearing, you have arrived at the most reasonable conclusion.

> According to the American Psychological Association, more than 40 percent of all college students suffer from some form of anxiety. Powell College South students are no different from college students elsewhere: they deserve to have adequate mental health counseling.

### Compose

Drafting begins when you organize your evidence or research notes and then put them into some kind of written form. As you write, focus on building body paragraphs through the techniques presented in Reasoning Strategies: Improving Critical Thinking that show you how to support your position and then add evidence. Using a variety of evidence types builds credibility with readers. Remember that the recursiveness of the

writing process allows you to move from composing to gathering evidence and back to brainstorming ideas or to organizing your draft at any time. Move around the writing process as needed.

Keep in mind that a first draft is just a beginning—you will revise it into a better work in later drafts. Your first draft is sometimes called a *discovery draft* because you are discovering how to shape your paper: which ideas to include and how to support those ideas. These suggestions and graphic organizer may be helpful for your first draft:

- Write your thesis at the top of the paper.
- Compose your body paragraphs: those that support your argument through reasoning strategies and those that address counterclaims.
- Leave your introduction, conclusion, and title for later drafts.

Use a graphic organizer like Table 10.1 to focus points, reasoning, and evidence for body paragraphs. You are free to reword your thesis, reasoning, counterclaim(s), refutation of counterclaim(s), concrete evidence, and explanation/elaboration/clarification at any time. You are also free to adjust the order in which you present

your reasoning, counterclaim(s), and refuting of counterclaim(s).

**Composing Your First Draft**

**Position Argument**

Name _____

Thesis: In your thesis, remember to include 1) an explanation of the issue and 2) your position about what should happen regarding the issue.

Issue:

My position:

Thesis as a single declarative sentence: _____

Background information:

Reporters' questions:

_____

Point 1 in support of thesis:

Reasoning: explanation/elaboration/clarification:

Concrete evidence:

_____

Point 2 in support of thesis:

Reasoning: explanation/elaboration/clarification:

Concrete evidence:

_____

Point 3 in support of thesis:

Reasoning: explanation/elaboration/clarification:

Concrete evidence:

_____

Points 4 & 5 in support of thesis:

Reasoning: explanation/elaboration/clarification:

Concrete evidence:

_____

Counterclaim:

Reasoning: explanation/elaboration/clarification:

_____

Refuting of counterclaim:

Reasoning: explanation/elaboration/clarification:

**TABLE 10.1** Position argument drafting organizer

### Develop a Writing Project through Multiple Drafts

Your first draft is a kind of experiment in which you are concerned with ideas and with getting the direction and concept of the paper clear. Do not think that your first draft must be perfect; remind yourself that you are just honing your work. In most serious writing, every phase of the process can be considered recursive, helping you shape the best paper possible.

## Peer Review: Critical Thinking and Counterclaims

After you have completed the first draft, begin peer review. Peer reviewers can use these sentence starters when thinking critically about overall strengths and developmental needs.

1. One point about your position that I think is strong is _____ because _____.
2. One point about your position that I think needs more development is _____ because _____.
3. One area that I find confusing is _____; I was confused about _____.
4. One major point that I think needs more explanation or detail is _____.
5. In my opinion, the purpose of your paper is to persuade readers _____.
6. In my opinion, the audience for your paper is _____.
7. One area of supporting evidence that I think could use more development is _____.
8. One counterclaim you include is _____.
9. Your development of the counterclaim is _____ because _____.

### Refuting Counterclaims

Peer reviewers are especially helpful with position and argument writing when it comes to refuting counterclaims. Have your peer reviewer read your paper again and look for supporting points and ideas to argue *against*, trying to break down your argument. Then ask your reviewer to discuss the counterclaims and corresponding points or ideas in your paper. This review will give you the opportunity to think critically about ways to refute the counterclaims your peer reviewer suggests.

As preparation for peer review, match each of the following arguments with their counterarguments.

Access multimedia content (http://openstax.org/books/writing-guide/pages/10-5-writing-process-creating-a-position-argument)

## Revising: Reviewing a Draft and Responding to Counterclaims

**Revising** means reseeing, rereading, and rethinking your thoughts on paper until they fully match your intention. Mentally, it is conceptual work focused on units of meaning larger than the sentence. Physically, it is cutting, pasting, deleting, and rewriting until the ideas are satisfying. Be ready to spend a great deal of time revising your drafts, adding new information and incorporating sources smoothly into your prose.

### The Revising Process

To begin revising, return to the basic questions of **topic** (*What am I writing about?*), **purpose** (*Why am I writing about this topic?*), **audience** (*For whom am I writing?*), and **culture** (*What is the background of the people for whom I am writing?*).

- **Questions about the topic.** Be sure your topic and thesis focus on your position, and omit extra material. Answer these questions:
  1. What is the general scope of my topic? _____
  2. What is my thesis? _____
  3. Does my thesis focus on my topic? _____
  4. Does my thesis clearly state my position? _____
- **Questions about purpose.** It is often easier to locate your purpose—or lack of purpose—after you have

written a draft or two. Answer these questions:

1. What do I hope to accomplish in writing about this topic? _____
2. Do all parts of the paper advance this purpose? _____
3. Does my paper focus on my argument or position? _____

- **Questions about audience.** Make sure your paper is aimed accurately at your readers. Answer these questions:
  1. What does my audience know about this subject? _____
  2. What does my audience need to know to understand the point of my paper? _____
  3. What questions or objections do I anticipate from my audience? _____ _____
- **Questions about culture.** Your paper should reflect consideration of cultural differences, if any, between you and your audience. Answer these questions:
  1. What is the culture of the people for whom I am writing? Do all readers share the same culture? _____
  2. How do my beliefs, values, and customs differ from those of my audience? _____
  3. How do the cultures of the authors of sources I cite differ from my culture or the culture(s) of my audience? _____

Because of the recursivity of the writing process, returning to these questions will help you fine-tune the language and structure of your writing and target the support you develop for your audience.

### Responding to Counterclaims

The more complex the issue, the more opposing sides it may have. For example, a writer whose position is that Powell College South Campus should offer daycare to its students with children might find opposition for different reasons. Someone may oppose the idea out of concern for cost; someone else may support the idea if the daycare is run on a volunteer basis; someone else may support the idea if the services are offered off campus.

As you revise, continue studying your peer reviewer's comments about counterclaims. If you agree with any counterclaim, then say so in the paragraph in which you address counterclaims. This agreement will further establish your credibility by showing your fairness and concern for the issue. Look over your paper and peer review comments, and then consider these questions:

- In what ways do you address realistic counterclaims? What other counterclaims should you address? Should you add to or replace current counterclaims?
- In what ways do you successfully refute counterclaims? What other refutations might you include?
- Are there any counterclaims with which you agree? If so, how do you concede to them in your paper? In what ways does your discussion show fairness?

After completing your peer review and personal assessment, make necessary revisions based on these notes. See Annotated Student Sample an example of a student's argumentative research essay. Note how the student

- presents the argument;
- supports the viewpoint with reasoning and evidence;
- includes support in the form of facts, opinions, paraphrases, and summaries;
- provides citations (correctly formatted) about material from other sources in the paper;
- uses ethos, pathos, and logos throughout the paper; and
- addresses counterclaims (dissenting opinions).

# 10.6 Editing Focus: Paragraphs and Transitions

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Implement transitional words and phrases in a position argument.
- Apply genre conventions in paragraphs and transitions for general and specific situations.

In the initial drafts of your paper, you may have concentrated on single ideas for your body paragraphs and single thoughts within those paragraphs. Your argument will read more smoothly, however, if you use transitional words and phrases to show readers how your ideas are connected or opposed to each other.

## Using Transitional Words and Phrases

To organize your paper most effectively, use **transitional words or phrases**, which show readers the relationship between different ideas—that is, how ideas connect with or are separate from each other. In the paragraph below, transitional words and phrases are underlined.

> To get a copy of your transcript from Abbott Community College, first log on to the college web site. Next, click the "Transcript" link to the left of the college logo. When the link opens, fill out the information requested in the boxes. Then upload a copy of your student ID and pay $10 electronically. Finally, submit your form. Your transcript will be emailed to you, but you may have to wait up to three days before you receive it.

The transitional words and phrases show readers the sequence of steps they need to follow to get a transcript. If you remove the transitional words and phrases, the paragraph would be choppy, and readers might not follow the steps as easily.

Transitions also help guide readers between paragraphs. Below are the body paragraphs a student wrote about the need for a traffic light at a street that leads into his college. The first version has no transitions.

> Many vehicles speed through the intersection without regard to the posted speed limit. A traffic signal would make vehicles slow down. They would not be able to speed through the signal.

> Pedestrian safety is a problem. Many students and others cross this intersection when coming to or leaving campus, and they must dodge traffic to get across. A traffic signal would allow them to cross at appropriate times.

> The amount of traffic has increased dramatically. A manufacturing plant opened four blocks from the intersection. The number of businesses in the strip mall at the intersection has grown by 50 percent. The college has changed its traffic routing for football games. Fans must enter via this intersection.

> The most compelling reason to install a traffic signal is that the number of accidents has risen far past an acceptable limit. According to recent police reports, a traffic accident occurs at least three times a month. One accident resulted in a loss of life.

The student then added transitions and changed the wording accordingly to help readers follow his ideas. The underlined transitions at the beginning of each paragraph alert readers to the four reasons he presents and to where he changes from one to another. The underlined transitions within the paragraphs help readers understand the relationship of ideas.

> First, many vehicles speed through the intersection without regard to the posted speed limit. A traffic signal would make vehicles slow down, for they would not be able to speed through the signal.

> Second, pedestrian safety is a problem. Many students and others cross this intersection when coming to or leaving campus, and now they must dodge traffic to get across. A traffic signal, therefore, would allow them to cross at appropriate times.

> Another reason to install the traffic signal has to do with the amount of traffic, which has increased dramatically in recent years. Two years ago, a manufacturing plant opened four blocks from the intersection. In the past 16 months, the number of businesses in the strip mall at the intersection grew by 50 percent. Furthermore, the college has changed its traffic routing for football games, and now fans must enter via this intersection.

> Finally, the most compelling reason to install a traffic signal is that the number of accidents has risen far past an acceptable limit. According to recent police reports, a traffic accident occurs at that intersection at least three times a month. In fact, one of those accidents resulted in a loss of life.

### Frequently Used Transitional Words and Phrases

**Addition:** again, and, further, in addition, next, then, also, as well as

**Cause-and-effect:** accordingly, consequently, for this reason, hence, therefore, thus, as a result

**Amplification:** again, also, apparently, first (second, third), moreover, indeed, more, most, in fact

**Chronological order:** after, before, during, earlier, finally, first (second, third), immediately, last, next, then, later

**Concession or agreement:** although, at least, at any rate, certainly, (even) though, in spite of, of course, still, nevertheless, nonetheless

**Compare and contrast:** at the same time, comparatively, conversely, however, instead, likewise, moreover, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, rather, similarly, still, yet, despite

**Detail:** including, in particular, namely, specifically, to list

**Emphasis or clarification:** above all, again, certainly, especially, furthermore, in fact, particularly, indeed

**Example:** chiefly, for example (instance), in other words, in particular, mainly, specifically

**Intention:** for this purpose, in order to do this, to this end, with this in mind

**Location:** above, along, behind, below, here, near, next to, opposite, to the left (right) of, under

**Summary:** finally, in conclusion, in short, in other words, thus

For more information about paragraphs and transitions, see Paragraphs and Transitions.

## 10.7 Evaluation: Varied Appeals

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Evaluate feedback regarding rhetorical choices and conventions of position writing.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the structure of a position argument as it relates to credibility, logic, and emotions.

Have a peer evaluate your final draft using the following rubric. Although you might not agree with all the feedback or evaluation, peer reviewers bring a fresh perspective. At the end of the rubric is a section for your peer to offer additional feedback or expand on the reasoning behind their assessment. Listen to or read your peer's feedback closely, asking any questions you have. Then, revise your paper again, according to the feedback you think is helpful.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using transitional words and phrases, as discussed in Section 10.6. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is stated clearly and expertly supported with credible evidence. The paper reflects careful attention to either thesis-first or thesis-last organization; in either case, the claims and evidence support the structure. | The paper identifies and expertly refutes realistic counterclaims; the paper's structure demonstrates the writer's fairness and advanced skill at appealing to readers' logic and emotions. The writer pays close attention to the rhetorical situation. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using transitional words and phrases, as discussed in Section 10.6. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is stated clearly and usually supported with credible evidence. The paper reflects attention to either thesis-first or thesis-last organization; in either case, the claims and evidence support the structure. | The paper identifies and refutes realistic counterclaims; the paper's structure usually demonstrates the writer's fairness and skill at appealing to readers' logic and emotions. The writer demonstrates awareness of the rhetorical situation. |
| **3**<br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using transitional words and phrases, as discussed in Section 10.6. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is stated clearly and generally supported with some credible evidence. The paper reflects some attention to either thesis-first or thesis-last organization; in either case, the claims and evidence give limited support to the structure. | The paper identifies and partially refutes realistic counterclaims; the paper's structure generally demonstrates the writer's fairness and some ability in appealing to readers' logic and emotions. The writer shows inconsistent awareness of the rhetorical situation. |

**TABLE 10.2**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using transitional words and phrases, as discussed in Section 10.6. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is occasionally stated clearly and occasionally supported with limited credible evidence. The paper reflects limited attention to either thesis-first or thesis-last organization; in either case, the claims and evidence give little support to the structure. | The paper may not identify counterclaims or may identify them and not address them further. The paper's structure minimally demonstrates the writer's awareness of fairness or skill at appealing to readers' logic and emotions. The writer shows little awareness of the rhetorical situation. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using transitional words and phrases, as discussed in Section 10.6. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is not stated clearly and is minimally supported with credible evidence. The paper reflects minimal or no attention to either thesis-first or thesis-last organization; in either case, the claims and evidence give little to no support to the structure. | The paper does not identify and refute a realistic counterclaim; the paper's structure does not demonstrate that the writer has any awareness of fairness or an ability to appeal to readers' logic and emotions. The writer shows little or no awareness of the rhetorical situation. |
| **Comments:** | | | |

**TABLE 10.2**

## 10.8 Spotlight on … Citation

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply citation conventions systematically in your work.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of intellectual property that motivate documentation conventions.

Academic writing relies on evidence and support. When this evidence or support comes from others, you must cite it properly to give credit where credit is due. Citing information to its source will build your credibility. See Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and MLA Documentation and Format and APA Documentation and Format for more information on citations.

### Types of Citation



In a position argument, you are expected to provide evidence that supports your stance and addresses counterclaims to it. You may use one of three types of citation: quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing. If you are quoting the exact words of a person or a written work, you must

- use quotation marks around the words;
- credit the source of your quotation; and

- use the formatting style mandated in the style guide your instructor assigns.

If you are **paraphrasing**, you are shaping someone else's words into your own words, but you are conveying the same meaning as the original speaker or writer. When you are paraphrasing in academic writing, provide formatted information about the original source so that readers know from whom the idea originates.

If you are **summarizing**, you are condensing the words of someone else into a shorter form but still retaining the main point and major details. As with quoting and paraphrasing, provide formatted information about the original source when you are summarizing.

For more information about quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing, see Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information.

## Examples of Types of Citation

American author Jack London (1876–1916) began his novel *The Call of the Wild* (1903) with this paragraph:

> Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that trouble was brewing, not alone for himself, but for every tide-water dog, strong of muscle and with warm, long hair, from Puget Sound to San Diego. Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland.

### Quoting in MLA style

If you are quoting from that paragraph using MLA style, you might have something like this:

> *The Call of the Wild* sets the contrasting tone for the story with its second sentence, highlighting the differences between nature and industrialization: "Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland" (London 1).

### Quoting in APA style

If you are quoting from that paragraph using APA style, you might have something like this:

> *The Call of the Wild* sets the contrasting tone for the story with its second sentence, highlighting the differences between nature and industrialization: "Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland" (London, 1903, p. 1).

### Paraphrasing

If you are paraphrasing that paragraph, you might have something like this:

> In the opening paragraph of *The Call of the Wild*, Jack London establishes the conflict between man and nature by letting readers know that because Buck doesn't read, he doesn't know that trouble is at hand for himself and every other dog on the west coast of the United States. The trouble occurs because gold has been discovered in the Arctic and thousands of men are rushing to the Northland by land and sea so that they can also take part in the discovery.

### Summarizing

If you are summarizing that paragraph, you might have something like this:

> In the opening paragraph of *The Call of the Wild*, Jack London establishes the conflict between man and nature by telling readers that neither Buck nor any other dog knows that trouble at hand because of the gold discovered and men rushing to find it.

### Intellectual property

When you create a written work, you do not want someone else to take credit for it. It is your **intellectual property**, an original idea resulting from your creativity and work and that, consequently, you own. If you look at a book, for instance, you will see a copyright symbol (©) somewhere in the opening pages, usually along with other publication information. This symbol gives the copyright owner legal protection against those who try to **plagiarize** (steal material and publish it as their own). *Plagiarism* can refer to entire works or parts of works that are not cited as being created by someone else, whether the work is copyrighted or not. If writers or speakers use someone else's words, ideas, or information, they must cite the source. For detailed information about what plagiarism is and is not, see Spotlight on ... Ethical Research.

## 10.9 Portfolio: Growth in the Development of Argument

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Reflect on and articulate how you used the steps of the writing process and how they affected your work.
- Reflect on and write about your use of reasoning and critical-thinking skills in developing your paper.

As you complete each writing assignment, you complete another part of your portfolio. After each paper, think critically about your writing process, reflecting on what you created from the first steps of discovering ideas to the last steps of composing and editing the final paper.

### Lessons Learned



As you reflect on writing your position argument, answer these questions about your writing process.

- What factors helped you determine the topic for your paper?
- Which brainstorming method worked best for you to develop ideas for your topic?
- How did you arrive at a workable thesis?
- How did you use ethos, pathos, and logos in your paper?
- How did you use kairos in your paper?
- What outside sources did you consult to get information to support your topic or to understand counterclaims?
- How did you determine which counterclaims to address?
- What type of citation did you use for giving credit to material you did not write?
- How did collaboration with others help you as you wrote and revised your paper?
- In collaboration, what specific constructive criticism did you receive that helped you?
- In what ways was this paper easier or harder to write than others you have written?
- What could you have done differently to make writing your paper easier or more effective?
- What insights about your topic did you gain from writing your paper?

## Further Reading

The following titles are well-known examples of position speeches or papers.

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# Reasoning Strategies: Improving Critical Thinking

# 11



**FIGURE 11.1** Throughout their college careers and beyond, students use a number of different reasoning strategies in academic and professional writing. (credit: "Howard Tilton Library Computers 2010" by Tulane Public Relations/ Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**11.1** Developing Your Sense of Logic
**11.2** Reasoning Trailblazer: Paul D. N. Hebert
**11.3** Glance at Genre: Reasoning Strategies and Signal Words
**11.4** Annotated Sample Reading: from Book VII of The Republic by Plato
**11.5** Writing Process: Reasoning Supported by Evidence


**INTRODUCTION** The ways in which you approach and discuss debatable topics incorporate critical thinking, critical reading, and critical writing. The reasoning strategies discussed in this chapter reflect the patterns people use to think critically and the structures with which writers and speakers commonly build their arguments. These strategies are also the ones you will use in most of your college writing projects, including your assignments for Position Argument: Practicing the Art of Rhetoric and Argumentative Research: Enhancing the Art of Rhetoric with Evidence. Each strategy is a building block of logic; that is, each is built on a pattern of thought, which you use out of the classroom as well. For instance, you might approach a text or real-life situation in some of the following ways:

- Explain it in terms of something unrelated but more familiar.
- Compare or contrast it with other texts or situations.
- Group it in a category with similar texts or situations.
- Consider it as a problem that needs to be solved.

- Examine the reasons something happens or what happens as a result.
- Explain what the text or situation means to you.

These thought patterns exemplify active critical thinking, which translates into critical writing. In other words, writing patterns reflect thinking patterns. By applying these reasoning patterns appropriately and effectively, you will be able to incorporate the evidence you need to support a thesis and persuade readers of the validity of your argument. Remember, too, that these are skills, and like other skills, the more you practice, the better you will get at using them effectively. (You can read more about argument and logic in Rhetorical Analysis: Interpreting the Art of Rhetoric.)

## 11.1 Developing Your Sense of Logic

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify key rhetorical concepts and thought patterns in a variety of texts.
- Explain how patterns of thought function for different audiences, purposes, and situations.

For the purposes of this course, **logic** means "reasoning based on thought and evidence." In practical terms, logic is the ability to analyze and evaluate persuasive or argument writing for effectiveness. By extension, it also means that you can learn to use logic in your own argumentative writing. Like any other new skill, you are likely to learn best when you have a starting point. Here are some suggestions for how to begin thinking and writing logically:

- Approach a topic with an open mind.
- Consider what you already know about the topic.
- Consider what you want to know about the topic.
- Find credible information about the topic.
- Base your judgments of the topic on sound reasoning and evidence.

Once you have formed your opinions on a particular debatable subject, you must decide on the best way to organize them to share with others. Developing your skills in six widely used **reasoning strategies**, or patterns for thinking and writing, can help you determine the most logical and effective means of organizing information to make your points.

In this chapter, you will examine these six reasoning strategies—analogy, cause and effect, classification and division, comparison and contrast, problem and solution, and definition—that are often used in college classes. In addition, you will consider how writers' personal views, cultural backgrounds, and purposes for writing help determine

- which reasoning strategy suits their needs; and
- what they decide to include in their writing.

As you progress in your college classes and beyond, you will find these reasoning strategies used in all genres of writing, both nonfiction (e.g., textbooks, how-to books) and fiction (e.g., novels, short stories). Understanding how these strategies work can help you recognize their common formats and analyze what you read; likewise, as a writer, understanding how these strategies work to reflect your thinking can help you determine the strategy you need to use.

### Analogy

Writers frequently use **analogy** as a strategy to compare two unlike subjects—one subject is familiar to readers, whereas the other is not. To explain or clarify the unfamiliar subject, the writer emphasizes the way or ways in which the two subjects are similar, even though they are dissimilar and unrelated in all other ways. Analogies are basically long forms of **similes** (short comparisons of unlike elements, based on the word *like* or *as*) or **metaphors** (short comparisons without signal words). In the example paragraph, the writer explains

unfamiliar aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic by comparing it with the more familiar concept of a robbery spree.

### Model Paragraph

> Examining COVID-19 is like examining a robbery case in this way: both require a great deal of investigation. Those investigating the causes behind the pandemic look for the history of how the virus spread, and those investigating a crime look for the backstory that might connect the victims and criminals. In addition, the two groups of investigators look at the reasons behind the focus of their study. Medical investigators look at why the virus spread throughout the world; police investigators look at why the crime spree took place in a particular area. Also, both types of investigators are trying to stop whatever or whoever is the focus of their investigation. Medical investigators want to stop the virus; police investigators want to stop the crimes.

## Cause and Effect

**Cause-and-effect** writing identifies and examines the **reasons** (causes) for and **consequences** (effects) of an action, event, or idea. Cause-and-effect writing often answers the question "Why?" and helps readers understand the connections between what happens because of—or as a result of—something else.

### Model Paragraph

> Ray's grocery, Artie's Hardware store, and Cradle and Teen department store all went out of business because a well-known superstore opened in Springdale. Customers who frequented Ray's, an establishment that had been run by the same family for four generations, used to drive many miles to take advantage of the high quality of items in the meat and deli departments. After the opening of the superstore, however, those same customers found they could get similar items at a savings, even if the quality was not as high as the products at Ray's. Customers at Artie's Hardware often talked with owner Artie Shoeman about their hardware needs, but the store did not offer the same variety of items they could find in the superstore. The same was true for those who shopped at Cradle and Teen. The superstore featured lower prices and more variety, even if the items did not match the quality of the items at Cradle and Teen.




**FIGURE 11.2** Small retailers often lose out to superstores. (credit: "Fort Bragg CA Storefront" by Ellin Beltz/ Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## Classification and Division

Classification and division are actually two closely related strategies, generally discussed together because of

their similarity. When using the strategy of division, the writer identifies a single subject or group and explains categories within that subject or group. In other words, the writer divides the larger unit into component parts. When using the strategy of classification, writers do the opposite. They group various elements and place them into larger, more comprehensive categories rather than divide the whole into parts. In general, the reasoning strategy of classification and division looks at smaller elements as parts of a larger element and thus helps readers understand a general concept and the elements that it comprises.

### Model Paragraphs

> Extra material in the textbook can be divided into photographs, quotations, and tables. The photographs were all taken by the author and focus on various parts of the life cycle of the plants highlighted in the chapter. In addition, to add color and more information about the subject matter of each chapter, the author has inserted sidebar quotations from both famous and non-famous people. The tables the author has included help readers see more details about the progression of the plants' spread across the country.

> After three months of training, the young dogs were placed into three categories: those who would go directly to permanent homes, those who would repeat the course, and those who would advance to the next level. The dogs that would be homed immediately were those who were far too social or far too active to be service dogs. The dogs that would repeat the course had possibilities as service dogs but needed more discipline and instruction. Their futures were yet to be decided. Those that advanced to the next level were obedient and focused and learned quickly. They displayed great promise as service dogs.

## Comparison and Contrast

**Compare and contrast**, one of the most frequently used reasoning strategies, analyzes two (sometimes more) subjects, examining the **similarities** (comparisons) and **differences** (contrasts) between them. Nearly everything you can think of can be a subject for comparison and contrast: objects, people, concepts, places, movies, literature, and styles, to name a few. To elaborate on the separate points, writers provide details about each element being compared or contrasted. Comparison and contrast helps readers analyze and evaluate subjects.

This strategy is helpful when the similarities or differences are *not* obvious and when a significant common thread exists between the subjects. For example, a contrast between an expensive, elegant restaurant and a fast-food restaurant would be useless because the differences are clearly obvious, despite the common thread—both are restaurants. However, *not* so obvious might be some similarities.

When subjects have no common thread or have obvious shared characteristics, any comparison or contrast makes little sense—like contrasting a fish and a shoe (no common thread) or comparing two fast-food restaurants (obvious similarities). However, a writer actually might find a common thread between a fish and a shoe (perhaps shine or texture or color), and a valid topic of contrast might be differences between the two fast-food restaurants.

### Model Paragraph

> Although they seem different on the surface, one way in which Romantic-period poetry and 1980s rap music are alike is the desire the writers had to create a new approach to their art. They wanted to represent simpler values that were more connected to the natural world, values to which a general audience could relate. For example, in William Wordsworth's "Daffodils," the speaker can escape the depressing, industrialized urban world to find peace in nature by contemplating a field of flowers. Similarly, in the Sugarhill Gang's 1979 "Rapper's Delight," the band sings of how their beats can lift spirits and cause listeners to dance and forget their woes. However, Romantic-period poetry and 1980s rap music are different in the delivery style and form of the art; "Rapper's Delight" is set to music, which is an integral part of the piece, but "Daffodils" is not.

## Problem and Solution

When using this reasoning strategy, writers introduce a **predicament** or challenging issue (the problem) and offer information about what was done or what should be done to **remedy** the predicament or issue (the solution). Problem-and-solution writing helps readers understand the complexities of some predicaments and the actions that can improve or eliminate them.

### Model Paragraph

> The issue of combating the spread of hate speech and misinformation on social media can be addressed if more social media providers improve their monitoring services. Aside from creating more algorithms that search for linked key words and phrases, social media providers should increase the number of professional monitors conducting active searches. Additionally, while many platforms such as Twitter and Facebook respond within a few days to reports of posts that violate their policies, more monitors could lessen the amount of time these posts are available. According to Facebook, inappropriate posts are investigated and removed within 24 to 48 hours (Facebook "Community Standards"). Some offenders have been reported multiple times for their platform violations, and social media sponsors should increase their monitoring of those offenders. Although such surveillance would increase the burden on the social media providers, it would help solve the growing challenge of online hate speech and misinformation.

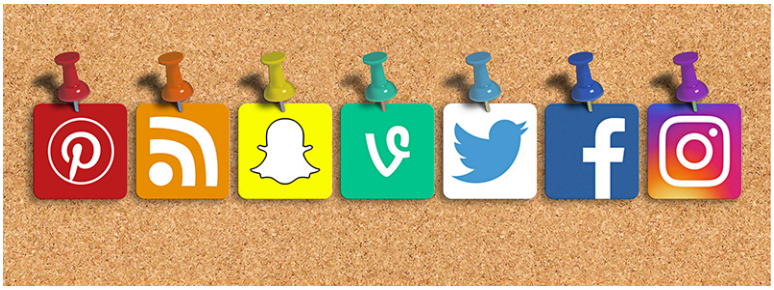


**FIGURE 11.3** Social Media Icons (credit: "Social Media Mixed Icons – Banner" by Blogtrepreneur/Wikimedia Commons, Creative Commons, CC BY 2.0)

## Definition

When using the reasoning strategy of **definition**, writers elaborate on the meaning of an idea, a word, or an expression, usually one that is controversial or that can be viewed in multiple ways. Beginning writers tend to think that definition writing looks only at the **denotation**, or dictionary definition. However, definition writing entails much more than relaying a dictionary definition. It also explains and elaborates on the **connotations**, the emotions and implications the topic evokes. Definition writing is especially useful for explaining and interpreting terms, ideas, or concepts that are easily or often confused or that have meanings beyond their denotations. Sometimes these meanings are personal interpretations and thus reflect a writer's particular viewpoint. Additionally, this strategy is beneficial when writers want to explain or reinforce a term before making an argument about a larger concept.

### Model Paragraph

> In everyday speech, the word *critical* is often used to highlight negative aspects of a topic. If someone says a friend was critical of a new haircut, the implication is that the friend did not like the cut. However, when used in college classes, *critical* has an expanded meaning: noting both the negative and positive aspects of a topic, examining those aspects in depth, and then making decisions about the discoveries. Students directed to use critical thinking, critical reading, or critical writing should know they are expected to examine all sides of a topic fully, evaluate the validity of those sides, and then make sound judgments on the basis of their evaluation.

In this chapter, you have learned about various reasoning strategies that you may use in academic and professional writing. Utilizing these strategies when you write can help you both evaluate and analyze text that

you read and create more logical and persuasive arguments.

Access multimedia content (http://openstax.org/books/writing-guide/pages/11-1-developing-your-sense-of-logic)

## 11.2 Trailblazer

### Reasoning Trailblazer: Paul D. N. Hebert

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read for inquiry, learning, and critical thinking.
- Identify reasoning strategies and explain their functions.



**FIGURE 11.4** Paul D. N. Hebert, 2015 (credit: "Paul Hebert- Revealing Planetary Biodiversity through DNA Barcodes" by Åge Hojem, NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet/NTNU University Museum/ Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

*"[R]esearchers will find a barcode linked to just about anything... encountered anywhere on the planet."*

### Reasoning Strategies in Science

Born in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, Paul Hebert (b. 1947) earned his bachelor of science degree from Queen's University, a public research university in his hometown. He then pursued graduate studies at the University of Cambridge (United Kingdom), where he received his PhD in genetics (a branch of biology dealing with heredity and the variation of inherited characteristics). He spent three years at Sydney University in Australia

and then another year in London at the Natural History Museum. Returning to Canada, he began research at the University of Windsor, followed by a directorship at the Great Lakes Institute at Windsor. In 1990, he joined the faculty of Ontario's University of Guelph, where he became director of the Centre for Biodiversity Genomics (a branch of biotechnology that strives to apply concepts of genetics and molecular biology to genetic mapping and DNA sequencing), and he holds a Canada Research Chair in molecular biodiversity (the study of the variety of life found on Earth or in a particular place on Earth).

Interestingly, Dr. Hebert, a well-known genetic scientist, uses reasoning strategies to organize his research. In 2019, a team he led launched a multimillion-dollar effort to identify more than two million new species of creatures. Because the world is losing species faster than species are being discovered, his initiative comes at an opportune time and adds to the value of his work. Experts in the field of biodiversity estimate that Earth is home to 8.7 million to 20 million different kinds of plants, animals, and fungi. To date, however, only 1.8 million of them have been formally described.

In 2003, Dr. Hebert first proposed the concept of using DNA (abbreviation for deoxyribonucleic acid, which codes genetic information for the transmission of inherited traits from a specimen) to create what is called DNA barcoding (https://openstax.org/r/barcode). This strategy is a method of identifying and classifying species by using a specific section of genetic code. In his groundbreaking paper, he proposed DNA barcoding as a solution to differentiate species by using the same small piece of DNA for every organism. A similarity today is the way in which scanners at groceries and other stores use UPC barcodes on items to determine prices.

The idea behind the barcode thinking is that it creates a unique sequence that can be used in myriad ways. Two of these ways include identifying an organism as part of a larger species and identifying a previously unknown species. Hebert proposed that animal species could be distinguished by sequencing fewer than 1,000 bases of mitochondrial (dealing with a subcellular structure found in many organisms) DNA from a given specimen.

Dr. Hebert was the founding director of the Biodiversity Institute of Ontario. Its goals are to

- advance the knowledge of what makes up biodiversity;
- protect biodiversity; and
- help boost the global collaboration of biodiversity researchers.

In addition to his work with the Biodiversity Institute of Ontario, Dr. Hebert heads the International Barcode of Life, which began in 2008 as a reference library of known species with their identifying sequences. The barcodes have helped identify organisms and document how they interact with other species.

One research program of the International Barcode of Life is BIOSCAN (https://openstax.org/r/bioscan). BIOSCAN's areas of research are threefold. The first is to speed the discovery of species. BIOSCAN will use new means to increase the identification of the millions of species yet to be discovered by analyzing hundreds of millions of specimens from freshwater, saltwater, and land sources. The second area is interaction of species, which will investigate the complex ecosystem of species, a topic that, for the most part, remains shrouded in mystery. The third area is species dynamics, which will study many of the world's areas as they are defined by their environmental conditions. Researchers will use that data to compile comprehensive starting points for comparisons about biodiversity.

In its ongoing efforts, BIOSCAN hopes to more than double the reference library, using specimens and species interactions at 2,500 sites around the world, a nod to the international impact of DNA technology. Almost all the new barcode records will come from undescribed species. A primary goal will be discovery of species. A sample barcode sequence will be taken. If it does not match an existing species, researchers will examine the specimen more closely, hoping to find a new species. In the past, this process would have taken years before a specimen was, indeed, confirmed as a new species.

Dr. Hebert hopes that by 2030, students can take handheld barcoders into the wild and use them to identify plants and animals instantly.

### Discussion Questions

1. Does the comparison between DNA barcoding and UPC barcodes used in grocery stores help you understand the concept of DNA barcoding? Why or why not?
2. How might BIOSCAN's use of interactions from more than 2,500 sites around the world help the program realize its goals?
3. How does Dr. Hebert use the cause-and-effect reasoning strategy in the initiative launched by the team he led? What is the cause of the initiative, and what is its effect?
4. How does Dr. Hebert use the reasoning strategy of problem and solution in his proposal about DNA barcoding? What problem does Dr. Hebert address, and what is its solution?
5. How would the reasoning strategy of classification and division be useful to a researcher like Dr. Hebert? Support your response with examples from the text.
6. In what ways might researchers use a comparison-and contrast reasoning strategy to discover a new species?

## 11.3 Glance at Genre: Reasoning Strategies and Signal Words

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify and define reasoning strategies and signal words.
- Determine how the rhetorical situation influences the content and reasoning strategies of written works.

As you read in The Digital World: Building on What You Already Know to Respond Critically, **rhetorical situation** are shaped by the conditions of the communication and the agents involved in that communication. To help you determine the conditions and the agents, you can examine purpose, culture, and audience expectation.

The **purpose**, or intention, for your writing determines the reasoning strategies you use. For example, if your purpose is to explain why one restaurant is better than another, you likely would use comparison and contrast.

Writers of essays and other formal papers usually support their ideas by using more than one reasoning strategy. For example, within comparison and contrast, they may include **description**, such as sensory details about the food at the two restaurants; **narration**, such as an anecdote about why they and their companions went to the restaurants or about something that happened at one of the restaurants; and **sequencing**, such as the order in which they received their food or the directions to get to the restaurants.

Alternatively, writers may combine some of the six strategies already mentioned. For instance, within the larger structure of comparison and contrast, they may use **classification** and **division** when discussing the restaurants' menus, sorting by main dishes, side dishes, appetizers, soups, salads, and desserts. Therefore, while the essay's primary purpose may be to compare and contrast, individual strategies within an essay or even within a paragraph may differ.

### Recognizing Purpose

Throughout your paper, your purpose for writing should be clear and focused. Your introduction, thesis, topic sentences, body paragraphs (which include reasoning and evidence), and conclusion should all reflect your argumentative or persuasive purpose.

To support and clarify your purpose, you are likely to use the following:

- **Analogy:** to explain to readers a subject with which they are unfamiliar by comparing a specific trait or traits with those of a more familiar subject.
- **Cause-and-effect:** to provide a clear understanding of the relationship between an event or situation and/or what happened because of it, why it occurred, and what might continue to happen.
- **Classification and division:** to explain a subject by breaking it into smaller parts and explaining the distinctions of the smaller parts or by grouping individual, disparate elements on the basis of certain characteristics to form larger units.
- **Compare and contrast:** to examine the similarities and/or differences of subjects in order to explain a specific point about their similarity or difference (often an unexpected similarity or difference).
- **Problem-and-solution:** to indicate a predicament or difficulty and suggest ways to deal with or eliminate it.
- **Definition:** to illustrate to readers an idea, word, or expression, allowing you to explain a unique meaning of a topic through details and analysis.

## Recognizing Audience

Critically thinking about the **culture**, or common beliefs and lived experiences, of your **audience**, the people who will read your work, can help you choose an appropriate vocabulary and level of detail.

The culture and audience expectation determine the language you use, the amount and type of information you include, and the way you deliver that information. Determine first what your readers want to know (their expectations), what they already know, and what they do not know. Determining—or at least making an educated guess about—the culture of your audience will aid you in deciding how to use the reasoning strategy you choose and the way in which you present your paper.

Suppose, for instance, your purpose is to persuade your audience to vote for a proposed local ordinance. First, consider the culture of your audience to ensure the language you use clearly explains the terms of ordinance for those who know nothing about it. Also, be sure that you fully understand the issues surrounding the ordinance and how it might have different effects on different groups of people so that what you assert is accurate. Next, again consider the culture of your audience members and what they may or may not know about your topic. For example, they may not know the reason for the proposed ordinance, what might happen if it is passed or not passed, or how it might affect them personally or culturally. If they are not as informed as you are, then include the background information they need to know about it in order for your reasoning strategy and overall argument to be effective.



**FIGURE 11.5** Considering the needs and expectations of an audience is key to effective writing. In college, an audience often may consist of your instructor and classmates, but in other situations it may consist of people of more varying ages and backgrounds, like this audience at a town hall meeting. (credit: "Youth and Tobacco Town

Hall Meeting" by The U.S. Food and Drug Administration/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Depending on your audience, you may want to include an analogy to help readers understand connections and particular points in certain ways. An analogy is also useful if the subject is complex. You can make a complex subject more accessible for your audience by comparing it to something familiar.

## Recognizing Points

Every point you make in a paper should be meaningful and should relate to the paper's **thesis**, its overarching claim or angle. How you make each point is determined by your reason for making that point. In most academic writing, you will use structures that present a thesis at the beginning of the essay. Readers should recognize your thesis because of

- its prominent placement in the essay;
- the language you use leading up to it; and
- the language you use following it.

For example, if your thesis is that the first two years of college should be tuition free for students (that is, tuition should be subsidized by the state), then you might begin your essay with an attention-getting fact stating that the current national student debt is over $1.7 trillion. After that, you might share evidence about the number of students who do not finish a bachelor's degree but have accrued student loan debt. Finally, you might preview your reasons for the position advocating for free tuition for the first two years of college.

Readers will recognize your supporting points as stated in your paragraph-level topic sentences because of how you discuss them in relation to your thesis. In all of your academic writing, choose language and reasoning strategies that guide readers back to your thesis.

When you present facts, whether in your thesis or in your evidence, remember to cite them properly according to the format your instructor requires. For more about proper citations, see MLA Documentation and Format and APA Documentation and Format.

## Structuring Your Reasoning Strategies

To present your reasoning, which is the main part of your essay, try these suggestions for using the six strategies:

**Analogy** paragraphs often begin with a statement of comparison between two unlike subjects, followed by reasons, explanations, or analyses of their similarities.

- **Example topic 1:** compare enrolling as a first-year student to visiting an amusement park for the first time

  **Example sentence:** Enrolling as a first-year student is like visiting an amusement park for the first time in this way: the inexperienced students and park goers must pay a high fee, abide by strict rules, and choose how they spend their adventure.

- **Example topic 2:** compare increasing the federal deficit to eating salted peanuts

  **Example sentence:** Increasing the federal deficit is like eating salted peanuts: the higher the increase, the more will be demanded. When you eat salted peanuts, the more you eat, the more you want.

Paragraphs explaining **cause-and-effect** often begin in one of these two ways: (1) an explanation of the cause(s), followed by an explanation of the effect(s) that happened as a result of the cause(s); or (2) an explanation of the effect(s), followed by an explanation of the cause(s) that led to the effect(s).

- **Example topic 1:** how an oil spill affected animals, waterways, and environmental costs

  **Example sentence:** Because an oil spill occurred off the coast of California, the fur and feathers of animals became dangerously matted, waterways were damaged, and the cost of maintaining a clean environment skyrocketed.

- **Example topic 2:** how the pandemic affected the population

  **Example sentence:** Because of the pandemic, gas consumption dropped, indoor dining at restaurants declined, and online shopping rose.

- **Example topic 3:** how animals, waterways, and environmental costs were affected by an oil spill

  **Example sentence:** The fur and feathers of animals became dangerously matted, waterways were damaged, and the cost of maintaining a clean environment skyrocketed as the result of an oil spill off the coast of California.

- **Example topic 4:** how the pandemic affected the population

  **Example sentence**: Gas consumption dropped, indoor dining at restaurants declined, and online shopping rose because of the pandemic.

**Classification**-and-**division** paragraphs often begin in either of two ways: (1) Classification paragraphs identify individual items and place them in a larger group; and (2) Division paragraphs break a large group or a single unit into smaller parts.

- **Example classification topic:** essential workers during the pandemic included employees in several fields

  **Example sentence:** During the pandemic, essential workers not under quarantine included employees in the fields of health care, childcare, transportation, water and wastewater, and agriculture and food production.

- **Example division topic:** how the new superstore will be divided

  **Example sentence:** The layout for the new superstore will be divided into furniture (third floor), household goods and kitchenware (second floor), and men's, women's, and children's clothing (first floor).

When using **compare and contrast** reasoning, you have choices about the structure to use. Comparison-and-contrast paragraphs identify two subjects and address their similarities and then their differences; or comparison-and-contrast paragraphs identify two subjects and address their similarities and then their differences.

- **Example topic 1:** reality television and scripted television

  **Example sentence:** Reality television and scripted television are alike in that both should make money for the network that airs them; however, they differ in the predictability of what the characters do in their roles.

- **Example topic 2:** printed book and audio book

  **Example sentence:** A printed book and an audio book are alike in that both present the material the author wrote; one way they differ is that listeners—as opposed to readers—cannot make notes on text in a printed book.

- **Example topic 3:** reality television and scripted television

  **Example sentence:** Reality television and scripted television differ in the predictability of what the characters do in their roles, but they are alike in that they both should make money for the network that airs them.

- **Example topic 4:** printed book and audio book

  **Example sentence:** One way a printed book and an audio book differ is that listeners—as opposed to readers—cannot make notes on material in the printed book; however, both present the material the author wrote.

You can develop a **problem-and-solution** paragraph in one of two ways: (1) identify the problem, and then explain a way to solve it; or (2) explain the solution to a problem, and then identify the problem(s) that necessitated it.

- **Example topic 1:** student loans

  **Example sentence:** The issue of defaulting on repayment of student loans would be solved by increasing the time the students are given to repay the loans.

- **Example topic 2:** campus parking

  **Example sentence:** The issue of the increased need for parking on campus would be solved by paving the area on the corner of Twelfth and Locust Streets to allow parking on that lot.

- **Example topic 3:** student loans

  **Example sentence:** By increasing the time in which student loans must be repaid, the issue of defaulting on repayment of student loans would be solved, and students could have more ease of mind to pursue their careers.

- **Example topic 4:** campus parking

  **Example sentence** By paving the area on the corner of Twelfth and Locust Streets to allow parking on that lot, the issue of the increased need for parking on campus would be solved, an eyesore would be beautified, and more students and faculty would get to class on time.

**Definition** paragraphs often begin by noting the dictionary definition (denotation) of the topic and then illustrating and explaining its unique or extended meaning.

- **Example topic 1:** patriotism

  **Example sentence:** Most people think patriotism is showing devotion to their country; to me, however, it is conducting myself in ways that are respectful to everyone.

- **Example topic 2:** independence

  **Example sentence:** Independence means freedom from outside control, but college students often find it brings personal responsibility they had not considered.

## Integrating Evidence from Appropriate Sources



Most academic writing is built on the writer's own ideas as supported by the ideas of others. Regardless of the reasoning strategies you use in an essay, you will usually need to integrate others' ideas to

- help you explore a topic;
- define, illustrate, explain, or prove an idea;
- help readers think critically about an idea; and
- give strength or credibility to your ideas.

These ideas from others could come from a variety of sources such as print or electronic media or in-person conversations. Similarly, these sources could be either personal (e.g., a conversation you had with someone or an email you received) or public (e.g., available online or in a printed publication). You can read more about finding and using credible sources in Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources.

These models show how writers integrate ideas from appropriate sources into their reasoning strategies.

### Analogy

Enrolling as a first-year student is like going to an amusement park for the first time: the inexperienced students or park goers must pay a high fee, abide by many rules, and choose their adventures. Like the cost for riding roller coasters, the cost for taking college classes is great and must be paid before the students start their journey. However, even after paying tuition, students do not have immediate access to whatever class they want to take, just as the park visitor cannot jump on any ride at any time. In the park, certain rides have warnings, such as "You must be at least 60 inches tall to go on this ride." In college, many classes have prerequisites or require students to have earned a minimum placement score. Also, even though park goers have paid their entrance fees and received armbands that allow them to go anywhere in the park, they are not guaranteed a place on that one awesome ride they have heard so much about. They may have to choose between waiting in a line for hours or doing something else and trying to catch that ride another time. Similarly, college classes have a limited number of seats. Like the roller coaster that everyone wants to ride, college classes close, and students must make another choice. So, while students may not be able to pick up that class that semester, they can try again the next term. Like those starting an adventure at an amusement park, those starting the college journey should have a plan of how they want to fill their time and have a backup plan should they be unable to get every class they want, according to Max Vega, a first-year adviser. Similarly, park goers should use a map to plan their adventure.

### Cause and Effect

Because an oil spill occurred off the coast of California, the fur and feathers of many animals became dangerously matted, waterways were damaged, and the cost of maintaining a clean environment skyrocketed. In May 2015, a ruptured pipeline in Santa Barbara County spilled oil along 20 miles of coastline. According to information published by the University of California-Davis, wildlife rescuers were able to save 49 coastal birds, 25 sea lions, and 6 elephant seals (Kerlin, "Wildlife Experience High Price of Oil"). Helping ecosystems recover from oil spills is difficult and can take decades and billions of dollars to recover even partially.

### Classification and Division

The layout for the new superstore can be divided into furniture (third floor), household goods and kitchenware (second floor), and men's, women's, and children's clothing (first floor). This arrangement allows customers to feel they have control over their shopping experience. Customers shopping for clothes are not distracted by household goods or furniture displays. "By categorizing our merchandise in this manner, we can further subdivide the merchandise on each floor, developing a logical system of separation that repeat customers will learn easily," said Carla Dawkins, general manager for Hometown Corner Store, in a *Curtisville News* report (Thurston 2). These subdivisions, Thurston stated, would allow individual floor managers to design the footprint of their floors to create an originality distinct and separate from the other floors (8).

### Comparison and Contrast

One way *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* are alike is that both are tragedies written by William Shakespeare; one way they differ is that they explore different themes. In *Romeo and Juliet*, almost all action centers on the theme of love, whether it is the innocent love between two young people or the protective love of parents for their children. In *Macbeth*, however, the action centers on ambition. The characters act on their ambitions for themselves and for their country, but excessive ambition is condemned and severely punished (Royal Shakespeare Company, "*Macbeth* Analysis").

### Problem and Solution

The issue of the increased need for parking on campus would be solved by paving the area on the corner of Twelfth and Locust Streets to allow parking on that lot. According to an email sent to all students from the provost, Dr. Sandra Kuryakin, the college purchased the corner lot two years ago with the intent of creating more parking spaces. In the email, Dr. Kuryakin adds, "We will break ground in June and plan to have the lot

finished before students are back on campus in August, thus solving our parking problem on the west end of campus."



**FIGURE 11.6** Empty lot to be converted to parking spaces (credit: "Columbus-Whittier Peninsula – Northern Tier (BRLF)" by Ohio Redevelopment Projects—ODSA/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

### Definition

Most people think patriotism means showing devotion to their country; to me, however, it is conducting myself in ways that are respectful to everyone. Too often, people proclaim themselves as patriots when they are actively seeking to withhold liberties from their fellow citizens or even harm them. When those claiming to be patriots condemn and physically harm others because they do not agree on political issues, they are not showing any reverence for their country. Instead, they dishonor their country by dishonoring its people. Respecting America should mean more than saluting the flag or singing the national anthem. It should mean respecting others' rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In light of all this, for me, patriotism means respecting others not only because they are fellow Americans but because they are fellow human beings.

## Signal Words and Phrases

Writers use signal words and phrases to steer readers in certain directions. You might use signal words and phrases to give readers clues about

how one idea connects with another;
how one paragraph connects with another;
how one idea supports or refutes another;
what is to come;
points you want to emphasize;
illustrations of your topic; or
similarities or differences you want to emphasize.

Common signal words and phrases for reasoning strategies include these:

**Analogy**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| accordingly | for instance | in relation to |
| as has been shown | given that | in the same way (that) |
| as noted | granted that | in this way |
| as previously discussed | having established that | ironically |
| as previously mentioned | in addition | paradoxically |
| as . . . so | in contrast | similarly |
| by extension | in fact | specifically |
| compared with | in parallel | the aforementioned |
| for example | in particular | thus |

**TABLE 11.1**

### Cause-and-effect

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| because (of) | in order to | since |
| begins with | in that | the reason is |
| for | is caused by | this led to |
| for this reason | leads (led) to | for this reason |
| if this (that) happens | reason | |

**TABLE 11.2**

### Effect

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| as a consequence | for this reason | outcome |
| as a result (of) | hence | result |
| as expected | it follows that | so (that) |
| because (of) | namely | therefore |
| consequently | on account of | thus |

**TABLE 11.3**

### Classification

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| aspects | feature(s) | part(s) |
| characteristics | field | rank |
| classes | form(s) | second |
| classify | genre(s) | set(s) |
| comprises | group(s) | several |
| consists of | kinds | sort(s) |
| dimension(s) | methods | stage(s) of |
| element(s) | numbers | types |
| various | ways | |

**TABLE 11.4**

### Division

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| another | is composed of | style(s) |
| category(-ies) | kind(s) | type(s) |
| contain(s) | one | variety(-ies) |
| first | other | |
| include(s) | sort(s) | |

**TABLE 11.5**

### Compare and contrast

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| alike | compared with | same (as) |
| along the same lines | in comparison | share |
| as well as | in like manner | similar(ly) |
| both | in the same way | similar (to) |
| each | is comparable to | the same as |
| equal(ly) | just as | too |
| in common | likewise | |

**TABLE 11.6**

### Contrast

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| although | but | difference |
| and yet | by (in) contrast | different (from) |
| as opposed to | compared with | either/or |
| better | conversely | even though |
| however | on the contrary | yet |
| instead (of) | on the other hand | so (that) |
| more/less than | unequal | therefore |
| neither/nor | vary | |
| nevertheless | whereas | |

TABLE 11.7

### Problem

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| catch | factors (include) | puzzle |
| challenge | hitch | quandary |
| conundrum | issue | riddle |
| crisis | obstruction | situation |
| difficulty | pose | snag |
| dilemma | predicament | the question is |
| enigma | problem(atic) | |

TABLE 11.8

### Solution

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| a (one) solution | cure | one answer is |
| address | deal with | option |
| alleviate | ease | possibility |
| ameliorate | explain/explanation | probability |
| amend | fix | propose |
| answer | improve | proposition |
| correct | lighten | prospect |

TABLE 11.9

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| reason | solution | treat(ment) |
| remedy | solve | way out |
| resolution (resolve) | take care of | |

**TABLE 11.9**

**Definition**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| according to (source) | for this reason (purpose) | not only . . . but also |
| also | further(more) | on the contrary |
| as a result | however | on the other hand |
| at the same | in addition to | otherwise |
| because | in brief | rather |
| besides | in conclusion | similarly |
| but | in fact | since |
| consequently | in other words | so |
| conversely | in particular | such as |
| equally important | likewise | then |
| finally | namelyx | therefore |
| first (second, etc.) | nevertheless | to illustrate |
| for example (instance) | next | |

**TABLE 11.10**

## Frequently Used Reasoning Strategies Terms

- **Audience:** the people who will read your paper.
- **Description:** writing in which the author attempts to depict certain characteristics of a person, place, or object. Writers describe their subjects by carefully noting details and sensory impressions, such as what the subject looks, sounds, smells, tastes, or feels like.
- **Metaphors:** comparison of two unlike elements. For example, the arguing protestors were volcanic, spewing hot, inflammatory speech.
- **Narration:** telling a story or relating events.
- **Point:** an important idea to share with the audience.
- **Purpose:** reason for writing.
- **Sequencing:** relating information in the order in which something happened or in which steps should be followed.
- **Similes:** comparison of two unlike elements. The word *as* or *like* appears in a simile. For example, the protestors' arguments were as heated as an erupting volcano.

- **Thesis:** the overarching and unifying idea of a piece of writing.

## 11.4 Annotated Sample Reading: from Book VII of The Republic by Plato

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify reasoning strategies and explain their function in a written text.
- Explain how reasoning strategies are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Read and respond critically to a text.

### Introduction



**FIGURE 11.7** Bust of Plato (credit: "Plato Pio-Clemetino" by Marie-Lan Nguyen (2006)/Vatican Museums/ Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The following excerpt is an example of classical rhetoric. It comes from Book VII of *The Republic (https://openstax.org/r/therepublic)* by Plato (c. 424 BCE–c. 347 BCE), written in the latter part of the fourth century BCE.

In this section, Socrates, Plato's teacher, and Glaucon, Plato's older brother, discuss the relationship between education and the human soul. Socrates argues that education is what moves the philosopher's soul toward its destination of enlightenment, or what he calls "the Form of Good."

Socrates explains this relationship through a famous allegory, "The Allegory of the Cave." An **allegory** is a written or pictorial work that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral, religious, or political one. A **literary allegory** is a fictional narrative in which characters and actions are symbols of truth or ideas about life. While an allegory is a concrete representation of abstract ideas—a comparison between the real and the abstract—an **analogy** creates a comparative relationship between two conditions, people, or items.

Socrates's literary allegory concerns characters he refers to as prisoners who were born into captivity in an underground cave and who have never seen daylight. He asks his student Glaucon to assume that one of the underground prisoners escapes and then asks Glaucon to consider how the other prisoners would react if the

escaped prisoner returned and explained to them that what they had believed to be real is, in fact, false. The allegory and questions Socrates poses illustrate that everyone is capable of knowing the truth; however, when someone has known a skewed reality for so long, learning the truth can be as blinding and difficult to fathom as seeing the sun for the first time.

To contemporary readers, this tale may seem archaic. Consider, however, a modern-day scenario that mirrors many of the same elements. Suppose a child is born into a commune run by a group of racial supremacists and raised into adulthood by those people. The child is taught only doctrines the adults support and is allowed to view only particular Internet sites and television shows that reinforce the group's racist views. Like the prisoners in the cave, the child has been kept from the realities of the outside world. The prisoners in the cave know about the outside world only through shadows. Similarly, the child knows about the outside world only through stories told by the adults. In "The Allegory of the Cave," one of the prisoners leaves the cave, experiences the outside world, and returns with truths discovered during the time away. This experience would be analogous to the now-grown child from the commune escaping, living in the real world, learning that the "truths" they had been taught were, in fact, falsehoods, and then returning to the commune to let others know about the discoveries.

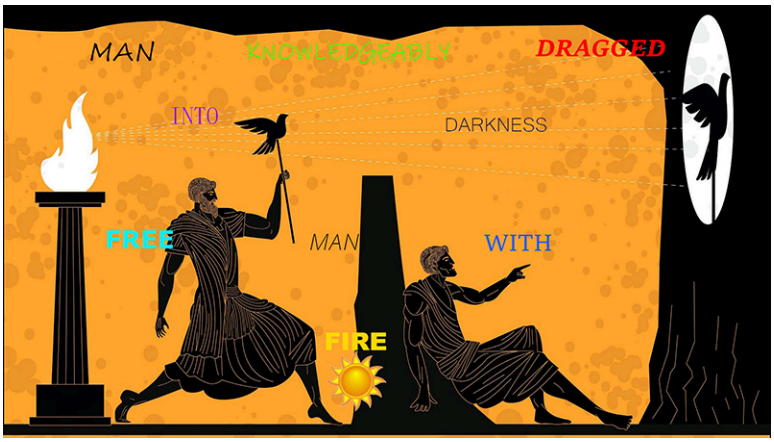



**FIGURE 11.8** This illustration of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" shows the prisoner chained to the wall and looking at the shadow of a manipulated image projected in front of him. The prisoner is unaware of anything about the outside world other than the shadow he sees on the wall. (credit: "Platos-Allegory-of-the-Cave-Featured-Image" by Carter Watkins/flickr, CC BY 2.0

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### Thinking Through Allegory

> **(Socrates)** And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened:—Behold! human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

***Narration.*** *This narration relates the dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon.*

***Description.*** *Throughout the excerpt, Socrates uses description to paint a picture of the changing life of humans moving from living underground in darkness to living above ground in light.*

***Problem and Solution.*** *Plato uses the problem-and-solution reasoning strategy to offer a way to solve people's*

*ignorance. The problem is how to get people who are uneducated (living in darkness) to know the truth (see the light) and accept it. The solution is to rise from the cave (use effort) and face the harsh light (attain knowledge) about truth (the idea of good).*

***Simile.*** *Here Socrates, the speaker, uses a simile to compare a low wall to a screen that is in front of marionette players.*

***Plot Summary.*** *Socrates shares with Glaucon an allegory that centers on a group of people who were born into captivity in a deep cave and have never seen daylight. Instead, they are chained in a position so that they can look only straight ahead at shadows that appear on a wall in front of them. Behind them is another wall with puppetlike images of people, animals, and trees; behind this wall is a fire. Another group of people manipulate the images, and the fire causes the images' shadows to project onto the large wall in front of the prisoners. The stories acted out by these shadows are all that the prisoners ever see of the outside world.*

> **(Glaucon)** I see.

> (**Socrates)** And do you see, I said, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent.

> **(Glaucon)** You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

> **(Socrates)** Like ourselves, I replied; and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

***Comparison and Contrast.*** *Socrates compares Glaucon and himself to the prisoners in that they too can know only that which they see or experience; thus, they are similar to the prisoners in how they achieve knowledge.*

> **(Glaucon)** True, he said; how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads?

> **(Socrates)** And of the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

> **(Glaucon)** Yes, he said.

> **(Socrates)** And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

> **(Glaucon)** Very true.

> **(Socrates)** And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

> **(Glaucon)** No question, he replied.

> **(Socrates)** To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.

> **(Glaucon)** That is certain.

***Plot Summary****. Glaucon agrees with Socrates that the prisoners would think the shadows on the wall represented real life and that the statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone are real.*

> **(Socrates)** And now look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive someone saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision,—what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them,—will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?

***Cause and Effect.*** *Here Plato uses the cause-and-effect reasoning strategy. The causes of the prisoners' ignorance are the restrictions placed on them in the cave. The effect of the restrictions is the prisoners' ignorance of reality, or lack of knowledge.*

> (**Glaucon)** Far truer.

> (**Socrates)** And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take refuge in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

***Cause and Effect.*** *Here Plato uses the cause-and-effect reasoning strategy. The effect of the prisoner looking directly at the light will be pain. The effect of the pain will be the prisoner's turning away from the light.*

> **(Glaucon)** True, he said.

***Plot Summary.*** *Glaucon agrees that a prisoner would suffer if he were suddenly released from the chains that held him and were then shown the reality of how the shadows were made. He would suffer physical pain from being held stiffly and then suddenly allowed to move and would experience eyestrain from being exposed to real sunlight for the first time. He would suffer mental anguish and confusion as he struggled to accept that what he had seen previously was not real, so he would turn his vision to look at the things he believed to be real.*

> **(Socrates)** And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he is forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? When he approaches the light, his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities.

> **(Glaucon)** Not all in a moment, he said.

> **(Socrates)** He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves; then he will gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars and the spangled heaven; and he will see the sky and the stars by night better than the sun or the light of the sun by day?

> **(Glaucon)** Certainly.

> **(Socrates)** Last of all he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is.

> **(Glaucon)** Certainly.

***Plot Summary.*** *Socrates then poses that the prisoner be dragged up a hill so high that he is near the sun. The bright sunlight would prevent him from seeing anything, including what he thought was real. In getting accustomed to the brightness of the light, the prisoner would first see the shadows, then reflections in the water, then actual objects, and finally the moon and other celestial beings. Socrates ends by stating that only after the prisoner takes these steps to accepting his new reality can he understand his place in this new world.*

> **(Socrates)** He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years, and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold?

> **(Glaucon)** Clearly, he said, he would first see the sun and then reason about him.

> **(Socrates)** And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow-prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them?

> **(Glaucon)** Certainly, he would.

> **(Socrates)** And if they were in the habit of conferring honors among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honors and glories, or envy the possessors of them? Would he not say with Homer, "Better to be the poor servant of a poor master," and to endure anything, rather than think as they do and live after their manner?

> **(Glaucon)** Yes, he said, I think that he would rather suffer anything than entertain these false notions and live in this miserable manner.

***Plot Summary.*** *Through a series of questions, Socrates asks if the prisoner would claim that the sun is what makes all things possible and if he would remember his life in the cave and feel sorry for the other prisoners who do not have this knowledge that he has. Socrates then quotes the Greek poet Homer, saying that the prisoner would think it is better to be poor and have knowledge than to be rich and know nothing. Glaucon agrees with what Socrates poses in all his questions.*

> **(Socrates)** Imagine once more, I said, such an one coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation; would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness?

> **(Glaucon)** To be sure, he said.

> **(Socrates)** And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable), would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death.

> **(Glaucon)** No question, he said.

> **(Socrates)** This entire allegory, I said, you may now append, dear Glaucon, to the previous argument; the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world according to my poor belief, which, at your desire, I have expressed—whether rightly or wrongly God knows. But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed.

***Metaphor.*** *In two metaphors, Socrates says (1) the prison-house is the world of sight and (2) the light of the fire is the sun.*

***Analogy.*** *Plato compares the prisoners' climb from the cave into the light of day to people learning reality.*

***Plot Summary.*** *In the end of this excerpt, Socrates tells Glaucon to consider the prisoner being returned to the dark*

*cave. He asks Glaucon if the prisoner, after his eyes had previously adjusted to the light of day, would be scorned by the other prisoners for being unable to see underground now. Socrates then suggests that in the allegory, light represents knowledge and the journey from below ground to above ground represents the intellectual growth of the individual. Those who have little knowledge—dim light from a fire that can only cast shadows—know little of the real world and of truth. Thus, he suggests that the prisoners' fear of the knowledge (of that which they do not comprehend rightly) is so profound that they would kill anyone who attempted to drag them out of the cave.*

### Discussion Questions

1. What purpose might Plato have had for using an allegory to impart his message?
2. In his allegory, Plato compares the prisoners' climb from the cave into the light of day to people learning what reality is. Explain the allegory and how the prisoners' emerging from the cave is similar to learning that what they thought previously was not real.
3. In this excerpt, written around 375 BCE, Plato begins a discussion about what education ought to do. In the 21st century CE, what do you think education ought to do?
4. In the last paragraph, Plato says that "in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all." Think critically think about whether you agree with that statement. Then explain your stance.

## 11.5 Writing Process: Reasoning Supported by Evidence

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Use organizational and reasoning strategies to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources.
- Implement varying language structures in the process of composing.
- Develop flexible strategies for drafting and revising.

In this section you will practice writing paragraphs that demonstrate your ability to use the reasoning strategies discussed.

### Summary of Assignment

Using three of the strategies for reasoning (analogy, cause and effect, classification and division, comparison and contrast, definition, or problem and solution), write at least three body paragraphs for your Position Argument: Practicing the Art of Rhetoric assignment. Write at least one single paragraph for each strategy you choose. You may write additional paragraphs in which you combine strategies.

***Another Lens.*** Make a visual draft of your assignment by using photos you take, images you find online (be sure to adhere to copyright guidelines), images you create, or a combination of these. Your instructor will tell you whether to substitute visuals for all three paragraphs or just one or two. Put the title at the top of your poster and, if necessary, include explanations of your images. The images you use and the manner in which you arrange them should convey the same ideas you want to express about your subject in writing. The selected images should reflect your critical thinking on your subject and should invite the viewer also to think critically about your subject. You can read more about understanding various aspects of visual rhetoric in Image Analysis: Writing About What You See. Although the design arrangements, or layouts, for a poster are numerous, consider using one of these:

- **Centered image—nucleus idea:** The primary image is in the center of the poster. Other secondary images radiate outward from the primary image or are arranged around it another meaningful way.
- **Left-to-right flow—horizontal:** Images progress across the poster like lines of text, from left to right.
- **Left-to-right flow—vertical:** Images progress across the poster like lines of text in a column. Depending on the size of your poster, you could include from three to five columns of images.

- **Two contrasting fields:** Images are divided into two sections of the poster, some on the left and some on the right.




**FIGURE 11.9** This cause-and-effect poster with two contrasting fields indicates the possible result of working without eye protection in a lab. (credit: "A flask exploding, a left eye open without protection" by Science Museum Group/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0)




**FIGURE 11.10** In this centered-image poster illustrating the strategy of definition, the sentence indicates a requirement of communication, and the images indicate ways ii,koln which people communicate. (credit: "Communication affirmation poster, USAF" by Dave Ahlschwede/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## Quick Launch: Structural Paragraph Frames

Once you have determined your reasoning strategy and purpose for a particular paragraph, consider how to develop the evidence within that paragraph through a topic sentence, explanation, and analysis. To do this task, choose the most appropriate structure for a given paragraph from the structures below, and complete the frame according to the prompts. You may alter the frames as needed. Remember that each paragraph that you develop should support your thesis. In other words, make sure that each topic sentence ties back to your thesis.

**First, record your working thesis: _____**

**Analogy**

- **Working topic sentence** _____ is like _____ in many ways.

**Structure**

- explanation:
- analysis:

**TABLE 11.11**

**Cause-and-Effect**

- **Working topic sentence for Structure #1**

  Because (cause/s) _____ (what had happened), (effect/s) _____ (what happened as a result).

  **Structure #1 for cause-and-effect paragraph**

  cause(s):

  effect(s):

- **Working topic sentence for Structure #2**

  (effect/s) _____ (what happened as a result) because (cause/s)_____ (what had happened).

  **Structure #2 for cause-and-effect paragraph**

  cause(s):

  effect(s):

**TABLE 11.12**

**Classification** and **Division**

- **Working topic sentence for Structure #1** (general subject) _____ can be divided into (smaller categories) _____, _____, and _____.

  **Structure #1 for classification-and-division paragraphs: division**

  larger subject:

  first category:

  second category:

  third category:

- **Working topic sentence for Structure #2**

  (smaller category) _____, _____, and _____ are (types) of (larger subject) _____.

  **Structure #2 for classification-and-division paragraph: classification**

  smaller category:

  smaller category:

  smaller category:

  larger subject:

**TABLE 11.13**

**Comparison and Contrast**

- **Working topic sentence for Structure #1**

  One way in which (subject 1)_____ and (subject 2)_____ are alike is (similarity) _____; one way in which they differ is (difference) _____.

  **Structure #1 for comparison-and-contrast paragraph**

  Subject 1:

  Subject 2:

  Similarity(-ies) of subject 1 and subject 2:

  Difference(s) of subject 1 and subject 2:

- **Working topic sentence for Structure #2**

  One way in which (subject 1) _____ and (subject 2) _____ are different is (difference)_____; one way in which they are similar is (similarity)_____.

  **Structure #2 for comparison-and-contrast paragraph**

  Subject 1:

  Subject 2:

  Difference(s) of subject 1 and subject 2:

  Similarity(-ies) of subject 1 and subject 2:

**TABLE 11.14**

**Problem-and-Solution**

- **Working topic sentence for Structure #1**

  The issue of (predicament or challenge) _____ was/can be solved by (what was/should be done)_____.

  **Structure #1 for problem-and-solution paragraph**

  problem(s):

  solution:

- **Working topic sentence for Structure #2**

  By (what was/should be done) _____, the issue of (predicament/challenge) _____ was/could be solved.

  **Structure #2 for problem-and-solution paragraph**

  solution:

  problem(s):

**TABLE 11.15**

**Definition**

- **Working topic sentence** Most people think _____ means _____; to me, however, _____ means _____.

  **Structure**

  Common definition or denotation:

  Expanded definition from writer:

**TABLE 11.16**

## Drafting: Reasoning Strategies

As you write, keep in mind the reasoning strategy you are using. Then begin your draft by using the applicable frame for the paragraph. Beginning in this way will help you focus the details of the paragraph to ensure they support the thesis and provide the reasoning you need. Note that when you revise, you may choose to reword your frame and the sentences that develop it. Revisions like these are part of the **recursive** nature of the writing process.

Below are frames for types of writing, sample sentences of filled-in frames, patterns for the six reasoning strategies, and sample paragraphs. In the sample paragraphs, topic sentences are underlined, and transitional words and phrases are italicized.

### Analogy

- **Frame for analogy topic sentence:** (subject 1) _____ is like (subject 2) _____ in this way: (way in which they are similar)_____.

  Learning a foreign language is like learning to ride a bicycle in this way: you must learn to perform multiple tasks, some at the same time.

- **Structure for analogy paragraph comparing learning a foreign language and learning to ride a bicycle:**

  **comparison:** learning a foreign language compared to learning to ride a bicycle

  **reason/explanation/analysis**: must learn the basic parts

  **reason/explanation/analysis**: must learn how parts work together

  **reason/explanation/analysis**: must learn multiple actions without thinking about them

**Model analogy paragraph**

Learning a foreign language is like learning to ride a bicycle: you must learn to perform multiple tasks, some at the same time. You *first* have to develop a foundational knowledge by learning how the individual parts of the bike work and how to use them, just as you learn the parts of speech of a language. *Then* you must learn how these parts work together. *For example*, through the action of pedaling the bike, you transfer energy to the wheels, causing them to rotate, *thus* moving the bike forward. *Similarly*, by learning how to use verbs in another language, you learn how to apply meaning that expresses an action or state of being. To steer the direction of the bike, you learn to change its path by turning the handlebars. To change the direction of a sentence, you learn how to control prepositions and modifiers. *Most important, though*, you must get to the point at which the actions of pedaling, steering, and balancing happen simultaneously and with little thought to the individual actions, just as you must do when speaking a foreign language.

### Cause and Effect

- **Frame for cause-and-effect topic sentence (Structure #1):**

  Because (cause/s) _____ (what had happened), then (effect/s) _____ (what happened).

  Because vehicles sped without regard to the speed limit, pedestrians dodged traffic and accidents increased; for those reasons, a traffic signal was installed.

- **Structure #1 for cause-and effect paragraph about reasons for installing a traffic signal:**

  **explanation of the cause(s), followed by an explanation of the effect(s) that happened as a result of the cause(s)**

  **cause:** vehicles sped without regard to the speed limit

  **cause**: pedestrians had to dodge traffic

  **cause:** number of accidents increased

  **effect:** traffic signal was installed

**Model cause-and-effect paragraph about reasons for installing a traffic signal (Structure #1)**

Many vehicles raced through the intersection of Clay Street and Eagle Avenue without regard to the posted speed limit. Pedestrians, many of whom were students, crossed the intersection to get to and from campus, *but* they had to dodge in and out of constant traffic. The number of accidents rose far past an acceptable limit. *Indeed,* one recent accident caused a loss of life. *For these reasons*, a traffic signal was installed at the intersection of Clay Street and Eagle Avenue.

- **Frame for a cause-and-effect topic sentence (Structure #2):**

  (effect/s) _____ (what happened) because (cause/s) _____ (what had happened).

  A traffic signal was installed because vehicles sped, people had to dodge traffic, and accidents increased.

- **Structure #2 for cause-and effect paragraph about reasons for installing a traffic signal:**

  **explanation of the effect(s), followed by an explanation of the causes(s) that led to the effect**

  **effect:** traffic signal was installed

  **cause:** vehicles sped without regard to speed limit

  **cause:** pedestrians had to dodge traffic

  **cause:** number of accidents increased

**Model cause-and-effect paragraph about reasons for installing a traffic signal (Structure #2)**

A traffic signal was installed at the intersection of Clay Street and Eagle Avenue. *Before* it was installed, many vehicles raced through the intersection without regard to the posted speed limit. Pedestrians, many of whom were students, crossed the intersection to get to and from campus, *but* they had to dodge in and out of constant traffic. The number of accidents rose far past an acceptable limit. *Indeed,* one recent accident resulted in a loss of life.

### Classification and Division

Notice that these paragraphs do not separate classification from division. Rather, they look at the same larger unit (sports drinks) from two angles: types of drinks that could be classified and the larger unit—sports drinks—broken down into smaller units contained within it.

- **Frame for classification-and-division topic sentence (Structure #1):** (general subject) _____ can be divided into (smaller categories) _____, _____, and _____.

  Sports drinks can be divided into hypotonic, isotonic, and hypertonic.

- **Structure #1 for classification-and-division paragraph about types of sports drinks:**

  **identification of the general subject followed by categories of that general subject**

  **general subject**: sports drinks

  **first category**: hypotonic

  **second category**: isotonic

  **third category**: hypertonic

**Model classification-and-division paragraph about types of sports drinks (Structure #1)**

All sports drinks are designed to increase hydration before, during, and after exercise or athletic involvement. They do this by replacing minerals *such as* sodium and potassium lost through sweat and by replacing electrolytes and carbohydrates. *However*, not all sports drinks are created equally. The *first* type of sports drink, **hypotonic** (having a lower concentration of dissolved content than the human body), includes drinks that have both a low number of carbohydrates and a higher concentration of salt and sugar than the human body. **Isotonic** (having the same concentration of dissolved content as the human body) drinks have salt and sugar concentrations similar to the human body but have higher carbohydrate content. *Last*, **hypertonic** (having a higher concentration of dissolved content than the human body) drinks are designed to supplement daily carbohydrate intake *and therefore* have high levels of carbohydrates to provide quick energy replacement. Their salt and sugar concentration is significantly lower than the human body's.

- **Frame for classification-and-division topic sentence (Structure #2):**

  (smaller categories) _____, _____, and _____ are divisions /types of (general subject)_____.

  Hypotonic, isotonic, and hypertonic are types of sports drinks.

- **Structure #2 for classification-and-division paragraph about types of sports drinks:**

  **categories of general subject followed by identification of the general subject**

  **smaller category**: hypotonic

  **smaller category**: isotonic

  **smaller category**: hypertonic

  **general subject**: sports drinks

**Model classification-and-division paragraph about types of sports drinks (Structure #2)**

Hypotonic (having a lower concentration of dissolved content than the human body) drinks include beverages that have both a low number of carbohydrates *and* a concentration of salt and sugar higher than the human body. Isotonic (having the same concentration of dissolved content as the human body) beverages have salt and sugar concentrations similar to the human body but have higher carbohydrate content. *Last*, hypertonic (having a higher concentration of dissolved content than the human body) beverages are designed to supplement daily carbohydrate intake *and therefore* have high levels of carbohydrate to provide quick energy replacement. Their salt and sugar concentration is significantly lower than the human body's. What do these beverages have in common? All are types of sports drinks, designed to increase hydration before, during, and after exercise or athletic involvement.

### Comparison and Contrast

- **Frame for a comparison-and-contrast topic sentence (Structure #1):**

  One way (subject 1) _____ and (subject 2) _____ are alike is (similarity) _____; one way they differ is (difference) _____.

  One way virtual learning and face-to-face learning are alike is that student responsibility is a key element in both; one way they differ is in the methods students choose to be attentive.

- **Structure #1 for comparison-and-contrast paragraph about virtual learning and face-to-face learning:**

  **identification of two subjects followed by a point-by-point discussion**

  **point 1:** discussion of a similarity of virtual learning and face-to-face learning

  **point 2:** discussion of a difference between virtual learning and face-to-face learning

**Model comparison-and-contrast paragraph about virtual learning and face-to-face learning (Structure #1)**

Student responsibility is a key factor in both virtual learning and face-to-face learning. In both settings, a student must be attentive in order to understand what is happening in the classroom and what is expected regarding readings, lab work, and other outside assignments. Differences occur in virtual classes and face-to-face classes, *though*, in how students choose to be attentive. *Depending on* how the virtual classes are set up, students' attention can range from complete to nonexistent, *and* the instructor might never know how much attention a particular student is paying. With in-person classes, *on the other hand*, an instructor can see a student's body language more closely and determine whether that student is attentive.



**FIGURE 11.11** Informal face-to-face instruction (credit: "Creative writing class-fine arts center" by Leesa/ Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

- **Frame for a comparison-and-contrast topic sentence (Structure #2):**

  One way (subject 1) _____ and (subject 2) _____ are different is (difference) _____; a way they are alike is (similarity) _____.

  One way virtual learning and face-to-face learning are different is in the way students choose to be attentive; a way they are alike is that student responsibility is a key element.

- **Structure #2 for comparison-and-contrast paragraph about virtual learning and face-to-face learning:**

  **identification of two subjects followed by a point-by-point discussion**

  **point 1**: discussion of a difference between virtual learning and face-to-face learning

  **point 2:** discussion of a similarity of virtual learning and face-to-face learning

**Model comparison-and-contrast paragraph about virtual learning and face-to-face learning (Structure #2)**

One way that virtual learning and face-to-face learning are different is in the methods students choose to be attentive, *but* they are alike in that student responsibility is a key factor in both. *With* virtual learning, students must clear their study space of distractions and be sure to have reliable Internet connections. *Alternatively*, in face-to-face learning, the study area and Internet connections are already in place and are provided by the school. *However*, in both styles of classes, students have the responsibility to be attentive in order to understand what is happening in the classroom and what is expected as far as readings, lab work, and other outside assignments.

### Problem and Solution

- **Frame for problem-and-solution topic sentence (Structure #1):**

  The issue of (predicament/s or challenging issue/s) _____ was solved/can be solved by (what was done/what should be done) _____.

  The issue of juveniles repeatedly committing crimes can be solved by treating juvenile offenders as adults.

- **Structure #1 for problem-and-solution paragraph about trying juveniles as adults:**

  **an explanation of problem(s), followed by the solution**

  **problem:** number of juveniles committing serious crimes is rising

  **problem:** facilities to which these juveniles are sent have failed to rehabilitate them

  **problem:** youths continue their life of crime

  **solution:** juveniles should be tried as adults

**Model problem-and-solution paragraph about trying juveniles as adults (Structure #1)**

Across the country, the number of juveniles committing serious crimes is rising dramatically. The facilities to which these juveniles are sent have failed to rehabilitate them, *and* a high percentage of the youths continue with their life of crime. Law-abiding citizens of the country, *however*, realize that this situation must change. *By* trying juveniles as adults, the issue of juveniles repeatedly committing crimes can be solved.

- **Frame for problem-and-solution topic sentence (Structure #2):**

  By (what was done/what should be done) _____, the issue of (predicament/s or challenging issue/s) _____ would be solved/was solved.

  By trying juveniles as adults, the issue of juveniles repeatedly committing crimes can be solved.

- **Structure #2 for problem-and-solution paragraph about trying juveniles as adults:**

  **an explanation of a solution, followed by the problems that necessitated it**

  **solution:** juveniles are tried as adults

  **problem:** number of juveniles committing serious crimes is rising

  **problem:** facilities to which these juveniles are sent have failed to rehabilitate them

**problem:** youths continue their life of crime

**Model problem-and-solution paragraph about trying juveniles as adults (Structure #2)**

Juveniles should be tried as adults. Across the country, the number of juveniles committing serious crimes is rising dramatically. The facilities to which these juveniles are sent have failed to rehabilitate them, *though*, and a high percentage of the youths continue with their life of crime. *Because of this lack of success,* law-abiding citizens of the country realize that these problems must be addressed immediately.

### Definition

- **Frame for definition topic sentence:**

  To most people, (subject) is _____; however, it really is _____.

  To most people, a hero is a famous person who is admired or idealized; however, a hero is really anyone who goes out of the way to help others.

- **Structure for definition paragraph:**

  **common definition or denotation:** a famous person who is admired or idealized

  **writer's expanded definition or connotation:** anyone who goes out of the way to help others

  **explanation/examples/details:** healthcare professionals

  **explanation/examples/details:** grocery and convenience store workers

**Model definition paragraph**

To most people, a hero is a famous person who is admired or idealized; however, it really is anyone who goes out of the way to help others. For example, during the pandemic that began in 2020, a number of people with everyday jobs suddenly became heroes. First, the need for healthcare went up sharply, and healthcare professionals worked many overtime hours and risked their lives to diagnose and treat others, with the hope of saving them. Consequently, these people became heroes. Also, because most people stayed at home and restaurants were closed, people purchased more food from grocery stores. Therefore, the people who delivered the food to grocery stores and the essential workers at the grocery stores became heroes to those who depended on their services.



**FIGURE 11.12** Health care workers in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic (credit: "Healthcare workers wearing PPE" by Javed Anees/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

## Checking Validity

After you have completed your paragraphs, check the validity, or soundness, of their logic. To perform this check, begin by assessing the logical connection of your topic sentences to your thesis statement. Because the

topic sentences are the major supporting statements for your thesis, each one should support it. Ask and answer the following questions of each topic sentence:

1. Does this topic sentence reflect the reasoning strategy you are using?
2. Does this topic sentence directly support the thesis statement?
3. Does the topic sentence make a sensible point?
4. What is the topic sentence's purpose? Is it to provide
    - background information;
    - a reason;
    - an illustration;
    - an explanation; or
    - a response to a counterclaim? (See Position Argument: Practicing the Art of Rhetoric for more information about counterclaims.)

If you have trouble answering any of the questions and cannot establish the sentence's validity, consider revising the topic sentence.

Next, check the validity of your body paragraphs' development. To perform this check, copy and paste to a new page one topic sentence and the sentences that develop it. Then, answer these questions on all the major supporting ideas that you develop for each topic sentence:

1. Does this body paragraph reflect the reasoning strategy you are using?
2. Does developing the idea in this body paragraph directly support its topic sentence?
3. Does this idea make a sensible point?
4. What is the purpose of developing this idea? Is it to provide
    - background information;
    - a reason for the topic sentence's claim;
    - an illustration of the topic sentence's point;
    - an explanation of the sentence's point; or
    - evidence demonstrating the topic sentence's point?

If you have trouble answering any of the questions and cannot establish a supporting idea's validity, consider revising or replacing the idea with one that you can logically develop to prove, illustrate, or explain the topic idea.

## Further Reading

The following titles are well-known examples of writings that use the reasoning strategies of analogy, cause and effect, classification and division, comparison and contrast, problem and solution, and definition.

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# Argumentative Research: Enhancing the Art of Rhetoric with Evidence

# 12




**FIGURE 12.1** In 2008, a protestor in London's Parliament Square uses researched evidence to support their claim against the Iraq War (2003–2011). On the sign, the protestor cites several statistics. Numerical data, such as statistics, is evidence that helps persuade an audience. (credit: "Iraq War Protesters in Parliament Square" by ljanderson977/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

**12.1** Introducing Research and Research Evidence
**12.2** Argumentative Research Trailblazer: Samin Nosrat
**12.3** Glance at Genre: Introducing Research as Evidence
**12.4** Annotated Student Sample: "Healthy Diets from Sustainable Sources Can Save the Earth" by Lily Tran
**12.5** Writing Process: Integrating Research
**12.6** Editing Focus: Integrating Sources and Quotations
**12.7** Evaluation: Effectiveness of Research Paper
**12.8** Spotlight on ... Bias in Language and Research
**12.9** Portfolio: Why Facts Matter in Research Argumentation

**INTRODUCTION** The term **research** is used widely and regularly and may have different—sometimes contradictory—meanings. Therefore, it is important to clarify what research is, why it is a key tool for academic success, and how using research-based evidence can enhance a writer's rhetorical abilities and effectiveness.

No matter what academic subjects you study, at some point you will need to conduct research. Although research is an integral part of all disciplines, even those primarily related to art or performance, the product of the research will vary. Even if your coursework does not require formal, documented research, it will, at minimum, include regular **research behaviors**. Every day, whether deciding which movie to watch or

choosing a new technology product, everyone participates in basic, informal research behaviors: a process of seeking information, testing it against other forms of collected information, and analyzing as much "data" as possible before making decisions or being persuaded. Although more formal, the same process applies to academic writing. You may be required to conduct research, gather evidence (data), and present your ideas and findings in a range of genres.

Like all communication, conducting and citing research is rhetorically situated and thus has a **purpose**, the reason or goal for the research; an **audience**, the recipient of the research findings; a **genre**, the structure of reported research; a **stance**, the position, or viewpoint, supported by research; a **context**, the situation in which the research or subject occurs; and a **culture**, the groups of people who share common beliefs and lived experiences, reflected by the author, audience, and subject. Furthermore, the researcher uses effective rhetorical strategies, such as reasoning supported by evidence. Therefore, it is important to match your research to the elements of the **rhetorical situation**, as indicated. For example, for a political science course, you may find that current unrest on campus regarding politics or race functions as a *context* for conducting formal research (through surveys or interviews) on students' responses to that unrest. Your *purpose* might be to provide evidence that supports your *stance* in proposing a change of campus policies. Your *audience* may include university administrators and student representatives. Your *genre* may be a persuasive speech, an article in the student newspaper, a poster, or a public service video. *Cultural elements* include the unrest and its relation to the university environment for both students and faculty. The supporting evidence is the resulting data and analysis from the surveys or interviews. But before you consider how to use evidence in reporting research, it is important to understand the research process itself.

With a focus on the role of evidence collection in research, this chapter presents methods for introducing research as evidence, examines the genre and writing processes associated with argumentative research papers, and addresses the use of unbiased language in creating and reporting effective research.

## 12.1 Introducing Research and Research Evidence

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Articulate how research evidence and sources are key rhetorical concepts in presenting a position or an argument.
- Locate and distinguish between primary and secondary research materials.
- Implement methods and technologies commonly used for research and communication within various fields.

The writing tasks for this chapter and the next two chapters are based on argumentative research. However, not all researched evidence (data) is presented in the same genre. You may need to gather evidence for a poster, a performance, a story, an art exhibit, or even an architectural design. Although the genre may vary, you usually will be required to present a **perspective**, or viewpoint, about a **debatable issue** and persuade readers to support the "validity of your viewpoint," as discussed in Position Argument: Practicing the Art of Rhetoric. Remember, too, that a debatable issue is one that has more than a single perspective and is subject to disagreement.

### The Research Process

Although individual research processes are rhetorically situated, they share some common aspects:

- **Interest.** The researcher has a genuine interest in the topic. It may be difficult to fake curiosity, but it is possible to develop it. Some academic assignments will allow you to pursue issues that are personally important to you; others will require you to dive into the research first and generate interest as you go.
- **Questions.** The researcher asks questions. At first, these questions are general. However, as researchers gain more knowledge, the questions become more sharply focused. No matter what your research

assignment is, begin by articulating questions, find out where the answers lead, and then ask still more questions.

- **Answers.** The researcher seeks answers from people as well as from print and other media. Research projects profit when you ask knowledgeable people, such as librarians and other professionals, to help you answer questions or point you in directions to find answers. Information about research is covered more extensively in Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources.
- **Field research.** The researcher conducts field research. Field research allows researchers not only to ask questions of experts but also to observe and experience directly. It allows researchers to generate original data. No matter how much other people tell you, your knowledge increases through personal observations. In some subject areas, field research is as important as library or database research. This information is covered more extensively in Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information.
- **Examination of texts.** The researcher examines texts. Consulting a broad range of texts—such as magazines, brochures, newspapers, archives, blogs, videos, documentaries, or peer-reviewed journals—is crucial in academic research.
- **Evaluation of sources.** The researcher evaluates sources. As your research progresses, you will double-check information to find out whether it is confirmed by more than one source. In informal research, researchers evaluate sources to ensure that the final decision is satisfactory. Similarly, in academic research, researchers evaluate sources to ensure that the final product is accurate and convincing. Previewed here, this information is covered more extensively in Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information.
- **Writing.** The researcher writes. The writing during the research process can take a range of forms: from notes during library, database, or field work; to journal reflections on the research process; to drafts of the final product. In practical research, writing helps researchers find, remember, and explore information. In academic research, writing is even more important because the results must be reported accurately and thoroughly.
- **Testing and Experimentation.** The researcher tests and experiments. Because opinions vary on debatable topics and because few research topics have correct or incorrect answers, it is important to test and conduct experiments on possible hypotheses or solutions.
- **Synthesis.** The researcher synthesizes. By combining information from various sources, researchers support claims or arrive at new conclusions. When synthesizing, researchers connect evidence and ideas, both original and borrowed. Accumulating, sorting, and synthesizing information enables researchers to consider what evidence to use in support of a thesis and in what ways.
- **Presentation.** The researcher presents findings in an interesting, focused, and well-documented product.

## Types of Research Evidence

Research evidence usually consists of data, which comes from borrowed information that you use to develop your thesis and support your organizational structure and reasoning. This evidence can take a range of forms, depending on the type of research conducted, the audience, and the genre for reporting the research.

### Primary Research Sources

Although precise definitions vary somewhat by discipline, **primary data sources** are generally defined as firsthand accounts, such as texts or other materials produced by someone drawing from direct experience or observation. Primary source documents include, but are not limited to, personal narratives and diaries; eyewitness accounts; interviews; original documents such as treaties, official certificates, and government documents detailing laws or acts; speeches; newspaper coverage of events at the time they occurred; observations; and experiments. Primary source data is, in other words, original and in some way conducted or collected primarily by the researcher. The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources and Compiling Sources for an Annotated Bibliography contain more information on both primary and secondary sources.

### Secondary Research Sources

**Secondary sources**, on the other hand, are considered at least one step removed from the experience. That is, they rely on sources other than direct observation or firsthand experience. Secondary sources include, but are not limited to, most books, articles online or in databases, and textbooks (which are sometimes classified as tertiary sources because, like encyclopedias and other reference works, their primary purpose might be to summarize or otherwise condense information). Secondary sources (https://openstax.org/r/secondarysources1) regularly cite and build upon primary sources to provide perspective and analysis. Effective use of researched evidence usually includes both primary and secondary sources. Works of history, for example, draw on a large range of primary and secondary sources, citing, analyzing, and synthesizing information to present as many perspectives of a past event in as rich and nuanced a way as possible.

It is important to note that the distinction between primary and secondary sources depends in part on their use: that is, the same document can be both a primary source *and* a secondary source. For example, if Scholar X wrote a biography about Artist Y, the biography would be a secondary source about the artist and, at the same time, a primary source about the scholar.

## 12.2 Trailblazer

### Argumentative Research Trailblazer: Samin Nosrat

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify and explain key rhetorical concepts.
- Analyze how authors make claims and support them with evidence in a range of activities outside of academic writing.



**FIGURE 12.2** Fresh produce in markets like this one in France continue to inspire Samin Nosrat (https://openstax.org/r/saminnosrat)'s recipes and ideas about food. (credit: "Légumes" by Arnaud 25/ Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

*"I love doing the homework on recipes and traditions . . . [I'm] excited to . . . read and research."*

Food writer, chef, and TV host Samin Nosrat (b. 1979) was born in San Diego, California, to Iranian parents who, as followers of the Baha'i faith, immigrated to the United States to avoid religious persecution in their

native country. When she was a student at the University of California, Berkeley, Nosrat became interested in cooking after a dinner at Berkeley's well-known Chez Panisse, the restaurant belonging to award-winning chef, author, and food activist Alice Waters (b. 1944). Indeed, Nosrat became so interested that she got a job bussing tables at the restaurant several months later. After a year, she "moved up" to the kitchen, where she became a cook, working with Chez Panisse chef Cal Peternell.

Nosrat is well known for her cookbook *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat: Mastering the Elements of Good Cooking* (2017), which won the prestigious James Beard Award in 2018 and also reached the *New York Times* best seller list that year. In the book, Nosrat claims that "like a scholar in search of primary sources," she wanted "to experience authentic versions of the dishes" she loved. In addition to being a chef and writer, she has hosted an award-winning Netflix docuseries based on her book and until February 2021 was a regular columnist for *The New York Times Magazine*.

The underlying thesis of Nosrat's *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat (https://openstax.org/r/saltfatacid)* is that one should trust their senses in the kitchen, building confidence and developing the knowledge to gain this trust. Nosrat emphasizes an intuitive, elemental approach to cooking. "Anyone can cook anything and make it delicious," Nosrat claims in the book's introduction, establishing that excellent cooking is based on skill in using and balancing the four basic elements named in the title. She found solid evidence for this stance in Japan, where the cuisine features salt; in Italy, where the cuisine features fat; in Mexico, where the cuisine features acid; and in California, where the cuisine features heat. Nosrat explains these four elements in detail and supports her premise with research, interviews, and internships with talented cooks in different countries.

When talking about her television show, Nosrat says, "Good food around the world is more similar than it is different." She considers how the chemistry and the culture of cooking work together around the world to create universally good food and, at the same time, create empathy and common ground.

Nosrat's audience can thus discern a persuasive purpose to her research into cooking. She argues that in addition to food, cooking is about people, and she hopes that by eating the food of a particular culture, readers and viewers will develop compassion for the people of that culture, despite politics or history. Seeking answers to important questions, Nosrat asks, "Does [food] really matter? Can food make a difference?"

As she continues her mission of research and writing, Nosrat feels the responsibility of her calling: to provide greater cross-cultural understanding and to center minoritized voices and traditions. She wants readers to feel safe inside her book, supported by the context she provides and her sensitivity to culture.

## Discussion Questions

1. Consider the rhetorical situation: In what ways does Samin Nosrat's writing respond to purpose, audience, genre, stance, culture, and context?
2. In what ways does Nosrat aim to make the cookbook genre persuasive or argumentative?
3. What is Nosrat's claim in *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*?
4. In what ways does Nosrat present reasoning and evidence?
5. In what ways does Nosrat use research to support her claim?

## 12.3 Glance at Genre: Introducing Research as Evidence

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify key terms and characteristics of evidence-based research writing.
- Participate effectively in a continuing scholarly conversation by synthesizing research and discussing it with others.
- Identify and analyze genre conventions as shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.

Good writing satisfies audience expectations in genre, style, and content. Similarly, careful research, conducted according to the scope and method of each discipline, is a precondition of good research writing. In the humanities, research usually focuses on texts, individual ideas, speculations, insights, and imaginative connections. On the other hand, research in the social and physical sciences tends to focus on data and ideas that can be verified through observation, measurement, and testing. However, regardless of differences in disciplines and preferences of varying audiences, certain principles of research, writing, and supporting a position hold true across the curriculum.

### The Genre of Research: Joining Scholarly Conversations

Conducting research on topics about which you have limited knowledge can be intimidating. To feel more comfortable with research, you can think of it as participating in a scholarly conversation, with the understanding that all knowledge on a particular subject is connected. Even if you discover only a small amount of information on your topic, the conversations around it may have begun long before you were born and may continue beyond your lifetime. Your involvement with the topic is your way of entering a conversation with other students and scholars at this time, as you discuss and synthesize information. After you leave the conversation, or finish your research, others are likely to pick it up again.



**FIGURE 12.3** Students participate in scholarly conversations as they share their ideas and research. (credit: "Visitas - SMAC - Volta Redonda, RJ" by maistelecentros/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

What you find through research helps you provide solid evidence that empowers you to add productively to the conversation. Thinking of research in this way means understanding the connections among your topic, your course materials, and larger historical, social, political, and economic contexts and themes. Understanding such connectedness begins with choosing your topic and continues through all phases of your research.

### Key Terms in Research Writing

These are key terms and characteristics of evidence-based research writing:

- **Citation.** When reporting research, writers use citations to acknowledge and give credit for all borrowed materials. Citation also strengthens the credibility, or ethos, of the researcher. Citations always have two parts. Internal citations are short references that lead readers to more detailed information about how to find the sources. External citations are the entries listed, with publishing information, on the Works Cited or References page of the paper. Formatting of both internal and external citations is disciplinary specific. See the Handbook for specific information about MLA Documentation and Format and APA Documentation and Format.
- **claim.** Claims are the points you make in your report. They are based on and supported by research and evidence.
- **Counterclaims.** When it comes to research, the counterclaim is the writer's thoughtful consideration and addressing of the other side's objections to claims made or even to the topic itself. Counterclaims may need to be supported by further research and evidence.
- **Evidence.** Within the genre of research, evidence is either findings from original research or, more often, borrowed information that helps you develop your thesis and support your organizational structure and line of reasoning.
- **Field research.** Field research is basically primary research you conduct through observation or experimentation. Depending on your research question, you may need to seek answers by visiting museums or businesses, attending concerts, conducting interviews, observing classrooms or professionals at work, performing experiments, or following leads. Field research is covered extensively in Research Process: How to Create Sources.
- **Research question.** Your research question dictates your general line or lines of inquiry that ultimately guide your research. In developing your research question(s), you are narrowing the scope of your topic. Your research question(s) will come from the purpose of your research, the audience of your research product, and the genre for reporting your research.
- **Thesis.** The thesis is the claim, position, or hypothesis by which you attempt to answer your formulated research question(s).
- **Reasoning.** Similar to an argumentative essay, the line of reasoning in a research essay, report, or presentation is the organizational arrangement of the supports and evidence that back up your thesis.
- **Topic.** The topic is the general subject or content area of your research. Strong topics are usually those that involve some controversy or debate. Topics that are not debatable or have no nuanced perspectives do not make for strong research questions or lines of inquiry.

## 12.4 Annotated Student Sample: "Healthy Diets from Sustainable Sources Can Save the Earth" by Lily Tran

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Analyze how writers use evidence in research writing.
- Analyze the ways a writer incorporates sources into research writing, while retaining their own voice.
- Explain the use of headings as organizational tools in research writing.
- Analyze how writers use evidence to address counterarguments when writing a research essay.

### Introduction

In this argumentative research essay for a first-year composition class, student Lily Tran creates a solid, focused argument and supports it with researched evidence. Throughout the essay, she uses this evidence to support cause-and-effect and problem-solution reasoning, make strong appeals, and develop her ethos on the topic.

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### Food as Change

> For the human race to have a sustainable future, massive changes in the way food is produced, processed, and distributed are necessary on a global scale.

***Purpose.*** *Lily Tran refers to what she sees as the general purpose for writing this paper: the problem of current global practices in food production, processing, and distribution. By presenting the "problem," she immediately prepares readers for her proposed solution.*

> The required changes will affect nearly all aspects of life, including not only world hunger but also health and welfare, land use and habitats, water quality and availability, energy use and production, greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, economics, and even cultural and social values. These changes may not be popular, but they are imperative. The human race must turn to sustainable food systems that provide healthy diets with minimal environmental impact—and starting now.

***Thesis.*** *Leading up to this clear, declarative thesis statement are key points on which Tran will expand later. In doing this, she presents some foundational evidence that connects the problem to the proposed solution.*

### THE COMING FOOD CRISIS

> The world population has been rising exponentially in modern history. From 1 billion in 1804, it doubled to approximately 2 billion by 1927, then doubled again to approximately 4 billion in 1974. By 2019, it had nearly doubled again, rising to 7.7 billion ("World Population by Year"). It has been projected to reach nearly 10 billion by 2050 (Berners-Lee et al.). At the same time, the average life span also has been increasing. These situations have led to severe stress on the environment, particularly in the demands for food. It has been estimated, for example, that by 2050, milk production will increase 58 percent and meat production 73 percent (Chai et al.).

***Evidence.*** *In this first supporting paragraph, Tran uses numerical evidence from several sources. This numerical data as evidence helps establish the projection of population growth. By beginning with such evidence, Tran underscores the severity of the situation.*

> Theoretically, the planet can produce enough food for everyone, but human activities have endangered this capability through unsustainable practices. Currently, agriculture produces 10–23 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Greenhouse gases—the most common being carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and water vapor— trap heat in the atmosphere, reradiate it, and send it back to Earth again. Heat trapped in the atmosphere is a problem because it causes unnatural global warming as well as air pollution, extreme weather conditions, and respiratory diseases.

***Audience.*** *With her audience in mind, Tran briefly explains the problem of greenhouse gases and global warming.*

> It has been estimated that global greenhouse gas emissions will increase by as much as 150 percent by 2030 (Chai et al.). Transportation also has a negative effect on the environment when foods are shipped around the world. As Joseph Poore of the University of Oxford commented, "It's essential to be mindful about everything we consume: air-transported fruit and veg can create more greenhouse gas emissions per kilogram than poultry meat, for example" (qtd. in Gray).

***Transition.*** *By beginning this paragraph with her own transition of ideas, Tran establishes control over the organization and development of ideas. Thus, she retains her sources as supports and does not allow them to dominate her essay.*

> Current practices have affected the nutritional value of foods. Concentrated animal-feeding operations, intended to increase production, have had the side effect of decreasing nutritional content in animal protein and increasing saturated fat. One study found that an intensively raised chicken in 2017 contained only one-sixth of the amount of omega-3 fatty acid, an essential nutrient, that was in a chicken in 1970. Today the majority of calories in chicken come from fat rather than protein (World Wildlife Fund).

***Example.*** *By focusing on an example (chicken), Tran uses specific research data to develop the nuance of the argument.*

> Current policies such as government subsidies that divert food to biofuels are counterproductive to the goal of achieving adequate global nutrition. Some trade policies allow "dumping" of below-cost, subsidized foods on developing countries that should instead be enabled to protect their farmers and meet their own nutritional needs (Sierra Club). Too often, agriculture's objectives are geared toward maximizing quantities produced per acre rather than optimizing output of critical nutritional needs and protection of the environment.

## AREAS OF CONCERN

### Hunger and Nutrition

***Headings and Subheadings.*** *Throughout the essay, Tran has created headings and subheadings to help organize her argument and clarify it for readers.*

> More than 820 million people around the world do not have enough to eat. At the same time, about a third of all grains and almost two-thirds of all soybeans, maize, and barley crops are fed to animals (Barnard). According to the World Health Organization, 462 million adults are underweight, 47 million children under 5 years of age are underweight for their height, 14.3 million are severely underweight for their height, and 144 million are stunted ("Malnutrition"). About 45 percent of mortality among children under 5 is linked to undernutrition. These deaths occur mainly in low- and middle-income countries where, in stark contrast, the rate of childhood obesity is rising. Globally, 1.9 billion adults and 38.3 million children are overweight or obese ("Obesity"). Undernutrition and obesity can be found in the same household, largely a result of eating energy-dense foods that are high in fat and sugars. The global impact of malnutrition, which includes both undernutrition and obesity, has lasting developmental, economic, social, and medical consequences.

> In 2019, Berners-Lee et al. published the results of their quantitative analysis of global and regional food supply. They determined that significant changes are needed on four fronts:
>
> Food production must be sufficient, in quantity and quality, to feed the global population without unacceptable environmental impacts. Food distribution must be sufficiently efficient so that a diverse range of foods containing adequate nutrition is available to all, again without unacceptable environmental impacts. Socio-economic conditions must be sufficiently equitable so that all consumers can access the quantity and range of foods needed for a healthy diet. Consumers need to be able to make informed and rational choices so that they consume a healthy and environmentally sustainable diet (10).

***Block Quote.*** *The writer has chosen to present important evidence as a direct quotation, using the correct format for direct quotations longer than four lines. See Section Editing Focus: Integrating Sources and Quotations for more information about block quotes.*

> Among their findings, they singled out, in particular, the practice of using human-edible crops to produce meat, dairy, and fish for the human table. Currently 34 percent of human-edible crops are fed to animals, a practice that reduces calorie and protein supplies. They state in their report, "If society continues on a 'business-as-usual' dietary trajectory, a 119% increase in edible crops grown will be required by 2050" (1). Future food production and distribution must be transformed into systems that are nutritionally adequate, environmentally sound, and economically affordable.

**Land and Water Use**

> Agriculture occupies 40 percent of Earth's ice-free land mass (Barnard). While the net area used for producing food has been fairly constant since the mid-20th century, the locations have shifted significantly. Temperate regions of North America, Europe, and Russia have lost agricultural land to other uses, while in the tropics, agricultural land has expanded, mainly as a result of clearing forests and burning biomass (Willett et al.). Seventy percent of the rainforest that has been cut down is being used to graze livestock (Münter). Agricultural use of water is of critical concern both quantitatively and qualitatively. Agriculture accounts for about 70 percent of freshwater use, making it "the world's largest water-consuming sector" (Barnard). Meat, dairy, and egg production causes water pollution, as liquid wastes flow into rivers and to the ocean (World Wildlife Fund and Knorr Foods). According to the Hertwich et al., "the impacts related to these activities are unlikely to be reduced, but rather enhanced, in a business-as-usual scenario for the future" (13).

***Statistical Data.*** *To develop her points related to land and water use, Tran presents specific statistical data throughout this section. Notice that she has chosen only the needed words of these key points to ensure that she controls the development of the supporting point and does not overuse borrowed source material.*

***Defining Terms.*** *Aware of her audience, Tran defines monocropping, a term that may be unfamiliar.*

> Earth's resources and ability to absorb pollution are limited, and many current agricultural practices undermine these capacities. Among these unsustainable practices are monocropping [growing a single crop year after year on the same land], concentrated animal-feeding operations, and overdependence on manufactured pesticides and fertilizers (Hamilton). Such practices deplete the soil, dramatically increase energy use, reduce pollinator populations, and lead to the collapse of resource supplies. One study found that producing one gram of beef for human consumption requires 42 times more land, 2 times more water, and 4 times more nitrogen than staple crops. It also creates 3 times more greenhouse gas emissions (Chai et al.). The EAT–*Lancet* Commission calls for "halting expansion of new agricultural land at the expense of natural ecosystems . . . strict protections on intact ecosystems, suspending concessions for logging in protected areas, or conversion of remaining intact ecosystems, particularly peatlands and forest areas" (Willett et al. 481). The Commission also calls for land-use zoning, regulations prohibiting land clearing, and incentives for protecting natural areas, including forests.

***Synthesis.*** *The paragraphs above and below this comment show how Tran has synthesized content from several sources to help establish and reinforce key supports of her essay.*

**Greenhouse Gas and Climate Change**

> Climate change is heavily affected by two factors: greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration. In nature, the two remain in balance; for example, most animals exhale carbon dioxide, and most plants capture carbon dioxide. Carbon is also captured, or sequestered, by soil and water, especially oceans, in what are called "sinks." Human activities have skewed this balance over the past two centuries. The shift in land use, which exploits land, water, and fossil energy, has caused increased greenhouse-gas emissions, which in turn accelerate climate change.

> Global food systems are threatened by climate change because farmers depend on relatively stable climate systems to plan for production and harvest. Yet food production is responsible for up to 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions (Barnard). While soil can be a highly effective means of carbon sequestration, agricultural soils have lost much of their effectiveness from overgrazing, erosion, overuse of chemical fertilizer, and excess tilling. Hamilton reports that the world's cultivated and grazed soils have lost 50 to 70 percent of their ability to accumulate and store carbon. As a result, "billions of tons of carbon have been released into the atmosphere."

***Direct Quotation and Paraphrase.*** *While Tran has paraphrased some content of this source borrowing, because of the specificity and impact of the number— "billions of tons of carbon"—she has chosen to use the author's original words. As she has done elsewhere in the essay, she has indicated these as directly borrowed words by placing them*

*within quotation marks. See Section 12.5 for more about paraphrasing.*

> While carbon sequestration has been falling, greenhouse gas emissions have been increasing as a result of the production, transport, processing, storage, waste disposal, and other life stages of food production. Agriculture alone is responsible for fully 10 to 12 percent of global emissions, and that figure is estimated to rise by up to 150 percent of current levels by 2030 (Chai et al.). Münter reports that "more greenhouse gas emissions are produced by growing livestock for meat than all the planes, trains, ships, cars, trucks, and all forms of fossil fuel-based transportation combined" (5). Additional greenhouse gases, methane and nitrous oxide, are produced by the decomposition of organic wastes. Methane has 25 times and nitrous oxide has nearly 300 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide (Curnow). Agricultural and food production systems must be reformed to shift agriculture from greenhouse gas source to sink.

**Social and Cultural Values**

> As the Sierra Club has pointed out, agriculture is inherently cultural: all systems of food production have "the capacity to generate . . . economic benefits and ecological capital" as well as "a sense of meaning and connection to natural resources." Yet this connection is more evident in some cultures and less so in others. Wealthy countries built on a consumer culture emphasize excess consumption. One result of this attitude is that in 2014, Americans discarded the equivalent of $165 billion worth of food. Much of this waste ended up rotting in landfills, comprised the single largest component of U.S. municipal solid waste, and contributed a substantial portion of U.S. methane emissions (Sierra Club). In low- and middle-income countries, food waste tends to occur in early production stages because of poor scheduling of harvests, improper handling of produce, or lack of market access (Willett et al.). The recent "America First" philosophy has encouraged prioritizing the economic welfare of one nation to the detriment of global welfare and sustainability.

***Synthesis and Response to Claims.*** *Here, as in subsequent sections, while still relying heavily on facts and content from borrowed sources, Tran provides her synthesized understanding of the information by responding to key points.*

> In response to claims that a vegetarian diet is a necessary component of sustainable food production and consumption, Lusk and Norwood determined the importance of meat in a consumer's diet. Their study indicated that meat is the most valuable food category to consumers, and "humans derive great pleasure from consuming beef, pork, and poultry" (120). Currently only 4 percent of Americans are vegetarians, and it would be difficult to convince consumers to change their eating habits. Purdy adds "there's the issue of philosophy. A lot of vegans aren't in the business of avoiding animal products for the sake of land sustainability. Many would prefer to just leave animal husbandry out of food altogether."

> At the same time, consumers expect ready availability of the foods they desire, regardless of health implications or sustainability of sources. Unhealthy and unsustainable foods are heavily marketed. Out-of-season produce is imported year-round, increasing carbon emissions from air transportation. Highly processed and packaged convenience foods are nutritionally inferior and waste both energy and packaging materials. Serving sizes are larger than necessary, contributing to overconsumption and obesity. Snack food vending machines are ubiquitous in schools and public buildings. What is needed is a widespread attitude shift toward reducing waste, choosing local fruits and vegetables that are in season, and paying attention to how foods are grown and transported.

***Thesis Restated.*** *Restating her thesis, Tran ends this section by advocating for a change in attitude to bring about sustainability.*

## DISSENTING OPINIONS

***Counterclaims.*** *Tran uses equally strong research to present the counterargument. Presenting both sides by addressing objections is important in constructing a clear, well-reasoned argument. Writers should use as much rigor in finding research-based evidence to counter the opposition as they do to develop their argument.*

> Transformation of the food production system faces resistance for a number of reasons, most of which dispute the need for plant-based diets. Historically, meat has been considered integral to athletes' diets and thus has caused many consumers to believe meat is necessary for a healthy diet. Lynch et al. examined the impact of plant-based diets on human physical health, environmental sustainability, and exercise performance capacity. The results show "it is unlikely that plant-based diets provide advantages, but do not suffer from disadvantages, compared to omnivorous diets for strength, anaerobic, or aerobic exercise performance" (1).

> A second objection addresses the claim that land use for animal-based food production contributes to pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and is inefficient in terms of nutrient delivery. Berners-Lee et al. point out that animal nutrition from grass, pasture, and silage comes partially from land that cannot be used for other purposes, such as producing food directly edible by humans or for other ecosystem services such as biofuel production. Consequently, nutritional losses from such land use do not fully translate into losses of human-available nutrients (3).

***Paraphrase.*** *Tran has paraphrased the information as support. Though she still cites the source, she has changed the words to her own, most likely to condense a larger amount of original text or to make it more accessible.*

> While this objection may be correct, it does not address the fact that natural carbon sinks are being destroyed to increase agricultural land and, therefore, increase greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere.

> Another significant dissenting opinion is that transforming food production will place hardships on farmers and others employed in the food industry. Farmers and ranchers make a major investment in their own operations. At the same time, they support jobs in related industries, as consumers of farm machinery, customers at local businesses, and suppliers for other industries such as food processing (Schulz). Sparks reports that "livestock farmers are being unfairly 'demonized' by vegans and environmental advocates" and argues that while farming includes both costs and benefits, the costs receive much more attention than the benefits.

## FUTURE GENERATIONS

> The EAT–*Lancet* Commission calls for a transformation in the global food system, implementing different core processes and feedback. This transformation will not happen unless there is "widespread, multi-sector, multilevel action to change what food is eaten, how it is produced, and its effects on the environment and health, while providing healthy diets for the global population" (Willett et al. 476). System changes will require global efforts coordinated across all levels and will require governments, the private sector, and civil society to share a common vision and goals. Scientific modeling indicates 10 billion people could indeed be fed a healthy and sustainable diet.

***Conclusion.*** *While still using research-based sources as evidence in the concluding section, Tran finishes with her own words, restating her thesis.*

> For the human race to have a sustainable future, massive changes in the way food is produced, processed, and distributed are necessary on a global scale. The required changes will affect nearly all aspects of life, including not only world hunger but also health and welfare, land use and habitats, water quality and availability, energy use and production, greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, economics, and even cultural and social values. These changes may not be popular, but they are imperative. They are also achievable. The human race must turn to sustainable food systems that provide healthy diets with minimal environmental impact, starting now.

***Sources.*** *Note two important aspects of the sources chosen: 1) They represent a range of perspectives, and 2) They are all quite current. When exploring a contemporary topic, it is important to avoid research that is out of date.*

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### Discussion Questions

1. In the second paragraph, what role does statistical data as evidence play in helping Lily Tran develop the thesis? What other evidence would be effective in achieving this goal?
2. In the second paragraph of the section "The Coming Food Crisis," how does Tran use research evidence to provide an understanding of key concepts?
3. By reviewing the organizational tools of headings and subheadings, diagram or outline the development of Tran's argument.
4. Locate places where Tran incorporates research evidence into her own ideas or words through summary or paraphrase. How do these examples differ from the block quote under "Areas of Concern"? Is one method more or less effective in establishing ethos, or credibility, for the writer? Why or why not?
5. How convincing is Tran's use of evidence in addressing counterclaims? Explain your answer.

## 12.5 Writing Process: Integrating Research

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify characteristics of and formulate a strong thesis.
- Evaluate sources to decide what to include in a research essay.
- Synthesize information from outside sources with your own ideas in research writing while retaining a writerly voice.
- Distinguish between a quotation, summary, and paraphrase and use each appropriately.
- Draft an argumentative research essay.
- Experience the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.
- Give and act on productive feedback to works in progress.

With a clearer understanding of how to work with sources to support and develop your position, you are just about ready to join the conversation and begin a research writing project of your own. The rest of this chapter will guide you through the process.

### Summary of Assignment

For this assignment, you will write an argumentative research essay in which you take a position on a food-based topic. The objective in developing this essay is to explore a topic, concept, or question with which you may be unfamiliar or about which you want to know more. As a first step, creating a list of possible topics will allow you to consider the range of possibilities. Consider the following, for example:

- Health aspects of caffeine or alcohol
- Vegetarian diets
- Eating disorders
- Food shortages
- School lunches

Next, formulating a research question will help you consider the scope of your essay by providing guidelines to follow in your research. Consider the following, for example:

- Is the long-term but limited consumption of caffeine or alcohol (red wine, for example) healthy or unhealthy for the body? Why?
- What are the environmental benefits of a vegetarian diet?
- What are the causes of eating disorders, and how can they be circumvented?
- What can be done to alleviate food shortages in a particular country?
- What is the school's responsibility in providing students with nutrition?

As you explore possible topics and develop your focus for the paper, consider significant points of contention—that is, their debatable nature: perhaps an important viewpoint that has not been widely addressed or a perspective that has not adequately been explored. Your thesis-driven essay should follow these criteria:

- 10–12 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font (standard one-inch margins)
- 8–10 sources (reflecting a range of primary and secondary sources, both print and digital)
- MLA or APA documentation (in-text and end-of-text citation) as assigned by your instructor

You will synthesize the information you discover during your research to make connections about the potential significance of your topic for your audience and for further inquiry. You will develop your essay on the basis of thorough research of multiple sources and full analysis of your findings. Use sources as evidence to support, contradict, or expand your original ideas or thinking. Be sure to include extensive analysis or evaluation regarding your research question.

***Another Lens 1.*** It can be challenging to come up with topics for your research paper; however, because research can often be a collaborative activity (several people researching different aspects of a topic to collaboratively write a report), brainstorming possible topics with others can help you get started.

To collaborate, form a small group, and list five possible topics on a sheet of paper or your laptop. Leave space under each topic for comments, ideas, and questions. After everyone has completed their list of topics, either move the paper or rotate seats every 10 minutes to allow group members to provide comments, ideas, and questions for all topic lists. If four people are in your group, you would provide comments, ideas, and question for three other group members, as you too will receive the same.

***Another Lens 2.*** Be as creative and inclusive as possible when thinking about topics and data source materials. Making a list of all possible nontraditional sources that could inform your topic may help you provide another lens. Or consider the varying viewpoints from which to explore your topic. While the Annotated Student Sample includes a range of traditionally academic sources, it might be interesting to consider possible nontraditional sources for researching a food- and culture-based topic. For example, consider these as primary sources: cookbooks, food blogs, or cultural festivals at which foods are included. If possible, consider doing field research, such as conducting interviews or observing professionals on site. As you choose your topic and begin your research process, keep an open mind about ways to use a variety of sources to approach your topic in different ways.

***Another Lens 3.*** Consider working in pairs in which each partner researches and writes on an opposing view of a single debatable issue. After researching and writing the papers as instructed, partners can set up a debate or panel discussion in which each presents their views on the subject, offering supporting evidence from their papers. Partners may want to enhance their presentations with PowerPoint or other media, including graphics, other visuals, or even sound, once again using or building further on researched evidence.

## Quick Launch: Thesis Frames

The most specific way to define the scope and focus of your research paper—and, as a writer, to control the thought and creativity of it—is through the *position* you take on the topic: your **stance**, or thesis. A thesis statement is often (though not always) a single, clear, and concise sentence that reveals your stance early in the essay. Keep in mind, though, that it is *not* the essay question restated, a topic statement, an assertion of fact, or a step-by-step writing plan. Strong academic writing generally shows the thesis in the introductory section and then returns to it throughout, allowing readers to understand the writer's purpose and stance. To use a travel analogy, your thesis tells readers where you are going and why the journey matters.

As you are composing your essay, the thesis serves as a touchstone to help you determine what material is pertinent. Keeping your thesis in mind as you draft is important to ensure that your reasoning and supporting evidence are focused and relevant. A strong thesis also provides a way to measure how successful you have been in achieving your purpose—in travel terms again, it lets you judge whether you have reached your destination and explained the journey's meaning. See Writing Process: Thinking Critically About Rhetoric for more information about thesis statements.

Review the Annotated Student Sample to follow the way Lily Tran presents her thesis: "The human race must turn to sustainable food systems that provide healthy diets with minimal environmental impact, starting now." *What works? What doesn't? What can you learn from her for your own writing?*

Remember that as your topic and ideas develop, you may need to revisit your thesis statement. One good practice in writing is to revisit the thesis after completing your draft to ensure the thesis reflects the content and focus of your paper. If it does not align with the content, readers may think that you set yourself one task but completed another. If this disconnect occurs, it's time to revise the thesis or content accordingly.

To develop a working thesis for your argumentative research paper, try using one of these frames. You may change the phrasing as needed to support your ideas.

- Because _____, [someone] should _____.
- _____ saves _____, reduces _____, and saves _____.
- The lack of _____ shows _____.
- _____ influences _____ and by extension _____.
- _____ accurately (inaccurately) portrays _____ because _____.
- _____ is a result of _____, _____, and _____.
- Although some argue that _____, a close examination shows _____.
- _____ and _____ prove that _____.

## Drafting: Working with Sources

When writing an argumentative research essay, you will need to draw on *other* people's research to support *your* original thinking. Such a proposition may seem complicated and even contradictory.

| Your argumentative research essay writing assignment may require that you ... | While also ... |
|---|---|
| develop a topic based on what has already been said and written | writing something new and original. |
| rely on experts' and authorities' opinions and facts to support your ideas | engaging with the borrowed materials by improving upon or disagreeing with those same opinions. |

**TABLE 12.1**

| Your argumentative research essay writing assignment may require that you ... | While also ... |
|---|---|
| attribute credit meticulously to previous researchers | finding a way to develop your own significant contribution. |
| adapt your language to fit the discipline of your topic by building upon what you hear and read | finding a way to incorporate your own words and your own voice. |

**TABLE 12.1**

You can meet these writing requirements through planning and organization. The following information is designed to help you simplify the steps.

### Don't Skip the Outline

Take the time to outline each body paragraph. Compose a working topic sentence, and choose a reasoning strategy or strategies. Then, in a paragraph outline organizer like the one presented in Table 12.2, list the researched evidence you will use in the paragraph to support your topic sentence and related thesis. Model your entry on the first entry by Lily Tran. Be sure to include the in-text citation in the evidence column. Add more rows as needed.

**Working Thesis:** The human race must turn to sustainable food systems that provide healthy diets with minimal environmental impact, starting now.

| Topic Sentence | Reasoning Strategy | Supporting Researched Evidence |
|---|---|---|
| Global food systems are threatened by climate change because farmers depend on relatively stable climate systems to plan for production and harvest. | Cause and effect | Yet food production is responsible for up to 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions (Barnard). |

**TABLE 12.2** Paragraph outline organizer

### Summary vs. Synthesis

In a research essay, you may incorporate borrowed material through synthesis, summary, quotation, or paraphrase. Because research writing is more than cutting and pasting together other people's ideas, good writers synthesize the material they use by looking for connections among sources to develop their own arguments. Summary—or a brief review of main points—is a necessary foundation for synthesis, but it is important to avoid constructing an essay simply on a series of summaries. Part of developing your own voice and control over your essay stems from your decision about which supports you use and why. You do not want sources to override your ideas. Remember, sources provide evidence for *your* thesis.

Table 12.3 shows some key differences between summary and synthesis:

| Summary | Synthesis |
|---|---|
| Demonstrates comprehension/understanding | Demonstrates critical/creative thinking and insight |
| Collects information | Compares/contrasts information |
| Restates key points | Interprets key points to make new meaning |
| Looks within a text | Looks for connections/relationships between texts |
| Treats sources as distinct entities | Combines bits and pieces of sources for specific purpose |
| Provides overview of content | Interprets content |
| Requires basic reading and thinking skills | Requires complex reading and thinking skills |

**TABLE 12.3** Summary vs. synthesis

Notice how Lily Tran synthesizes information in her work, combining sources to respond to a claim and adding her own views in the second paragraph:

> In response to claims that a vegetarian diet is a necessary component of sustainable food production and consumption, Lusk and Norwood determined the importance of meat in a consumer's diet. Their study indicated that meat is the most valuable food category to consumers, and "humans derive great pleasure from consuming beef, pork, and poultry" (120). Currently only 4 percent of Americans are vegetarians, and it would be difficult to convince consumers to change their eating habits. Purdy adds "there's the issue of philosophy. A lot of vegans aren't in the business of avoiding animal products for the sake of land sustainability. Many would prefer to just leave animal husbandry out of food altogether."

> At the same time, consumers expect ready availability of the foods they desire, regardless of health implications or sustainability of sources. Unhealthy and unsustainable foods are heavily marketed. Out-of-season produce is imported year-round, increasing carbon emissions from air transportation. Highly processed and packaged convenience foods are nutritionally inferior and waste both energy and packaging materials. Serving sizes are larger than necessary, contributing to overconsumption and obesity. Snack food vending machines are ubiquitous in schools and public buildings. What is needed is a widespread attitude shift toward reducing waste, choosing local fruits and vegetables that are in season, and paying attention to how foods are grown and transported.

### Quoting vs. Paraphrasing

One of the most common ways to use sources is by incorporating other people's words into your work. Students who are unsure about their writing sometimes overuse quotations, creating a patchwork essay of other people's voices, because they may lack confidence about using their own words. However, one key point to remember is not to allow your sources to drown out your own voice. As a writer, you can avoid overreliance on others' words by being strategic about the quotations you include and by incorporating your own explanations and analysis for the quotations that you do include. Always explain or analyze your quotations; they do not speak for themselves.

For example, Lily Tran does this kind of analysis in the following paragraph. In the first three sentences, she paraphrases and quotes from the source. In the final sentence, she looks at the implications and relates the evidence to her thesis.

> Among their findings, they singled out, in particular, the practice of using human-edible crops to produce meat, dairy, and fish for the human table. Currently 34 percent of human-edible crops are fed to animals, a practice that reduces calorie and protein supplies. They state in their report, "If society continues on a 'business-as-usual' dietary trajectory, a 119% increase in edible crops grown will be required by 2050" (1). Future food production and distribution must be transformed into systems that are nutritionally adequate, environmentally sound, and economically affordable.

A crucial skill you will develop as you practice writing is the ability to judge when to quote directly and when to paraphrase. You have no doubt used direct quotations in your writing, repeating someone else's words verbatim within your paper and placing them within quotation marks, "like this." Another way to incorporate borrowed ideas into your writing is to **paraphrase** them, or restate them in your own words. If the ideas you want to borrow are particularly long, complicated, or filled with jargon, consider paraphrasing for brevity or clarity. Paraphrasing also allows you to maintain your own voice, keeping the writing style and language as consistent as possible—a benefit especially when you draw on multiple sources at once.

Table 12.4 reviews the differences between quoting and paraphrasing and when to use each.

| Quotation | Paraphrase |
|---|---|
| The borrowing must be identical to the original, comprising a narrow segment of the source. The quoted material must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author. | The idea or concept borrowed from a passage is rephrased in your own words. A paraphrase must be attributed to the original source. Paraphrased material may (or may not) be shorter than the original passage, depending on the text. If any language used is the same as the language of the original source, then you are quoting, not paraphrasing. It is sometimes necessary in a paraphrase to use words directly from the borrowed material to account for technical or discipline-specific language. In such instances, place the directly quoted words within quotation marks. |
| **Use a quotation ...**<br>• to support your definition of a new or unfamiliar term or phrase<br>• when you want to distance yourself from the original source by quoting it to make clear that the statement is not your own<br>• to show that an expert or authority supports your position<br>• to provide factual evidence for a claim<br>• to include historically significant language<br>• when a source presents an idea in a particularly striking, moving, or unique way<br>• to serve as a passage for analysis, comment, or critique; for example, to set out a position with which you intend to agree or disagree | **Use a paraphrase ...**<br>• if a quotation would break the flow of your paper (Too many quotations can make an essay sound choppy and difficult to follow.)<br>• to communicate statistics and numerical data<br>• when combining information from a source with your own analysis or other data (synthesizing)<br>• when what you want from your source is the idea**,** not the language that expresses it<br>• if you can state the point of the material more succinctly by eliminating irrelevant information and not alter the meaning of the passage<br>• to explain or simplify a passage that may be difficult to understand |

**TABLE 12.4** When to quote and when to paraphrase

Although quoting can be more straightforward, consider these suggestions when paraphrasing:

- Focus on ideas and on understanding the paper or passage as a whole rather than skimming for specific phrases.
- Put the original text aside when you write so that it doesn't overly influence you.
- Restructure the idea to reflect the way *your* brain works.
- Change the words so that the paraphrase reflects your language and tone. Think about how you would explain the idea to someone unfamiliar with your subject (your mother, your roommate, your sister).

Here is an example of how Lily Tran combines paraphrase and quotation:

> Global food systems are threatened by climate change because farmers depend on relatively stable climate systems to plan for production and harvest. Yet food production is responsible for up to 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions (Barnard). While soil can be a highly effective means of carbon sequestration, agricultural soils have lost much of their effectiveness from overgrazing, erosion, overuse of chemical fertilizer, and excess tilling. Hamilton reports that the world's cultivated and grazed soils have lost 50 to 70 percent of their ability to accumulate and store carbon. As a result, "billions of tons of carbon have been released into the atmosphere."

For more information on quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing, visit Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) (https://openstax.org/r/purdueOWL).

### Opening and Closing

Lead your argumentative research essay with your best punch. Make your opening so strong your reader feels compelled to continue. Make your closing so memorable your reader can't forget it. Because readers pay special attention to openings and closings, make these sections work for you. Start with a title and lead paragraph that grab readers' attention and alert them to what is to come. End with closings that sum up and reinforce where readers have been. Choose from the menu of options presented in Table 12.5 as you draft your essay. You may want to write more than one opening and closing and then ask your peer conference partner to give feedback about their preference and why they have that preference.

| Opening Strategies | Closing Strategies |
|---|---|
| Describe a related conflict. | |
| Explain the evolution of your thesis. | Provide the answer to your research question. |
| Provide a related anecdote. | Return to the scene set by the opening. |
| Start with a sensory detail. | Resolve the problem you have explored. |
| Introduce a related quotation. | Make a recommendation or a call to action. |
| Shock readers with a statistic. | Speculate about the future with regard to the issue. |
| Ask a rhetorical question. | Revisit your thesis. |
| Present the chronology of the issue. | Leave readers with an insightful thought to ponder. |
| End with your thesis. | |

**TABLE 12.5** Writing menu

Look again at the way Lily Tran begins her essay by explaining the evolution of her thesis. *Is it effective in grabbing your attention? Why or why not? What are some other strategies that she might have used?*

> For the human race to have a sustainable future, massive changes in the way food is produced, processed, and distributed are necessary on a global scale. The required changes will affect nearly all aspects of life, including not only world hunger but also health and welfare, land use and habitats, water quality and availability, energy use and production, greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, economics, and even cultural and social values. These changes may not be popular, but they are imperative. The human race must turn to sustainable food systems that provide healthy diets with minimal environmental impact, starting now.

Now look again at the way Lily Tran ends her essay by revisiting her thesis. *Is it effective in leaving you with something to think about? Why or why not? What are some other strategies that she might have used?*

> For the human race to have a sustainable future, massive changes in the way food is produced, processed, and distributed are necessary on a global scale. The required changes will affect nearly all aspects of life, including not only world hunger but also health and welfare, land use and habitats, water quality and availability, energy use and production, greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, economics, and even cultural and social values. These changes may not be popular, but they are imperative. They are also achievable. The human race must turn to sustainable food systems that provide healthy diets with minimal environmental impact, starting now.

### Responding to Counterarguments

The final element of your argumentative research essay is a response to counterarguments, or others' objections. To establish your credibility on the subject, you need to acknowledge and address the most important arguments against your thesis. Look again at Lily Tran's response to a counterargument, which she acknowledges and then addresses. *Does she address the counterargument fully? What could she add to the paragraph to address the counterargument more fully and forcefully?*

> A second objection addresses the claim that land use for animal-based food production contributes to pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and is inefficient in terms of nutrient delivery. Berners-Lee et al. point out that animal nutrition from grass, pasture, and silage comes partially from land that cannot be used for other purposes, such as producing food directly edible by humans or for other ecosystem services such as biofuel production. Consequently, nutritional losses from such land use do not fully translate into losses of human-available nutrients.

Use a graphic organizer like Table 12.6 to plan your response to important arguments against your thesis, and consult Writing Process: Creating a Position Argument.

| Introduction | That ... (What do critics claim?) | However, But, Despite ... (What do you say in response?) |
|---|---|---|
| While some may claim ...<br>Although critics argue ...<br>Those opposed suggest ...<br>Some opponents claim ...<br>Those critical of the idea argue ... | | |
| Some opponents claim ... | that nutritional losses from such land use do not fully translate into losses of human-available nutrients. | While this objection may be correct, it does not address the fact that natural carbon sinks are being destroyed to increase agricultural land and, therefore, increase greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. |

**TABLE 12.6** Counterclaim organizer

## Peer Review: Switch Sides

One way to gain a new perspective for revision is to switch sides in arguing a position. Your peer conference partner can help you with this exercise. Rewrite a paragraph of your draft from an alternative viewpoint. Ask your partner to read both versions. Discuss the similarities and differences regarding the rhetorical situation. In what ways might you revise your original paragraph to better address the issues of the alternative paragraph?

For example, Issa, a mountain bike enthusiast, wrote his draft in favor of opening up more wilderness trails for mountain bikers to use. However, before writing his final draft, he researched the arguments against his position and wrote from that viewpoint:

> Hikers and other passive trail users argue against allowing mountain bikes onto narrow trails traditionally traveled only by foot and horse. They point out that the wide, deeply treaded tires of mountain bikes cause erosion and that the high speeds of the bikers startle and upset both hikers and horses. According to hiker Donald Meserlain, the bikes "ruin the tranquility of the woodlands and drive out hikers, bird watchers, and strollers" (Hanley 4).

For the writer, the main advantage of switching sides for a draft may be a better understanding of the opposition's viewpoint, making for a more effective argument against it in the final draft. In fact, for his final draft, Issa argues his original position in favor of mountain bikes, but he does so with more understanding, empathy, and effectiveness because he spent some time with the opposition. His final draft makes it clear where he stands on the issue. The tone of the mountain bike essay is now less strident and more thoughtful.

> Educated mountain biking, like hiking and horseback riding, respects the environment and promotes peace and conservation, not noise and destruction. Making this case has begun to pay off, and the battle over who walks and who rides the trails should now shift in favor of peaceful coexistence. Buoyed by studies showing that bicycle tires cause no more erosion or trail damage than the boots of hikers, and far less than horses' hooves, mountain bike advocates are starting to find receptive ears among environmental organizations (Schwartz 78).

Another switch that pays good dividends for the writer is changing the audience. In college writing situations, the final audience always includes the instructor, so such a change may simply be a temporary but useful fiction. Had a draft of the mountain bike essay been aimed at the different constituencies mentioned in the essay—the Sierra Club, mountain bicycle manufacturers, property owners, or local newspapers—the writer might have gained a useful perspective in attempting to switch language and arguments to best address this more limited readership. Likewise, drafts of various papers written to young children, sympathetic classmates, skeptical professors, or sarcastic friends may also provide useful variations in the writing perspective.

In addition to working with a partner on this activity, take some extra time to check the essential elements of the argumentative research essay. Note whether the paper you are reviewing has these elements:

- a strong thesis
- sufficient and accurate support for claims
- a combination of summary, paraphrase, quotation, and synthesis
- strong counterclaims
- complete and correct citations
- a strong closing

### Revising: Who's Game?

As you know, **revising** means reseeing, rereading, and rethinking your thoughts on paper until they match your intention. Mentally, it is conceptual work in which you focus on larger units of meaning. Be prepared to do a lot of copying, cutting, pasting, crossing out, and rewriting until you are satisfied with the ideas and where they appear in your paper.

## 12.6 Editing Focus: Integrating Sources and Quotations

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply citation conventions systematically in your work, understanding the concepts of intellectual property that motivate documentation conventions.
- Compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources.

Direct quotations are most effective when you integrate them smoothly into the flow of your paper. You can do this by introducing the source and reason for the quotation in a phrase or sentence. Readers should be able to follow your meaning easily and to understand the relevance of the quotation immediately.

### Introduce Quotations

Because readers need to know who is speaking, introduce quoted material with a **signal phrase** (sometimes called an attributory phrase). A signal phrase is a word or group of words that introduces borrowed or quoted material and informs readers of the source and purpose of the quotation. If the source is well-known, the name alone will be enough of a signal phrase. For example, a first-year student wrote, "Henry David Thoreau asserts in *Walden*, 'The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation'" (5).

If your paper focuses on the published work itself, introduce a quotation with the work's title rather than the author's name, as long as the reference is clear—for example, "*Walden* sets forth one individual's antidote against the 'lives of quiet desperation' led by the working class in mid-nineteenth-century America" (Thoreau

5). If either the author or the source is not well-known, introduce the quotation with a brief explanation to give readers enough context to understand the quotation—for example, "Mary Catherine Bateson, daughter of renown anthropologist Margaret Mead, has become, in her own right, a student of modem civilization."

### Select the Right Signal Phrase

Signal phrases (https://openstax.org/r/signalphrases) tell readers that the words or ideas that follow come from another source. Signal phrases often contain a verb that indicates the tone or intention of the author. To avoid monotony, vary the placement and words of the signal phrases you use. Note the differences, both slight and significant, in the following signal words and phrases as you integrate some of them into your draft:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| acknowledges | denies | points out |
| admits | emphasizes | refutes |
| agrees | endorses | reports |
| argues | follows up | reveals |
| asserts | grants | says |
| believes | illustrates | shows |
| claims | implies | states |
| comments | insists | suggests |
| concedes | maintains | thinks |
| concludes | notes | writes |
| declares | observes | |

**TABLE 12.7**

## Quote Smoothly and Correctly

A direct quotation repeats an author's or speaker's exact words. Slight changes in wording are permitted, but these changes must be clearly marked. Although you cannot change what a source says, you do have control over how much of it you use. Because using quotations that are too long can imply that you have little to say for yourself, use only the part of the quotation needed to make your point. Quotations should support your points, not say them for you.

To shorten a quotation to include only the most important information, integrate it smoothly and correctly into the body of your paragraph to provide minimal disruption for readers. Unless the source quoted is itself the topic of the paper (as in a literary interpretation), limit brief quotations to no more than two per page and long quotations to no more than one every three pages. The following examples illustrate both correct and incorrect use of quoted material.

### Original Passage

According to one film critic, the plot is exciting, but most of the dialogue "has the energy and impact of day-old gruel, without sugar, spice, or raisins." In fact, if I had to judge the film on dialogue alone, I'd say, "Save your money." Most of the characters alternate between a low and intermittent mumble, like a distant helicopter with engine trouble, and garbled whoops, as though speaking in tongues. Perhaps this is the director's way of trying

to mask a cornucopia of cliché-ridden, monosyllabic utterances, which, I agree, are not worth audience attention. Much of the acting is no better. However, some notable exceptions eclipse all the negatives of the script and the bit-part actors.

### Omit or Substitute Words Judiciously

Cutting words for the sake of brevity is often useful, but do not distort meaning. Indicate omitted words by using ellipsis points (three dots within a sentence, four to indicate a complete sentence is being omitted). Use brackets ([ ]) to indicate any changes or additions.

**Distorted Quotation**

"The plot is exciting . . . the dialogue has . . . energy and impact."

The critic's words are taken out of context. Negatives are removed, as are the critic's dismissive comments about the film and the exceptions to the opinion.

**Accurate Quotation**

"The plot is exciting, but most of the dialogue 'has the energy and impact of day-old gruel. . . .' However, some notable exceptions eclipse all the negatives of the script."

### Quotation Marks for Short Quotations

Embed brief quotations in the main body of your paper, and enclose them in quotation marks. The previous examples in this section are brief and would be embedded within paragraphs as normal sentences. According to MLA style guidelines, a brief prose quotation consists of four or fewer typed lines; a brief poetry quotation consists of three or fewer typed lines.

### Block Format for Long Quotations

Set quotations of more than four lines in block format. Block quotations are indented but spaced the same as the normal text. Format block quotations as follows:

- Introduce the quotation in the last line of normal text with a sentence that ends with a colon.
- Indent one half inch, and then begin the quotation.
- Do not use quotation marks, as the indentation signals direct quotation.
- Include the page number, in parentheses, after the end punctuation.

For example, this student writing on Thoreau used a block quotation from *Walden* to describe the scenery in the author's own words:

> The scenery of Walden is on a humble scale, and, though very beautiful, does not approach to grandeur, nor can it much concern one who has not long frequented it or lived by its shore; yet this pond is so remarkable for its depth and purity as to merit a particular description. It is a clear and deep green well, half a mile long and a mile and three quarters in circumference, and contains about sixty-one and a half acres; a perennial spring in the midst of pine and oak woods, without any visible inlet or outlet except by the clouds and evaporation (195).

### Explain and Clarify Quotations

Sometimes you will need to explain a quotation's relevance or meaning in the context of your discussion. For example, one student wrote, "In *A Sand County Almanac,* author Aldo Leopold invites modern urban readers to confront what they lose by living in the city and mentions the resulting 'spiritual dangers': 'supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery and . . . heat comes from the furnace' (6). Leopold sees city-dwellers as self-centered children, blissfully but dangerously unaware of how their basic needs are met."

If you need to clarify what a word or reference means, write your definition or explanation and enclose it

within square brackets.

### Adjust for Clarity and Accuracy

A passage containing a quotation must follow all the rules of grammatical sentence structure: tenses should be consistent, verbs and subjects should agree, and so on. If the form of the quotation doesn't quite fit the grammar of your own sentences, you can either quote less of the original source, change your sentences, or make a slight alteration in the quotation. For example, you might write, "Leopold writes that city dwellers assume 'breakfast comes from the grocery'" or "Leopold writes that city dwellers '[suppose] that breakfast comes from the grocery.'" For more information on using quotations, see Editing Focus: Quotations and Quotations.

## When to Quote

Reserve direct quotations for cases in which you cannot express ideas better yourself or when the exact words offer the strongest support for your ideas. Use quotations when the original words are especially precise, clear, powerful, or vivid, but ensure they do not substitute for your own thoughts.

- **Precise.** Use quotations when the words are important in themselves or when the author makes fine but important distinctions.

  "Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil: in its worst state, an intolerable one."—Thomas Paine

- **Clear.** Use quotations when the author's ideas are complex and difficult to paraphrase. "Paragraphs tell readers how writers want to be read."—William Blake
- **Powerful.** Use quotations when the words are especially authoritative and memorable.

  "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—John 8:32, King James Version

- **Vivid.** Use quotations when the language is lively and colorful, when it reveals something of the author's or speaker's character.

  "A person who won't read has no advantage over one who can't read."—Mark Twain

# 12.7 Evaluation: Effectiveness of Research Paper

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify common formats and design features for different kinds of texts.
- Implement style and language consistent with argumentative research writing while maintaining your own voice.
- Determine how genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics vary.

When drafting, you follow your strongest research interests and try to answer the question on which you have settled. However, sometimes what began as a paper about one thing becomes a paper about something else. Your peer review partner will have helped you identify any such issues and given you some insight regarding revision. Another strategy is to compare and contrast your draft with the grading rubric similar to one your instructor will use. It is a good idea to consult this rubric frequently throughout the drafting process.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: integrating sources and quotations appropriately as discussed in Section 12.6. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is stated clearly in the thesis and expertly supported with credible researched evidence. Ideas are clearly presented in well-developed paragraphs with clear topic sentences and relate directly to the thesis. Headings and subheadings clarify organization, and appropriate transitions link ideas. | The writer maintains an objective voice in a paper that reflects an admirable balance of source information, analysis, synthesis, and original thought. Quotations function appropriately as support and are thoughtfully edited to reveal their main points. The writer fully addresses counterclaims and is consistently aware of the audience in terms of language use and background information presented. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: integrating sources and quotations appropriately as discussed in Section 12.6. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is stated clearly in the thesis and supported with credible researched evidence. Ideas are clearly presented in well-developed paragraphs with topic sentences and usually relate directly to the thesis. Some headings and subheadings clarify organization, and sufficient transitions link ideas. | The writer maintains an objective voice in a paper that reflects a balance of source information, analysis, synthesis, and original thought. Quotations usually function as support, and most are edited to reveal their main points. The writer usually addresses counterclaims and is aware of the audience in terms of language use and background information presented. |

**TABLE 12.8**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3**<br><br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: integrating sources and quotations appropriately as discussed in Section 12.6. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is stated in the thesis and generally supported with some credible researched evidence. Ideas are presented in moderately developed paragraphs. Most, if not all, have topic sentences and relate to the thesis. Some headings and subheadings may clarify organization, but their use may be inconsistent, inappropriate, or insufficient. More transitions would improve coherence. | The writer generally maintains an objective voice in a paper that reflects some balance of source information, analysis, synthesis, and original thought, although imbalance may well be present. Quotations generally function as support, but some are not edited to reveal their main points. The writer may attempt to address counterclaims but may be inconsistent in awareness of the audience in terms of language use and background information presented. |

**TABLE 12.8**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: integrating sources and quotations appropriately as discussed in Section 12.6. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is not clearly stated in the thesis, nor is it sufficiently supported with credible researched evidence. Some ideas are presented in paragraphs, but they are unrelated to the thesis. Some headings and subheadings may clarify organization, while others may not; transitions are either inappropriate or insufficient to link ideas. | The writer sometimes maintains an objective voice in a paper that lacks a balance of source information, analysis, synthesis, and original thought. Quotations usually do not function as support, often replacing the writer's ideas or are not edited to reveal their main points. Counterclaims are addressed haphazardly or ignored. The writer shows inconsistency in awareness of the audience in terms of language use and background information presented. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: integrating sources and quotations appropriately as discussed in Section 12.6. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer's position or claim on a debatable issue is neither clearly stated in the thesis nor sufficiently supported with credible researched evidence. Some ideas are presented in paragraphs. Few, if any, have topic sentences, and they barely relate to the thesis. Headings and subheadings are either missing or unhelpful as organizational tools. Transitions generally are missing or inappropriate. | The writer does not maintain an objective voice in a paper that reflects little to no balance of source information, analysis, synthesis, and original thought. Quotations may function as support, but most are not edited to reveal their main points. The writer may attempt to address counterclaims and may be inconsistent in awareness of the audience in terms of language use and background information presented. |

**TABLE 12.8**

## 12.8 Spotlight on … Bias in Language and Research

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Avoid bias and stereotyping in your writing.
- Evaluate sources for language bias and stereotyping.

When you begin any research project, it is important to have set checks and balances to ensure you are not

unknowingly imposing your own biases into your research. A **bias** is a personal and usually unreasoned judgment, or a prejudice. Although it may be impossible to function without any bias (good or bad), you *can* consider possible components of bias in your research. No document can be completely objective, for all documents are created by people who have been socialized in some way; therefore, it is helpful to think about the biases of authors of research documents. Many researchers are clear about their biases and state them in introductions to their writings, whereas others may use—or omit—evidence in a way that implies bias for or against the topic.

As a student researcher, seek to be as transparent and critically self-reflective as possible about your preconceptions and language use. Although you will revisit the concept of bias in source selection in The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources, in this section you will look at bias in topic choice and language use.

## Language Bias

Language bias (https://openstax.org/r/languagebias) refers to words and expressions that are offensive, demeaning, or prejudicial toward individuals or groups on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, social class, appearance, physical or mental abilities, or sexual orientation. One form of language bias (https://openstax.org/r/languagebias1) is **sexist language** that includes only one gender. The most common occurrence is use of the word *man* or *men* to stand for all people—including those who are not male. Language has changed to be more inclusive, with terms such as *firefighter* replacing *fireman* and *mail carrier* replacing *mailman*.

Another kind of language bias focuses on people's health or abilities, indicating a person as a "victim" of a certain disease or "suffering from it." Use unbiased language to identify the person as someone "with X disease." Similarly, refer to a "person who is blind" rather than a "blind person." This kind of language focuses on the person, not the disease or ability.

To avoid language bias, follow these guidelines:

- Use currently accepted terminology when referring to groups of people. If you are writing about a group of people and are unsure of the proper terminology, research the most recent usage patterns before you write. The same is true for pronoun references, about which you can find more information in Editing Focus: Pronouns and Pronouns.
- Be sensitive when referring to people with disabilities by using a "people first" approach. For example, say "a person who uses a wheelchair" instead of "a wheelchair-bound person."
- Avoid stereotyping—that is, attributing positive or negative characteristics to people on the basis of groups to which they belong. Although not strictly linguistic, stereotyping comes through in making assumptions about people. A stereotypical attitude would be to assume that all or most rich people act in certain ways and, conversely, that all or most poor people act in certain ways. Another stereotypical attitude would be to assume that a person who comes from a particular area of the country adheres to a certain political agenda.

## Assignment: Reviewing Your Research Essay for Language Bias

First, review your essay, and speculate as to biases or blocks you may have incorporated while researching and writing. Freewrite, reflecting on these possibilities. Next, go through your essay one section at a time, and highlight any people references, pronouns, biased language, and instances of possible stereotyping. Using the information above and your reflective freewrite, complete a bias chart like the one shown in Table 12.9. Next, exchange your essay with two other classmates to see whether they detect bias of which you were unaware. After receiving feedback from two or three people, form a group and discuss what each of you found and how to use alternative language or references. Finally, revisit your freewriting after collaborating with your classmates to reconsider what you wrote before. Add a section to the freewrite in which you relate what your

group discussed and what you may have learned from that discussion.

| Essay Section | Essay Language | Possible Bias | Possible Revision |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

**TABLE 12.9** Bias chart

### Publish Your Work

After completing your argumentative research paper, you should have a product to be proud of. Your instructor may have a plan to publish papers written by class members, or you may be interested in publishing on your own and joining a wider scholarly conversation. Consider submitting your work to one of these journals that publish undergraduate research:

- *Butler Journal of Undergraduate Research (https://openstax.org/r/butlerjournalUG)*
- *Crossing Borders: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Undergraduate Scholarship (https://openstax.org/r/crossingborders)*
- *Liberated Arts: A Journal for Undergraduate Research (https://openstax.org/r/liberatedarts)*
- *Reinvention: An International Journal of Undergraduate Research (https://openstax.org/r/reinvention)*

In addition, if you have designed your research project as a solution to a local problem, consider finding venues to disseminate the information to those for whom it would be the most useful. This decision may mean adjusting the format, tone, language, and/or conventions of your work to address the needs of a specific audience.

## 12.9 Portfolio: Why Facts Matter in Research Argumentation

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Distinguish between facts, inferences, and informed opinion and when to use each.
- Analyze how facts have shaped your research and composing processes.

As this assignment draws to a close, you will note that facts, examples, inferences, informed opinions, and personal experiences all provided believable evidence for your argument. However, be aware that the difference between facts and other evidence is that **facts** are verifiable. That Alaska has the most territory of all U.S. states is not up for question or interpretation; personal belief or opinion is irrelevant. Unless their accuracy is challenged, facts are essential in any research paper. Yet they can be misleading when used in certain ways or proved incorrect by later discovery. Hopefully, you have supported your research paper with verifiable factual information.

**Inferences** are conclusions based on a combination of facts and personal knowledge. For example, if you attend five different classes in five different academic departments and find no minority students in each class, you may infer that very few minority students attend the school. However, although your inference may seem reasonable, it is not a fact because you have not met all the students at the college, nor do you have access to enrollment figures.

Facts are not necessarily better or more important than inferences; they serve different purposes. Facts provide information, and inferences give that information meaning. Sometimes inferences are all you will have available. For example, statistics reflecting what "Americans" believe or do are only inferences about these groups based on information collected from a relatively small number of individuals. To be credible, inferences must be reasonable and based on factual evidence.

Expert opinion makes strong evidence. A forest ranger's testimony about trail damage caused by mountain bikes or lug-soled hiking boots reflects the training and experience of an expert. A casual hiker making the

same observation is less believable.

Personal testimony or informed opinion is based on direct personal experience. When someone has experienced something firsthand, their knowledge cannot be discounted easily. If you have been present at the mistreatment of someone, whether as the object or observer of the incident, your eyewitness testimony will carry weight.

## Reflective Task

After reflecting on your argumentative research essay by considering bias, facts, and inferences, you now have the opportunity to reflect on what you learned through the research and writing process in general. Think critically about your writing process, reflect on each stage, and consider how this writing experience was similar to or different from others. Also, estimate roughly what percent of your sources are facts, examples, inferences, or informed opinion. As you reflect, answer the following questions in your notebook or as part of a cover letter for your research paper:

- How did you decide on the topic for your paper?
- How did you decide on the scope of your topic?
- What did you know about your topic before you began your research?
- What did you learn about your topic?
- What primary and secondary sources did you collect, and why?
- How did you arrive at a workable thesis?
- How did you determine which sources best supported your thesis?
- Did you rely most on facts, examples, inferences, expert opinion, or personal experiences? Why?
- What type of citation did you use for crediting material you did not write?
- How did collaboration with others help you as you wrote and revised your paper?
- How did the writing for this paper compare with other writing assignments? Was it easier or harder to write than others you have written?
- How did you manage the timing of your essay, from topic selection, to gathering sources, to writing and revising?
- What could you have done differently to make your writing process easier or more effective?
- What insights do have about yourself as a writer?

## Further Reading

These sources address argument and are based on researched evidence.

Lanier, Jaron. *Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now.* Picador, 2019.

O'Neill, Cathy. *Weapons of Math Destruction.* Crown, 2017.

Zuboff, Shoshona. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power.* PublicAffairs, 2020.

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Pinsker, Joe. "The Why of Cooking." *The Atlantic*, 25 Apr. 2017, theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/04/the-why-of-cooking-samin-nosrat/523923/.

*The Purdue OWL Family of Sites*. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue U, 2008, owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html. Accessed 25 Jan. 2021.

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Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden; Or Life in the Woods*. Ticknor and Fields, 1854. *Project Gutenberg,* 29 Jan. 2021, gutenberg.org/files/205/205-h/205-h.htm.

# Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information

# 13




**FIGURE 13.1** In the research process, you may have to conduct fieldwork to collect primary data. In this photograph, a military sergeant is interviewing an Iraqi police officer and entering the subject's answers into her computer. (credit: "Petty Officer 1st Class" by Jeremy L. Wood/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

**13.1** The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources
**13.2** The Research Process: How to Create Sources
**13.3** Glance at the Research Process: Key Skills
**13.4** Annotated Student Sample: Research Log
**13.5** Research Process: Making Notes, Synthesizing Information, and Keeping a Research Log
**13.6** Spotlight on ... Ethical Research

**INTRODUCTION** In every field, any claim you make about a debatable subject must be supported by evidence. To identify an unknown rock, for example, you scrape it with a known rock in the geology laboratory. The scratch marks of the harder rock on the softer rock will be part of your evidence to support your claims about the unknown rock. If you conduct a survey of students to examine college study habits, counting and collating your findings will provide evidence to support your conclusions. Although the nature of evidence varies from one discipline to another, the need for evidence is constant. Collecting accurate and current evidence to support your claim is a key part of research; without it, readers likely will judge you as uninformed and your work as unconvincing. Equally constant is the need to have complete and accurate documentation for these sources. While not all research is done for academic purposes—you may conduct research when choosing a new piece of technology, deciding on a movie to watch, renting an apartment, or even choosing a career path—the research discussed in this chapter is academic related. You will learn about generating research support materials by doing library research, conducting fieldwork, taking notes, organizing sources, and

keeping a detailed and accurate research log.

## 13.1 The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Locate and evaluate primary and secondary research materials, including journal articles and essays, books, scholarly and professionally established and maintained databases or archives, and informal electronic networks and Internet sources.
- Apply methods and technologies commonly used for research in various fields.

Once you have chosen your argumentative research topic, developed a workable research question, and devised a plan for your research as described in Argumentative Research: Enhancing the Art of Rhetoric with Evidence, you are ready to begin the task usually associated with the term *research*—namely, the collection of sources. One key point to remember at this stage is intentionality; that is, begin with a **research plan** rather than a collection of everything you find related to your topic. Without a plan, you easily may end up overwhelmed by too many unusable sources. A carefully considered research plan will save you time and energy and help make your search for sources more productive. Access to information is generally not a problem; the problem is knowing where to find the information you need and how to distinguish among types and qualities of sources. In short, finding sources is all about sorting, selecting, and evaluating.

Your specific methods for collecting sources will depend on the details of your research project. However, a good strategy to begin with is to think in terms of needs: *What do you need, as the researcher and writer? What do your readers need?* This kind of needs assessment is similar to the considerations you make about the rhetorical situation when writing an analysis or argument.

Review Table 13.1 as you conduct a source "needs assessment."

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Your Needs** | Basic Facts/ Data/ Information | These materials help inform you about your topic. They also may help shape the scope of your knowledge of your topic. |
| | Critical/ Conceptual/ Contextual Sources | These materials provide explanations and context for your research project. They may range from basic historical or contextual information to explanations of special theories or ideologies. These materials will help you with your analysis and will help you address the *So what?* questions that your research topic may pose. |
| **Readers' Needs** | Reason to Invest | This material engages readers both intellectually and emotionally. |
| | Proof That It Matters | These are convincing arguments or illustrative examples that answer the *So what?* question, showing why anyone should care about the topic or your approach to it. |
| | Examples and Explanation | These are illustrative examples and explanations of complex, esoteric, or idiosyncratic concepts, theories, technical processes, etc. |

**TABLE 13.1** Research needs assessment

### Generating Key Words

Before you begin locating sources, consider the research terms you will use to find these sources. Most research is categorized according to key terms that are important for understanding the topic and/or

methodologies. When beginning the research process, you may find that the ideas or words associated with your topic are not yielding results when you search library or Internet **databases** (organized collections of information).

If you are running into challenges locating information related to your topic, you may not have chosen the specific key terms needed. Because libraries and online databases generate search results based on algorithms that target keywords, the best way to find the appropriate terminology associated with your topic is to practice generating key terms. You may need a range of keywords, some for library searches and others for online searches. When considering the difference between keyword searches in academic libraries versus online sources, note that most academic libraries use Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) for subject searches of their online catalogs. Many databases use subject searches based on algorithms that may be unique to that database. Don't become discouraged if you find that the terms for searching in your academic library may be somewhat different from the terms for searching online. As you begin to find sources related to your subject, take notes on the variety of terms that describe your research area. These notes will come in handy as both keyword and subject searches throughout your research process.

The following steps and examples will help you get started:

- Begin by limiting your topic to one or two sentences or questions. (*What effects do a region's water and temperatures have on fall foliage?*)
- Highlight specific words that are key to understanding or finding answers to your question. (*What effects do the amount of water a region gets and temperatures for that region have on colors of fall foliage?*)
- Consider words assumed but not mentioned in your question. For instance, the example question implies a search around trees and rainfall; however, *trees* and *rainfall* are not mentioned. Add these words to the words highlighted in your question.
- Consider synonyms for the words you highlighted. A search for synonyms for *fall* yields *harvest*, *autumn*, and *autumnal equinox*. A search for synonyms for *leaves* yields *foliage*, *fronds*, and *stalks*. Be sure you understand the meaning of each synonym so that you can choose those that best capture the concepts you seek to research.
- Try different combinations of the key terms and synonyms to help you find as many sources as you can.

You can find more information about key terms and searches by consulting Writing Process: Informing and Analyzing.

## Locating Sources

Once you have identified sources to fit both your and your readers' needs, you can begin to locate these sources. Throughout the research process, look for sources that will provide enough information for you to form your own opinions or answer your research question(s). Use source materials as support for your own words and ideas. The following are possible locations for source materials:



**FIGURE 13.2** New York City Public Library, Rose Main Reading Room (credit: "Grand Study Hall, New York Public Library" by Alex Proimos/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

### Libraries

While much of your writing and research work happens online, libraries remain indispensable to research. Your university's physical and/or online library is a valuable resource, providing access to databases, books and periodicals (both print and electronic), and other media that might not otherwise be accessible. In many cases, experienced people are available with discipline-specific research advice. To take full advantage of library resources, keep the following suggestions in mind:

- **Visit early and often.** As soon as you receive a research assignment, visit the library (physically, virtually, or both) to discover resources available for your project. Even if your initial research indicates a wealth of material, you may be unable to find everything during your first search. You may find that a book has been checked out or that your library doesn't subscribe to a certain periodical. Furthermore, going to the library can be extremely helpful because you likely will see a range of additional sources simply by looking around the areas in which you locate initial sources.
- **Check general sources first.** Look at dictionaries, encyclopedias, atlases, and yearbooks for background information about your topic. An hour spent with these sources will give you a quick overview of the scope of your topic and lead you to more specific information.
- **Talk to librarians.** At first, you might show a librarian your assignment and explain your topic and research plans. Later, you might ask for help in finding a particular source or finding out whether the library has additional sources you have not checked yet. Librarians are professional information experts; don't hesitate to use their expertise.

### General Reference Works

General reference works provide background information and basic facts about a topic. To locate these sources, you will need a variety of tools, including the online catalog and databases, as well as periodical indexes. To use these resources effectively, follow this four-step process:

1. Consult general reference works to gain background information and basic facts.
2. Consult specialized reference works to find relevant articles on all topics.
3. Consult the library's online catalog to identify library books on your topic.
4. Consult other sources as needed.

The summaries, overviews, and definitions in general reference works can help you decide whether to pursue a topic further and where to turn next for information. Because the information in these sources is necessarily general, they will not be sufficient alone as the basis for most research projects and are not strong sources to

cite in research papers.

Following are some of the most useful general reference works to provide context and background information for research projects:

- **Almanacs** and **yearbooks** provide up-to-date information, including statistics on politics, agriculture, economics, and population. See especially the *Facts on File World News Digest* (1940–present), an index to current events reprinted in newspapers worldwide, and the *World Almanac and Book of Facts* (1868–present), which reviews important events of the past year as well as data on a wide variety of topics, including sports, government, science, business, and education. In addition to current publications, almanacs from recent years or from many years ago provide information about the times in which they were written.

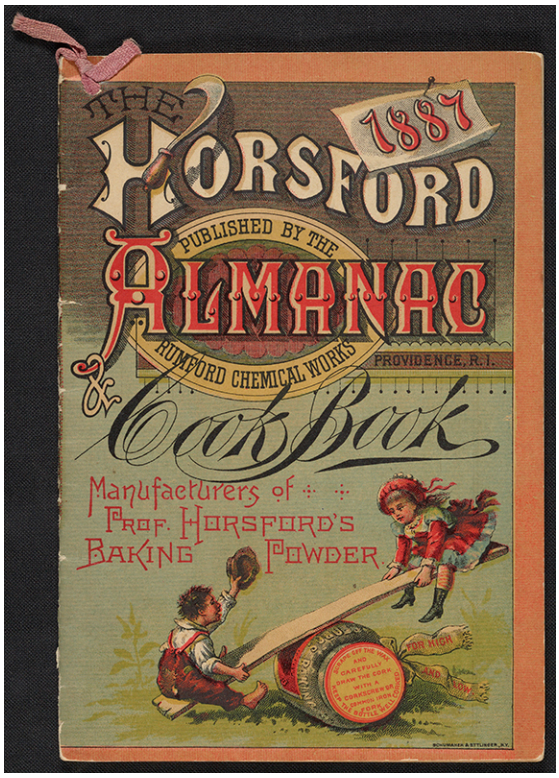



**FIGURE 13.3** This edition of the *Horsford Almanac and Cook Book* dates from 1887. Published as an "advertising almanac" by a baking powder company, this short almanac featured recipes for a healthful diet as well as general almanac data. (credit: "The Horsford 1887 almanac and cook book" by Science History Institute/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

- **Atlases** such as the *Hammond World Atlas*, the *National Geographic Atlas of the World*, and the *Times Atlas of the World* can help you identify places anywhere in the world and provide information on population, climate, and industry.
- **Biographical dictionaries** contain information about people who have made some mark on history in many different fields. Consult the following: *Contemporary Authors* (I962–present), containing short biographies of authors who have published during the year; *Current Biography* (1940–present), containing articles and photographs of people in the news; and *Who's Who in America* (1899–present), the standard biographical reference for living Americans.
- **Dictionaries** contain definitions and histories of words, along with their syllabication, and correct spelling and usage.
- **Encyclopedias** provide basic information, explanations, and definitions of virtually every topic, concept, country, institution, historical person or movement, and cultural artifact imaginable. One-volume works

such as the *Random House Encyclopedia* and the *Columbia Encyclopedia* give brief overviews. Larger works, such as the *New Encyclopædia Britannica* (32 volumes, also online), contain more detailed information.




**FIGURE 13.4** Both print and electronic texts provide excellent general resources for people of all ages. (credit: "The future of books" by Johan Larsson/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

### Databases

Databases, usually accessed directly through your library website, are indispensable tools for finding both journal and general-audience articles. Some databases contain general-interest information, indexing articles from newspapers, magazines, and sometimes scholarly journals as well. While these databases can be useful when you begin your research, once you have focused your research topic, you likely will need to use subject databases, which index articles primarily from specialized scholarly and technical journals.

The difference between scholarly journal and other articles is important. Although at times these lines are blurred, think of articles found in popular journals or magazines as published widely and usually addressing a general audience. Such materials are useful for obtaining introductory or background information on a topic as well as a sense of the range of factors to consider. Indeed, these sources may help you narrow your topic by giving you a basic understanding of the range and scope of the "conversation" you are entering in your research process. Scholarly journal articles, on the other hand, typically are written and published by academic researchers. These publications often have more specialized information and vocabulary and are most useful after you have narrowed your topic and developed specific research questions. Within the range of scholarly articles are those that are peer reviewed or found in peer-reviewed journals. These journal articles are generally more specific and contain more reliable information because they are written by experts and reviewed by other experts in the field before the article is published. See Compiling Sources for an Annotated Bibliography for more information about peer-reviewed publications.

A good starting point for research is a **general-interest database**, which covers a wide range of topics from many sources. Several major general-interest databases are listed below; however, many others may be available at your library. A librarian likely can help you find those that may be specific to your university.

- **Academic OneFile from Gale**. Based on the access capabilities of your institution, you may be able to use this database, which indexes citations, abstracts, and some full texts in such subjects as the physical sciences, technology, medicine, social sciences, the arts, theology, literature, and more. By using this database, you may be able to retrieve the full text of articles provided in PDF and HTML formats and audio versions of texts in MP3 format.
- **Academic Search Complete** from EBSCOhost. Your library also may provide you with access to this

database, which indexes citations, abstracts, and full text from journal articles, books, reports, and conference proceedings in all disciplines. An advantage of this database is that you can retrieve full-text articles provided in PDF and HTML forms. Academic Search Complete also provides searchable cited references for nearly 1,000 journals.

- **CQ Researcher**. This general database is unique because it publishes well-researched, single-themed 12,000-word reports by respected journalists who have established ethos because of their history of in-depth, unbiased coverage of health, social trends, criminal justice, international affairs, education, the environment, technology, and the economy. These reports can be beneficial at any research stage because they provide an overview, background, chronology, assessment of the current situation, tables and maps, pro/con statements from opposing positions, and bibliographies. Files from before 1996 are in HTML format; newer ones, beginning January 1996, are PDFs.
- **Factiva**. Many students find Factiva a useful general tool because it provides full-text news articles and business/industry information from newswires, newspapers, business and industry magazines, television and radio transcripts, financial reports, and news service photos. Within the Factiva database, most content is HTML, though other formats are available for export. The database contains news sources from 1979 to the present and financial data from the 1960s to the present.
- **Google**. One of the most frequently used databases for any research is Google. Students often use Google to begin their searches because they can find material from many different sources, both formal and informal, including blogs, journals, websites, and popular magazines. For academic research, you may find it useful to begin with a general Google search and then move to Google Scholar. Google Scholar provides a simple way to do a broad search for scholarly literature across a variety of disciplines and sources—articles, theses, books, et cetera. Within the Google database, you will also find more information or effective uses of Google for your research purposes. See Compiling Sources for an Annotated Bibliography for more information about Google Scholar.
- **Opposing Viewpoints in Context from Gale**. As you familiarize yourself with your topic, you may find this database helpful for understanding the parameters of the discussion on your topic. Opposing Viewpoints offers over 20,000 pro/con viewpoint essays on controversial issues and current events, plus thousands of topic overviews, primary source documents, social activist biographies, court case overviews, related full-text periodical articles, statistical tables, and multimedia content.
- **Gale in Context**. This database provides curated topic pages that combine academic journal articles, primary sources, reference works, essays, news sources, multimedia, and biographies about people, events, places, and time periods.
- **Web of Science from Clarivate Analytics**. The three Web of Science databases index citations from journal articles and conference proceedings in the sciences, social sciences, arts, and humanities. You can access cited reference searches, analyze trends and patterns, and create visual representations of citation relationships. Its contents date from 1900 to the present.

### Government Documents

The U.S. government publishes numerous reports, pamphlets, catalogs, and newsletters on most issues of national concern. To access documents from published in 1976 and onward, consult the Catalog of U.S. Government Publications. To find documents published prior to 1976, consult the *Monthly Catalog of United States*. Both resources should be available electronically and contain listings for materials in formats such as nonprint media, records, CDs, audiocassettes, videotapes, slides, photographs, and other media. Many of these publications may be located through your university's library catalog as well. Consult a librarian to find out what government documents are available to you and in what forms.

### Archives/Special Collections



Many libraries have donated records, papers, or writings that make up archives or special collections containing manuscripts, rare books, architectural drawings, historical photographs and maps, and so on. These, as well as items of local interest such as community and family histories, artifacts, and other

memorabilia, are usually found in a special room or section of the library. By consulting these collections or archives, you also may find local or regional atlases, maps, and geographic information systems (GIS). Maps and atlases depict more than roads and boundaries. They include information on population density, language patterns, soil types, and much more. And, as discussed later in this chapter, these materials can figure into research projects as primary data.

University libraries' special collections often house items donated by alumni, families, and other community groups. For example, one state university library's special collections, housing a collection of Black Panther and American Communist Party newspapers and pamphlets, celebrated Black History Month with an exhibit featuring the Black Panther Party and the Black Power movement. Included in the exhibit were Black Panther newspapers and pamphlets published in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as earlier civil rights literature from the American Communist Party. This exhibit not only helped students become aware of information about the time and movement but also demonstrated the range and depth of the university's archive collection.

### Interlibrary Loans

Even though libraries house many materials, you may need a source unavailable at your library. If so, you usually can get the source through a networked system called interlibrary loans. Your library will borrow the source for you and provide some guidance as to the form of the materials and how long you will have access to them.

Whichever search tool you use, nothing is magic about information gathered. You will need to use critical skills to evaluate materials gathered from sources, and you will still need to ask these basic questions: Is the author identified? ls that person a professional in the field or an interested amateur? What are their biases likely to be? Does the document represent an individual's opinion or peer-reviewed research?

## Evaluating Sources

One key to judging the validity of sources is analysis. You already may be familiar with analysis, which involves looking at texts, media, or other artifacts to examine their individual parts and make interpretive claims about them. In the research process, analysis involves collecting data, deciding how you want to use that data *(what are you looking for?),* and applying those criteria to your data. For example, if you were looking at how the presence of social media has changed in television programs in the last five to seven years, you would determine what shows you want to view and what patterns you want to study.

As you analyze sources, you evaluate them in terms of your research needs. On the basis of your needs assessment, you will determine whether a source is acceptable or unacceptable, good or bad, trustworthy or biased. Although firm categories can be useful, you may find a more nuanced evaluation helpful as well. When you look for sources and evaluate them, begin with general questions such as these:

- How do I want to use this source?
- Am I able to use it in that way?
- Might this source be more valuable if used in another way?

When you ask whether a source is acceptable, the answer usually depends on what you want to do with it. Even biased, false, or misleading material can be useful, depending on how a researcher puts it to use. For instance, you may be writing about a particular historical event and come across a magazine article featuring a biased account of that event. If your purpose is to write a brief but accurate description of the event, then this account is of little use. *But what if your purpose is to write a critical analysis of the ways in which misleading media coverage of an event has influenced public perception of it?* Suddenly, the biased account becomes useful as a specific example of the media coverage you wish to analyze.

A source's value, therefore, is a function of your purpose for it. Labeling a source as good or bad, truthful or misleading, doesn't really evaluate its use to you as a researcher and writer; truthful sources can be used poorly, and misleading sources can be used effectively. What matters is whether the source fits your purpose.

Finally, when evaluating a source, consider time (*when was it judged true?*) and perspective (*who said it was true, and for what reason?*).

### Locate the Date

Most documents, especially those created since the advent of copyright laws at the end of the 19th century, include their date of publication. Pay attention to the date a source was created, and reflect on what might have happened since then. Information may be outdated and useless. On the other hand, it may still be highly useful—and continuing usefulness is the reason many old texts remain in circulation. Once you locate the source's date, you can decide whether it will be relevant for your purpose. If you are studying change over time, for example, old statistical information would be useful baseline data to demonstrate what has changed. But if you are studying current culture, dated information may be misleading. In other words, when evaluating whether a dated source serves your purpose, know what that purpose is.

### Identify Perspective



To identify and evaluate perspective, ask what viewpoint, or perspective, it represents. *Who created the source, and for what purpose?* This question can be difficult to answer immediately because an author's viewpoint is not always identified or summarized in the source itself—and when it is, the information provided, being a creation of the author, cannot always be believed. To trust a source, you need to analyze its assumptions, evidence, biases, and reasoning, which together constitute the author's perspective. ln essence, you need to ask these questions: *What is this writer's purpose? Is it scholarly analysis, political advocacy, entertainment, or something else?* Consider the following:

- Will a quick perusal of the introduction or first chapter reveal the writer's assumptions about the subject or audience?
- Can you tell which statements are facts, which are inferences drawn from facts, and which are strictly opinions?
- Does a first reading of the evidence persuade you? Is the logic of the position apparent and/or credible?
- Does the writer omit relevant points?
- Do the answers to these questions make you more or less willing to accept the author's conclusions?

Although trying to answer these questions about every source may seem daunting or even futile at first, have patience and give the research process the time it needs. At the beginning of a research project, when you are still trying to gain context and overview and have looked at only one source, you likely will have difficulty recognizing an author's purpose and viewpoint. However, as you read further and begin to compare and contrast one source with another, differences will emerge, especially if you read extensively and take notes. The more differences you note, the more critically aware you become and the more you understand how and where a source might help you.

### Review Critically

To review a source with a critical eye, ask both first and second questions of the text. The answers to first questions are generally factual, the result of probing the text (identifying the title, table of contents, chapter headings, index, and so on). The answers to second questions are more inferential, the result of analyzing assertions, evidence, and language in the text (identifying the perspective of the author and their sources).

### Review Internally

*Does information in one source support or contradict information in other sources?* Do a subject search of the author across platforms to find out how other experts view the author and how your source fits in with the author's other works.

## 13.2 The Research Process: How to Create Sources

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Locate and create primary research materials.
- Apply methods and technologies used for research and communication in various fields.

Introducing Research as Evidence and Compiling Sources for an Annotated Bibliography explain the difference between primary and secondary sources in the research process. Almost all of the source-gathering information in this chapter thus far has focused on gathering secondary sources. However, your research assignment may require that you use primary sources—not only those you find in the library but also those you create yourself, outside the library, by doing **field research**, also called **fieldwork**.

### Conducting Field Research

If not applicable for this class, you may be asked at some point in your college career to conduct fieldwork, which is considered primary research (the collection or development of primary sources). You may already have engaged in primary research by performing experiments in a laboratory for a science course or by documenting your observation of a musical or artistic performance.

Fieldwork is the kind of research done when a person goes out into the "field" to collect data. This term is often used by both biologists, who may observe nature to understand plant growth, and anthropologists, who observe people to understand human cultural habits. Social scientists interested in language use and development, for example, have borrowed the term *fieldwork* to describe the ways they collect data about how people learn or use language. In fact, fieldwork is common to subjects such as education, medicine, engineering, sociology, journalism, criminology, and advertising.

Different disciplines—and different rhetorical situations—require different kinds of fieldwork. If your task, for instance, is to find out what consumers think of a new product, you may need to create and distribute a survey or questionnaire. If you want to find out how many people stop at a certain fast-food restaurant along the highway just to use the restroom, as compared with the number of customers who purchase food, you will have to spend some time observing the location.

No matter what kind of data you collect, the way you represent your research in your written work requires careful attention to fairness and accuracy. These ideas are particularly important when you write about the people you interview or observe. The way you represent them, as well as their words and actions, may present challenges. Be aware of those challenges by considering personal biases as you write about your research participants. Finally, be considerate of interviewees' time, and acknowledge their help by sending a follow-up email thanking them.

#### Planning Field Research

Unlike a library, which bundles millions of bits of every kind of information in a single location, "fields" are everywhere, including the campus of your university (academic departments, administrative offices, labs, libraries, dining and sports facilities, and dormitories) as well as the neighborhood beyond the campus (theaters, restaurants, malls, parks, playgrounds, farms, factories, schools, and so on). Field information is not cataloged, organized, indexed, or shelved for your convenience. Obtaining it requires diligence, energy, and careful planning. Some considerations are listed below:

- **Think about your research question.** What field sources might strengthen your argument or add to your report?
- **Select your contacts and sites.** Find the person, place, thing, or event that you would see as most helpful to you. Will you set up observations, conduct interviews, distribute surveys, or use a combination of methods?
- **Schedule research in advance.** Interviews, trips, and events don't always work out according to plans.

Allow time for glitches, such as having to reschedule an interview or return for more information.

- **Do your homework.** Visit the library or do a Google search before conducting extensive field research. No matter from whom or from where you intend to collect information, having background knowledge can help you make more insightful observations and formulate better interview questions.
- **Log what you find.** Record visits, questions, phone calls, and conversations in a **research log (https://openstax.org/r/reasearchlog)**. From the very beginning of your research, enter information about topics, questions, methods, and answers into a journal, or use another record-keeping method. Record even dead-end searches to remind yourself that you tried them. This method of organizing information is the writing task for this chapter and will be discussed at length in Glance at the Research Process: Key Skills and Annotated Student Sample.



**FIGURE 13.5** Biologists work in the field to gather samples for further study. (credit: "Biologists track frogs in Eastern Oregon desert" by U.S. Bureau of Land Management/Maria Thi Mai/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

### Observation

In general, fieldwork that relies on observation as a method of data collection involves taking notes while observing events, activities, people, places, animals, and so on. Observations can range from a single visit to one event or location to several visits over an extended period. Consider your research question and topic to determine whether you need to observe over time or just once to get the information you need. You can prepare for your observation by doing some of the preliminary work in your research log. At this time, consider the limitations of only one observation session, which may yield only partial information.

As you plan for your observation, and before you arrive, decide whether you will be a **participant observer**, which involves taking part in what you are observing. For example, if you observed a volleyball club meeting that you attend regularly, and thus know most of its members or join in activities, you would be a participant observer. You will need to consider, though, how well you will be able to focus on the observation tasks. *How actively will you participate in the group/event? While participating, how frequently will you be able to jot down notes or otherwise document your experience? Might you become distracted and forget your observation tasks, and if so, how will you handle that possibility?*

Another option is to be a **nonparticipant** observer. In this capacity, you try to let your presence go unnoticed. Although you are there and observing, you do not influence the situation in any way. If you sat in a corner of an art class at your university to observe what materials students use, for example, you would be an unobtrusive and nonparticipant observer.

When you observe, take detailed notes; without them, you may forget much of what you observed after you leave a site. After recording your notes in your research log, review and rewrite your observation notes as soon

after your site visit as possible. Take precise notes, indicating the color, shape, size, texture, and arrangement of everything relevant as applicable. Pay special attention to any anomalies you notice in a situation. Visual images provide excellent memory aids, so consider sketching, photographing, or videotaping the site you visit. If you speak your notes into a recording device, you will also pick up the characteristic sounds of the site.

Your observation notes will become very important as you begin to analyze your data. When you have finished observing, review your notes to consider them for analysis. Ask yourself what kinds of questions or conclusions your observations raise. Record your questions and conclusions in the speculations section of your research log; this material serves as your tentative interpretation of observation notes. These questions and conclusions can help direct further analysis of what you have observed and what you write based on those observations.

For example, consider that you want to determine whether seating is an issue for students eating in on-campus restaurants. You might organize your observations, questions, and speculations as shown in Table 13.2.

| Observations | Questions and Speculation |
|---|---|
| Student enters campus restaurant with friends. Friends look around for seating before rejoining student at the counter. Friends take over five minutes to find an empty table that will seat them. Both the students searching for tables and the student at the counter keep checking their watches. The time is between classes but later in the afternoon than normal lunch time: 2:30. | How many seats are available in the campus restaurant? Are students at the tables eating, studying, or both? The students appear concerned about time and the opportunity to eat as a group. |

**TABLE 13.2** Observations, questions, and speculations

In the "Observations" column, the writer describes, whereas in the "Questions and Speculation" column, the writer evaluates the situation. The "Questions and Speculation" section is particularly important, as different observers usually will have different interpretations. Moreover, both columns might be different at different times of the day or on different days of the week. To increase the validity of your findings, you might get a second opinion on your interpretation by sharing your observations with a peer.

### Surveys

Researchers in the social sciences often use surveys to collect data from a large number of individuals or from groups of people. A **survey** is a structured interview in which respondents are all asked the same questions and their answers are tabulated and interpreted. A survey would be a good source of data if, for example, you were comparing the eating habits of students who eat off campus with those of students who eat in college dining facilities. Or you may want to conduct research that compares the overall eating habits of students in one on-campus dining facility with those of students in another. You might ask questions such as these:

- How often do you eat at a campus facility? This question could provide several options to assist survey takers with some ranges.
- When you eat on campus, which of these dining facilities do you choose? A list of the dining facilities you are comparing would follow this question to refamiliarize survey takers with the names of the venues.

For research purposes, respondents to surveys can be treated as experts because they are being asked for opinions or information about their own behavior. Design your survey questions to be answered quickly and to generate useful information about your topic. To get this kind of information, ask questions skillfully. *What* and *who* questions are easy for respondents to answer easily and accurately. Less valuable for a survey is a *why* question, which requires a more thorough and planned answer. Respondents are less likely to give the proper

attention to a *why* question for this reason. Furthermore, wording that suggests a right or wrong answer reveals the researcher's biases more than the subject's candid responses.

The format of the questioning and the way the research is conducted also influence responses. For example, to get complete and honest answers about a sensitive or highly personal issue, the researcher would probably use anonymous written surveys to ensure confidentiality. Other survey techniques include oral interviews in which the researcher records each subject's responses on a written form. Surveys are usually brief in order to gain the cooperation of a sufficiently large number of respondents. To enable the researcher to compare answers, the questions are usually closed, although researchers may sometimes ask open-ended questions to gain additional information or insights. Treated briefly here, surveys involve complex procedures for the designing of questions, distribution of the survey, and assessment of the results.

A complication arises when a survey requests sensitive information, such as personal experience with drugs, alcohol, or sex, from identifiable subjects. Colleges and universities have "human subject" boards or committees that need to approve any research that could compromise the privacy of students, staff, or faculty. Consequently, consult your instructor before launching any survey on or off campus. However, the simple, informal polling of people to request opinions takes place quite often in daily college life, such as every time a class takes a vote or an instructor asks the class for opinions or interpretations of texts.

In one case, a student who was writing a self-profile wanted to find out how others perceived her. First, she listed 10 people who knew her in different ways—her mother, father, older sister, roommate, best friend, favorite teacher, and so on. Next, she invited each to list five words that best characterized her. Finally, she asked each to call her answering machine on a day when she knew she would not be home and name those five words. ln this way, she was able to collect original outside opinion (fieldwork research) in a nonthreatening manner. She then wove those opinions into her profile paper, combining them with her own self-assessment. The external points of view added an interesting (and sometimes surprising) view of herself as well as other voices to her paper.

### Interviews



Conducting interviews is another method of gathering information. Consulting, interviewing, and using information gathered from professionals in specific fields can offer authoritative perspectives. Other possibilities include interviewing people who have direct experience with your research topic.

If you are comfortable talking to people you don't know, then you have a head start as a successful interviewer. In many respects, a good interview is simply a good conversation. If you consider yourself shy, don't worry; you can still learn how to ask insightful interview questions that will elicit useful answers. Before conducting an interview, determine whether it is more appropriate to use a formal question-and-answer session, an informal exchange of ideas, or something in between.

Your chances of gathering helpful interview material increase dramatically when you prepare ahead of time and formulate the questions you want to ask. Consider the following guidelines:

- **Select the right person.** People differ in both the amount and the kind of knowledge they have. Not everyone who knows something about your research topic will be able to provide the information you need. Ask yourself
  - what information you need;
  - why you need it;
  - who is likely to have it; and
  - how you might gain it.

  Most research projects benefit from more than one perspective, so plan on more than one interview. For example, to research Lake Erie pollution, you could interview someone who lives on the shore, a chemist who knows about pesticide decomposition, a vice president of a nearby paper company, and people who

frequent the waterfront.

- **Know your subject.** Before you talk to an expert about your topic, make sure you know something about it yourself. Be prepared to explain your interest in it, know the general issues, and learn what your interview subject has already said about it in books, articles, or interviews. ln this way, you will ask sharper questions, get to the point faster, and be more interesting for your subject to talk with.
- **Create a working script.** A good interview doesn't follow a script, but it usually starts with one. Before you begin an interview, write the questions you plan to ask, and arrange them so that they build on each other—general questions first, specific ones later. Your written questions can remind you to get back on track, should you or your subject digress.
- **Ask both open and closed questions.** Different kinds of questions elicit different kinds of information. Open questions place few limits on the answers given: *Why did you decide to major in business? What are your plans for the future?* Closed questions specify the information you want and usually elicit brief responses: *When did you receive your degree? From what college?* Open questions usually provide general information; closed questions supply details.
- **Ask follow-up questions.** Listen closely to the answers you receive. When the information is incomplete or confusing, ask follow-up questions to request clarification. Such questions are seldom scripted, so plan on using your wits to direct your subject toward the information you consider most important.
- **Use silence.** If you don't get an immediate response to a question, wait a bit before asking another one. ln some cases, your question may not have been clear, and you will need to rephrase it. But in many cases, your interview subject is simply collecting their thoughts, not ignoring you. After a slight pause, you may hear answers worth waiting for.
- **Read body language.** Be aware of what your subject is doing while answering questions. *Does the subject look you in the eye? Fidget and squirm? Look distracted or bored? Smile?* From these visual cues, you may be able to infer when your subject is speaking most frankly, doesn't want to give more information, or is tired of answering questions.
- **Take content notes.** Many interviewers take notes on a pad that is spiral bound on top and thus allows for quick page flipping. Don't try to write down everything, just major ideas and telling statements in the subject's own words that you might want to use as quotations in your paper. Omitting small words, focusing on the most distinctive and precise language, and using common abbreviations are all techniques to make taking notes more efficient.
- **Take context notes.** Note your subject's physical appearance, facial expressions, and clothing as well as the interview setting itself. These details will be useful later when you reconstruct the interview, helping you represent it more vividly in your paper.
- **Record audio with permission only.** If you plan to record the interview, ask for permission in advance. The advantage of recording is that you have a complete record of the conversation. Sometimes, when hearing the interview subject a second time, you notice important things you missed earlier. However, recording devices may make subjects nervous. Be aware, too, that transcribing a recording is time consuming. It's a good idea to have a pen in hand to catch highlights or jot down additional questions.
- **Confirm important assertions.** When your subject says something especially important or controversial, read back your notes aloud to check for accuracy and to allow your subject to elaborate. Some interviewers do this during the interview, while others do it at the end.
- **Review your notes.** Notes taken during an interview are brief reminders of what your subject has said, not complete quotations. Write out the complete information as soon after the interview as you can, certainly within 24 hours. Supplement the notes with other remembered details while they are still fresh, recording them in your research log or directly into a computer file that you can refer to as you write your paper.
- **Interview electronically.** It is possible, and useful, to contact individuals electronically. Phone interviews are quick and obvious ways of finding out information on short notice. Even better is asking questions via email, which is less intrusive than telephoning, as your subject can answer quickly, specifically, and in writing at a convenient time. Other electronic media for interviews include Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, and

Microsoft Teams. All of these tools allow you to see the interviewee physically without having to travel for an in-person interview.

## 13.3 Glance at the Research Process: Key Skills

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Locate and evaluate primary and secondary research materials, including journal articles and essays, books, scholarly and professionally established and maintained databases or archives, and informal electronic networks and Internet sources.
- Practice and apply strategies such as interpretation, synthesis, response, and critique to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources.
- Apply methods and technologies commonly used for research and communication in various fields.

Your task in writing an argumentative research paper as outlined in Writing Process: Integrating Research is to present original thinking that is supported by researched evidence. You may wonder how a college student will think of anything new to say about a topic that already has been researched by many others. First, keep in mind that your original thinking does not necessarily have to be groundbreaking—something never considered by others in the field—though it might be. Your original thinking may be something smaller but equally important, such as offering an alternative viewpoint on some evidence, interpreting existing evidence in a new way that sheds light on current questions in the field, or pointing out a flaw in the current thinking regarding a topic.

### Synthesis

One skill that will help you develop this original thinking is **synthesis**. As explained in Writing Process: Integrating Research, synthesis involves combining information gathered from various sources and making connections among those sources to create a new, deeper, or changed understanding of a topic. In other words, you examine how information or opinions you have read in one place relate to what you have read in another place or to your own thoughts. To practice the skill of synthesis, use Figure 13.6, which illustrates how thinking can change like ripples of water.




**FIGURE 13.6** Synthesizing research (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

#### Keeping Track of Sources

Because unorganized or incorrectly documented research may be less than useless, many researchers make the effort to keep their notes and comments on their sources in a **research log**. An organized record of all sources consulted, a research log includes publication information, notes taken from the sources, and

commentary about their relation to other sources or to the thesis of your paper. Having a dynamic tool such as this makes it easier to document sources in your works cited or references list and place in-text citations in your paper. It also helps with the research itself, showing at a glance what information you already have and where it comes from so that you can avoid repetition. Equally important, commentary on notes helps you synthesize information efficiently.

### Key Research Skills

In addition to synthesis and research log maintenance, a good researcher needs the following skills to perform required tasks:

- **Critical analysis:** Ability to think about what text or data means and how the parts relate to the whole.
- **Critical thinking:** Ability to analyze, make inferences, evaluate, synthesize, and draw conclusions on the basis of researched information.
- **Data collection:** Ability to gather facts and research on a topic through various kinds of sources, field research, observation, interviews, surveys or questionnaires, experimentation, and/or focus groups.
- **Field research:** Ability to collect raw data outside a laboratory, library, or workplace setting; observation and data collection in the subject's natural environment.
- **Interviewing:** Ability to engage in questions and answers with experts or those who have knowledge to share regarding a research topic.
- **Note-taking:** Ability to identify and record information that will later be used to support a thesis.
- **Organization:** Ability to plan, document, and track research to incorporate into a unified composition.
- **Paraphrasing:** Ability to restate an idea in your own words.
- **Summarizing:** Ability to restate in your own words the main ideas and key details of a text.
- **Synthesis:** Ability to combine information from different sources and make connections among them to form a new conclusion or deeper understanding of a topic.
- **Technology:** Ability to use computers, databases, and other forms of technology to conduct research.
- **Time management:** Ability to plan research tasks over several weeks or months.

## 13.4 Annotated Student Sample: Research Log

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate the ability to inquire, learn, think critically, and communicate when reading in varying rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Identify and analyze relationships between ideas, patterns of organization, and interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements in written texts.
- Practice and apply strategies such as interpretation, synthesis, response, and critique to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources.

### Introduction

Lily Tran created this log entry during the research process for an argumentative research paper assigned in her first-year composition class, as shown in this Annotated Student Sample.

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### Planning to Write




**FIGURE 13.7** National Guard soldiers at the Glendale, Arizona, food bank, 2021 (credit: "U.S. Air National Guard" by Tech. Sgt. Michael Matkin/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

> **Freewrite:** I found this photograph in an article I was reading about food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic. I copied and pasted it here as inspiration for my argumentative research paper.

*Lily Tran includes a visual in the freewrite section of her research log. The visual may or may not appear in the final paper, but here, it serves to stimulate her writing and thinking about her topic and possibly connect to other information she finds.*

> For a sustainable future, food production and processing have to change. So does global distribution.

*Tran begins to establish problem-and-solution reasoning, recognizing that there are different stages to food production and that all will be affected by any proposed solution.*

> The necessary changes will affect nearly all aspects of life, including world hunger, health and welfare, use of land resources, habitats, water, energy use and production, greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, and economics, as well as cultural and social values.

*Tran also employs cause-and-effect reasoning in beginning to think about the effects of any proposed change.*

> These needed changes may not be popular, but people will have to accept them.

*She recognizes potential counterarguments to address if the paper is to be persuasive.*

| Information | Connection to Thesis/Main Points | Notes/Cross-References/Synthesis |
|---|---|---|
| **Date:** 12/07/2020<br>Their report states, "If society continues on a 'business-as-usual' dietary trajectory, a 119% increase in edible crops grown will be required by 2050" (Berners-Lee). | Shows why a solution to food sustainability is needed | Create a concrete example to support this statistic. For example, if Farmer Joe grows . . .<br>Tie to the explanation of the problem for which I'm proposing a solution. |
| *Tran cites and quotes an alarming statistic from a secondary source.* | *She makes a connection to her thesis.* | *She anticipates that not all readers will respond to the statistic alone. To counteract this possibility, she may decide to create an original anecdotal example.*<br>*Tran then connects the information to the text structure: problem/solution.* |
| **Source/Citation:** Berners-Lee, M., et al. "Current Global Food Production Is Sufficient to Meet Human Nutritional Needs in 2050 Provided There Is Radical Societal Adaptation." *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*, vol. 6, 2018, online.ucpress.edu/elementa/article/doi/10.1525/elementa.310/112838/Current-global-food-production-is-sufficient-to (https://openstax.org/r/onlineucpress). Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.<br>*Tran uses MLA 8th edition style guidelines to create this citation for her log entry. She includes all information needed for citing the entry in the works cited list for her paper.* | | |

**TABLE 13.3** Research log entry

## Discussion Questions

1. If Lily Tran were to use the photo, what information or questions might she enter in the right-hand column of her research log?
2. Why do you think Tran has chosen a direct quotation instead of a summary or paraphrase?
3. Why is the information in the center column important to include in a research log?

# 13.5 Research Process: Making Notes, Synthesizing Information, and Keeping a Research Log

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Employ the methods and technologies commonly used for research and communication within various fields.
- Practice and apply strategies such as interpretation, synthesis, response, and critique to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources.
- Analyze and make informed decisions about intellectual property based on the concepts that motivate them.
- Apply citation conventions systematically.

As you conduct research, you will work with a range of "texts" in various forms, including sources and documents from online databases as well as images, audio, and video files from the Internet. You may also work with archival materials and with transcribed and analyzed primary data. Additionally, you will be taking notes and recording quotations from secondary sources as you find materials that shape your understanding of your topic and, at the same time, provide you with facts and perspectives. You also may download articles as PDFs that you then annotate. Like many other students, you may find it challenging to keep so much material organized, accessible, and easy to work with while you write a major research paper. As it does for many of those students, a research log for your ideas and sources will help you keep track of the scope, purpose, and possibilities of any research project.

A research log is essentially a journal in which you collect information, ask questions, and monitor the results. Even if you are completing the annotated bibliography for Writing Process: Informing and Analyzing, keeping a research log is an effective organizational tool. Like Lily Tran's research log entry, most entries have three parts: a part for notes on secondary sources, a part for connections to the thesis or main points, and a part for your own notes or questions. Record source notes by date, and allow room to add cross-references to other entries.

## Summary of Assignment: Research Log

Your assignment is to create a research log similar to the student model. You will use it for the argumentative research project assigned in Writing Process: Integrating Research to record all secondary source information: your notes, complete publication data, relation to thesis, and other information as indicated in the right-hand column of the sample entry.

***Another Lens.*** A somewhat different approach to maintaining a research log is to customize it to your needs or preferences. You can apply shading or color coding (https://openstax.org/r/shadingorcolorcoding) to headers, rows, and/or columns in the three-column format (for colors and shading). Or you can add columns to accommodate more information, analysis, synthesis, or commentary, formatting them as you wish. Consider adding a column for questions only or one for connections to other sources. Finally, consider a different visual format (https://openstax.org/r/visualformat), such as one without columns. Another possibility is to record some of your comments and questions so that you have an aural rather than a written record of these.

### Writing Center

At this point, or at any other point during the research and writing process, you may find that your school's writing center can provide extensive assistance. If you are unfamiliar with the writing center, now is a good time to pay your first visit. Writing centers provide free peer tutoring for all types and phases of writing. Discussing your research with a trained writing center tutor can help you clarify, analyze, and connect ideas as well as provide feedback on works in progress.

## Quick Launch: Beginning Questions

You may begin your research log with some open pages in which you freewrite, exploring answers to the following questions. Although you generally would do this at the beginning, it is a process to which you likely will return as you find more information about your topic and as your focus changes, as it may during the course of your research.

- What information have I found so far?
- What do I still need to find?
- Where am I most likely to find it?

These are beginning questions. Like Lily Tran, however, you will come across general questions or issues that a quick note or freewrite may help you resolve. The key to this section is to revisit it regularly. Written answers to these and other self-generated questions in your log clarify your tasks as you go along, helping you articulate

ideas and examine supporting evidence critically. As you move further into the process, consider answering the following questions in your freewrite:

- What evidence looks as though it best supports my thesis?
- What evidence challenges my working thesis?
- How is my thesis changing from where it started?

## Creating the Research Log

As you gather source material for your argumentative research paper, keep in mind that the research is intended to support original thinking. That is, you are not writing an informational report in which you simply supply facts to readers. Instead, you are writing to support a thesis that shows original thinking, and you are collecting and incorporating research into your paper to support that thinking. Therefore, a research log, whether digital or handwritten, is a great way to keep track of your thinking as well as your notes and bibliographic information.

In the model below, Lily Tran records the correct MLA bibliographic citation for the source. Then, she records a note and includes the in-text citation here to avoid having to retrieve this information later. Perhaps most important, Tran records *why* she noted this information—how it supports her thesis: *The human race must turn to sustainable food systems that provide healthy diets with minimal environmental impact, starting now.* Finally, she makes a note to herself about an additional visual to include in the final paper to reinforce the point regarding the current pressure on food systems. And she connects the information to other information she finds, thus cross-referencing and establishing a possible synthesis. Use a format similar to that in Table 13.4 to begin your own research log.

| Information | Connection to Thesis/Main Points | Notes/Cross-References/ Synthesis |
|---|---|---|
| **Date:** 6/06/2021<br>It has been estimated, for example, that by 2050, milk production will increase 58 percent and meat production 73 percent (Chai). | Shows the pressure being put on food systems that will cause the need for more sustainable systems | Maybe include a graph showing the rising pressure on food systems.<br>Connects to similar predictions about produce and vegan diets. See Lynch et al. |
| **Source/Citation:** Chai, Bingil Clark, et al. "Which Diet Has the Least Environmental Impact on Our Planet? A Systematic Review of Vegan, Vegetarian and Omnivorous Diets." *Sustainability*, vol. 11, no. 15, 2019, www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/15/4110 (https://openstax.org/r/mdpi4110). Accessed 6 Dec. 2020. | | |
| **Date:** | | |
| **Source/Citation:** | | |
| **Date:** | | |
| **Source/Citation:** | | |

**TABLE 13.4** Model research log

## Types of Research Notes

Taking good notes will make the research process easier by enabling you to locate and remember sources and

use them effectively. While some research projects requiring only a few sources may seem easily tracked, research projects requiring more than a few sources are more effectively managed when you take good bibliographic and informational notes. As you gather evidence for your argumentative research paper, follow the descriptions and the electronic model to record your notes. You can combine these with your research log, or you can use the research log for secondary sources and your own note-taking system for primary sources if a division of this kind is helpful. Either way, be sure to include all necessary information.

### Bibliographic Notes

These identify the source you are using. When you locate a useful source, record the information necessary to find that source again. It is important to do this as you find each source, even before taking notes from it. If you create bibliographic notes as you go along, then you can easily arrange them in alphabetical order later to prepare the reference list required at the end of formal academic papers. If your instructor requires you to use MLA formatting for your essay, be sure to record the following information:

1. Author
2. Title of source
3. Title of container (larger work in which source is included)
4. Other contributors
5. Version
6. Number
7. Publisher
8. Publication date
9. Location

When using MLA style with online sources, also record the following information:

10. Date of original publication
11. Date of access
12. URL
13. DOI (A DOI, or digital object identifier, is a series of digits and letters that leads to the location of an online source. Articles in journals are often assigned DOIs to ensure that the source can be located, even if the URL changes. If your source is listed with a DOI, use that instead of a URL.)

It is important to understand which documentation style your instructor will require you to use. Check the Handbook for MLA Documentation and Format and APA Documentation and Format styles. In addition, you can check the style guide information provided by the Purdue Online Writing Lab (https://openstax.org/r/purdueonlineWL).

### Informational Notes

These notes record the relevant information found in your sources. When writing your essay, you will work from these notes, so be sure they contain all the information you need from every source you intend to use. Also try to focus your notes on your research question so that their relevance is clear when you read them later. To avoid confusion, work with separate entries for each piece of information recorded. At the top of each entry, identify the source through brief bibliographic identification (author and title), and note the page numbers on which the information appears. Also helpful is to add personal notes, including ideas for possible use of the information or cross-references to other information. As noted in Writing Process: Integrating Research, you will be using a variety of formats when borrowing from sources. Below is a quick review of these formats in terms of note-taking processes. By clarifying whether you are quoting directly, paraphrasing, or summarizing during these stages, you can record information accurately and thus take steps to avoid plagiarism.

### Direct Quotations, Paraphrases, and Summaries

A **direct quotation** is an exact duplication of the author's words as they appear in the original source. In your

notes, put quotation marks around direct quotations so that you remember these words are the author's, not yours. One advantage of copying exact quotations is that it allows you to decide later whether to include a quotation, paraphrase, or summary. ln general, though, use direct quotations only when the author's words are particularly lively or persuasive.

A **paraphrase** is a restatement of the author's words in your own words. Paraphrase to simplify or clarify the original author's point. In your notes, use paraphrases when you need to record details but not exact words.

A **summary** is a brief condensation or distillation of the main point and most important details of the original source. Write a summary in your own words, with facts and ideas accurately represented. A summary is useful when specific details in the source are unimportant or irrelevant to your research question. You may find you can summarize several paragraphs or even an entire article or chapter in just a few sentences without losing useful information. It is a good idea to note when your entry contains a summary to remind you later that it omits detailed information. See Writing Process Integrating Research for more detailed information and examples of quotations, paraphrases, and summaries and when to use them.

## Other Systems for Organizing Research Logs and Digital Note-Taking

Students often become frustrated and at times overwhelmed by the quantity of materials to be managed in the research process. If this is your first time working with both primary and secondary sources, finding ways to keep all of the information in one place and well organized is essential.

Because gathering primary evidence may be a relatively new practice, this section is designed to help you navigate the process. As mentioned earlier, information gathered in fieldwork is not cataloged, organized, indexed, or shelved for your convenience. Obtaining it requires diligence, energy, and planning. Online resources can assist you with keeping a research log. Your college library may have subscriptions to tools such as Todoist or EndNote. Consult with a librarian to find out whether you have access to any of these. If not, use something like the template shown in Figure 13.8, or another like it, as a template for creating your own research notes and organizational tool. You will need to have a record of all field research data as well as the research log for all secondary sources.

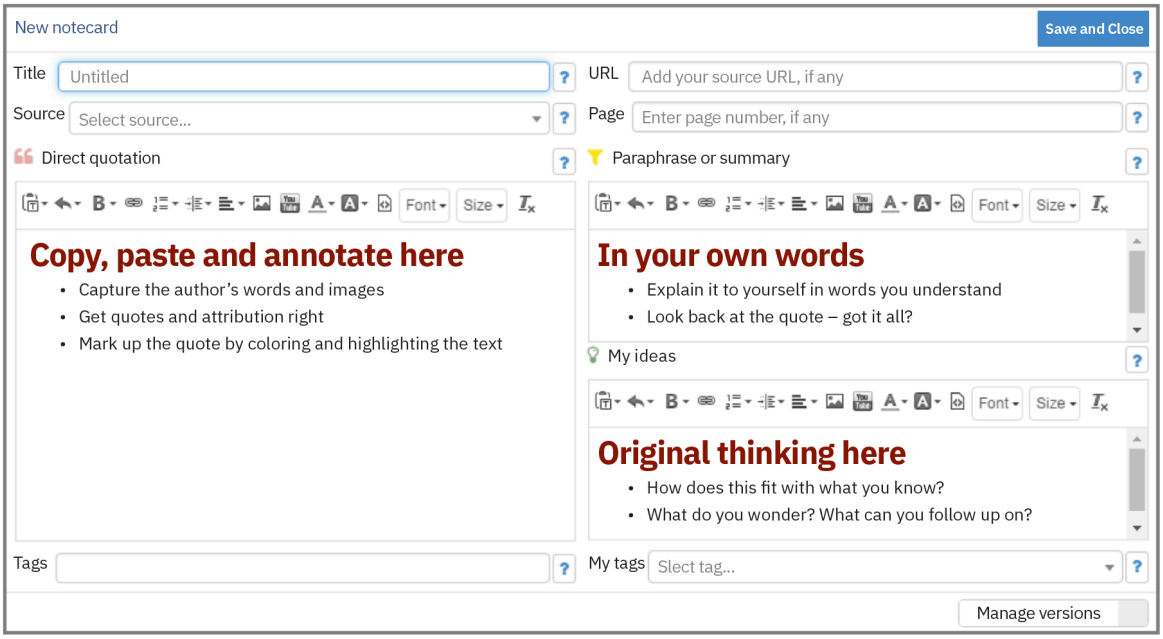



**FIGURE 13.8** Electronic note card (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

## 13.6 Spotlight on … Ethical Research

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Participate effectively in collaborative processes involving field research in a variety of disciplines.
- Develop projects using the characteristic processes of various disciplines.
- Analyze and make informed decisions about intellectual property based on the concepts that motivate them.
- Apply citation conventions systematically.

Whenever you do research, especially field research involving human participants, fair and ethical treatment of your subjects is expected. Included in this treatment are respect for privacy and, when required, anonymity. Related to fair and ethical treatment is your respect for the work of others, as demonstrated by attributing credit to sources from which you borrow information. Not doing so is one aspect of plagiarism.

### Working with Human Participants and Institutional Review Boards

To comply with federal regulations and ethical principles, universities maintain institutional review boards (IRBs) that monitor how researchers treat their research participants. A range of research involvement exists when working with human subjects; whether your research involves taking blood samples, conducting psychological experiments, or simply distributing surveys, you must be aware of and consult your university's IRB for policies and guidelines. In most cases, as undergraduates, you will not be working on research that is potentially risky or harmful to human participants. For example, it is unlikely you will be involved in conducting medical or psychological research. However, you may work on a project that requires field research such as interviews or observations. Although participants in a fieldwork project will probably not incur the same amount of risk as participants in clinical experiments, the IRB may have some questions nonetheless:

- Will participation be voluntary?
- Will the selection of research subjects be fair?
- Will confidentiality be preserved?
- Will there be any risks to participants?
- Will the study yield important results for society?

Whenever you conduct fieldwork, whether it is via interviews, observations, or surveys, keep in mind ethical considerations for your participants and the ways you represent them in your work. See Tracing a Broad Issue in the Individual for more information.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is putting one's name on a paper written by a friend and submitting it as one's own. Plagiarism is buying or downloading a paper from an Internet site and pretending to have written it. And plagiarism is pasting in a phrase, sentence, paragraph, passage, or portion of anybody else's work in a paper and not giving that author credit. ln these examples, the intent to plagiarize is deliberate and obvious, something that serious and honorable students would never do.

However, plagiarism also occurs when well-meaning students get careless when taking notes or copying notes into actual drafts. Following are three examples of unintentional plagiarism:

- A student copies a passage word for word from an Internet site and pastes it into a paper but forgets to include quotation marks or author attribution.
- A student summarizes a published author's idea but omits both author name and source title.
- A student credits an author's idea in a signal phrase (According to John Smith . . .) but omits quotation marks around the author's exact phrases.

All of these may be unintentional, but each is an act of plagiarism, easily avoidable by more careful research

and writing practice.

### What Plagiarism Is Not

While you cannot publish the work of others, you may publish material that is **common knowledge**—that is, historical, cultural, or geographical information that an educated adult would be expected to know. Nor do you need to attribute material that appears in multiple sources, such as dates of historical events, names and locations of states and cities, general laws of science, and statements of well-known theories.

You do not need to document phrases in widespread use in your culture or well-known information found in textbooks or lectures in the field in which you are writing. For example, in a paper written about Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) for a psychology class, you would not document the term *superego*, a word Freud frequently used. For more about what plagiarism is and is not, see Spotlight on … Citation.

### Avoiding Plagiarism

Ensuring that your voice, ideas, critical thinking, connections, and analysis are the focus of your essay and not allowing borrowed materials to "take over" are critical to avoiding plagiarism. Additionally, keeping an accurate research log will assist you in recording, attributing, and clearly citing borrowed materials. When you think about plagiarism, consider what seems fair and how you might feel if someone were to use your work without giving you credit. Here are a few tips for avoiding plagiarism:

- In your research log, and subsequently in your essay, put quotation marks around language that comes directly from your sources. Use internal citations and appropriate reference pages for academic papers.
- Use internal citations for paraphrases and summaries, and do your best to capture the sentiment of the author you cite, even when using your own words.
- Keep accurate, thorough research notes so that you have the source information you need to work efficiently and cite accurately. For all copied sources, write who said what, where, and when. When quoting directly, do not distort or intentionally modify an author's meaning.
- Plan your work schedule to allow time for careful reading of your sources and effective use of them.

Another way to avoid plagiarism is to make sure that you have enough time to write and revise your project multiple times. Many students often find that postponing or avoiding the research process forces them to become rushed and to present a product that reflects insufficient attention to attribution.

## Further Reading

Here are a few resources that you may find helpful throughout your research processes.

"Your Research Toolbox," University of Massachusetts Amherst: https://people.umass.edu/curtis/academics/researchtoolbox/researchlog.html

"Observing," Purdue Online Writing Lab (notes on conducting fieldwork): https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/conducting_research/conducting_primary_research/observing.html

"Using Citation Generators Responsibly," Purdue Online Writing Lab: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_citation_machines_responsibly.html

## Works Cited

*OWL: The Purdue Online Writing Lab*. Purdue U, 2021, owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html. Accessed 25 Jan. 2021.

# Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources

14



**FIGURE 14.1** Academic writers often create annotated bibliographies to inform readers about sources and to analyze the information sources provide. Annotated bibliographies are especially useful in argumentative and scientific research. (credit: "Wikimedia Design edit-a-thon 16" by Sebastian ter Burg/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**14.1** Compiling Sources for an Annotated Bibliography
**14.2** Glance at Form: Citation Style, Purpose, and Formatting
**14.3** Annotated Student Sample: "Healthy Diets from Sustainable Sources Can Save the Earth" by Lily Tran
**14.4** Writing Process: Informing and Analyzing


**INTRODUCTION** As an author, you will spend a great deal of time crafting your compositions to ensure that your ideas, thesis statements, and arguments come across to readers clearly and with authority. The way to present a strong, persuasive argument is through thorough analysis and solid evidence obtained from credible sources. Because sources are so important, creating an annotated bibliography can be a cornerstone of the argumentative research writing process.

This chapter shows how to develop an annotated bibliography for the argumentative research project presented in Writing Process: Integrating Research. An annotated bibliography shows the authority present in each of the sources and explains why each was chosen. The information in the annotated bibliography helps readers understand the role a bibliography plays in gathering and using sources to support an argument. Later in the chapter, you will apply the principles presented to create your own annotated bibliography for one of the assignments in this course—perhaps your own argumentative research paper, as outlined in Writing Process: Integrating Research.

If you are creating an annotated bibliography, you may not have created a research log, as addressed in

Research Process: Making Notes, Synthesizing Information, and Keeping a Research Log. However, as you work through this chapter, consult Research Process: Making Notes, Synthesizing Information, and Keeping a Research Log for additional information about locating, analyzing, and incorporating sources.

By creating an annotated bibliography, you move beyond simply collecting sources to interacting with them. When writing annotations, you read each source more closely than you would otherwise, think about it more critically, and strengthen your own claims on the topic. An annotated bibliography thus provides you with perspectives beyond your own ideas and helps you understand where your claims fit into the broader body of knowledge on the topic, or "the conversation." Annotated bibliographies help other scholars by providing an overview of the sources and breadth of knowledge about the research surrounding a given topic.



Writing an annotated bibliography is an opportunity to practice expectations of convention; there are many rules to follow depending on the format and style you write in. But it can also be an opportunity to challenge convention in both the content and the style of your writing. A growing movement in academics fosters anti-racist practice, which embraces stylistic choices based on culture. That is to say, so-called standard language ideologies are no longer seen as "better" or even "correct." Rather, an ever-evolving idea of language awareness increasingly allows students and their instructors to explore cultural expression of ideas.

## 14.1 Compiling Sources for an Annotated Bibliography

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Integrate your ideas with ideas from related sources.
- Locate, compile, and evaluate primary, secondary, and tertiary research materials related to your topic.

A **bibliography** is a list of the sources you use when doing research for a project or composition. Named for the Greek terms *biblion*, meaning "book," and *graphos*, meaning "something written," bibliographies today compile more than just books. Often they include academic journal articles, periodicals, websites, and multimedia texts such as videos. A bibliography alone, at the end of a research work, also may be labeled "References" or "Works Cited," depending on the citation style you are using. The bibliography lists information about each source, including author, title, publisher, and publication date. Each set of source information, or each individual entry, listed in the bibliography or noted within the body of the composition is called a **citation**.

Bibliographies include formal documentation entries that serve several purposes:

- They help you organize your own research on a topic and narrow your topic, thesis, or argument.
- They help you build knowledge.
- They strengthen your arguments by offering proof that your research comes from trustworthy sources.
- They enable readers to do more research on the topic.
- They create a community of researchers, thus adding to the ongoing conversation on the research topic.
- They give credit to authors and sources from which you draw and support your ideas.

**Annotated bibliography** expand on typical bibliographies by including information beyond the basic citation information and commentary on the source. Although they present each formal documentation entry as it would appear in a source list such as a works cited page, an annotated bibliography includes two types of additional information. First, following the documentation entry is a short **description** of the work, including information about its authors and how it was or can be used in a research project. Second is an **evaluation** of the work's validity, reliability, and/or bias. The purpose of the annotation is to summarize, assess, and reflect on the source. Annotations can be both explanatory and analytical, helping readers understand the research you used to formulate your argument. An annotated bibliography can also help you demonstrate that you have read the sources you will potentially cite in your work. It is a tool to assist in the gathering of these sources and serves as a repository. You won't necessarily use all the sources cited in your annotated bibliography in your

final work, but gathering, evaluating, and documenting these sources is an integral part of the research process.

## Compiling Sources

Research projects and compositions, particularly argumentative or position texts, require you to collect sources, devise a thesis, and then support that thesis through analysis of the evidence, including sources, you have compiled. With access to the Internet and an academic library, you will rarely encounter a shortage of sources for any given topic or argument. The real challenge may be sorting through all the available sources and determining which will be useful.

The first step in completing an annotated bibliography is to locate and compile sources to use in your research project. At the beginning, you do not need to be highly selective in this process, as you may not ultimately use every source. Therefore, gather any materials—including books, websites, professional journals, periodicals, and documents—that you think may contain valuable ideas about your topic. *But where do you find sources that relate to your argument? And how do you choose which sources to use?* This section will help you answer those questions and choose sources that will both enhance and challenge your claim, allowing you to confront contradictory evidence and **synthesize** ideas, or combine ideas from various sources, to produce a well-constructed original argument. See Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information for more information about sources and synthesizing information.

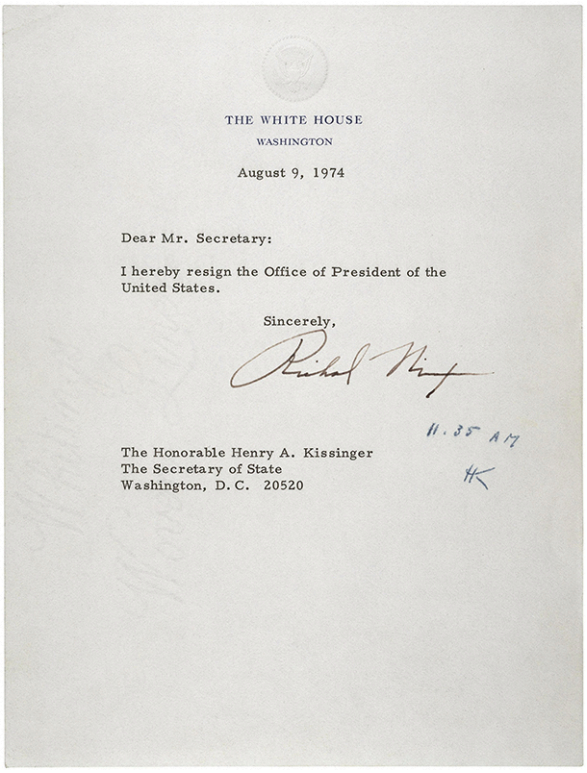
## Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Sources

In your research, you likely will use three types of sources: primary, secondary, and tertiary. During any research project, your use of these sources will depend on your topic, your thesis, and, ultimately, how you intend to use them. In all likelihood, you will need to seek out all three.

### Primary Sources

Primary sources allow you to create your own analysis with the appropriate rhetorical approach. In the humanities disciplines, **primary sources** include original documents, data, images, and other compositions that provide a firsthand account of an event or a time in history. Typically, primary sources are created close in time to the event or period they represent and may include journal or diary entries, newspaper articles, government records, photographs, artworks, maps, speeches, films, and interviews. In scientific disciplines, primary sources provide information such as scientific discoveries, raw data, experimental and research results, and clinical trial findings. They may include published studies, scientific journal articles, and proceedings of meeting or conferences.

Primary sources also can include student-conducted interviews and surveys. Other primary sources may be found on websites such as the Library of Congress (https://openstax.org/r/Library_of), the Historical Text Archive (https://openstax.org/r/Historical_Text), government websites, and article databases. In all academic areas, primary sources are fact based, not interpretive. That is, they may be commenting on or interpreting something else, but they *themselves* are the source. For example, an article written during the 1840s condemning the practice of enslavement may interpret events occurring then, but it is a primary source document of its time.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 9, 1974

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I hereby resign the Office of President of the United States.

Sincerely,

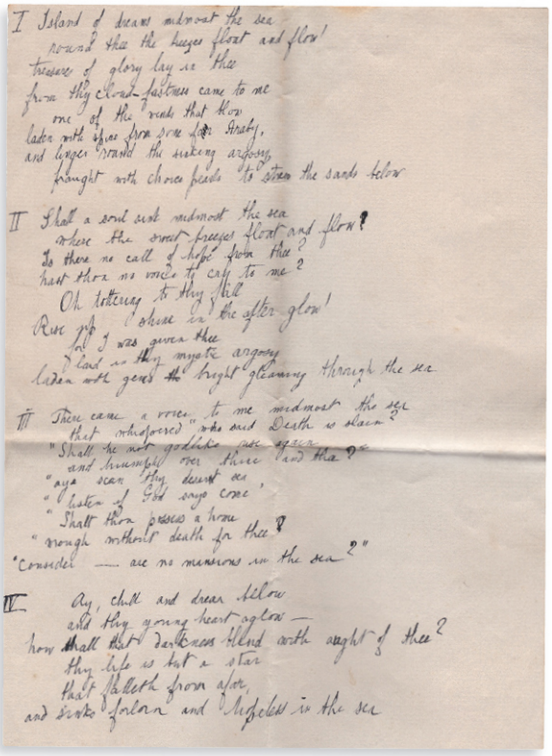
Richard Nixon

11.35 AM

The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
The Secretary of State
Washington, D. C. 20520

HK

**FIGURE 14.2** This letter of resignation by President Richard Nixon (1913–1994), written in 1974, is an example of a primary source. (credit: "Letter of Resignation of Richard M. Nixon, 1974" by Former U.S. President Richard M. Nixon, officially a work of the U.S. government/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)



I Island of dreams midmost the sea
around the the hueys float and flow!
treasure of glory lay in thee
from thy closed fastness came to me
one of the winds that blow
laden with spice from groves afar Arabby,
and bringest round the sinking argosy
fraught with choice perils to strew the sands below

II Shall a soul sink midmost the sea
where the purest pearls float and glow?
Is there no call of hope from thee?
hast thou no voice to cry to me?
Oh tottering to thy fall
River gift I was given thee
Land in thy mystic argosy
laden with gems the bright gleaming through the sea

III There came a voice to me midmost the sea
that whispered "who said Death is slain?
"Shall the mute goddess age
and triumph over three and thee?"
"aye dear thy doubt was
"Listen to God says one,
"Shall thou possess a home
"enough without death for thee?
"Consider — are no mansions in the sea?"

IV Ay, chill and drear below
and thy young heart aglow —
how shall dull darkness blend with aught of thee?
thy life is but a star
that falleth from afar,
and sinks forlorn and lifeless in the sea

**FIGURE 14.3** Original poetry, such as this mirror-writing poem by Caroline Fitzgerald, is an example of a primary source. Manuscripts, journals, and diaries are primary sources. (credit: "Caroline Fitzgerald poem in mirror writing flipped" by Caroline Fitzgerald (1865–1911)/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

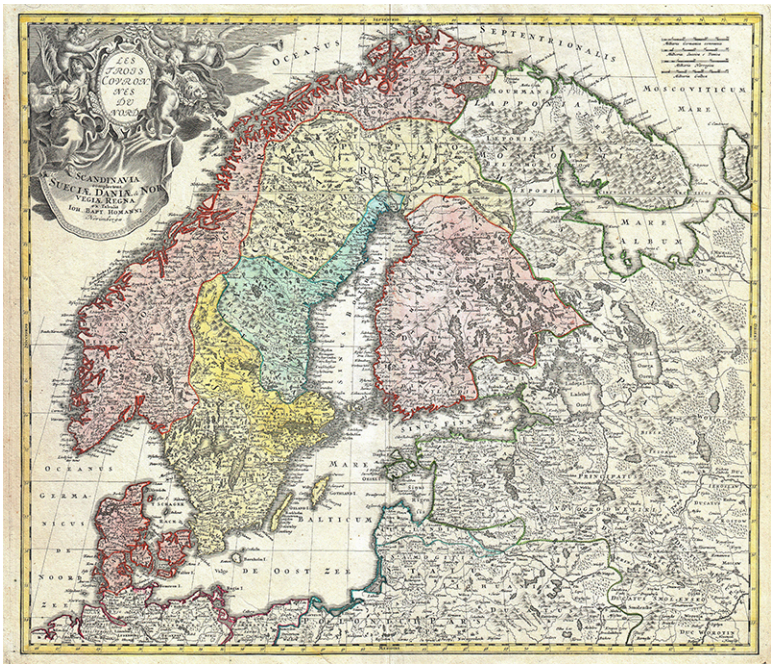



**FIGURE 14.4** This map of Scandinavia from 1730 is an example of a primary source. (credit: "1730 Homann Map of Scandinavia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and the Baltics - Geographicus – Scandinavia" by Johann Homann (1664–1724)/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

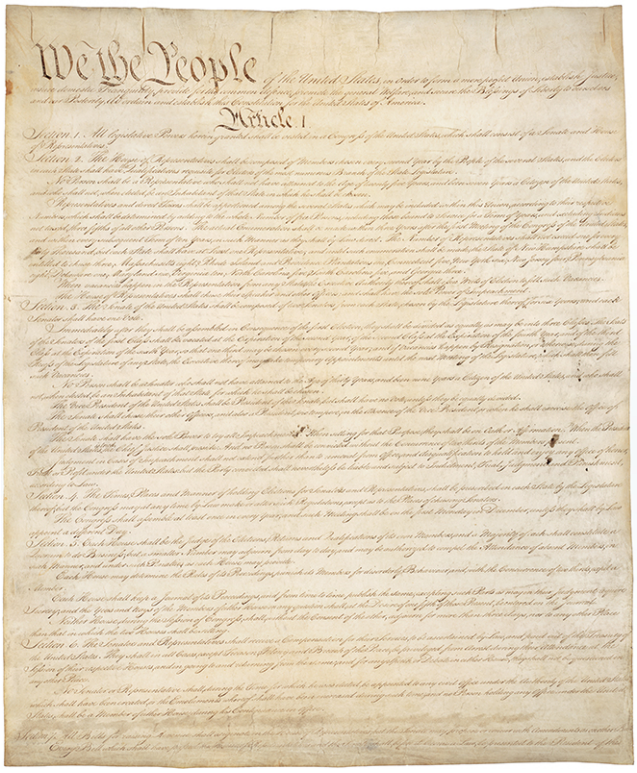



**FIGURE 14.5** Government documents, such as the United States Constitution, are primary sources. (credit: "Constitution of the United States, page 1" by U.S. National Archives and Records Administration/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

### Secondary Sources

**Secondary sources**, unlike primary sources, are interpretive. They often provide a secondhand account of an

event or research results, analyze or clarify primary sources and scientific discoveries, or interpret a creative work. These sources are important for supporting or challenging your argument, addressing counterarguments, and synthesizing ideas. Secondary sources in the humanities disciplines include biographies, literary criticism, and reviews of the fine arts, among other sources. In the scientific disciplines, secondary sources encompass analyses of scientific studies or clinical trials, reviews of experimental results, and publications about the significance of studies or experiments. In some instances, the same item can serve as both a primary and a secondary source, depending on how it is used. For example, a journal article in which the author analyzes the impact of a clinical trial would serve as a secondary source. But if you instead count the number of journal articles that feature reports on a particular clinical trial, you might use them as primary sources because they would then serve as data points.

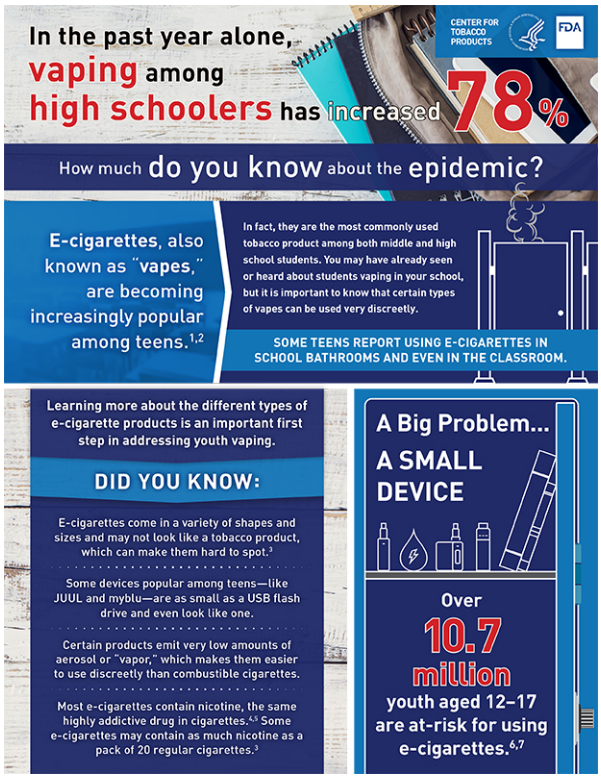



**FIGURE 14.6** Infographics are secondary sources that combine text and graphics to summarize information about a topic. (credit: "Youth Vaping Risks" by nhs.gov/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Table 14.1 provides examples of how primary and secondary sources often relate to one another.

| Discipline | Primary Source Example | Secondary Source Example |
|---|---|---|
| **Literature** | Wilfred Owen's poem "Dulce et Decorum est" | Essay analyzing World War I poetry |
| **Psychology** | Raw data from a study testing the effects of a medication on bipolar disorder | Book evaluating different approaches to treating bipolar disorder in patients |
| **Politics and Government** | Transcript of John F. Kennedy's inauguration speech | Website analyzing the themes present in John F. Kennedy's inauguration speech |
| **History** | Diary of a soldier who fought in the Civil War | Textbook entry about the battles of the Civil War |

**TABLE 14.1** Primary and secondary sources

| Discipline | Primary Source Example | Secondary Source Example |
|---|---|---|
| **Fine Art** | Native American pottery | Newspaper article about the importance of honoring Native American art |
| **Performing Arts** | Recording of a live concert | Critical review of a concert published in a magazine |

**TABLE 14.1** Primary and secondary sources

### Tertiary Sources

In addition to primary and secondary sources, you can use a tertiary source to summarize or digest information from primary and/or secondary sources. Because tertiary sources often condense information, they usually do not provide enough information on their own to support claims. However, they often contain a variety of citations that can help you identify and locate valuable primary and secondary sources. Researchers often use tertiary sources to find general, historical, or background information as well as a broad overview of a topic. Tertiary sources frequently placed in the secondary-source category include reference materials such as encyclopedias, textbooks, manuals, digests, and bibliographies. For more discussion on sources, see The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources.




**FIGURE 14.7** Textbooks are examples of tertiary sources. (credit: "Programming language textbooks" by User:K.lee/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## Authoritative Sources

Not all sources are created equally. You likely know already that you must vet sources—especially those you find on the Internet—for legitimacy, validity, and the presence of bias. For example, you probably know that the website Wikipedia is not considered a trustworthy source because it is open to user editing. This accessibility means the site's authority cannot be established and, therefore, the source cannot effectively support or refute a claim you are attempting to make, though you can use it at times to point you to reliable sources. While so-called bad sources may be easy to spot, researchers may have more difficulty discriminating between sources that are authoritative and those that pose concerns. In fact, you may encounter a general hierarchy of sources in your compilation. Understanding this hierarchy can help you identify which sources to use and how to use them in your research.

### Peer-Reviewed Academic Publications

This first tier of sources—the gold standard of research—includes academic literature, which consists of textbooks, essays, journals, articles, reports, and scholarly books. As scholarly works, these sources usually provide strong evidence for an author's claims by reflecting rigorous research and scrutiny by experts in the field. These types of sources are most often published, sponsored, or supported by academic institutions, often a university or an academic association such as the Modern Language Association (MLA). Such associations exist to encourage research and collaboration within their discipline, mostly through publications and conferences. To be published, academic works must pass through a rigorous process called **peer review**, in which scholars in the field evaluate it anonymously. You can find peer-reviewed academic sources in library catalogs, in article databases, and through Google Scholar online. Sometimes these sources require a subscription to access, but students often receive access through their school.

Academic articles, particularly in the social and other sciences, generally have most or all of the following sections, a structure you might recognize if you have written lab reports in science classes:

- **Abstract**. This short summary covers the purpose, methods, and findings of the paper. It may discuss briefly the implications or significance of the research.
- **Introduction**. The main part of the paper begins with an introduction that presents the issue or main idea addressed by the research, establishes its importance, and poses the author's thesis.
- **Review**. Next comes an overview of previous academic research related to the topic, including a synthesis that makes a case for why the research is important and necessary.
- **Data** and **Methods**. The main part of the original research begins with a description of the data and methods used, including what data or information the author collected and how the author used it.
- **Results**. Data and methods are followed by results, detailing the significant findings from the experiment or research.
- **Conclusion**. In the conclusion, the author discusses the results in the context of the bigger picture, explaining the author's position on how these results relate to the earlier review of literature and their significance in the broad scope of the topic. The author also may propose future research needs or point out unanswered questions.
- **Works Cited or References**. The paper ends with a list of all sources the author used in the research, including the review of literature. This often-overlooked portion of the composition is critical in evaluating the credibility of any paper that involves research.



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The perception of odor objects in everyday life: a review on the processing of odor mixtures

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Smelling monomolecular odors hardly ever occurs in everyday life, and the daily functioning of the sense of smell relies primarily on the processing of complex mixtures of volatiles that are present in the environment (e.g., emanating from food or conspecifics). Such processing allows for the instantaneous recognition and categorization of smells and also for the discrimination of odors among others to extract relevant information and to adapt efficiently in different contexts. The neurophysiological mechanisms underpinning this highly efficient analysis of complex mixtures of odorants is beginning to be unraveled and support the idea that olfaction, as vision and audition, relies on odor-objects encoding. This configural processing of odor mixtures, which is empirically subject to important applications in our societies (e.g., the art of perfumers, flavorists, and wine makers), has been scientifically studied only during the last decades. This processing depends on many individual factors, among which are the developmental stage, lifestyle, physiological and mood state, and cognitive skills; this processing also presents striking similarities between species. The present review gathers the recent findings, as observed in animals, healthy subjects, and/or individuals with affective disorders, supporting the perception of complex odor stimuli as odor objects. It also discusses peripheral to central processing, and cognitive and behavioral significance. Finally, this review highlights that the study of odor mixtures is an original window allowing for the investigation of daily olfaction and emphasizes the need for knowledge about the underlying biological processes, which appear to be crucial for our representation and adaptation to the chemical environment.

Keywords: odor mixture, perception, interactions, configural, elemental, animal behavior, human applications

INTRODUCTION

The way human beings map their environment as a brain representation is a cornerstone to the interactions they can develop with their surroundings and thus determines their fitness to the world they live in. This representation is built on the basis of sensory cues provided by sensory organs and gathered in the brain. The environment is particularly rich in volatile chemical compounds emitted from a large variety of natural and unnatural sources (e.g., plants, food, conspecifics, organisms, perfumes, human activities). The olfactory system must compute this mixture of volatiles, all day long at a certain distance from the sources and in a timescale reconcilable with fast but relevant behaviors. This is the challenge of the sense of smell, which has to extract relevant information from highly complex chemical mixtures. For humans and other organisms, the success of this computation is a prerequisite to a reliable mental representation of the olfactory environment, which is essential for maximizing adapted behaviors throughout life. Conversely, impaired olfactory processing may affect health and/or well-being and can even lead to death in certain species.

Efficient processing of odorants mixtures should allow for not only the instantaneous recognition and categorization of smells but also the discrimination of odors among others (e.g., background). The different ways in which the olfactory system processes an odor mixture relative to its components contributes to this discrimination. Nevertheless, though olfaction has been the subject of numerous studies, most of them used so-called "monomolecular odors" (i.e., they were based on single odorants as stimuli). As a consequence, the psychophysiological and neurobiological mechanisms that govern the perception of complex odor stimuli, namely the daily functioning of the sense of smell, remain poorly understood. In this context, the present review aims to depict the current knowledge on the perception of odor mixtures. The main guideline of this review is to gather and discuss the results of very recent as well as major studies on the processing of odor mixtures whatever they focused on cellular, neurobiological, behavioral or psychological aspects, and to take into consideration studies conducted both in humans and animals. Considering that olfactory neuroanatomy is remarkably conserved among animals (Ache and Young, 2005), we especially took advantage of studies in non-human species to highlight the ongoing research on the mechanisms of peripheral and central processing specific to complex odor stimuli. Then we discuss the implications of these mechanisms in relation to the perception

www.frontiersin.org June 2014 | Volume 5 | Article 504 | 1

**FIGURE 14.8** Articles from peer-reviewed academic journals such as this one are among the most credible sources you can use. (credit: "The perception of odor objects in everyday life a review on the processing of odor mixtures" by Thierry Thomas-Danguin, Charlotte Sinding, et al./Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0)

### Credible Nonacademic Sources

These sources, including articles, books, and reports, are second in authority only to peer-reviewed academic publications. Credible nonacademic sources are often about current events or discoveries not yet reviewed in academic circles and often provide a wider-ranging outlook on your topic. Peer-reviewed texts tend to be narrow and specific, whereas nonacademic texts from well-researched sources are often more accessible and can offer a broader perspective. These three major categories generally provide quality sources:

- Information, white papers, and reports from government and international agencies such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the United States government
- Longer articles and reports from major newspapers, broadcast media, and magazines that are well regarded in academic circles, including the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the BBC, and the *Economist*
- Nonacademic books written by authors with expertise and credentials, who support their ideas with well-sourced information

To find nonacademic sources, search for .gov or .org sites related to your topic. A word of caution, however: know that sources ending in .org are often advocacy sites and, consequently, inherently biased toward whatever cause they are advocating. You also can look at academic article databases and search articles from major newspapers and magazines, both of which can be found online.

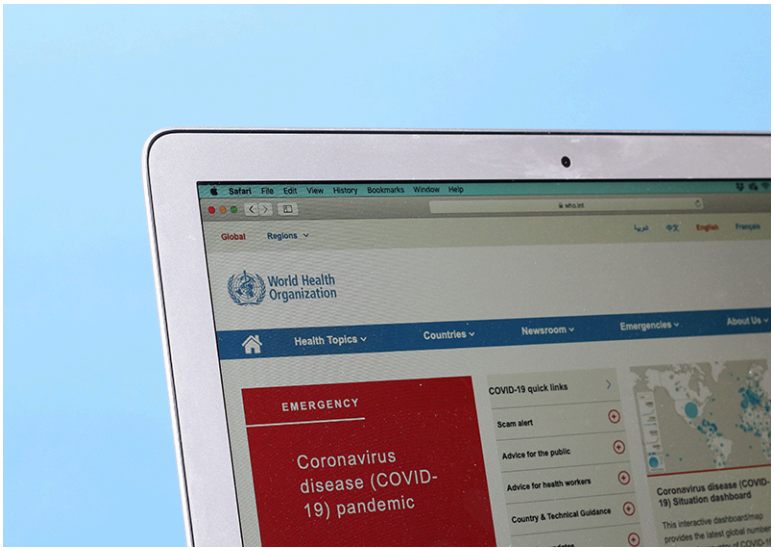



**FIGURE 14.9** Information from credible sources, such as the World Health Organization, provides value to your research. (credit: "WHO World Health Organization on Coronavirus pandemic COVID-19" by https://www.nursetogether.com/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0)

### Short Informational Texts from Credible Websites and Periodicals

The next most authoritative sources are shorter newspaper articles or other pieces on credible websites. These articles tend to be limited in scope, as their authors report on a single issue or event. Although they do not often provide in-depth analysis, they can be a source of credible facts to support your argument. Alternatively, they can point you in the direction of more detailed or rigorous sources that will enhance your research by tracing the original texts or sources on which the articles are based. Usually, you can find these sources through Internet searches, but sometimes you may have difficulty determining their credibility.

### Judging Credibility

To judge credibility, begin by looking for the author or organization publishing the information. Most periodical compositions contain a short "About the Author" blurb at the beginning or end of the article and often include a link to the author's credentials or to more information about them. Using this information, you can begin to determine their expertise and, potentially, any agenda the author or organization may have. For example, expect a piece discussing side effects of medical marijuana written by a doctor to present more expertise than the same piece written by a political lobbyist. You also can determine whether bias is present; for example, the organization may promote a particular way of thinking or have an agenda that will influence the content and language of the composition. In general, look for articles written with neutral expertise.

### The CRAAP Test

You may find the CRAAP test a helpful and easy-to-remember tool for testing credibility. This checklist provides you with a method for evaluating any source for both reliability and credibility. CRAAP stands for Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose. The CRAAP test, as shown in Table 14.2, includes questions that can be asked of any source.

| | |
|---|---|
| Currency | When was the information published, revised, or updated?<br>Does your topic require current information?<br>Are links within the source current? |
| Relevance | Does the information relate to your topic or support your thesis?<br>Who is the intended audience of the source?<br>What is the purpose of the source? |
| Authority | Who is the publisher, sponsor, or source?<br>What are the author's credentials and/or qualifications?<br>Does the URL reveal anything about the source? |
| Accuracy | Where does the information come from?<br>What evidence is used to support the information, and can it be verified?<br>Are there elements of bias?<br>Has the information been reviewed? |
| Purpose | What is the author's purpose for creating the source?<br>Is the information based on facts, opinion, or propaganda?<br>What biases are present? Are biases recognized? |

**TABLE 14.2** CRAAP test questions

### Sources with Clear Bias or Unclear Authority

The final type of source encompasses nearly everything else. Although they cannot be considered credible or valid to support your argument or claims, these sources are not necessarily useless. Especially when you are compiling sources at the beginning of a project, those with clear bias or unclear authority can be useful as you explore all facets of a topic, including positions within an argument. These sources also can help you identify topics on which to base your search terms and can even point you toward more credible sources.




**FIGURE 14.10** Websites and periodicals with clear bias or without clear authority may be useful in pointing you in the direction of more credible sources. (credit: skylarvision/Pixabay, CC0 1.0)

## Locating Sources

Academic article databases are the best starting places for finding sources. There are too many databases to cover them all in this chapter, but you would be wise to familiarize yourself with those to which you have access through your school or program. For further information on databases, see The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources. In the long run, this knowledge will save you a good deal of time and a possible headache.

You will want to start with your college library website, which includes access to sources paid for by your institution. As a student, you should be able to access these quickly and easily. Another popular and wide-ranging database is Google Scholar (https://openstax.org/r/Google_Scholar). Google Scholar is helpful for finding sources across a wide range of topics. One drawback, however, is that it catalogues nearly all disciplines, so the results can be vast and unfocused. Therefore, when using Google Scholar, be as specific as possible, and add your academic discipline as a keyword. For example, when searching for information on climate change, add the keyword "environment" or "politics" depending on your research angle; otherwise, the results will include all disciplines and potentially bury the articles you seek. Google Scholar also has a feature labeled "Cited by," which shows you other papers that cite the article in their review of literature relate to the topic. Writing Process: Informing and Analyzing contains more information about focusing your searches. Like clues to a mystery, one search can lead you to a wealth of related articles.

When you are able to identify potential sources by reading their abstracts or using Google Scholar, you may at times land on a publisher's website that requires you to pay to read the full article. When you find yourself in a situation such as this, record information about the article—author(s), article title, journal title, publication date. It is likely that you will be able to use your school's database to access the article. For information about other databases, consult The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources.

Just as writing is **recursive**, requiring you to go back and forth between different stages of the process, you will likely return to your annotated bibliography at different points. You may begin by looking for sources related to your topic, or you may choose or narrow your topic after an initial database search for sources. If your project has a variety of possible topics, you may even start with a current issue of a leading journal in the field, find an article that interests you, and use that article to shape your topic selection. As a bonus, you will have your first reputable source. Later, as you refine your thesis, reasoning, and evidence, you may find yourself returning to your search for sources. Consider this hypothetical situation: You are developing an argument that examines the risk factors of childhood trauma that surface in later life. As you analyze the data from your sources, it occurs to you to find out whether any documented correlation exists between early trauma and resilience. So you return to Google Scholar and your university's academic database to find more research based on this idea in order to revise your analysis by adding the new viewpoint.

One difficulty may be homing in on the keywords that will lead you to the sources you need. At this point, sources from the last two categories discussed may come into play: short pieces from credible websites and newspapers and other texts with clear bias or unclear authority. Less credible sources may lead you to better ones, particularly if you can identify the keywords used in them and then apply those keywords within academic databases. For more on developing useful keywords, consult The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources.

### Boolean Operators

Keyword searches can become frustrating, either yielding so much information that it seems impossible to sort through or narrowing the search so much that you miss important potential sources. One way to remedy this situation is to become familiar with **Boolean operators**, the basis of mathematical sets and database logic. Rather than searching with natural language only, you can use these operators to focus your search. The three basic Boolean operators are **AND**, **OR**, and **NOT**. Using these operators helps you search by linking necessary information, excluding irrelevant information, and focusing information. For example, if you have some pieces

of information from tertiary sources, you may be able to use Boolean operators to find additional useful sources. A search string such as *artificial intelligence (title) AND Buiten (author) AND 2019 (year)* can yield the exact journal source you need. Here is a brief review of how to use the three operators:

- Use **AND** to narrow search results and tell the database to include *all* search terms in finding sources. If you want to find sources that include all of the search terms entered, use the AND operator. In Figure 14.11, the darkest blue triangular section in the center of the Venn diagram represents the result set for this search, including all three terms. In many databases, including Google, AND is implied between each word. To exclude AND, use quotation marks. For example, Google would translate the search term *ethics artificial intelligence* as *ethics AND artificial AND intelligence*. To make your phrases more specific, use the AND operator combined with quotation marks: *"ethics" AND "artificial intelligence"*.

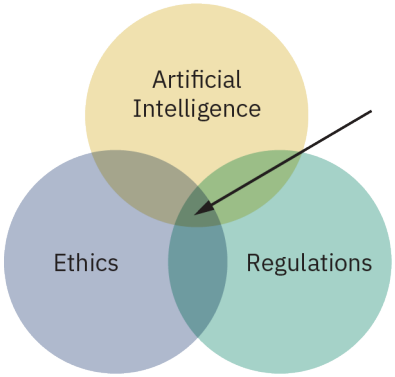



**FIGURE 14.11** Search results for AND (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

- Use **OR** to connect two or more similar concepts and broaden your results, telling the search engine that any of your search terms can appear in the results it gives you. The Boolean operator OR is represented by Figure 14.12. Using the OR operator gives you a very large set of results.

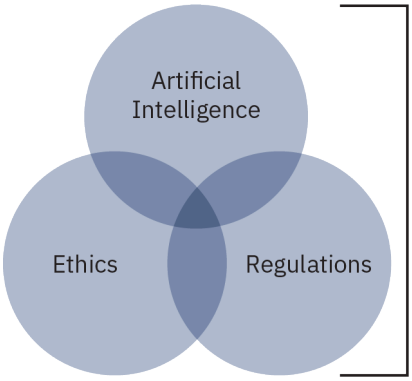



**FIGURE 14.12** Search results for OR (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

- Use **NOT** to exclude results from a search. This operator can help you narrow your search, telling the search engine to ignore names or words you do not want included in your results. For example, if you know you don't want self-driving cars in your search results, you might search for *"artificial intelligence" NOT "self-driving cars"*.

## Choosing Sources

Choosing sources to include in your annotated bibliography may seem overwhelming. However, if you can find a few good academic articles as a starting point, use them to guide your research. Academic articles are efficient, scrutinized by experts in their fields, and organized in ways that aid readers in identifying key

findings that relate to their argument. The following tips will help you choose solid sources to guide your research:

- **Look for relevant scholarly articles.** Even the briefest Google search can yield an overwhelming amount of content. Sift through it by looking first through academic databases to find high-quality sources relevant to your research.
- **Read abstracts.** As you sift through scholarly articles, you can get a good idea of what each one is about by reading the abstract. It includes the findings and will show you in about 100 words whether the paper holds relevance to your research.
- **Skim.** Once you have determined that an article may be useful, skim each section to glean the information you need. Closer and more extensive reading can come later as you develop and support your argument.
- **Avoid getting bogged down** in technical information or industry-specific jargon. The benefit of reading peer-reviewed research is that you know the reviewers have determined it to be solidly constructed. Therefore, even if you don't understand some portions completely, you can still feel confident about using relevant information from the article.
- **Work smarter** by using the research provided. Once you have identified an article that is helpful to your research, use it to find more like it. Search for other publications by the authors; researchers often spend much of their careers researching one overarching topic or theme. Use the review of literature to identify related articles that may add to your research. You can also use the article's bibliography to find additional sources. Or reverse engineer the process: use article databases to find other articles that cite the article in their literature reviews.

## 14.2 Glance at Form: Citation Style, Purpose, and Formatting

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Successfully apply citation conventions to your writing, understanding the ideas of intellectual property that motivate their use.
- Compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with ideas from related sources.

### Citation Styles

Academic writing encompasses a variety of citation styles. Depending on the type of source, most of these styles include varieties of similar information: author's name, title of work, publisher, location of publishing company, journal, website link, and sometimes the DOI (digital object identifier). The citation style you choose often will coincide with the academic discipline involved. Major citation styles include the following:

- **American Psychological Association (APA)**: Often used in education, psychology, and science fields
- **Modern Language Association (MLA)**: Often used in humanities fields
- **Chicago** or **Turabian Style**: Often used in business, history, and fine arts fields

Your instructor most often will assign a particular style for students to use. In this book, for example, the primary focus is on MLA Documentation and Format, although APA Documentation and Style is covered as well.

You can also visit the official MLA Style Center (https://openstax.org/r/MLA_Style). Another excellent and comprehensive source on citation format is Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (https://openstax.org/r/Purdue_University) (OWL). A citation in MLA format of a website with no listed author name would look like the following example:

"Food Preparation Workers." *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1 Sept. 2020, www.bls.gov/ooh/food-preparation-and-serving/food-preparation-workers.htm.

## Annotated Citations

An annotated bibliography goes further than the citation entry. Beginning with the formal citation as shown above, it continues with information about the text, discussing the work's author(s), authority, and impact on or usefulness to the research project. Most annotated bibliographies also present a short critical analysis of the source. Annotations are written in paragraph form. Depending on the purpose of your project and the instructions given, your annotations may range from relatively simple summaries to thorough analyses of your sources and how you will use them. Typically, you will provide this information in one or two paragraphs of around 100 to 200 words total.

Look at the following sample annotation, which is two paragraphs long and consists of just over 150 words. It not only establishes the credibility of the publisher of the website, in this case a United States government organization, but also summarizes the conclusions of the source, including an analysis of future projections for this and similar occupations. It also reflects on how the source contributes to the research and how it helps shape the argument proposed in the research project.

"Food Preparation Workers." *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1 Sept. 2020, www.bls.gov/ooh/food-preparation-and-serving/food-preparation-workers.htm.

> Authority: This web page is produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, part of the United States Department of Labor. This agency collects and disseminates the latest economic and employment data, including figures on employment and wages. The report provides information such as education needed, median pay, most recent data regarding number of jobs, and employment outlook for the next 10 years.

> The web page concludes that the occupational outlook of this profession is declining slightly, with an anticipated 1 percent decline in employment over the 10 years following the publication date, largely as a result of folding food preparation into the duties of counter workers. However, it also projects that employment in the combined occupations of cooks and food preparation workers will increase 7 percent over the same period of time. This source supports the project's claim that technical education in food services provides beneficial training that leads to employment and helps shape the argument for better funding for technical schools.

Annotated bibliographies are usually ordered alphabetically by the first word in the citation, often the author's last name. In very long lists of citations, you may choose to organize entries by topic, arranging sources into groups that address the topic from similar perspectives or focuses. The entirety of the annotation should be indented. Only the beginning of the source citation, typically the author's last name, is left-aligned. Your paragraphs should be objective, offering comment and criticism based on the reliability, validity, and bias present rather than on your agreement or disagreement with the ideas. Although you can state opinions, do so in the context of the larger project, and provide explanations.

### Functions of an Annotated Bibliography

The function of an annotated bibliography can vary according to the purpose of the writing and the stage at which it is completed. These functions often include

- providing a review of literature for research related to a argument;
- formulating a thesis, particularly if you compile the annotated bibliography at the beginning of the writing process;
- demonstrating the amount and quality of your research on a subject or topic;
- providing examples of sources of information available on a topic; and
- supplying items and publications of interest to readers or other researchers.

### Parts of an Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography allows readers to determine the scope and credibility of the sources you have used in your research. Each annotation goes beyond a summary of the source, providing information that helps

readers determine whether to read the entire work. In other words, if someone else were researching the same or a similar topic, your annotations would help them decide whether the sources would be useful and why. Occasionally, confusion may arise about the function and purpose of abstracts versus annotations. As defined, an **abstract** is a purely descriptive summary, typically found at the very beginning of a journal article or in a periodical index. Abstracts are usually short, intended to provide readers with a concise understanding of a paper's basic content, research, and findings. Although **annotations** also can be descriptive, informative, and similarly brief, they are usually evaluative and critical.

A useful and thorough annotation contains three basic parts:

- A **summary** of the source, detailing the topic(s), major arguments and claims, and main ideas discussed.
- An **evaluation** of the source's usefulness to your argument, its validity, its reliability, and any bias present. When you evaluate sources, you discuss the authors and their credentials, any agendas present, and the sources' goals.
- A **reflection** on how the source fits into the puzzle of your research project. You will examine how it shapes your argument and influences your thinking about the topic.

### Create an Annotation

With these guidelines and information in mind, you can create an annotation. First, write a summary of typically no more than one or two sentences. Include the name of the author of the work, when and where it was written, and a general description of the content. Here you will need to **paraphrase**, or explain the essential information of the text in your own words. The rest of the annotation is an analysis of the source and a reflection on how you will use it. The evaluation assesses the source's quality and relevance to your topic. Although you often complete an annotated bibliography at the culmination of a work, the analytic nature of the annotated bibliography means that working on it as part of the prewriting process can help you shape your ideas, learn more about your topic, write a thesis, and determine which sources to use while formulating your argument.

## Using Sources in Academic Conversation

Academic writing, particularly an assignment in which you create an **argument**—a persuasive text using one or more appeals—to support a claim to support a claim through reasoning and evidence, is somewhat like joining a conversation, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. You contribute your own ideas to an issue, support your claim by citing other sources on the topic, refute counterclaims, and create meaningful rhetorical appeals. With these contributions, you add your writing to the database of knowledge and opinion regarding that topic. See Glance at Genre: Introducing Research as Evidence for a more detailed discussion of authors in conversation. As you think about creating your annotated bibliography, keep this conversation in mind.

One way to use sources is to find those that agree with your position and perhaps even those that argue the point in a similar way. While using sources like these isn't necessarily a problem, creating a rhetorical argument is more than simply repeating existing research, no matter how solid or well-regarded it may be. Therefore, try to expand your compilation to include sources that not only provide strong evidence for your claim but also challenge, extend, or focus on a narrow part of your argument. Joining the conversation may mean explaining how your ideas differ from those presented by another author, or it may involve synthesizing the ideas of multiple sources.

You can join the conversation in several ways without simply restating the words of a source. One option is to combine arguments or research findings from associated source ideas in order to create a summary claim or statement. It may be that none of your sources individually point to a result, but connecting some of them may lead you to a broad conclusion. A second option builds on the first, but rather than summarize to draw a conclusion, you would synthesize to make a claim about the consequences or implications of the sources. A third option is to identify and develop areas of agreement or disagreement between sources and between your

own claims and the sources you examine. Finally, you may find areas for further study, including unanswered questions raised by the research you analyze.

### Key Terms

These are key terms and characteristics of annotated bibliographies.

- **Agenda**: Underlying intentions or motivations of a person or group.
- **Analysis**: Detailed examination of a complex topic, often looking at individual parts, to interpret meanings, themes, and author choices.
- **Annotations**: A note of explanation or comment. Annotations are both descriptive and critical, adding clarity and insight beyond a straightforward summary.
- **bias**: Predisposition, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something.
- **Bibliography**. A list of sources and basic information about them, including author, title, publisher, and publication date.
- **Boolean operators**: The words AND, OR, and NOT used as conjunctions between search terms to combine or exclude keywords in an online database search. Boolean operators help narrow searches.
- **Citation**: A set of information referencing a single source of information used in a writer's research.
- **Format**: The way in which a composition is arranged or organized. In a bibliography, *format* is the way in which the bibliographical information is presented.
- **Paraphrase**: A restatement, usually for clarity, of a written or spoken text.
- **Peer-reviewed source**: An article or other informational work written by an expert and reviewed anonymously by other experts in the field to ensure the work's overall quality, including its validity.
- **primary sources**: An immediate, firsthand account of a topic or an event from someone connected to it. Original research, including interviews, experiments, surveys, and field observations, is considered a primary source.
- **rigorous**: Exhaustive, thorough, accurate.
- **secondary sources**. A secondhand account of an event or topic, often providing analysis or interpretation.
- **Style**: A set of rules for citing sources in academic writing.
- **Summary**: A brief statement covering the main ideas of an event or written composition.
- **Synthesis**: The combination of ideas to form new conclusions.
- **tertiary sources**: A summary or digest of primary or secondary sources.
- **Thesis**: **A** statement that identifies a topic and the author's claim, or angle, about that topic.

## 14.3 Annotated Student Sample: "Healthy Diets from Sustainable Sources Can Save the Earth" by Lily Tran

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the purpose, language, culture, and expectations of different genres of composition.
- Analyze relationships between ideas and organizational patterns.
- Evaluate research materials for credibility, sufficiency, accuracy, timeliness, and bias.

### Introduction

In this section, you will read a sample annotated bibliography based on the Annotated Student Sample to help you create your own annotated bibliography. As you read, remember that annotations summarize, assess, and evaluate a source, specifically regarding its function in the project for which it is used. Note the purpose of the annotations in this bibliography and how much information the author includes for readers.

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### Annotated Bibliography

Berners-Lee, M., et al. "Current Global Food Production Is Sufficient to Meet Human Nutritional Needs in 2050 Provided There Is Radical Societal Adaptation." *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*, vol. 6, 2018, online.ucpress.edu/elementa/article/doi/10.1525/elementa.310/112838/Current-global-food-production-is-sufficient-to. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.

***Format.*** *Notice that only the author's name is left-aligned. All other text, including the annotation, is indented. The citation includes all relevant information in MLA format. Et al. means "and others." M. Berners-Lee is the principal author.*

> M. Berners-Lee and the other authors of this article—C. Kennelly, R. Watson, and C. N. Hewitt—all are associated with Lancaster [UK] University. In this article, they present a quantitative analysis of global and regional food supply, following the flow of calories, protein, and selected micronutrients from production to human consumption. Clear tables and figures accompany the text. A reference list of 55 books, scholarly articles, and official reports provides sources for additional information.

> Of particular value is that the paper first analyzes current policies and practices in food production, then offers projections for two scenarios. One scenario assumes that current policies and practices continue unchanged. The other explains what policies and practices need to be implemented to supply a healthy diet globally in 2050. This information makes it possible to describe what success looks like and also what failure looks like.

***Authority.*** *This annotation includes two paragraphs. In the first, Lily Tran discusses the credibility of the authors, noting their research and association with a British university. Tran also emphasizes the data provided and comments on the breadth of references listed.*

***Evaluation.*** *The second paragraph is an evaluation of the source's applicability to the topic of the research paper. Notice that Tran specifically explains its potential use: the scenarios given allow readers to understand success and failure as related to healthy diets from sustainable resources.*

Chai, Bingli Clark, et al. "Which Diet Has the Least Environmental Impact on Our Planet? A Systematic Review of Vegan, Vegetarian and Omnivorous Diets." *Sustainability*, vol. 11, no. 15, 2019, www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/15/4110. Accessed 6 Dec. 2020.

> Bingli Clark Chai and secondary authors Johannes Reidar van der Voort, Kristina Grofelnik, Helga Gudny Eliasdottir, Ines Klöss, and Federico J. A. Perez-Cueto are associated with the Design and Consumer Behaviour Section, Department of Food Science, Faculty of Science, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. They present a systematic review of the environmental impacts of human diets, based on 16 published studies and 18 published reviews. Most of the studies were done in the United States or Europe, and they ranged in duration from seven days to 27 years. Separate tables compare the design, intervention, duration, diets, quality assessment, and main outcomes of the studies, as well as the diets, quality assessment, and main outcomes of the reviews. In addition to the studies and reviews analyzed, the reference cites additional journal articles for further information.

> This is a secondary source in that it evaluates published work rather than presenting original research. Its value lies in the compilation, comparison, and summation of information from a variety of credible sources.

***Evaluation.*** *Tran summarizes the credibility of the source by noting the authors' academic association and explaining that the source is actually a compilation of study research.*

***Reflection.*** *Tran notes the source's usefulness as a secondary source whose authors compile, compare, and summarize research valuable to the paper's argument. Notice, however, that she does not analyze the impact of the*

*source on her argument.*

> Lusk, Jayson L., and F. Bailey Norwood. "Some Economic Benefits and Costs of Vegetarianism." *Agricultural and Resource Economics Review*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2009, pp. 109–124, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/agricultural-and-resource-economics-review/article/abs/some-economic-benefits-and-costs-of-vegetarianism/1C2CB85022A54F27504A7DA65576C5C4.

> Jayson L. Lusk is a distinguished professor and department head of the Department of Agricultural Economics at Purdue University, and F. Bailey Norwood is an associate professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Oklahoma State University. They report the findings of a detailed cost-benefit analysis examining production costs and nutrient content of corn, soybeans, wheat, peanuts, hogs, cattle, chickens, and milk to determine cost per nutrient produced at the farm level and the retail level. The discussion includes the monetary value consumers place on these foods, based on price and demand. The text is supplemented by tables of data plus details of calculations.

***Summary.*** *This annotation provides a robust summary of the article's content.*

> This approach is valuable because of its transparency as to methods and the detailed calculations shown. Unfortunately, the numbers are dated; the article was published in 2009. However, because of the specificity of the presentation, it is possible to extrapolate trends that would be applicable today.

***Evaluation.*** *Tran points out a flaw in the data—namely, that it is old. However, she explains how she might use it anyway through analysis. Other than this short explanation of the potential to extrapolate trends, Tran does not reflect on how she could use the source in other ways.*

> Schulz, Lee. "Would a Sudden Loss of the Meat and Dairy Industry, and All the Ripple Effects, Destroy the Economy?" *Department of Economics*, Iowa State U, www.econ.iastate.edu/node/691. Accessed 6 Dec. 2020.

> Schulz is an associate professor in the Department of Economics at Iowa State University. In response to a question about the effects of removing livestock-related industries from the United States, he cites statistics on the contributions these industries make to the economy, both domestically and globally. No references are provided, but the author's contact information is given for further questions.

> Although this article is less scholarly than other sources cited here, it is included to show a viewpoint that differs from the general pro-vegetarian stance of most sources.

***Evaluation and Reflection.*** *Noting that this source is less scholarly and provides fewer citations than others, Tran nevertheless considers it important for presenting a different viewpoint from the other sources collected. Although she does not explicitly explain the impact of the viewpoint on the argument, readers can assume she will address this influence in her argument paper.*

> Willett, Walter, et al. "Food in the Anthropocene: The EAT–*Lancet* Commission on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems." *Lancet*, vol. 393, no. 10170, 2019, pp. 447–492, www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)31788-4/fulltext.

> The EAT–*Lancet* Commission on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems is composed of physicians and researchers from Germany, Sweden, Norway, England, Switzerland, Lebanon, Mexico, Netherlands, Zimbabwe, Australia, Indonesia, Italy, India, Pakistan, and the United States. Lead author Walter Willett, MD, is affiliated with Harvard University's T. H. Chan School of Public Health, Harvard Medical School, and the Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA. The commission report quantitatively describes a universal healthy reference diet with the goals of alleviating hunger and increasing nutrition, saving water, minimizing agricultural land use, and reducing the effects of climate change. This in-depth study cites 357 professional references available for further information.

***Summary.*** *In this annotation, Tran provides a summary listing the key ideas.*

***Authority and Evaluation.*** *Tran lists the lead author's credentials and establishes the authority of the commission sponsoring the report, showing the breadth of research involved.*

> Directly related to the topic at hand, this is a major source because of its global scope, thorough treatment, and realistic assessment of the current situation and future challenges. This will be the most important source for this paper.

***Reflection.*** *Tran reflects on the quality of the source and explains its impact on the research, revealing it to be the most important source for the paper.*

### Discussion Questions

1. Why does Lily Tran evaluate the credibility of the authors in the annotations? How does this practice help the research?
2. Which of Tran's sources will likely increase knowledge of the subject matter she is researching? Why is this increased knowledge an important step in forming an argumentative research project?
3. How can Tran use these sources to refine her own opinion?
4. How might Tran use the source from *Agricultural and Resource Economics Review* to find more recent data?

## 14.4 Writing Process: Informing and Analyzing

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Successfully apply citation conventions to your writing, understanding the ideas of intellectual property that motivate their use.
- Evaluate research materials for credibility, sufficiency, accuracy, timeliness, and bias.
- Compose to discover and reconsider ideas.
- Compose an annotated bibliography that uses correct style conventions and integrates the writer's ideas with ideas from related sources.

Now it is time to try your hand at creating your own annotated bibliography. As you work through identifying and writing about your sources, you may want to seek out additional ones to help support your argument or thesis. This recursive process is similar to the fine-tuning that occurs during the writing process, in which a writer moves fluidly among drafting, editing, and revising. You can return to your annotated bibliography during the course of research and writing to modify, further develop, analyze, and add to your sources. Remember, using a variety of sources can broaden your perspective about your topic by showing how different scholars and popular publications approach it.

### Summary of Assignment: Annotated Bibliography

For this assignment, you will create an annotated bibliography based on your research for one of the writing assignments in this course, preferably Writing Process: Integrating Research. After collecting and choosing sources, you will write citations using MLA Documentation and Format and compose a one- or two-paragraph annotation for each source. Remember, the purpose of the annotation is to provide

- a brief summary that allows readers to understand the background of the source and its basic claims; and
- an evaluation and reflection on the source's reliability, its usefulness, and the author's or organization's credibility.

While the format for your MLA citation should follow the prescriptive pattern from the Handbook, you will

decide on the language and structure of the annotations you include. While your topic, personal style, and ideas may lend themselves to a more standardized format, it is possible that they may instead challenge codified conventions in favor of a style more authentic to you.

***Another Lens 1.*** Consider alternatives to a formal annotated bibliography that complements differing learning styles or abilities. If your instructor is amenable, you may informally annotate sources in their margins or use an online annotation program such as Kami (https://openstax.org/r/Kami).

***Another Lens 2.*** Another alternative is to discuss, with a partner or in a small group, each source's credentials, key ideas, and usefulness to your project. In either case, using a graphic organizer similar to the one in the next section should help you organize your ideas.

### Quick Launch: Organizing Information

Begin by collecting sources. A good way to start is to make a list of keywords, known authors, organizations, and previously identified sources related to your topic. For example, imagine you have been assigned an argument project and chosen artificial intelligence as the topic. Begin, then, with the keywords *artificial intelligence*. A Google search will reveal a wealth of information on the topic, likely too much to help you craft a meaningful argument. However, a basic search will allow you to

- effectively define *artificial intelligence* as "the simulation of human intelligence by machines programmed to mimic human thought and actions";
- name four types of artificial intelligence: reactive machines, limited memory, theory of mind, and self-aware;
- identify leading industries in which artificial intelligence is already present, such as self-driving cars and virtual butlers; and
- recognize the existence of a spectrum of thought surrounding the ethics and governance of artificial intelligence.

You also may discover some alternative search terms to use, such as *machine learning*, *data mining*, *robotics*, and *neuroscience*. Although you may not ultimately use them in your argument, the sources that you find may point you toward a focused thesis.

When you finish your keyword search, the next step is to search academic databases. Use your library's resources to find scholarly sources such as journal articles, books, textbooks, expert interviews, and reputable periodical pieces. Aim for five to seven sources to begin with, though you likely will add more as you work on your project. You may already have an idea of what claims you want to make in your argument, but the sources may shape them as well. As you review the sources you collect, choose those that give you a varied range of perspectives on the topic. Remember that you can return to this procedure at various points in your research, adding sources as your needs change and as you refine your claims. While you search for sources, keep in mind the specifics of your research project, and limit your search to sources that specifically support your argument, inform a counterargument, or otherwise add information that enhances your research.

### Thesis

Before you choose sources, you must have an idea of what you want to say. If you're creating an annotated bibliography for the argument described Writing Process: Integrating Research, you likely have already drafted a thesis statement. If you are creating an annotated bibliography for another topic, you will need to draft a working thesis. Your thesis will state your position on the topic. It is often a single clear, concise sentence that reveals your side in the argument. You will use your sources to support the thesis you draft.

These frames may be useful when you draft your working thesis:

- Because _____, [someone] should _____.

- _____ saves _____, reduces _____, and helps _____.
- The lack of _____ shows _____.
- _____ influences _____ and, by extension, _____.
- _____ accurately (inaccurately) portrays _____ because _____.
- _____ is a result of _____, _____, and _____.
- Although some argue that _____, a close examination shows that _____.
- _____ and _____ prove that _____.

## Citations and Annotations

For each source you choose, first write the source citation in MLA format. An example of a citation for the research project on artificial intelligence might be:

> Buiten, Miriam C. "Towards Intelligent Regulation of Artificial Intelligence." *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2019, pp. 41–59, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-risk-regulation/article/towards-intelligent-regulation-of-artificial-intelligence/AF1AD1940B70DB88D2B24202EE933F1B. Accessed 23 Jan. 2021.

After preparing citations for each of your sources, write the annotations. To do this, consider the following:

- The purpose of the work
- For whom the work is written
- How to summarize the content
- The author/organization producing the work
- Distinctive or interesting features of the content (particularly in comparison with other sources)
- The relevance of the work to your topic
- Strengths, weaknesses, and bias present
- Conclusions and implications

To annotate, you will typically begin with a summary of one to three sentences. For longer or more complex sources, the summary may be longer. Then discuss unique features of the content, an evaluation of the source, and a reflection on how the source is useful to your research. For each source, use a graphic organizer such as Table 14.3. It will help you collect the needed information, organize your thoughts, and get started summarizing and analyzing your sources.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Source Citation** | |
| **Intended Audience** | |
| **Main Ideas, Arguments, and Themes Present** | |
| **Author's Point of View, Bias, and Expertise** | |

**TABLE 14.3** Source evaluation organizer

| | |
|---|---|
| **Comparison with Other Sources on the Topic** | |
| **Evaluation of Source's Relevance to Topic** | |
| **Evaluation of Strengths and Weaknesses** | |
| **Conclusions Drawn by Author** | |

**TABLE 14.3** Source evaluation organizer

## Drafting:

Creating an annotated bibliography requires you to read your sources critically. As you first collect your sources, briefly review and examine the information they contain, specifically through the lens of how each can add to your research. As you read more critically, choose those that represent different perspectives on your topic as well as those that have similar viewpoints but arrive at them in different ways or from various angles.

If you have been using a graphic organizer for each source, as suggested, the information you need and your ideas about the source will be right there for you. If you haven't organized your research in this way, now is a good time to do it, when you do not yet need to structure good paragraphs. When it is time for you to write your annotations, having your thoughts already mapped out will make your work easier. For the hypothetical artificial intelligence project, you might organize information for the article cited earlier as shown in Table 14.4.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Source Citation** | Buiten, Miriam C. "Towards Intelligent Regulation of Artificial Intelligence." *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2019, pp. 41–59, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-risk-regulation/article/towards-intelligent-regulation-of-artificial-intelligence/AF1AD1940B70DB88D2B24202EE933F1B. Accessed 23 Jan. 2021. |
| **Intended Audience** | The journal is published by Cambridge University Press. Therefore, it is peer reviewed and intended for an academic audience. |
| **Main Ideas, Arguments, and Themes Present** | Discusses the unpredictability and difficulty of controlling artificial intelligence and examines what, if anything, can be done to increase transparency, specifically as it relates to biases of algorithms |

**TABLE 14.4** Completed source evaluation organizer

| | |
|---|---|
| **Author's Point of View, Bias, and Expertise** | Buiten is a law and economics professor at the University of Mannheim. She is the author or coauthor of nine publications, and contributed to others, about law and technology and digitalization, competition law, and European law. |
| **Comparison with Other Sources on the Topic** | Other sources call for total transparency in legal matters regarding artificial intelligence. This article questions whether such transparency is useful and/or feasible on the basis of current laws |
| **Evaluation of Source's Relevance to Topic** | Focuses on legal transparency for artificial intelligence, related to the question of whether artificial intelligence is harmful or helpful to society |
| **Evaluation of Strengths and Weaknesses** | Well-researched; uses dozens of peer-reviewed sources |
| **Conclusions Drawn by Author** | Transparency for artificial intelligence will be difficult and expensive to comply with and should be better defined in legal contexts before it is required. |

**TABLE 14.4** Completed source evaluation organizer

For some sources, you may be unable to find information for each category. In particular, for sources that are very short or from which you use only one or two bits of information, your annotations will not be long or complex, and your graphic organizer may seem sparse. That is to be expected. What is important at this stage is to identify how you will use your resources as they relate to your argument or thesis.

After you have outlined your sources by using the graphic organizer or a similar method, it is time to start writing the actual annotations. Remember the three tasks in writing an annotation:

1. **Summary** the central idea or scope of the source, particularly as it relates to your research project.
2. **Evaluation** the source for authority, author's perspective, reliability, validity, and bias.
3. **Reflect** on how the source affects your research and your thinking.

Your annotated bibliography should include at least some of these functions and, depending on the source, may contain all of them. Below is an example of an annotated bibliography entry for the article on artificial intelligence. The entry begins with the correctly formatted citation, followed by two paragraphs summarizing, evaluating, and reflecting. Because you already have completed the graphic organizer, much of the analysis is already done there. Simply take that thinking and shape it into useful paragraphs, like those the writer created here.

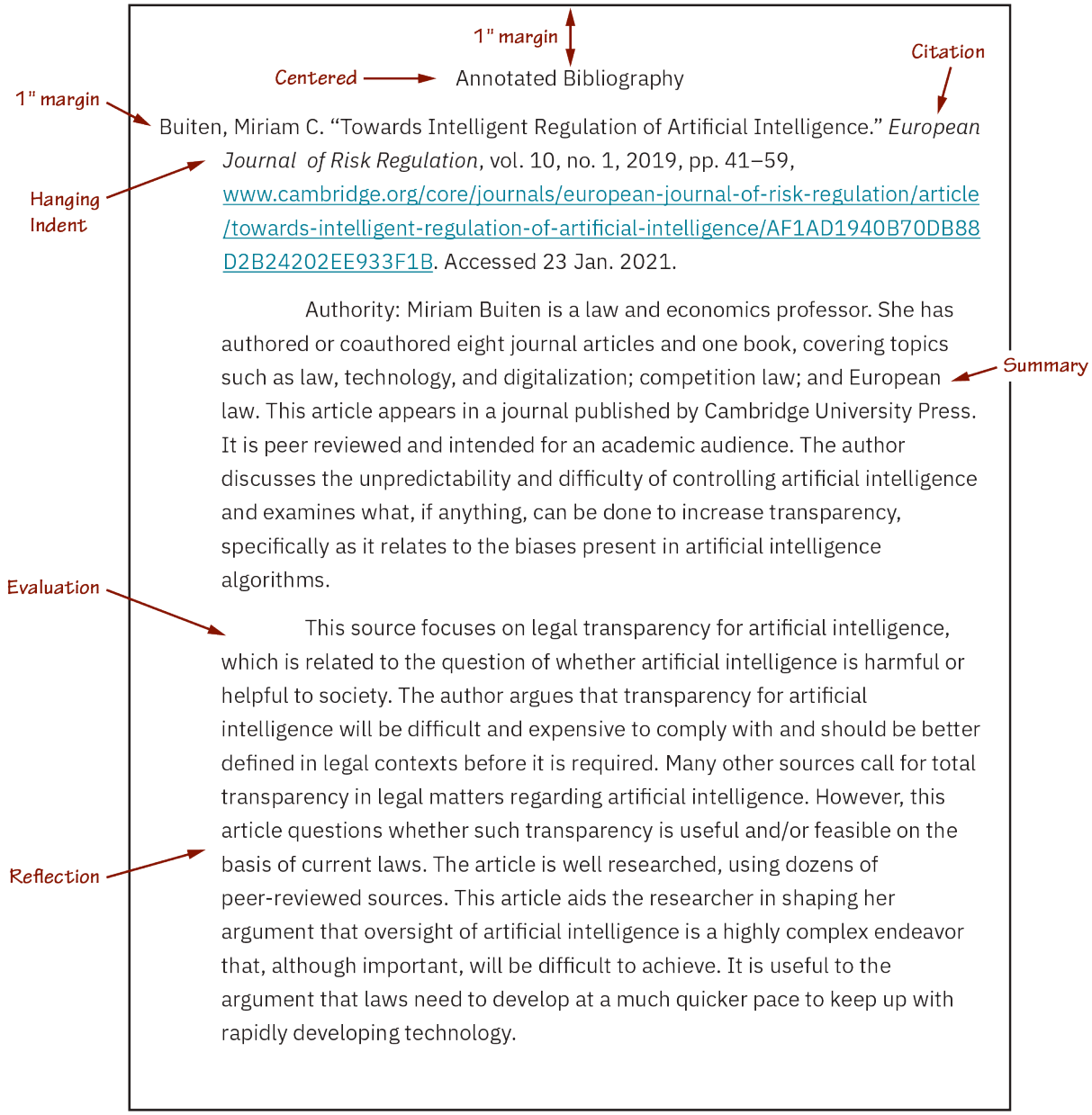



**FIGURE 14.13** Sample annotated bibliography entry (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

You can break down this sample annotation, analyzing each part separately as shown in Figure 14.13.

Buiten, Miriam C. "Towards Intelligent Regulation of Artificial Intelligence." *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2019, pp. 41–59, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-risk-regulation/article/towards-intelligent-regulation-of-artificial-intelligence/AF1AD1940B70DB88D2B24202EE933F1B. Accessed 23 Jan. 2021.

***Format.*** *Notice the MLA format, including information listing the author, title, publishing journal, and DOI or link to the article. The reader will be able to find and read the article easily.*

> Authority: Miriam Buiten is a law and economics professor. She has authored or coauthored eight journal articles and one book, covering topics such as law, technology, and digitalization; competition law; and European law. This article appears in a journal published by Cambridge University Press. It is peer reviewed and intended for an academic audience. The author discusses the unpredictability and difficulty of controlling artificial intelligence and examines what, if anything, can be done to increase transparency, specifically as it relates to the biases present in artificial intelligence algorithms.

***Authority.*** *The author is named and introduced with background information establishing her authority in the field. The publishing organization is also named, establishing credibility as a peer-reviewed journal.*

***Summary.*** *The contents of the text are summarized briefly, allowing readers to quickly understand the topic and scope of the article and to begin to piece together its relevance to the overall research project.*

> This source focuses on legal transparency for artificial intelligence, which is related to the question of whether artificial intelligence is harmful or helpful to society. The author argues that transparency for artificial intelligence will be difficult and expensive to comply with and should be better defined in legal contexts before it is required. Many other sources call for total transparency in legal matters regarding artificial intelligence. However, this article questions whether such transparency is useful and/or feasible based on current laws. The article is well researched, using dozens of peer-reviewed sources.

***Evaluation.*** *This paragraph includes an evaluative statement that shows the article's validity.*

> This article aids the researcher in shaping her argument that oversight of artificial intelligence is a highly complex endeavor that, although important, will be difficult to achieve. It is useful to the argument that laws need to develop at a much quicker pace to keep up with rapidly developing technology.

***Reflection.*** *This part of the paragraph reveals how the source fits into the research puzzle, noting that it indirectly supports the claim that developing oversight for artificial intelligence is not a simple task and would require the law to evolve quickly.*

***Style.*** *The annotation is written in third person, referring to "the researcher" and "her," as opposed to using first-person pronouns such as me and I.*

## Formatting

The format of an annotated bibliography can vary depending on the discipline and purpose. Therefore, be clear at the outset which style you need to use. In academic writing, that information often will come from your instructor. Generally, annotated bibliographies will be written in MLA Documentation and Format, APA Documentation and Format, or Chicago style.

This text uses MLA style. MLA source citations follow several principles in place of specific rules. The style has been adapted in recent years to respond to the evolving nature of text in an increasingly digital world. Thus, the *MLA Handbook* is organized by the *process* of citation, rather than listing rules for every type of source. However, certain overall guidelines apply. When you cite a source, first identify core elements that are present. Remember from earlier in this chapter that these are author(s), title of source, title of container, version, number, publisher, publication date, and location.

> Buiten, Miriam C. "Towards Intelligent Regulation of Artificial Intelligence." *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2019, pp. 41–59, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-risk-regulation/article/towards-intelligent-regulation-of-artificial-intelligence/AF1AD1940B70DB88D2B24202EE933F1B. Accessed 23 Jan. 2021.

***Author.*** *The entry with gold highlighting begins with the author's last name, followed by a comma and the remainder of the name. The author's name is followed by a period.*

***Title of Source.*** *The title of the source follows the author's name in purple highlighting. The title is either italicized*

*or placed within quotation marks, depending on the type of source, and followed by a period. Book titles are italicized, while print or online articles are placed in quotation marks, as shown.*

***Title of Container.*** *The container, highlighted in teal, is the larger work to which a source belongs. An article may belong to a website or journal, a song to an album, or a video to a video-sharing site. This container comes next in the citation. It is generally italicized and followed by a comma. However, some sources do not have containers; for example, a book (versus a chapter in a book) or an entire website (versus a single page on a website) is self-contained and thus has no container to cite.*

***Version.*** *Next, the version is listed, if there is one. For example, a textbook edition or version of a text would appear here, followed by a comma. This citation example doesn't have a version, so that information is skipped.*

***Number.*** *Some sources, especially academic journals, are part of a numbered sequence as shown in green highlighting. Journals usually have both volume and issue numbers; include both in your citation, separated by commas.*

***Publisher.*** *The next element in the citation is the publisher, followed by a comma. The publisher does not have to be listed for some sources, including periodicals, works published by the author or editor, websites with the same name as the publisher, or websites that host works but do not actually publish them. Because this sample source is a periodical, no publisher is listed in the citation.*

***Publication Date.*** *List the most recent date of publication available for the version of the source you used. The date is followed by a comma as shown in red highlighting.*

***Location.*** *Location, shown in dark and light gray highlighting, refers to where in the source you found the information, including page numbers and URLs. Be as specific as possible, as this information allows readers to return to your source to read it for themselves. When listing a URL, remove the beginning tag of http:// or https://.*

### Optional elements

You may want to add optional elements to help readers identify the source more easily. These can include the following:

- City of publication, generally only for books that were published before 1900 or whose publishers either have offices in more than one country or are unknown in North America (MLA 8)
- Access date, which is present in the sample annotation
- DOI (digital object identifier), which may be used in place of a URL if available
- Original publication date, if it differs from the publication date used for the citation

### Alphabetizing and Indenting

Other rules also apply to MLA citations in a research project. Most of these are formatting and style rules that add to a polished final product. Remember to list sources in alphabetical order according to the author's last name. If the source has more than one author, list it according to the last name of the first author mentioned. If the source has no author named, insert it into your alphabetical list according to the first word in the title. For example, if Miriam C. Buiten's name were not mentioned, you would enter the item under *T*, the first letter of the first word in the title, *Towards*. In your bibliography, double-space the citation, and do not leave a space between entries.

In an annotated bibliography, indent the entire annotation in the same manner as the source citation after the first line. In most word processing programs, you can create this formatting by highlighting the citation and annotation paragraphs and then creating a hanging indent. In Microsoft Word, open the Paragraph Settings icon on the Home tab. Under the tab that reads Indents and Spacing, find the section labeled Indentation. On the right side of that section is the label Special. Click the drop-down menu, and choose Hanging. Different word processing programs may require you to create hanging indentations in another way. Consult an MLA guide often to ensure that your citations are correct.

### Annotations

Annotations are the most important part of an annotated bibliography. Although there is no set format for writing annotations, remember to write them in paragraph form and to summarize, evaluate, and/or reflect. Annotation lengths will vary depending on the length of the source, how it is used in your project, and how much analysis you do within the annotation. However, a general length of one to two paragraphs consisting of 100 to 200 words is roughly the standard.

## Descriptive/Informative and Analytical/Critical Annotations

There are two major types of annotated bibliographies. The first is **descriptive annotations**, or informative, summarizing the material and explaining why the source is useful for your topic. This type of annotated bibliography also points out special features of the text, including any data, graphics, or other characteristics. Although you discuss the author's main arguments and conclusions, you do not analyze or evaluate them. Descriptive annotations are useful for helping readers understand an author's main ideas but less helpful for showing how the source has influenced the research project as a whole.

The other type of annotated bibliography is **analytical bibliography**, or critical. This type includes all the features of a descriptive annotated bibliography, including a summary of the material. In addition, it includes your analysis of the information in each source and explanation of how the source has influenced the development of your research. With analytical or critical annotations, you examine the strengths, weaknesses, and biases present in the author's information and explain how the author's work and conclusions apply to your research.

In projects for this course, especially those using arguments, you will almost always create analytical or critical annotated bibliographies, though the detail in which you analyze may vary from source to source. The detail in these bibliographies will contribute to your knowledge base and provide information for others.

## Further Reading

To learn more about creating an annotated bibliography, consider the following sources:

"Annotated Bibliographies." *OWL: The Purdue Online Writing Lab*, Purdue U, owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/common_writing_assignments/annotated_bibliographies/index.html.

Beatty, Luke, and Cynthia A. Cochran. *Writing the Annotated Bibliography: A Guide for Students and Researchers*. Routledge, 2020.

"How to Prepare an Annotated Bibliography: The Annotated Bibliography." *Cornell University Library*, Cornell U, 5 May 2021, guides.library.cornell.edu/annotatedbibliography.

## Works Cited

Krause, Steven D. *The Process of Research Writing*. 2007, www.stevendkrause.com/tprw/.

"MLA Citation Guide (8th Edition): Annotated Bibliography." *LibGuides at Columbia College (BC)*, LibGuides, 16 June 2021, columbiacollege-ca.libguides.com/mla/annot_bib.

"MLA Formatting and Style Guide." *OWL: The Purdue Online Writing Lab*, Purdue U, 2021, owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_general_format.html.

# Case Study Profile: What One Person Says About All

# 15

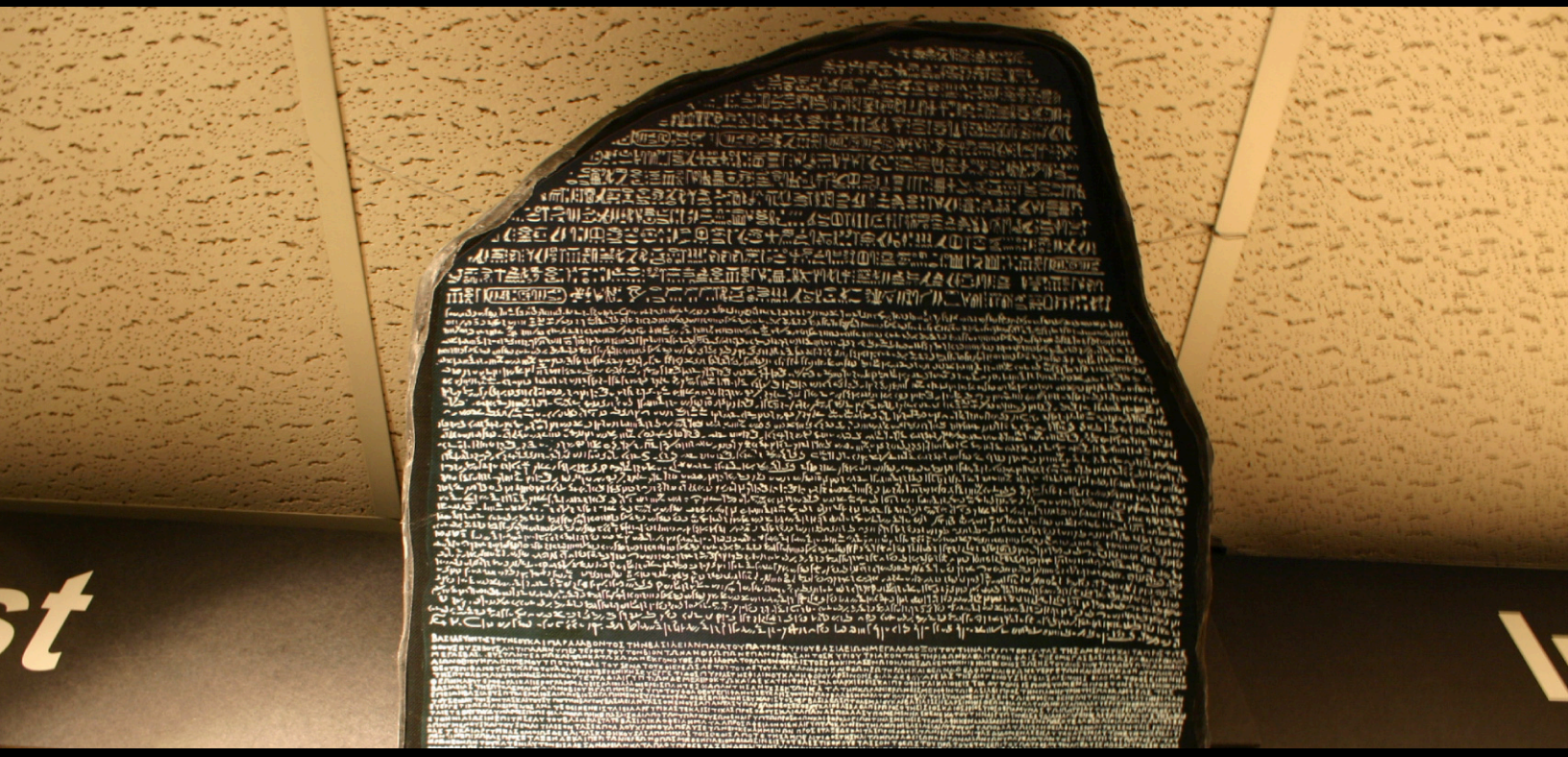


**FIGURE 15.1** Throughout history, language differences have affected aspects of human life such as trade, diplomacy, and culture. Found in 1799 and at first indecipherable, the Rosetta Stone, pictured here, marks an important milestone in helping language researchers understand Egyptian hieroglyphics. In addition to language-related artifacts, case studies are another, far more frequently used tool that researchers rely on to understand how people learn and use languages. (credit: "Rosetta Stone" by Ryan Somma/ideonexus/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**15.1** Tracing a Broad Issue in the Individual
**15.2** Case Study Trailblazer: Vilayanur S. Ramachandran
**15.3** Glance at Genre: Observation, Description, and Analysis
**15.4** Annotated Sample Reading: Case Study on Louis Victor "Tan" Leborgne
**15.5** Writing Process: Thinking Critically About How People and Language Interact
**15.6** Editing Focus: Words Often Confused
**15.7** Evaluation: Presentation and Analysis of Case Study
**15.8** Spotlight on ... Applied Linguistics
**15.9** Portfolio: Your Own Uses of Language


**INTRODUCTION** Academic research is often about finding answers to human questions. *How do people live, and how do they learn? In what ways is language an expression of thought? Why do people act as they do? How do people's feelings affect their behavior?* Answers to these questions are not easy to find because many are hidden in the human brain. Indeed, researchers may spend years of study looking for such answers and, in doing so, may discover only more questions.

*How do you begin to find answers to such behavioral research questions?* One research tool, the case study,

gives researchers the opportunity to observe people and draw conclusions about their behavior. Education, psychology, sociology, and linguistics are just some of the research fields that rely on these studies as a way of drawing conclusions through observation.

A case study is a genre of academic writing in which researchers use firsthand evidence to share findings, draw hypotheses, and identify opportunities for further investigation. In this chapter, you will learn what a case study is, how it contributes to research, and how to conduct an informal one of your own.

## 15.1 Tracing a Broad Issue in the Individual

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define the term *case studies*.
- Explain the purpose of case studies in academic research.
- Identify ethical considerations of research on human subjects.

To gain more knowledge of or insights into human behavior, thoughts, or emotions, researchers conduct observations of participants. Case studies are the written results of these observations. Because authors of case studies interpret results within the context of a limited setting and sample size, these authors often theorize about their findings and aim to discover opportunities for further research rather than draw hard, universal conclusions.

Case studies depend on **qualitative research** and analysis. Qualitative research involves subjective evidence that is difficult to control and difficult to replicate. For example, if a researcher observes a classroom, business, or hospital setting, their observations are limited to what they observe at that particular location on that particular day at that particular time.

Case studies also depend on **quantitative research**. Quantitative research involves hard, specific data that can be replicated in a controlled environment. You may have read about health studies that suggest a moderate amount of red wine or chocolate is good for your health or that eating red meat is bad for your health. Authors of case studies use quantitative research by looking at data drawn from a group and using it as a basis for their findings. In other words, the data, not the researchers' observations, form the primary evidence.

Another thing to know about case studies is that their authors attempt to observe participants in their natural environments. For example, to learn something about customer-service skills for a case study, an author would observe employees at a call center or in a retail store as they do their jobs. Similarly, to learn about how people use language, an author might observe people communicating naturally with their friends, family, or colleagues. Because case studies take place in the participants' natural environments, analyzing case studies can help readers imagine themselves in that environment. For example, as part of their training, a nurse or doctor might read a case study about a patient to think about what they would do in the same situation. Examining case studies helps readers imagine a wide range of outcomes, while conducting case studies helps researchers discover opportunities for further research.

### Case Study Ethics

Professional researchers must abide by a complex ethical and legal framework when conducting case studies. More importantly, participants must give their permission to be part of the study and to have their information shared. Researchers are obligated to act ethically when conducting case studies, *but what does "act ethically" mean, exactly?* Most people would agree that it is *unethical* to inflict harm on a case study participant, yet there are instances of researchers injuring their participants either physically or psychologically. One of the best-known examples of a case study conducted unethically (https://openstax.org/r/conductedunethically) is the Milgram Experiment (https://openstax.org/r/milgramexperiment), in which Yale University psychologist Stanley Milgram (https://openstax.org/r/stanleymilgram) (1933–1984) attempted to study the extent of people's willingness to submit to authority when ordered to do something they know is wrong. Participants

were instructed to deliver a range of electric shocks to other participants, who in fact were not actual participants but other researchers. Unbeknownst to the participants, the shocks were not real, and no electric current was delivered when participants pressed the button to deliver the shocks. Responses to shocks—screams and other indications of pain—were prerecorded. Yet some participants reported suffering psychological trauma from what they believed were their actions.

Most people also would consider it unethical to be dishonest about a case study. Researchers are expected to conduct their studies and analyze their data objectively, without bias. Over the years, laws and ethical codes have been implemented to protect case study participants. If you pursue an academic or career field that uses case studies, you will learn more about ethical and legal considerations specific to that field. For example, most academic case studies must be approved by an institutional review board (IRB) before the research can be conducted. Most universities have specific guidance on how faculty and students should go about research involving human subjects and most likely will have strict guidelines for conducting case studies. The assignment in this chapter, however, asks only that you conduct an informal case study. Your instructor will be your best resource to get answers to questions you have about your college's policies on conducting research and whether and how they apply to the research you intend to do.



## 15.2 Trailblazer

### Case Study Trailblazer: Vilayanur S. Ramachandran

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply critical thinking and communication in varying rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Identify and describe the genre conventions and rhetorical situation of case studies.



**FIGURE 15.2** "Vilayanur S. Ramachandran (credit: Vilayanur S Ramachandran 2011" by David Shankbone/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0)

*"My . . . work . . . has been to unravel . . . the mysterious connections between brain, mind, and body."*

## Ramachandran's Case Study on Phantom Limbs

Neuropsychologist Vilayanur Subramanian Ramachandran (https://openstax.org/r/vsramachandran) (b. 1951) was born in Tamil Nadu, India. He was educated in India and Thailand before earning a PhD from the University of Cambridge in England. Both a physician and a medical researcher, Dr. Ramachandran is a distinguished professor of psychology at the University of California, San Diego. He is best known for his work in behavioral neurology, particularly his research on the phenomenon of phantom limbs.

Behavioral neurology is a specialty that focuses on the ways in which neurological damage and disease affect behavior, memory, and cognition and how these problems can be treated. Ramachandran is the author of the books *Phantoms in the Brain* (1998) and *The Tell-Tale Brain* (2011), among others.

Ramachandran's most significant contribution to the field of behavioral neurology is the mirror box (https://openstax.org/r/mirrorbox), a device used to treat patients with amputated limbs. Phantom limb, a condition that afflicts people who have had an arm or leg amputated, is characterized by a feeling or sensation in the area of the amputated limb. In some cases, patients report pain in a phantom limb. Connecting brain, mind, and body, Ramachandran theorized that in cases of phantom limb pain, the brain could be tricked into thinking the limb was still there. Thus, the brain would reorient itself (scientifically referred to as *neural plasticity*) and, consequently, reduce pain. He then conducted case studies to test this theory.

Ramachandran's first task was to identify a research question, which he formulated from a theory based on existing literature on neural plasticity. At the time, little scientific research existed on phantom limbs, thus

providing Ramachandran with an opportunity to gain new insights into the phenomenon. Aware that existing research suggested the brain could reorient, or rewire, itself, he posited that neural plasticity could be used to help people with phantom limb syndrome.

Ramachandran's methods included recruiting case study participants whom he could observe. He placed ads in newspapers seeking volunteers who had undergone amputations. He then conducted case studies on the volunteers to observe how phantom limbs affected them.

These observations, along with previous research, convinced Ramachandran that neural plasticity could be used to treat patients with phantom limb syndrome. Based on his observations of a limited number of people, Ramachandran analyzed the results of his studies and developed the mirror box, a treatment that is used today to help ease chronic pain when it exists on one side of the body. Focusing on the connections of brain, mind, and body, Ramachandran created a box containing a mirror that reflects the existing limb. The reflection of the limb, which the participant moves, creates an illusion in the brain, tricking it into thinking it has control of the missing limb.

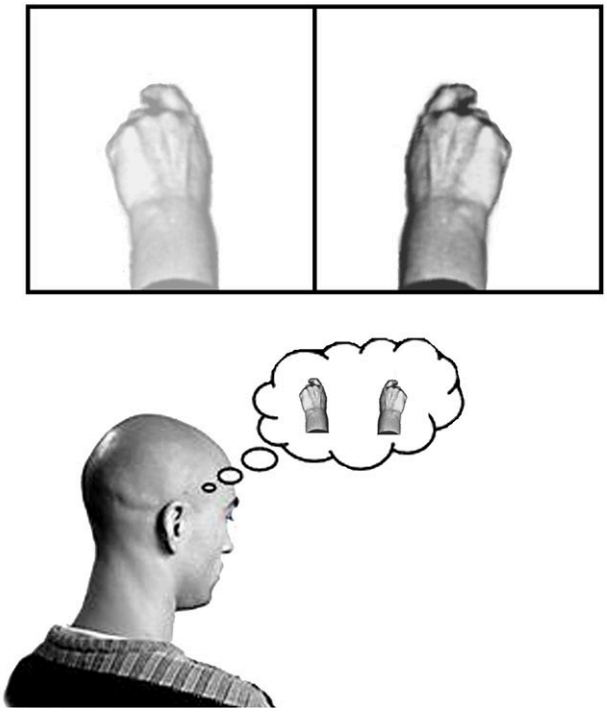


**FIGURE 15.3** Dr. Ramachandran's research and case study established the link between visual perception and nerve transmission. Mirror therapy, resulting from this discovery, has helped bring some relief from phantom limb pain. (credit: "Mirror-box-comic" by Edward M. Hubbard/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

To learn more about Dr. Ramachandran's research, see his TED Talks 3 Clues to Understanding Your Brain (https://openstax.org/r/3clues) and The Neurons That Shaped Civilization (https://openstax.org/r/thatshapedcivilization).

## Discussion Questions

1. What advantages and disadvantages would a case study offer a researcher such as Ramachandran for finding information?
2. What do you think Ramachandran's research question was?
3. What would have constituted quantitative and qualitative research in Ramachandran's case study?

4. What do you think Ramachandran might have told participants regarding the ethics of the study?

## 15.3 Glance at Genre: Observation, Description, and Analysis

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the structural components of case studies.
- Determine the objectivity of case studies.
- Apply the genre conventions of case studies in your own research.

The goal of case study authors is to expand knowledge in a field of study. In many case studies, researchers look for "blind spots": areas of investigation that the current research is not addressing or not addressing sufficiently. Sometimes the authors of a study will explicitly state what they believe are the gaps in their research and call on other researchers to fill in those gaps.

### Components of Case Studies

Case studies generally have five main parts. They begin by presenting an overview of previous case studies on the topic. Sometimes called a **literature review**, this part of the case study provides background and helps readers understand where the current study fits within previous research. The second component of a case study is a detailed description of the **participants** and the **observation environment**. These descriptions of the individuals being studied and the conditions under which they are being studied provide additional background and context. The third component is the **methods** section, in which the author explains the ways in which data will be collected, such as interviews, surveys, observations, document analysis, and so on. The fourth component, following the methods section, is an organized presentation of the data collected, or the **findings** of the study. Finally, an **analysis** of the results concludes the case study. In this section, the author provides an interpretation of the collected data. This section usually includes an explanation of the limitations of and gaps in the case study's data, methods, or anything else the author believes is important.

Similar to academic essays, case studies adhere to a formal structure and voice. They are organized clearly, edited carefully, and reflect objectivity. As with all academic work, sources are documented and cited, usually using APA Documentation and Format.

### Key Terms

A case study, at its most basic level, is about close observation as a basis for analysis. By observing individuals or groups in a particular setting, researchers attempt to learn something about the participants' thoughts, actions, behavior, or feelings. To conduct a case study, you should be familiar with the following terms.

- **Analysis**: Interpretation of data gathered in a case study.
- **Data**: Information gathered from observation, interviews, research, or any other part of a case study.
- **field observations**: Observations made while participants are engaged in "real" activities at "real" places. Usually these are the workplace, school, or home. Other locations might be athletic or social venues or any other setting in which participants can be observed acting as they would if they were not being observed.
- **Results**: What collected data reveals about the research question.
- **Participants**: The human or, in some cases, nonhuman subjects observed in specific settings for the purpose of collecting data and evidence.
- **Observation environment**: The location and conditions under which participants are observed.
- **qualitative research**: Subjective information based on observations or elements that are difficult to replicate.
- **quantitative research**: Specific data that can be replicated in a controlled environment.
- **Research question**: Focused question about the topic being researched. A research question is the basis of a case study.

- **Survey** or **Interview**: Questions that the author of a case study asks participants in order to elicit relevant information.

## 15.4 Annotated Sample Reading: Case Study on Louis Victor "Tan" Leborgne

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply critical thinking and communication in varying rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Identify and describe the genre conventions and rhetorical situation of case studies.
- Analyze relationships between ideas and patterns of organization.

### Introduction



**FIGURE 15.4** Pierre Paul Broca (credit: "Paul Broca" by Anonymous/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

French physician Pierre Paul Broca (1824–1880), an early researcher of brain science, is credited with developing theories about how the brain controls motor functions such as language. One of his patients, Louis Victor Leborgne, suffered from a continuing loss of speech that resulted in an inability to form any syllables other than *tan*. Following Leborgne's death, Broca examined Leborgne's brain and observed some abnormalities in the left frontal lobe. These observations would eventually lead to the larger discovery that different areas of the brain control different motor functions.

This sample case study imagines what Broca might have written about Leborgne. The contemporary references at the end of the study are those used by the actual writer of the case study, not Pierre Paul Broca.

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### Patient Admission

> This 50-year-old Caucasian male was transferred from the psychiatry division to the surgical ward of Bicêtre Hospital in Paris on 11 April 1861. I performed a thorough physical examination upon his admission. The presenting diagnosis is diffuse gangrenous inflammation and infiltration of connective tissue of the entire lower right extremity, extending from the instep upward to the buttock. The patient shows complete paralysis of his right-side limbs. The left limbs are mobile with adequate control and power. Both bowel and bladder control are intact. The eyes are equally focused and reactive to light, although the vision in the left eye has deteriorated more than in the right eye. The patient exhibits difficulty in swallowing food, but the tongue is not paralyzed, and voice is normal.

***Introduction.*** *Broca first orients readers to the details of the case study: the participant, Leborgne, and how Leborgne came to be under his care.*

***Background and Context.*** *Broca gives a detailed description of the case study participant. He notes physical details of Leborgne's paralysis so that readers understand that Leborgne retains control over his voice and tongue. This knowledge allows Broca to eliminate paralysis as a cause of the subject's inability to use language.*

> The patient is completely unable to form words other than the single syllable *tan*, which he most often repeats twice in rapid succession: "tan-tan." This is said in varying tones and inflections. Paralysis of the patient's dominant arm prevents writing. Nevertheless, the patient can communicate to a surprising extent through facial expressions and gestures with his left hand. His intellect appears normal, and he shows no signs of head trauma.

***Research Question.*** *In this paragraph, Broca further describes his participant and begins to bring the case study into focus. The details he provides about Leborgne's ability to communicate and use language will be the focus of the study. Broca observes that Leborgne can communicate nonverbally, and no physical signs indicate that his brain may be affected. Broca wants to understand why Leborgne communicates as he does.*

### Patient History

> ***Personal History.*** My personal interviews with family members revealed that Louis Victor Leborgne was born 21 July 1809, in Moret-sur-Loing. The town has many tanneries, a fact that may account for his use of the syllable *tan*. His father is an elementary school teacher. The patient is one of six siblings. His previous occupation was *formier* [artisan who made forms for shoemakers]. He is unmarried and has no children. Members of his immediate family visit but have been unable to provide care for him at home, resulting in an extended hospital stay of 21 years. Interviews with other patients in the ward have indicated that the patient is unfavorably viewed as egotistical and vindictive.

***Description of Research Methods.*** *In this section, Broca notes that he interviewed Leborgne's family and other patients in the hospital and provides a hypothesis as to why Leborgne uses the syllable tan to communicate.*

***Organization.*** *The author uses headings to organize the different sections of the case study. Main headings are centered; subheadings are left-justified.*

> ***Medical History.*** My interviews with family members and hospital staff responsible for his care yielded only a cursory medical history. They did, however, reveal that the patient developed epilepsy in his childhood or youth; the exact age is unknown.

> At age 30, the patient lost the ability to speak but did not immediately seek medical attention. When the condition persisted, he came to Bicêtre Hospital and was admitted to the psychiatry division in 1840 (exact date not recorded).

***Limitations of Research.*** *Broca again notes the use of personal interview data as a research method / primary source. He acknowledges the limitations of this method ("only a cursory medical history") but was able to gather relevant details, such as when Leborgne developed epilepsy, when he lost the ability to speak, and when he was first admitted to the hospital.*

> Approximately 10 years after the onset of his first symptoms, Leborgne experienced gradual weakness of his right arm, which developed into complete paralysis in that limb. This condition was followed by weakness in his right leg and foot. Apparently, it took four years from the start of the paralysis of his right arm until the patient completely lost the ability to stand. In these years, his vision and mental faculties also deteriorated.

> The patient remains in bed, having refused to leave it for the past seven years. During this time, his clothing was changed once a week. The infrequent change of clothes caused a delay in discovering the extent of his gangrenous inflammation and infection. At this point, the patient could hardly move and was transferred to the surgical unit, where I first met him.

***Background and Context.*** *More details of Leborgne's medical history are given. Broca concludes the patient history by relating the circumstances leading to his treatment of Leborgne. This section provides a detailed account of everything known about the participant and his condition. Broca doesn't rely only on records to gather this history, though. He interviews hospital staff to try to gather additional information not recorded.*

## Treatment

> The gangrene being too extensive for surgery, I confined myself to testing his mental faculties and language comprehension. By using his fingers, the patient was able to respond accurately to mathematical questions. He understood and responded to verbal questions as well. At times, his answers were incorrect, such as claiming to have children; I attribute these lapses to sepsis, which by now was far advanced.

***Research Methods.*** *In this section, Broca begins to relate how he observed Leborgne's ability to communicate.*

***Analysis of Results.*** *Broca tries to explain the reason for Leborgne's incorrect responses.*

> Lacking any physical irregularities that would cause his loss of speech, I conclude the condition must be related to brain function. This condition is so singular that it seems useful to assign it a special name. I will designate it, therefore, as *aphemia*, or loss of speech.

> The patient expired on 17 April 1861 at 11:00 a.m. Cause of death was gangrenous infection and sepsis.

***Broad Theory.*** *Broca poses a theory about Leborgne's limited ability to communicate: "the condition must be related to brain function." This theory will be tested later in the case study and, if correct, might be applicable to how the brain works for everyone.*

## Autopsy Findings

> I performed an autopsy 24 hours postmortem and found a number of irregularities in the patient's brain. A softened area over the perisylvian region contained a cavity the size of a chicken's egg, filled with serous fluid. Volume loss affected the gyri, subcortical perisylvian area, insula, and part of the striate nucleus. I weighed the brain and discovered it to be lighter than normal. I attribute the low weight to the loss of volume in the left cerebral hemisphere.

> I observed a significant malformation on the left frontal lobe, which I believe to be the source of the patient's aphemia and, therefore, the brain location controlling speech production. Wishing to preserve the brain, I performed a surface examination only, without a full dissection. I have placed the preserved brain at the Musée Dupuytren in Paris.

***Research Methods.*** *Broca provides details of the autopsy and describes the abnormalities he found in Leborgne's brain. These details are crucial to the study because of Broca's earlier comment about Leborgne's inability to communicate resulting from brain function.*

***Analysis of Results.*** *Broca further hones his theories based on his observations of Leborgne's brain. Broca hypothesizes that this malformation is the cause of Leborgne's condition and, therefore, is located in the part of the brain that is related to speech.*

### Discussion

> I presented Leborgne's case at the meeting of the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris on 18 April 1861, where it generated considerable controversy. My former teacher Jean-Baptiste Bouillaud had previously advanced the idea that the language function is localized in the frontal lobes, with which, based on my autopsy of Leborgne's brain, I concur. Anatomist Louis Pierre Gratiolet opposed the idea that there could exist a specific area responsible for speech, arguing that the brain functions as a whole. Esteemed physician Ernest Auburtin asserted that specific areas of the brain have specific functions and further stated that motor articulation is not directly relevant to the ability to conceive words and ideas.

***Advancing Knowledge.*** *Broca uses his case study to contribute to the research on brain functions.*

***Limitations of the Research.*** *Broca notes that not all attending the meeting are in agreement, suggesting that further research is needed to learn more about the brain and whether specific parts control specific functions.*

### Conclusion

> Given my patient Leborgne's success at responding to verbal and mathematical questions despite his loss of speech, I am convinced that brain function is localized. Auburtin's theory of more compartmentalized specificity is intriguing, and I intend to pursue this idea. Leborgne's preserved brain remains at the Musée Dupuytren, where it is available for further study.

***What's Next.*** *Inviting additional research, Broca calls on his audience to research localized brain function. He notes that Leborgne's brain is available for researchers to observe.*

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## Discussion Questions

1. What methods does Broca use in his case study?
2. What are Broca's field observations?
3. What types of evidence does Broca gather for his case study?
4. How does Broca analyze his data? What conclusion does he reach?
5. If Leborgne had lived longer, what are some ways Broca could have expanded his study on his patient's use of language?

### Language and Expression

One significant finding of Broca's case study was that Leborgne grew up in the town of Moret-sur-Loing. The town had many tanneries, leading Broca to theorize that Leborgne's use of the syllable *tan* was related to his home. *Why is this theory important?* It illustrates how personal history affects people. It is possible that Leborgne used language in this way because of his history and cultural association with his hometown. Culture and identity have a big impact on how people use language, even among people who speak the same language.

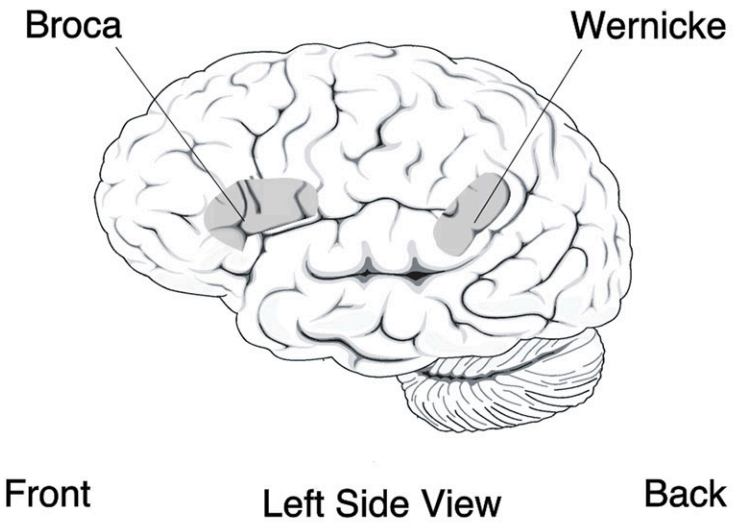



**FIGURE 15.5** The Broca area—named for French anthropologist and pathologist Pierre Paul Broca (1824–1880), who discovered its function—is the part of the brain that controls articulate speech. The Wernicke area—named for German neurologist Carl Wernicke (1848–1905), who first described the area—is the part of the brain that controls the comprehension of speech. (credit: "BrocasAreaSmall" by NIH publication 97-4257/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## 15.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically About How People and Language Interact

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify and implement genre conventions of case studies for structure, paragraphing, voice, and mechanics.
- Articulate how genre conventions are shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.
- Participate successfully in the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.
- Give and act on productive feedback to works in progress.

Having learned about case studies and how they help advance research and knowledge, you are ready to do an informal one of your own. You will conduct an informal case study profile by selecting a topic to research, observing a setting and a participant (or participants), and using specified research methods. If applicable, see The Research Process: How to Create Sources for more information about selecting a research topic. You will then analyze the results of your study to determine its significance.

As indicated in Tracing a Broad Issue in the Individual, many universities and professional organizations will provide guidance on how to adhere to ethical standards when conducting a case study. Your instructor will be your best resource for answers to questions you have about your college's policies on conducting research and whether and how they apply to the research you intend to do. Remember, however, that for any research you do involving human subjects, you must obtain participants' written permission to be included in your study.

## Summary of Assignment

Conduct an informal case study of a classmate, friend, or family member to gain insight into the participant's use of language, specifically the ways in which their culture(s) and language(s) interact. Try to find a willing participant who is either bilingual or fluent in, familiar with, or an occasional user of a language other than English. You can focus your case study on the ways in which your participant changes their language according to context, how their use of language is different when they interact with family and friends as opposed to in academic or professional contexts, or how using one language affects the other. Be sure to consult your instructor about the school's policy on student participation in studies, and obtain written permission from the participant before you begin. If you do not know anyone who speaks another language, consider these topics:

- Body language that accompanies linguistic communication
- Language shifts according to medium (text, phone call, email, in person)
- In-person vs. written communication
- Comparison of language use between two participants from different cultures or age groups

After you decide on your topic, formulate a research question that asks precisely what you want to learn from your study. Next, you will need to plan your case study by drafting questions for interviews and conducting observations at determined times and places. Then, using the information you collect from your interviews and observations, you will offer an interpretation about the participant's use of language that might be helpful to your college's instructors and administrators. Present your findings in a report of around 1,000 to 1,200 words.

***Another Lens.*** Complete the same case study, and share your findings in a presentation that is 7 to 10 minutes in length. See Scripting for the Public Forum: Writing to Speak for more information about scripting for a public forum. For this version of the assignment, record your interviews on video or use a voice recorder. Play clips of your interviews in your presentation to illustrate the participant's use of language. Organize the presentation into clear, distinct sections with subtitles. Instead of long, dense paragraphs, use short bullet points to state your main points. Use visuals to communicate abstract ideas or data. Make sure your presentation flows logically and that you use appropriate transitions to maintain coherence. To indicate clear demarcations between sections, use headings and subheadings, as in the Annotated Sample Reading. In your presentation, include all of the typical sections of a written case study:

- **Background/Context.** Give an overview of previous research on the topic.
- **Methods.** Provide a detailed description of the methods you used to collect the data. Include a description of the participant and the observation environment.
- **Results.** Provide the data collected: answers to interview or survey questions, your observations, and any other pertinent information.
- **Analysis.** Interpret the data, and discuss any limitations of the case study.

See the resources below for some helpful presenting tips.

- 6 Tips to Calm Your Nerves before Speaking (https://openstax.org/r/6tips)
- Like, Eliminate Ums and Ahs, Right? (https://openstax.org/r/eliminateums)
- Do You Write the Way You Speak? (You Should!) (https://openstax.org/r/doyouwritetheway)
- Do You Write the Way You Speak? (You Should!) Part 2 (https://openstax.org/r/doyouwritetheway2)

## Quick Launch: Research Question and Data Collection

Within your selected topic, begin to brainstorm possible research questions, keeping in mind the following characteristics:

- **Open Ended.** A good research question has multiple possible answers, all equally plausible. Avoid a yes-

or-no question or one with an obvious answer.

- **Debatable.** The research question should spark reasonable debate around the best answer or solution. If you think you know the answer to the research question or if you doubt that people can be open-minded about a range of answers, it is not a good research question.
- **Answerable.** You should be able to answer your research question by using the evidence you gather. You should be able to consult existing source material on the topic.
- **Consequential.** The outcome of the debate around your research question should be of consequence. In other words, what you or others choose to do going forward should matter and affect others.

You probably will revise the wording of your research question quite a bit before it aligns with the characteristics listed. Spend time thinking about your research question, and revise it as necessary to prepare to conduct your case study. See Table 15.1 for examples of how to revise research questions in various fields of study.

**Research Questions**

| **Topic** | **Research question doesn't meet basic requirements. It is a yes-or-no question, of little consequence, easy to answer, or suggestive of the "right" answer.** | **Research question is of some consequence and could have multiple answers but needs further revision to be open-ended, more specific, or more consequential.** | **Research question is specific, open-ended, consequential, and suitable for a case study.** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sports | Who are the best college athletes now?<br>Should college athletes be paid? | Is it fair to other students to pay college athletes? | How do colleges benefit—or not—from paying student athletes?<br>How do college athletes benefit—or not—from being paid? |
| Finance | Should you invest in stocks or bonds?<br>Should the government regulate the economy?<br>What was the GDP in the year 2016? | What are some things the U.S. government does to protect the economy? | How are individuals affected by government intervention in free-market economies? |
| Technology | Are high-quality cell phones too expensive?<br>Is Apple a monopoly? | What will be the future of landlines? | Why do some people continue to use landlines?<br>How do people combine cell phone and landline use? |

**TABLE 15.1** Revising research questions

Once you select a topic and research question, you can begin looking for background information.

### Data Collection

Before starting your actual research, get a sense of the body of knowledge around your topic. Remember, case studies are about advancing research in a particular field. For a case study to effectively advance knowledge, it must show awareness of the research already done in the field. A literature review section, which includes previous research and background about the topic, is typically included in a case study. Browsing trade publications and academic journals can help you get a sense of existing research. Looking for articles frequently referred to in other articles is a good way to locate important research, as researchers typically cite significant studies. Look at important, groundbreaking research in addition to recently published work. The information you gather from existing literature may be either qualitative or quantitative. See The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources for more information about conducting research.

## Drafting:

After you have established your research question, you can begin your actual study. Start by planning how you will collect your primary source data. First, review the literature in the field if you have not yet done so. Next, draft questions to ask your case study participant. The strongest case studies provide a unique perspective that is applicable to your specific audience—in this case, students, teachers, and administrators at your college. Keep in mind that not every college is the same. Some colleges, such as "open admissions" community colleges, admit all who apply, whereas other colleges accept only 5 percent or fewer of their applicants. Interview questions are likely to be different depending on the individual characteristics of your college. To learn more about your college and its student population, search for information on the college website. Look for sections that have titles such as "About Us," "About Our Students," "College Facts" / "Factbook," and so on.

Brainstorm a list of characteristics that make your college and its students unique. Figure 15.6 shows how a student at Midlands Technical College began data collection for a case study on language use.

| | |
|---|---|
| | **Student Body Characteristics** |
| | College: Midlands Technical College |
| | 61% Female, 39% Male |
| | 45% White, 25% Black, 15% Hispanic, 10% Asian, 5% Other |
| | Most students live in urban or suburban areas |
| | Most students (59%) are traditional college age (24 or under) |
| | Because this is a community college, all students live off campus; most have not relocated to attend school |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

**FIGURE 15.6** Brainstorming data (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

### Create Interview Questions

Using your research and brainstorming ideas, draft a series of 10 to 15 questions you plan to ask your case study participant. Remember that these questions should be open-ended (no yes-or-no questions) and give the participant an opportunity to speak freely and extemporaneously. There are no right or wrong answers. With these questions, keep your purpose in mind: to gather information that will be helpful to students, teachers, and administrators about how a student at Midlands (or another school) uses language. Here are some sample questions:

- What are your hobbies, or what do you do for entertainment? (This question should elicit responses that provide insight into the student's leisure activities and the groups they identify with.)
- What new language uses did you have to develop when you became a college student?
- If you have a job in addition to being a student, what are some ways you use language to do that job?
- How do you communicate with friends and family? (Text messages? Apps such as Snapchat? Phone calls?)
- Describe your style of text messaging. (Probe for details about situations and contexts.)
  - When do you send long texts?
  - How long do you usually wait for a response before sending a new message?
  - How long do you usually wait before responding to a message?
  - When do you use standard English?
  - When and for what purposes do you use emoji?
- How do you communicate using voice or video chat (Zoom, video games, iMessage, etc.)?
- With whom do you communicate, and in what contexts?
- How do you adjust your use of language in these situations?

Remember to use the brainstorming and research you did previously to draft appropriate questions for your case study participant. Also, try to find ways to encourage the participant to provide as many details as they can and to identify an appropriate setting in which you can observe them using language.

Interview the person you have chosen to study. Record their responses on paper or on a digital voice recorder. If using a digital recorder, briefly note anything you want to review later in writing. If you find an opportunity to elicit further information or follow up, do so. You may find it helpful to print the bulleted list of questions and write the participant's answers directly on the page.

### Field Observation

The next step is to observe. If you haven't already done so, decide on a setting in which to observe the participant. You might observe in person and/or use a messaging app or video chat to observe them using language at work, with their friends and family, or in some other setting. The setting should be one in which you can get a good idea of how the participant uses language naturally in that context. For example, you would not want to observe a student playing a video game if they aren't a gamer. Here are some suggestions about what to note as you observe. Be sure to take detailed notes during your observation. Consider printing this page as well and writing observation notes on it. See The Research Process: How to Create Sources to learn more about field research.

- What are some common words or phrases used?
- In what ways does the participant replace or substitute certain words with emoji, slang, acronyms, and the like?
- When does the participant's voice indicate shifts in volume, tone, or vocabulary? If you are observing texts or writing, how does the participant communicate tone?
- What specific words and phrases does the participant use? That is, what words and phrases might not be understood by you or others but *are* understood by the participant and the people with whom they are communicating?

### Analysis of Data

After collecting data, analyze your findings and write your report. First, look closely at the data you have collected, and decide what the information is telling you about how the participant uses language. You should have data gathered from both qualitative and quantitative research. If you need more of either one, interview or observe the participant again, or conduct more background research. Practice identifying qualitative and quantitative data.

Access multimedia content (http://openstax.org/books/writing-guide/pages/15-5-writing-process-thinking-critically-about-how-people-and-language-interact)

### Writing the Introduction: Background, Context, and Methods

In the introduction, provide background and context for the case study. To begin, write a detailed description of the study you have conducted and what you sought to learn from it. Also include the details of your literature review and the methods you used to collect data (interviews, observations, and so on). The example below is an introduction to the Midlands Technical College student's case study on how students use language:

**Background and Context**

> Midlands Technical College is a two-year public college in Columbia, South Carolina. Over the course of two weeks, I observed two students to better understand their uses of language. A generational shift in the average college student population is occurring, with millennials graduating and making up less of the college student population. At the same time, Gen Z's numbers on college campuses continue to grow. Studying how college students use language can provide valuable insights into how to communicate effectively with this population.

**Methods and Participant**

> I gathered my data using three methods. In the first method, I researched literature about both Midlands Technical College's student population and communication habits and attitudes among Gen Z students, and I looked into some case studies about the use of emoji. For the second method, I created a group chat consisting of me and two students enrolled in the same section of an introductory psychology course. We used this group chat to discuss the course, assignments, due dates, etc. For the third method, I created a survey of 10 questions asking the students to think about and reflect on how they use language at home versus at school. I then interviewed the students to record their answers. Using this data, I was able to analyze how students use language among their peers versus how they use language around their family.

### Body: Presentation of Data

The next step in writing your case study is to present your data and analysis. How you set up your body paragraphs is up to you or your instructor. Like the sample study about Leborgne, most case studies are organized into sections and subsections, each devoted to an aspect of the study. You have already written an introduction in which you presented the scope of your study, the participant, the field of research, and other pertinent background information. Now you can continue by organizing each element that you studied into its own section, or you can choose another way of setting it up. For example, your overall structure might look like the structure in Table 15.2, using your own criteria and as many sections as you need. If you choose another structure, create a similar organizer to help you keep focused as you write.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Criterion 1**<br>**Possible Criterion: *Telephone Greetings*** | **Qualitative Research Data**<br>**Quantitative Research Data**<br>**Additional Information**<br>**Analysis** |
| **Criterion 2**<br>**Possible Criterion: *Emoji*** | **Qualitative Research Data**<br>**Quantitative Research Data**<br>**Additional Information**<br>**Analysis** |
| **Criterion 3** | **Qualitative Research Data**<br>**Quantitative Research Data**<br>**Additional Information**<br>**Analysis** |
| **Criterion 4** | **Qualitative Research Data**<br>**Quantitative Research Data**<br>**Additional Information**<br>**Analysis** |
| **Criterion 5** | **Qualitative Research Data**<br>**Quantitative Research Data**<br>**Additional Information**<br>**Analysis** |
| **Criterion 6** | **Qualitative Research Data**<br>**Quantitative Research Data**<br>**Additional Information**<br>**Analysis** |

**TABLE 15.2** Organizational structure

Provide detailed descriptions of what you observed and the results of your research. Include qualitative data based on your observations as well as quantitative data based on measurable results. Be sure to acknowledge what you do not know or were unable to observe. The following example illustrates a typical body paragraph describing a student's use of capitalization and punctuation in text messages.

> Mateo's use of capitalization and punctuation appeared to change depending on the mood he wanted to convey. For example, "what time do u think prof chang will let us go today"—a casual message about class on Tuesday—lacked capitalization and punctuation ("What time do you think Prof. Chang will let us go today?"). On Thursday, Mateo sent a more formal message regarding the need for the group to study for an upcoming exam: "Guys, we need to settle on a time and place—Oscar's or Dawson Library—to study." It's not clear whether Mateo's use of capitalization and punctuation is connected to his social group or other factors, as I had limited ability to observe the use of capitalization and punctuation by the study participants. However, this question is worth exploring in more detail.

### Using Visuals

One way in which an oral presentation of a case study will differ from a written case study is the number of visuals provided. Presenters are expected to use visuals when sharing data and illustrating points. However, writers also use visuals to help communicate abstract ideas. In addition to images, four main types of graphics are used to present data:

- **Bar Charts**. These charts typically use vertical bars to compare different data points. They are used primarily to compare similar groups to one another.

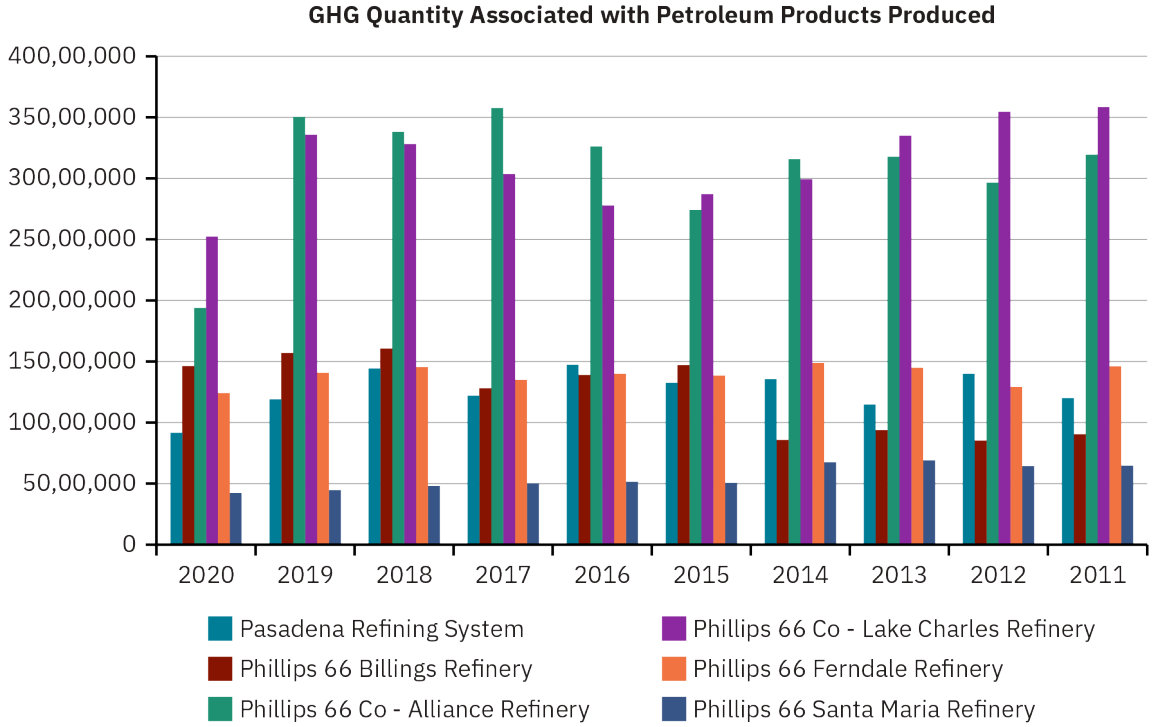



**FIGURE 15.7** Bar chart (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

- **Line Graphs**. These graphs typically use one or more lines to show how a data point (or points) has changed over time. Line graphs are often used to show trends over a given period.

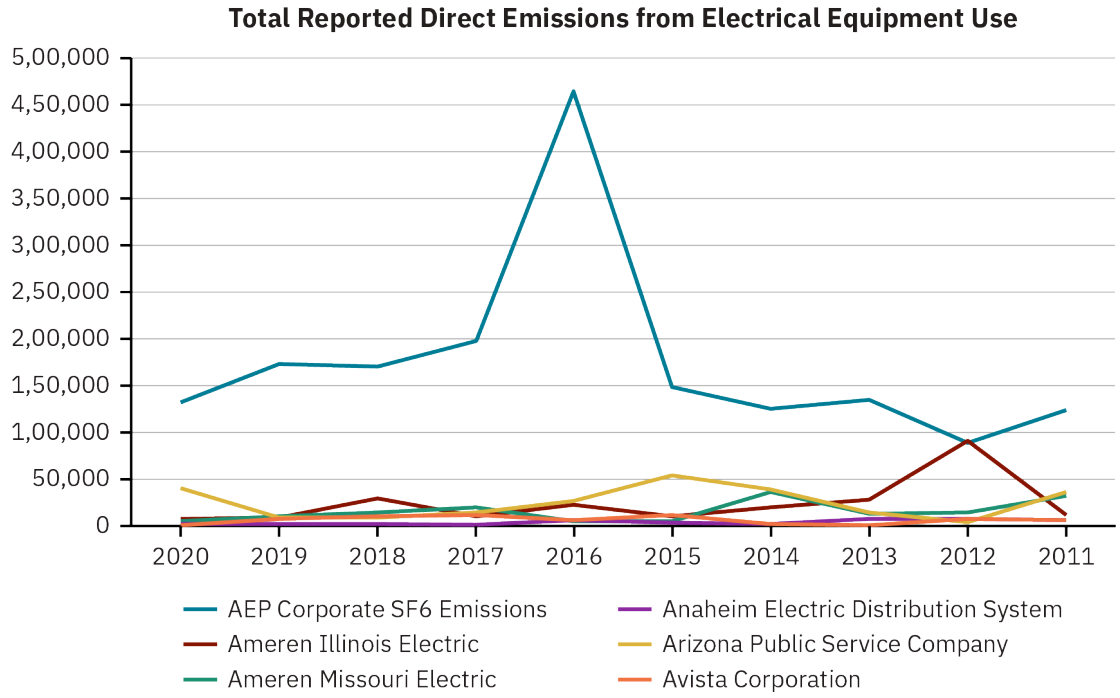



**FIGURE 15.8** Line graph (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

- **Pie Charts**. These charts typically divide a circle (or "pie") that represents a group into sections that express a percentage of the whole. They are used to show relationships and proportions of these parts.

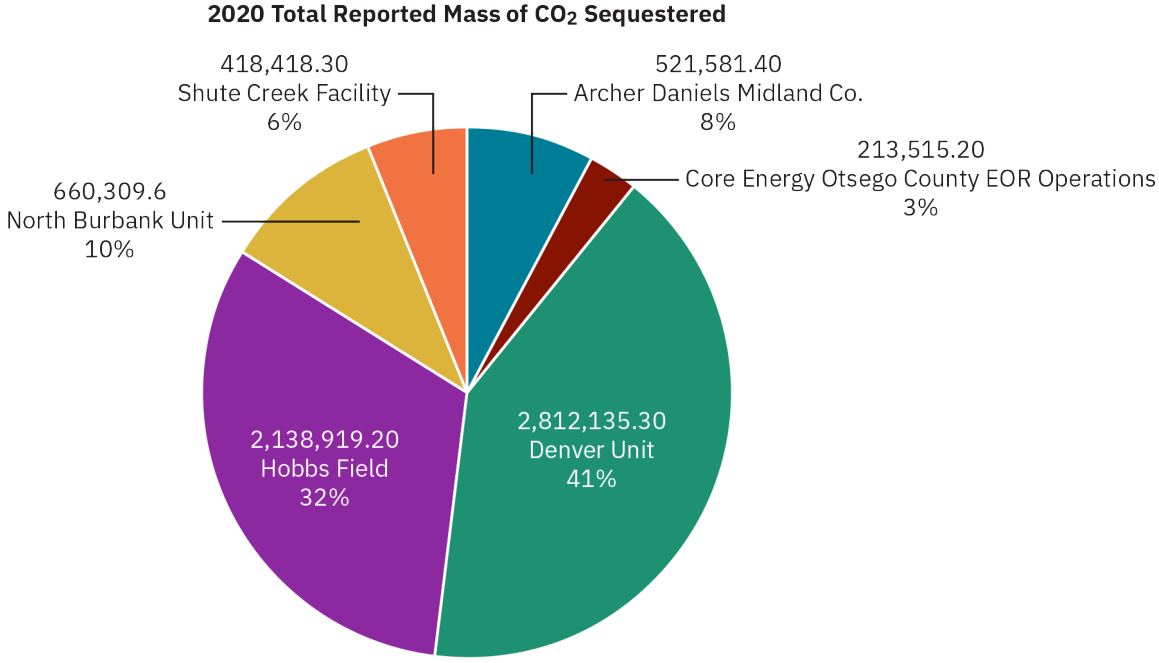



**FIGURE 15.9** Pie chart (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

- **Tables**. Tables typically break down a set of specific data points that are hard to manage in words or charts. They present data in a linear way to help people locate a specific data point easily.

| Category | | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| Index | Title | |
| 0 | Probably Extinct | Taxa and populations that inhabited Russian territory (or marine area) in the past and whose presence has been unconfirmed for the last 50 years. |
| 1 | Endangered | Taxa and populations whose abundance has decreased to critical levels, allowing them to become extinct in the near future. |
| 2 | Decreasing Number | Taxa and populations whose number is constantly decreasing. If the negative factors reducing the populations continue, the taxa can be moved to Category 1 in the near future. |
| 3 | Rare | Taxa and populations with a low number of individuals inhabiting limited territory (or marine area) or sporadically distributed over extensive territory (or marine area). |
| 4 | Uncertain Status | Taxa and populations which apparently belong to one of the above categories but there are considerable gaps in knowledge of them, or they do not exactly meet the criteria for the other categories. |
| 5 | Rehabilitated and Rehabilitating | Taxa and populations whose number and distribution is recovered or recovering due to protective measures. They are close to the state of stable existence without any current urgent measures on protection and rehabilitation. |

**FIGURE 15.10** A table sourced from information in the Red Data Book of the Russian Federation. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

When selecting visuals, ensure that they are clear and related to the topic. A visual's purpose is to illustrate a point that is too long or complex to express in words. Visuals should have a clear purpose and be clearly labeled. Your audience should be able to interpret and see the point of the visual without explanation. Include visuals to support your work, not simply because you are expected to include them.

### Conclusion: What It All Means

Once you collect all your data, analyze it further and collectively to form your conclusions. Take a close look again at your interview responses and observation notes. *What did the participant say in the interview that led to insights about their use of language?* Try to identify any words or phrases that tell you something about the participants. See Analytical Report: Writing from Facts for more information about analyzing data. *How does the data from your interviews and observations reveal something that might lead to a generalization about how students use language?*

Arriving at conclusions can be tricky. Base your conclusion on observations of consistent behavior rather than reaching a broad conclusion based on limited evidence. Your conclusion should be something you notice that challenges your previous understanding or assumptions. For example, younger people appear to avoid the "laughing with crying eyes" emoji because it has been so overused that it now seems insincere. Young people are often the driving force behind new uses of language. To replace the "insincere" laughing-with-crying-eyes emoji, many young people turned to the skull emoji to indicate "I'm dead" (from laughing).

Your conclusion should present your theories. *Based on the evidence you gathered, what are some*

*generalizations you can make about how students use language? What did you observe that provides opportunity for further study?* The example conclusion from a case study on emoji below presents a theory on how students use them.

> Overall, I observed that students tend to be more informal when communicating to other students in the same age group. These students used emoji to communicate thoughts and feelings that differed from the more literal and more widely understood meaning of the emoji. I believe that students of this generation want to use language in a way that separates them from their older siblings, parents, and teachers. Thus, their use of emoji reflects that desire as they seek to change the meanings of some emoji. Whether this trend continues as students age is up for debate and presents an opportunity to further understanding of language use within this group.

## Peer Review: Conferencing Electronically

After you finish your draft, receiving feedback from a peer will help you identify the strengths and weaknesses in your case study. Writers sometimes find it hard to view their work from the perspective of their audience. Therefore, peer feedback will help you focus on your writing in ways that are not obvious to you. Similarly, when you review your peer's work, react to their draft as a serious and conscientious reader. What suggestions can you offer to make this case study more informative or something you would want to read?

Technology has facilitated giving and receiving feedback. You are probably familiar with getting feedback during in-class peer reviews and conferences, but if you haven't done so already, consider electronic peer reviews. Conferencing electronically offers several advantages:

- **Convenience.** You don't have to be in the same room with your conferencing partner to give each other feedback. Within a reasonable time frame, you can review your partner's writing at a time that is convenient for you.
- **Time.** You have more time to think about your reactions to, and your feedback on, your conferencing partner's writing than you would in person.
- **Permanence.** The feedback you give and receive is stored digitally and easy to access.
- **Shareability.** Electronic feedback is easier to reproduce and share with others, such as an instructor or a tutor.

Multiple technologies exist to help you conference electronically.

- **Cloud Storage.** Cloud storage providers such as Microsoft's OneDrive and Google Drive store files on the Internet. You can access these sites from any device. Sharing, too, is easier because changes to the document are saved automatically. Therefore, every time you or someone else accesses the document, they are viewing the latest version.
- **Word Processors.** Microsoft Word and Google Docs have review features such as comment boxes and Track Changes as well as the capacity to suggest, accept, and reject changes.
- **Collaboration Platforms.** Slack, Google Hangouts, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams allow you to create a space where you can communicate with people in a shared online workspace. Features of collaboration platforms include file sharing and storage, chat, video conferencing, and task organizing.

When you are assigned a partner, open their draft and begin reviewing it. The following tutorial will explain how to use the review features of Microsoft Word. Other Microsoft Office and non-Office products (Google Docs and Apple's Pages) offer similar commenting and markup features.

1. Open the document you want to review, and click the Review tab above the tools ribbon.
2. Read the draft as you normally would, looking for areas to comment on. Note the places where you can provide positive comments as well as possible places for revision.
3. To add a comment, highlight the word, sentence, or phrase to which you want to add a comment.
4. Click New Comment in the tools ribbon to create a comment box in the margin.

5. Type your comment in the box.
6. Click anywhere outside the box to save the comment.
7. To delete a comment, click inside the comment box, and then click Delete next to or beneath New Comment in the tools ribbon.

### Specific Comments

Provide specific comments when reviewing your peer's draft. Vague, general comments such as "revise this" don't explain the reason for revision or how to revise. When conferencing electronically, specificity is even more important because what you write might be the only feedback your peer receives, unless you conference over video chat.

Comments can generally be categorized as vague, somewhat helpful, and specific and clear.

- **Vague comments** might offer praise that doesn't point to anything specific about the writing, or they might offer criticism without providing a suggested revision or explaining why something should be revised. For example, a comment such as "Revise this sentence" is not helpful. Although it specifically identifies the sentence as needing revision, it doesn't indicate why or suggest how to revise.
- **Somewhat helpful comments** are still general, but they comment on something specific about the writing. They may also suggest some direction for a revision. For example, a comment such as "Revise this question so that it's more debatable" identifies the aspect that needs revision and briefly explains why. However, it does not provide further details about why the question is not debatable or how to revise it.
- **Specific and clear comments** identify precisely why the writing is good or needs revision. They also suggest a specific revision or revision strategy the writer can use. For example, "I think this question could be more debatable. 'Do college students struggle with time management skills?' is a yes-or-no question and would not lead to a strong argument either way. A better question could be 'How does lack of time management skills affect college students as a whole?' or 'What should be done about students' lack of time management skills?'"

## Revising: Accepting and Rejecting Suggestions

After your partner finishes reviewing your draft, you will need to accept or reject their suggested changes. Use the image below to locate the tools in Word you will need to use. You can accept or reject edits to the wording, edits to the formatting, and comments in the margins.

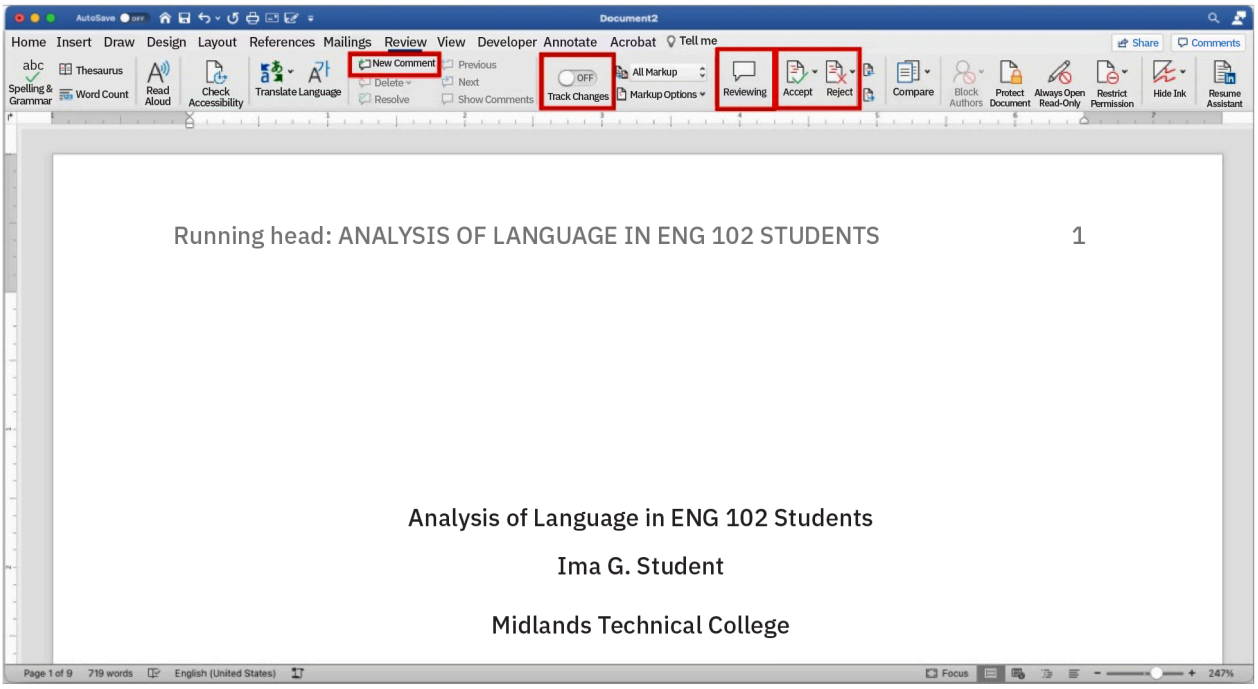



**FIGURE 15.11** Microsoft Word Review ribbon (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

Edits made directly to your document will appear in red (for added text) or red text with a strikethrough (for deleted text).

1. To accept or reject changes in a Word document, open the document and click the Review tab above the tools ribbon.
2. To ensure that changes you make to the document will not be saved as edits, go to the tools ribbon, and toggle Track Changes to off.
3. To open a panel that displays all changes, click Reviewing or Reviewing Pane in the tools ribbon.
4. To navigate to a specific revision, click the revision in this panel.
5. To navigate consecutively through changes, click the Previous and Next buttons beside the Accept and Reject options in the tools ribbon.
6. To accept a revision, click Accept in the tools ribbon.
7. To reject a revision, click Reject in the tools ribbon.
8. The arrows below or beside the Accept and Reject buttons open drop-down menus that give you the option either to accept or reject a change and then move to the next revision or to accept or reject all changes at once. Be careful not to accept or reject all changes without addressing each one individually.
9. When you finish, be sure you have accepted or rejected all of the edits and deleted all comments so that they don't appear in the final draft.
10. Check that no red text remains in the paper and that no comments remain in the right margin.
11. When you are finished, be sure to save your changes.

## Sharing Your Work

Seek out a student conference or publication to present your case study. Many colleges host events and conferences to showcase student work. Your teacher or advisor can probably direct you toward opportunities to present your work at your college or in the community.

For example, the University of Central Oklahoma hosts the annual Language and Linguistics Student Conference (https://openstax.org/r/languageandlinguistic), which is open to all undergraduate and graduate students. Presenting at a student conference is a great opportunity not only to share your work but also to

network and gain experience that will make you stand out when applying to other schools, for scholarships, and for jobs.

In addition, a number of academic journals publish student research. For instance, Spectrum (https://openstax.org/r/spectrum), sponsored by the University of Alberta, is a student-run interdisciplinary journal that showcases students' work. See more undergraduate publishing opportunities provided by the Council on Undergraduate Research (https://openstax.org/r/ugjournalslisting).

If you publish or present your case study, remember to adhere to ethical standards. As explained in Tracing a Broad Issue in the Individual, many universities and professional organizations will provide guidance on what standards to follow when conducting a case study. Be sure to review these guidelines with the organization sponsoring the conference or publication.

Another option for sharing is to gather the case studies done by all class members and, with the approval of your instructor, go through them to ascertain what, if any, trends emerge. If you and your classmates think these studies might be useful to college administrators, consider sending them, along with a detailed cover letter, to the Office of Admissions, the Dean of Students, or another appropriate administrative office.

## 15.6 Editing Focus: Words Often Confused

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define and give examples of homonyms, homographs, and homophones.
- Demonstrate correct use of commonly confused words.

When writing about language, you don't want to make the mistake of misusing language. **Homonyms** are words that sound the same and are spelled the same but have different meanings. **Homographs** are words that are spelled the same but may sound different and have different meanings. **Homophones** are words that sound the same but might have a different spelling, a different meaning, or both. Because they sound the same, they are often confused. Other words frequently confused sound slightly different and have slightly different spellings. It's important to recognize and correct commonly confused words because spell checkers don't always catch these errors.

### Homonyms

Because homonyms' spelling and pronunciation are the same but their meanings are different, you probably don't have to worry about misusing them, although they often belong to different parts of speech. However, some awareness of homonyms and their multiple meanings will help ensure that your language is precise. For more information about homonyms, see "Words and Language."

Here are some common homonyms and their meanings:

| | |
|---|---|
| band | Verb: to come together<br>Noun: group of musicians |
| rock | Verb: to move back and forth<br>Noun: hard material found in the earth |
| tire | Verb: to become sleepy or lose energy<br>Noun: ring-shaped rubber component that fits over the wheel of a vehicle |

TABLE 15.3

| | |
|---|---|
| current | Noun: flow of water or electricity<br>Adjective: up to date |
| train | Verb: to teach or learn through practice<br>Noun: group of connected railroad cars |

**TABLE 15.3**

## Homographs

Homographs have the same spelling but different meanings. They are considered different from homonyms because they may be pronounced differently. Some disagreement exists among scholars as to whether pronunciation *must* be different for a word to be considered a homograph. Some experts insist that origins must differ as well. However, all agree that meanings differ. For more information about homographs, see Words and Language.

Here are some common homographs and their meanings:

| | |
|---|---|
| lead | Noun: a metal (pronounced *led*)<br>Verb: to be at the front, to guide (pronounced *leed*) |
| bow | Verb: to bend forward<br>Noun: a position in which one bends forward<br>Noun: the front of a ship<br>Noun: a type of knot (pronounced *boh*) |
| object | Noun: a material item; a grammatical term (accent on first syllable)<br>Verb: to express disapproval (accent on second syllable) |
| close | Adjective: near (*s* pronounced like *ss*)<br>Verb: to bar passage; to shut down (*s* pronounced like *z*) |
| minute | Noun: 60 seconds (pronounced *minit*)<br>Adjective: tiny (pronounced *my-noot* or *my-nyoot*) |

**TABLE 15.4**

## Homophones

Homophones are words that are spelled differently and have different meanings but sound the same. Homophones are often the words that cause the most confusion and the most frequent errors. For more information about homophones, see Words and Language.

Here are some common homophones and their meanings:

| | |
|---|---|
| weather/ whether | **Weather** means the conditions outside, such as temperature and sunshine.<br>**Whether** is a conjunction that joins words or other parts of a sentence. |
| meat/meet | **Meat** is animal-based food.<br>When you **meet** someone, you encounter or get together with that person. |
| hear/here | **Hear** is what you do when you listen to music.<br>**Here** is a place nearby. |
| two/too/to | **Two** is a number, more than one and less than three.<br>**Too** may mean "also," or it may mean "very" or "more (adjective) than desired."<br>**To** is a preposition indicating direction or motion, as in "I wrote **to** the manager after I'd gone **to** the office." |

**TABLE 15.5**

The following homophones are often confused. Note that one of each group is a **contraction**: two words shortened and joined by an apostrophe.

| | |
|---|---|
| their | Possessive pronoun, belonging to *them*: "The family packed **their** suitcases for **their** vacation." Both the suitcases and the vacation belong to the *family*. |
| they're | Contraction joining *they* and *are*: "**They're** leaving for the airport at 10:30." In other words, *they are* leaving. |
| there | Referring to a location: "'Baggage claim is over **there**,' the airport worker said while pointing to the baggage carousels." This form indicates a physical place. |
| your | Possessive pronoun, belonging to *you*: "**Your** new phone will be mailed on November 4." The phone belongs to *you*. |
| you're | Contraction joining *you* and *are*: "**You're** registered for the conference." In other words, *you are* registered. |
| its | Possessive pronoun, belonging to *it*: "**Its** positive qualities outweigh **its** negative ones." Both the positive and the negative qualities belong to *it*. *It* could be a book, house, car, movie, phone, or any other object or idea. |
| it's | Contraction joining *it* and *is*: "**It's** raining today." In other words, *it is* raining. |

**TABLE 15.6**

## What Is the *Effect*? Or Is It *Affect*?

One final category of commonly confused words are words that sound and look *similar* but have different meanings.

| | |
|---|---|
| Affect | Verb: to influence an outcome: "Increasing the minimum wage will **affect** the incomes of millions of Americans."<br>Noun: body language that accompanies an expression of emotion: "The crime victim showed normal reactions and **affects."** |
| Effect | Noun: the outcome or result of an influence: "The **effect** of the increased minimum wage will be a 10 percent decrease in the federal poverty rate."<br>Verb: to cause to come into existence: "Congress will **effect** the new law." |
| Insure | Verb: to protect against damage or loss: "Homeowners must **insure** their property for the cost of full replacement." |
| Ensure | Verb: to make certain of: "This policy will **ensure** that the bank doesn't incur a loss as a result of irreparable damage to the home." |

**TABLE 15.7**

### Practice

Choose the correct word to complete each sentence.

1. Can you (hear/here) the phone ring from (hear/here)?
2. Are you going (to/too/two) the movie theater at (to/too/two) p.m., or is that (to/too/two) early for you?
3. This show always has a depressing (affect/effect) on me.
4. (Its/It's) hard to find small apartments for rent in this neighborhood.
5. Let's (meet/meat) at the pizza place so that I can eat something without (meet/meat).
6. Although it will need work, (its/it's) basic structure is sound.
7. Check about (ensuring/insuring) personal items in your apartment.
8. You can set the groceries on the table over (their/there/they're).
9. I'm going to watch the game at (their/there/they're) house.
10. How do you think the elections will (affect/effect) the neighborhood?
11. (Their/There/They're) listening to music on (their/there/they're) headphones.
12. (You're/Your) going to trip if you don't tie (you're/your) shoelaces.
13. Bring (you're/your) phone to the store to exchange it for a new one.
14. (Weather/whether) we travel depends on the (weather/whether).

## 15.7 Evaluation: Presentation and Analysis of Case Study

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Revise writing to follow the genre conventions of case studies.
- Evaluate the effectiveness and quality of a case study report.

Case studies follow a structure of *background and context*, *methods*, *findings*, and *analysis*. Body paragraphs should have main points and concrete details. In addition, case studies are written in formal language with precise wording and with a specific purpose and audience (generally other professionals in the field) in mind. Case studies also adhere to the conventions of the discipline's formatting guide (APA Documentation and Format in this study). Compare your case study with the following rubric as a final check.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: words often confused, as discussed in Section 15.6. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | Paragraphs are unified under a single, clear topic. Abundant background and supporting details provide a sense of completeness. Evidence of qualitative and quantitative data collection is clear. Transitions and subheads connect ideas and sections, thus establishing coherence throughout. Applicable visuals clarify abstract ideas. | The writer clearly and consistently recognizes and works within the limits and purpose of the case study. The writer engages the audience by inviting them to contribute to the research and suggests ways for doing so. The implications, relevance, and consequences of the research are explained. The study shows mature command of language and consistent objectivity. Quotations from participant(s) are accurate and relevant. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: words often confused, as discussed in Section 15.6. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | Paragraphs usually are unified under a single, clear topic. Background and supporting details provide a sense of completeness. Evidence of qualitative and quantitative data collection is clear. Transitions and subheads connect ideas and sections, thus establishing coherence. Applicable visuals clarify abstract ideas. | The writer usually recognizes and works within the limits and purpose of the case study. The writer engages the audience by inviting them to contribute to the research and usually suggests ways for doing so. The implications, relevance, and consequences of the research are explained. The study shows command of language and objectivity. Quotations from participant(s) are usually accurate and relevant. |

**TABLE 15.8**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3**<br><br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: words often confused, as discussed in Section 15.6. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | Paragraphs generally are unified under a single, clear topic. Background and supporting details provide a sense of completeness. Some evidence of qualitative and quantitative data collection is clear. Some transitions and subheads connect ideas and sections, generally establishing coherence. Visuals may clarify abstract ideas or may seem irrelevant. | The writer generally recognizes and works within the limits and purpose of the case study. The writer sometimes engages the audience by inviting them to contribute to the research but may not suggest ways for doing so. The implications, relevance, and consequences of the research are explained, if not fully. The study shows some command of language and objectivity. Quotations from participant(s) are generally accurate, if not always relevant. |

**TABLE 15.8**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: words often confused, as discussed in Section 15.6. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | Paragraphs sometimes are unified under a single, clear topic. Background and supporting details are insufficient to provide a sense of completeness. There is little evidence of qualitative or quantitative data collection. Some transitions and subheads connect ideas and sections, but coherence may be lacking. Visuals are either missing or irrelevant. | The writer occasionally recognizes and works within the limits and purpose of the case study. The writer rarely engages the audience by inviting them to contribute to the research or suggests ways for doing so. The implications, relevance, and consequences of the research are haphazardly explained, if at all. The study shows little command of language or objectivity. Quotations from participant(s) are questionable and often irrelevant. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: words often confused, as discussed in Section 15.6. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | Paragraphs are not unified under a single, clear topic. Background and supporting details are insufficient to provide a sense of completeness. There is little evidence of qualitative or quantitative data collection. Transitions and subheads are missing or inappropriate to provide coherence. Visuals are either missing or irrelevant. | The writer does not recognize or work within the limits and purpose of the case study. The writer does not engage the audience by inviting them to contribute to the research. The implications, relevance, and consequences of the research are haphazardly explained, if at all. The study shows little command of language or objectivity. Quotations, if any, from participant(s) are questionable and often irrelevant. |

**TABLE 15.8**

## 15.8 Spotlight on … Applied Linguistics

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify cultural and linguistic variations in the English language.
- Explain how case studies are used in the field of applied linguistics.
- Explain how the field of applied linguistics has contributed to understanding of language.

Scholars engaged in the field of **applied linguistics** seek to identify and offer solutions to real-life problems involving language. For example, immigrants who don't speak the primary language of their new country might have difficulty attending school, finding a job, or accessing services. One subfield of applied linguistics is **language acquisition theory**, which focuses on the ways in which people learn language.

## Solving Language-Related Problems

Applied linguistics has far-reaching implications that affect the real world. Effective communication in the workplace is one of the language-related problems that linguists study.

For example, globalization of business means a greater likelihood that workers will need to collaborate with people from other cultures. It is not uncommon for American businesses to be owned by foreign companies or to hire foreign workers with temporary work visas. When different cultures interact, misunderstandings may occur. For example, directness when speaking is common and valued in American business culture, but indirectness is the norm in some other cultures. Understanding this difference can help workers communicate more effectively.

The work of UCLA professor John Schumann in applied linguistics has helped researchers understand how people learn new languages. In 1976, Schumann conducted a case study of non-English speakers. His observations of one participant, Alberto, a 33-year-old man from Costa Rica, led Schumann to develop the acculturation model of second-language acquisition. Discounting Alberto's age and ability, Schumann hypothesized that Alberto's inability to learn English resulted from lack of contact with native English speakers. This theory thus suggests that learning a new language depends on societal and cultural factors—that is, the most successful language learners are those who immerse themselves most in the culture associated with the language.

Consider also the research done by Dr. Kristine Hildebrandt (https://openstax.org/r/KristineHildebrandt), a researcher at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Hildebrandt's studies of endangered languages of Nepal led her to start the research project "Narrating Disaster: Calibrating Causality and Responses to the 2015 Earthquakes in Nepal." Soon after the earthquake that year, she and her team interviewed people in Nepal's remote villages—remote both physically and linguistically—to learn more about their feelings and actions following the quake. From hearing the firsthand stories of how people in the region responded, adapted, and rebuilt shortly after the disaster, Hildebrandt hoped that the project's findings could improve outside response to disasters in these areas by considering the perspectives and actions of their residents. Also of particular interest to her were the effects of culture on the response to disaster and the effects of disaster on the social, economic, and linguistic structures of a community.

### Language Evolution

The work of linguists also guides people in how to use language and how to adapt it to contemporary situations. For example, speakers of English continue to revise their language to be more inclusive. The Associated Press and many other professional organizations have recently updated their stylebooks to refer to Americans of African descent as "Black" with a capital B instead of "African American." These organizations considered and debated the change for a long time but ultimately concluded that using *Black* better reflects the shared experience and common culture of Black people living in the United States.

Similarly, language is evolving to be more inclusive of people's gender identities. For a long time, many considered it grammatically incorrect to use the plural pronoun *they* with a singular verb. However, it is now widely accepted that *they* is a useful gender-neutral pronoun to refer to an individual person whose gender is unknown—and to include those who fall outside the gender binary.

## Linguistics-Related Task

To learn more about language acquisition, set up an interview with a person you know who has learned another language. It may be English as a second language, another spoken language, a language no longer spoken, American Sign Language, Braille, or even musical notation. Ask questions similar to those you asked your case study participant(s) to find out how they acquired this language. Consider asking some of the following questions:

- What is your first language?
- What caused you to learn a second language?
- Under what conditions did you learn this language? (School? Surroundings? Family? Other?)
- With whom do you use each language?
- In which language do you feel more comfortable? Why?
- How often and in what circumstances do you use both languages?
- Do you think in your first language and then translate into the second language?
- In which language do you have a larger vocabulary?

When you have enough information, write a summary of the information you gathered, and draw a conclusion about this person's experience. Finally, suggest a question for further research.

## 15.9 Portfolio: Your Own Uses of Language

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Write a reflection on the development of your composing processes.
- Articulate how those processes affect your work.
- Participate effectively in collaborative processes.




Think about the different groups to which you belong. When you go to work, you are part of a group in which you and your colleagues complete specific tasks to earn money. When you are with your family, you are with a group of people who are related to you. When you are with your friends, you are with a group of people who share interests similar to yours. When you are at school, you are with a group of people who are there to teach and to learn. These groups usually have hierarchies, language terms, dress codes (official or unofficial), and rules of behavior.

For example, think about the differences between standard English (formal, grammatically correct English) and the way you or people you know speak. Southerners might use expressions such as *y'all* and *ain't*, long considered slang and/or incorrect. Some people pluralize nouns that would be grammatically correct as singular. Specific uses of English variants are often linked to a geographical region, ethnicity, or both.

Variations of standard English are often the norm among people of color, and people who hold power over social mobility, such as teachers, hiring managers, and so on, traditionally consider use of standard English necessary to demonstrate education and professionalism. Thus, people of color often have to use two variations of English to navigate between professional and personal settings. A formal, grammatically correct sentence in standard English might impress an employer but might make you look out of touch to some in your community.

### How Language Use Speaks to Who You Are




Pick a specific group of which you are a part, and reflect on that group's use of language. The group you pick can be somewhat broad, such as "employees of Target," or more specific, such as "members of the University of North Carolina marching band." Ask yourself: *What words are used in this group that might not be understood by people outside the group? Has the group changed the spelling or meaning of any words to communicate with one another? Does the group use any acronyms?* Reflect on how language is used in your group to communicate ideas.

Then, reflect on how language within your group is used to evaluate ethos, or credibility, of its members. *In other words, how is language used to identify people who are initiated as "part of the group"? What flaws in the use of language would show that someone is not part of the group?*

Write your reflection in your notebook. If appropriate, discuss your reflection with another student, noting areas of similarity and difference. Add this reflection to your portfolio along with your case study profile.

## Further Reading

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# Unit 3

# Navigating Rhetoric in Real Life

## Unit Introduction

Unit 3 is about the **real world**—the world outside the walls of your college or university. There is a common misconception among students that the writing they do in the classroom is not related to the real world. The works of the Trailblazers in this text have argued against this idea. They are all using the genres taught in the text in new and interesting ways as part of their work in the real world. As technology evolves, increasing numbers of platforms are available for people to publish their ideas for professional and personal purposes. However, with these options come new responsibilities to present one's ideas fairly, accurately, and respectfully. Your voice has power, and your developing ability to present it effectively to the public means your journey with writing is really just beginning.

# Print or Textual Analysis: What You Read

# 16

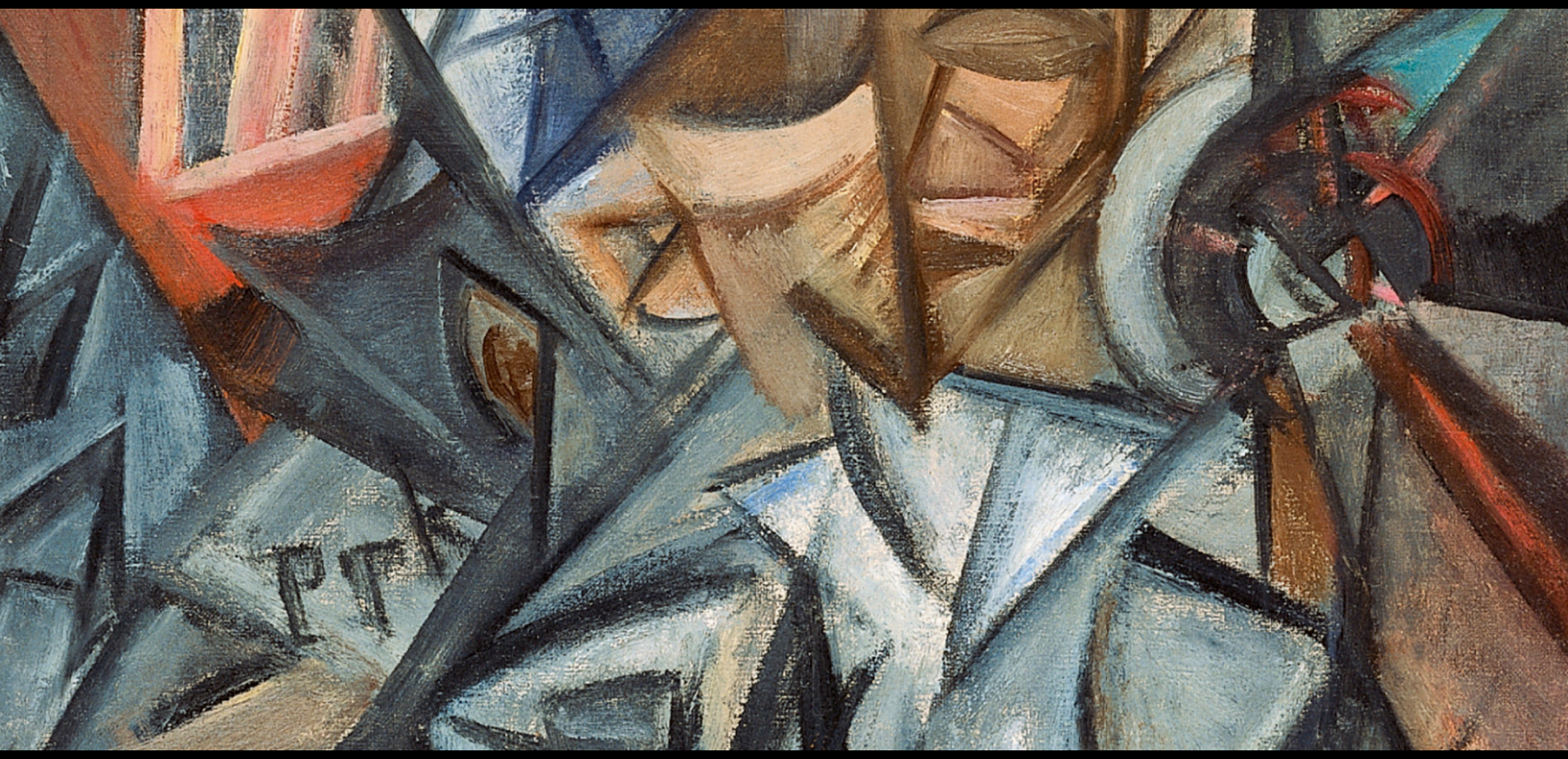


**FIGURE 16.1** Consider the subject of this painting, *Man on the Street*, by Russian artist Olga Rozanova (1886–1918). Now, consider the way the subject is presented: cool colors, fragmented lines, distorted perspective. *What is the artist saying about the man on the street by presenting him in this way?* As soon as you begin to answer this question, you are analyzing a visual text. When you read a story, you might ask the following questions: *Why does this character act this way? How would the story be different if it were set in another time or place? What is the author saying about life in general? How does the author make these points?* When you begin to answer these questions about a work of fiction or literary nonfiction, you are analyzing a literary text. (credit: "Man on the Street (Analysis of Volumes)" by Olga Rozanova/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**16.1** An Author's Choices: What Text Says and How It Says It
**16.2** Textual Analysis Trailblazer: bell hooks
**16.3** Glance at Genre: Print or Textual Analysis
**16.4** Annotated Student Sample: "Artists at Work" by Gwyn Garrison
**16.5** Writing Process: Thinking Critically About Text
**16.6** Editing Focus: Literary Works Live in the Present
**16.7** Evaluation: Self-Directed Assessment
**16.8** Spotlight on ... Humanities
**16.9** Portfolio: The Academic and the Personal


**INTRODUCTION** In the real world, you are surrounded by text—both visual and print. It appears in media, advertising, and even text messages. Often, text is not one-dimensional, in the sense that words and the ways in which they are used or arranged can have different meanings depending on the relationship between the text and the reader. In such cases, a text is open to analysis and interpretation. Usually, there is no one right

way to analyze and interpret a text; readers, like viewers, may understand elements in different ways and draw different conclusions. Whatever they are, however, will be the result of reading critically: examining parts of the text as they relate to the whole, supporting ideas with evidence, and drawing conclusions on the basis of analysis.

The practice of analysis will benefit you in several ways. It can help you enter an ongoing conversation with a new and fresh perspective. It also can help you understand meaning beyond the surface of a text—including historical contexts and cultures, new approaches to thinking, and new knowledge.

Although the word *text* tends to imply words, writing, or books, virtually all works created by human beings can be considered texts that are open to analysis—films, plays, music and dance performances, exhibits, paintings, photographs, sculptures, advertisements, artifacts, buildings, and even whole cultures. In this chapter, you will focus on the analysis of print texts. In Image Analysis: What You See, you will move to the analysis of visual and digital texts.

## 16.1 An Author's Choices: What Text Says and How It Says It

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define *textual analysis* and explain its place in academic and real-world contexts.
- Identify the components of textual analysis and compare it to rhetorical analysis.
- Demonstrate critical thinking and communicating in various rhetorical contexts.

You may already be familiar with what is called **textual analysis** in academia. In fact, you do it frequently when you read or interact in other ways with language. It is important, though, to distinguish between what textual analysis *is* and what it is *not*. For example, imagine you and a friend have just finished watching a TV show or movie. You'll probably say whether you liked it and what in particular prompted your opinion. This brief and casual opinion-based conversation is just that, a casual conversation. It is *not* analysis, which goes far beyond liking or disliking a text. Perhaps you continue your conversation. *Do you and your friend agree that everything in the show is obvious and clear or is inconsistent and muddy—characters' motivations, their development over the course of the story, how the setting affects the story, the point the story is making, the extent to which the characters seem realistic or relatable, whether the dialogue seems natural, or any other elements? Or do you and your friend view some of these elements differently? Do you have different views about what you think is the main idea or what a character represents? For instance, do you think the main character represents a force of good, while your friend thinks the main character is a boring wimp?* If you agreed on everything—and everything seems straightforward—then that's that: the film offers little to interpret and most likely is not a strong text for analysis because it doesn't invite interpretation. However, if you *do* have questions about some of the elements or disagree about them, then you are on your way to analyzing and interpreting a text.

### Analyzing and Interpreting

*What exactly, then, is textual analysis?* To analyze a text is to examine its various parts to explain its meaning. Analyzing a text implies that the text can be read in more than one way. Your analysis is your reading of it: your explanation of various text elements, your understanding of the text, and how you understand it in a larger context. Others may read and understand it differently. To find out what a text—fiction or nonfiction—means, you look at its language, examine how it is put together, perhaps compare or contrast it with similar texts or other works, and notice how it affects you or how it fits into events outside it, and you keep asking *why*. Always keep in mind, however, that a textual analysis is not about whether you like a text; it is about the meaning of the text—how the author created it and intended it to be understood.

Any written work can be analyzed as a text. But an editorial or opinion piece or something written, for example, as part of an ongoing argument of viewpoints is more likely to be looked at for the rhetorical or persuasive strategies it employs to create or change an opinion. (This kind of rhetorical analysis is the focus of

Rhetorical Analysis: Interpreting the Art of Rhetoric.) Literary works, whether fiction or nonfiction, film or text, print or digital, are those analyzed as texts. Their impact on real events in real life is likely less direct than that of rhetorical, or persuasive, writing, but many characters and themes that "live" in these works tend to exist for a very long time and are open to analysis as part of a person's growth and education—and even more, a part of and a reflection of the human condition.

Writers have many options when considering what to say and how to say it. The best texts for analysis are those that are most problematic—texts whose meanings seem elusive or complex—because these texts give you the most room to argue for one meaning over another. Like your goal in rhetorical analysis, your goal in textual analysis is to make the best possible case to demonstrate to readers that your analysis is reasonable and deserves serious attention. Remember, too, that *argument* in academic terms means taking a position and supporting it. Therefore, when you analyze a text, you take a position on an aspect (or several aspects) of that text and support it with evidence from the text itself and, if applicable, from borrowed sources, which you acknowledge.

Textual analysis is a complex task that draws on your critical reading, reasoning, and writing skills. Depending on your topic and thesis, you may have to describe real or fictional people and situations, retell events, define key terms, analyze passages and explain how they work in relation to the whole, and examine and interpret contexts and themes—perhaps by comparing or contrasting the text with other texts. Finally, you will "argue" for the meaning as you understand it, rather than another possible meaning. In other words, as you do for most academic writing, you develop a thesis and defend it with sound reasoning and convincing textual evidence.



## 16.2 Trailblazer

### Textual Analysis Trailblazer: bell hooks

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate critical thinking and communicating in varying rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Integrate the writer's ideas with ideas of others.



**FIGURE 16.2** bell hooks (https://openstax.org/r/bell-hooks) (credit: "Bellhooks" by Cmongirl/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

*"Writing and performing should deepen the meaning of words, should illuminate, transfix, and transform."*

## Talking Back

Born Gloria Jean Watkins, bell hooks adopted the name of her great-grandmother, a woman known for speaking her mind. In choosing this pen name, hooks decided not to capitalize the first letters so that audiences would focus on her work rather than her name. However, this stylistic choice has become as memorable as her work.

She is well known for her approach to social critique through textual analysis. The writing interests and research methods hooks uses are wide ranging. They began in poetry and fiction writing and eventually developed into critical analysis. She started writing at an early age, as her teachers (in the church) impressed on hooks the power in language. With this exposure to language, hooks began to understand the "sacredness of words" and began to write poetry and fiction. Over time, hooks's writing became more focused on advancing and reviving the texts of Black women and women of color, for even though "black women and women of color are publishing more… there is still not enough" writing by and about them. Texts live on through others' analyses, hooks argues. Therefore, she believes the critical essay "is the most useful form for the expression" between her thoughts and the books she is reading. The critical essay allows hooks to create a dialogue, or "talk back" to the text. The critical essay also extends "the conversations I have with other critical thinkers." It is this "talking back" that has advanced hooks's approach to literary criticism. This action, for which hooks eventually named a volume of essays, refers to the development of a strong sense of self that allows Black women to speak out against racism and sexism.

Although young hooks continued to write poetry—some of which was published—she gained a reputation as a writer of critical essays about systems of domination. She began writing her first book, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, when she was 19 and an undergraduate student at Stanford University. The book is titled after Sojourner Truth's (1797–1883) "Ain't I a Woman" speech (https://openstax.org/r/Aint-I-a-Woman) given at the Woman's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, in 1851. In this work, hooks examines the effects of racism and sexism on Black women, the civil rights movement, and feminist movements from suffrage to the 1970s. By "talking back" to formerly enslaved abolitionist Sojourner Truth throughout, hooks identifies ways in which feminist movements have failed to focus on Black women and women of color. This work is one of many in which thorough analysis "uncovered" the lived experiences of Black women and women of color.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are your thoughts about hooks's approach to analysis through "talking back" to a text? What might this approach look like in an essay or text: how might you "talk back"?
2. What purpose does hooks's approach to entering into conversation with other critical thinkers through critical analysis serve?
3. Much of hooks's work is based on her goal of "reviving" and "uncovering" historically marginalized women's voices. In what ways does critical analysis highlight the work of others?

## 16.3 Glance at Genre: Print or Textual Analysis

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define key terms and organizational patterns of textual analysis.
- Explain how genre conventions are shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.

As a **genre**—or literary category in which works feature similar forms, styles, or subject matter—textual analysis is less of a genre in itself and more of an exploration and interpretation of other genres. That is, textual analysis is explanatory and interpretive. When you receive an assignment to analyze a text, you focus on the elements that give it meaning. Usually your instructor will assign a specific writing task: to analyze and explain certain aspects of a text, to compare or contrast certain elements within a single text or in two or more texts, or to relate certain text elements to historical context or current events (as student writer Gwyn Garrison has done in the Annotated Student Sample). These writing tasks thus explore genre characteristics of fiction, drama, poetry, literary nonfiction, film, and other forms of literary language.

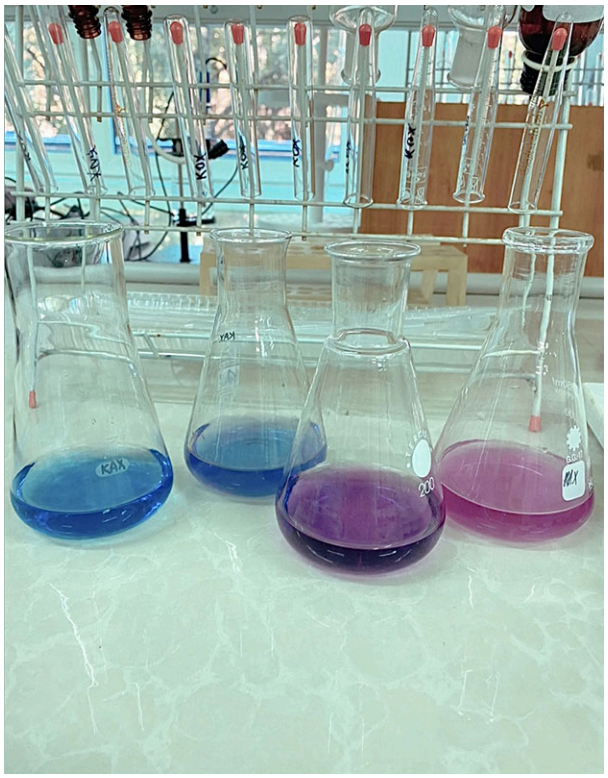


**FIGURE 16.3** Like scientists who analyze components of a substance, writers of textual analysis examine a fiction or literary nonfiction work to understand and interpret its meaning by looking at its components. (credit: "Complexometric titration" by Alina.Popova.26/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0)

When you write a textual analysis, ask yourself questions such as these:

- In what ways can this text be read?
- What are some different ways of reading it?
- Which reading makes the most sense to me?
- Which passages in the text support this reading?
- Whom does my analysis need to convince? (Who is my audience?)

## Textual Analysis and Interpretive Communities

How you read and analyze a text depends on who you are. Who you are depends on the influences that have shaped you, or the communities to which you belong. Everyone belongs to various communities: families, social and economic groups (e.g., students or teachers, middle or working class), organizations (e.g., Democratic or Republican Party, Masons, Habitat for Humanity), geographic locales (e.g., rural or urban, north or south), and institutions (e.g., school, church, fraternity). Your membership in one or more communities may determine how you view and respond to the world. The communities that influence you most are called **interpretive communities**; they influence the meaning you make of the world. People who belong to the same community may well have similar assumptions and therefore are likely to analyze texts in similar ways.

Before writing an interpretive or textual analysis essay, it is helpful to ask, *Who am I when writing this piece?* Be aware of your age, gender, race, ethnic identity, economic class, geographic location, educational level, or political or religious persuasion. Ask to what extent and for what purpose any of these identities emerges in your writing. Readers will examine the biases you may bring to your work, understanding that everyone views the world—and, consequently, texts—from their own vantage point.

College is, of course, a large interpretive community. The various smaller communities that exist within it are called disciplines: English, history, biology, business, art, and so on. Established ways of interpreting texts exist within disciplines. Often when you write a textual analysis, you will do so from the perspective of a traditional academic interpretive community or from the perspective of one who challenges that community.

Whether you deliberately identify yourself and any biases you might bring with you in your essay depends on the assignment you are given. Some assignments ask you to remove your personal perspective as much as possible from your writing, others ask that you acknowledge and explain it, and others fall somewhere in between.



**FIGURE 16.4** The individuals in this group of student volunteers and staff represent both similar and different cultural and interpretive communities. (credit: “Alternative Spring Break (ASB) group from Rice University, volunteer

at Mason Neck State Park" by Virginia State Parks/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

### Conventions of Textual Analysis

When asked to analyze or interpret a literary work, whether fiction or nonfiction, you will likely focus on some of these literary elements to explain how an author uses them to make meaning.

- **Alliteration:** literary device consisting of repetition of initial consonant sounds. ("Away from the steamy sidewalk, the children sat in a circle.")
- **Analysis:** close examination and explanation of a text, supported by reasoning and evidence.
- **Antagonist:** character or force opposing the main character (protagonist) in a story.
- **Climax:** moment of emotional or intellectual intensity or a point in the plot when one opposing force overcomes another and the conflict is resolved.
- **Epiphany:** flash of intuitive understanding by the narrator or a character in a story.
- **Figurative language:** language that suggests special meanings or effects. Similes and metaphors are examples of figurative, rather than literal, language. ("She stands like a tree, solid and rooted.")
- **Imagery:** language that appeals to one (or more) of the five senses. ("The cicadas hummed nonstop all day, but never loud enough to dull the roar of the leaf blowers.)
- **Metaphor:** direct comparison between two unlike things. ("She is a sly fox in her undercover work for the government.")
- **Narrator:** someone who tells a story. A character narrator is a part of the story, whereas an omniscient narrator tells a story about others.
- **Persona:** mask to disguise or cover the author's real self when presenting a story or other literary work.
- **Plot:** sequence of events in a story or play.
- **Point of view:** vantage point from which a story or event is perceived and told. The most frequently used points of view are first person and third person. In first person, the narrator is a character or observer in the story (fiction) or the author of it (nonfiction). In third person, the narrator has no part in the story other than telling it.
- **Protagonist:** main character or hero in a story.
- **Rhyme:** repetition of sounds, usually at the ends of lines in poems, but also occurring at other intervals in a line.
- **Rhythm:** rise and fall of stressed sounds within sentences, paragraphs, and stanzas.
- **Simile:** indirect comparison of unlike things using the word *as* or *like*. ("When he does undercover work, he is as sly as a fox.")
- **Symbol:** object that represents itself and something else at the same time. A red rose is both a rose of a certain color and the suggestion of something romantic.
- **Theme:** meaning or thesis of a literary text.

## 16.4 Annotated Student Sample: "Artists at Work" by Gwyn Garrison

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of how conventions are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Demonstrate critical thinking and communicating in varying rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Make connections between ideas and patterns of organization.
- Evaluate literary elements and strategies used in textual analysis.

### Introduction

Student Gwyn Garrison wrote this textual analysis for a first-year composition class. In the essay, Garrison extends her analysis beyond the texts to discuss outside events and real individuals, making connections among them.

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### The Power of Language

Language is the medium through which the communication of ideas takes place. One of language's many attributes is its ability both to reflect and to shape social attitudes. Language has the power to perpetuate oppression when dominant social groups choose the ways in which rebellious behavior is described. Thus, people in power historically have used language as propaganda to perpetuate the ideas that they want to reiterate. For example, if a woman in modern society is described as *ladylike,* the message is that she conforms to traditional gender expectations of politeness, modesty, and deference. However, if a woman is called a *whore,* the message is that the woman does not conform to these traditional gender standards. In recent years, oppressed social groups have learned that they can reclaim the language of the oppressor by redefining such words and their connotations.

*Gwyn Garrison uses reaction—reflection or thinking—to introduce the "big idea" of the thesis: language has the power to shape cultural and social attitudes.*

> American authors such as Kate Chopin and Shirley Jackson, sociopolitical activists such as Hillary Clinton and Chrissy Teigen, and California rape survivor Chanel Miller— artists/writers in their own ways—take on this essential work of reclaiming language on behalf of all women. This confiscation of the tools of the oppressor is an essential step toward building a society in which women may be free to be who they are. Negative stereotypical labeling no longer has the effect of disempowering women because language can be reclaimed from the oppressor as a form of empowerment.

*Garrison's thesis statement highlights her analytical approach. She makes a connection between women's rights and a series of texts by significant women.*

> Writers can use the short story form to shift perception away from the lens of the status quo and focus perception in a new way. In Kate Chopin's 1898 short story "The Storm" (text follows this discussion), protagonist Calixta engages in a passionate extramarital affair with an old friend, Alcée. Readers may argue that Calixta's actions should be labeled as immoral by both societal and religious standards because she breaks the social and religious contract defined by her marriage vows. Yet every other action of Calixta's complies with traditional gender roles: she is a wife, mother, and caretaker. In some ways, committing this one social transgression seems completely out of character when she meets traditional gender expectations in all other areas of her life.

*Garrison provides publication information as well as a brief plot summary and context for the story. You can read "The Storm" in its entirety at the end of this feature.*

> When Calixta acts outside of societal norms, however, she discovers the freedom of self-expression and passion.

*This transitional topic sentence supports the overall thesis while also identifying what the paragraph will be about.*

> All parts of her womanhood that have no place in the society in which she lives have been repressed until this one moment. In this scene, Chopin takes possession of the term *whore* and redefines Calixta's behavior as a transformative awakening.

*This explanation makes a reference to the language of the text and explains the significance of the scene as it relates to the entire story and to Garrison's thesis.*

> Chopin's diction evokes a spiritual transcendence that allows Calixta to live momentarily outside social norms present only in the physical plane of existence: "when he possessed her, they seemed to swoon together at the very borderland of life's mystery."

*Here, Garrison correctly cites textual evidence—an example of the protagonist's diction— to support her reasoning.*

> The affair becomes a vehicle that allows Calixta to get to a place of true self-expression. The storm, an aspect of nature or the natural world, acts as the catalyst in Calixta's natural self-realization of womanhood. As the storm breaks externally, it also breaks internally for Calixta. Chopin's depiction of Calixta's sexual liberation and fulfillment outside of her marriage is an early step in the fight to bridge the gap between women's bodies and their sociopolitical lives. By presenting female sexuality in a way that is enlightening rather than degrading, Chopin helps destigmatize labels such as *whore,* which have been used to shame women for acting outside of traditional gender expectations.

*Garrison further elaborates on the significance of the textual evidence and connects it to the topic sentence and thesis. In this case, it is the storm—an element of both plot and setting as well as a symbol.*

> In Shirley Jackson's novel *We Have Always Lived in the Castle,* Merricat and her sister Constance are rumored to be witches who, according to village gossip, eat children. The label of *witch* has long been a device to oppress women who do not conform to traditional gender roles. In Salem, Massachusetts, during the 17th-century witch trials, women who could read or write, who refused marriage, or who practiced alternative religions often were labeled as witches and burned to death.

*Introducing a second text for comparison, Garrison revisits the idea of language reclamation introduced earlier.*

> In Jackson's novel, Merricat embraces the notion of being labeled a witch. In fact, she facilitates the rumors by burying talismans, identifying magical words, and talking to her cat, Jonas. In contrast to the witch trials, Merricat burns her own house to rid it of her male cousin. And she survives the fire, purging herself and her sister of the family's patriarchal tendencies. By claiming the role of witch, Merricat insulates herself and her sister from their patriarchal family and society. In the end, Merricat creates a space where she and Constance can live together in a woman-centered territory outside the reach of the villagers.

*Focusing on language and its implications, Garrison discusses the use of witch, a label the character is happy to embrace as a means of asserting her womanhood.*

> With this story, Jackson does the important work of reclaiming the word *witch,* stripping it of its oppressive power and redefining it for womankind.

*In the section that follows, Garrison moves outside literary texts and extends her analysis to language use in contemporary political situations, thus connecting literature with reality. Notice that Garrison has used the literary present tense in discussing both Chopin's and Jackson's fiction. She switches and uses mostly past tense now in discussing nonliterary events.*

> Similarly, in a more recent political climate, former U.S. president Donald Trump employed stereotypical derogatory language against women whom he considered dissenters. He used phrases like "such a nasty woman" (Ali) to describe former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and "filthy mouthed wife" (@realDonaldTrump) to describe model Chrissy Teigen to try to shame women with social influence into submission. It is noteworthy, too, that he describes Teigen by her role in relation to a man rather than by her name, which would indicate her individuality. Both Clinton and Teigen, along with millions of women around the world, have worked to empower women by redefining such language. Almost immediately following the accusation of "such a nasty woman," women and girls around the country donned t-shirts and ball caps with the phrase, showing their pride in being "nasty" (Ali). In this context, the term came to describe women who speak truth to power. Although Teigen acknowledges that she had previously been blocked by Trump for trolling him, she shot back defiantly at him with a tweet that read in part: "lol what p— a— b—" (@chrissyteigen). Shortly thereafter, the phrase was trending as a Twitter hashtag (Butler). In this instance, people, particularly women, appreciated Teigen's ability to respond to female shaming with language that Trump himself was recorded using and that is also traditionally used to shame and degrade women. This time, however, it was directed toward a powerful man. This reclamation of power through language is one step women have taken to revise the social gender narrative for a modern context.

*Again, Garrison introduces texts for comparison, bringing her argument regarding the reclamation of language into the modern day.*

> After four years of being known as "the girl raped by Stanford swimmer Brock Turner," sexual assault survivor Chanel Miller has reclaimed the narrative of her story with the publication of her memoir *Know My Name.* After a Stanford University fraternity party in January 2015, Turner assaulted (with intent to rape) an intoxicated and unconscious Miller behind a dumpster at approximately 1:00 a.m. Some passing students interrupted the act, and Turner was taken by the police after the students restrained him. He was later brought to trial and found guilty. The sympathetic male judge sentenced Turner to only six months in county jail, from which he was released after three months for good behavior. When speaking on television to *60 Minutes* on September 22, 2019, Miller expressed outrage that media coverage during the trial had focused not on what Miller had already lost but on what Turner had to lose if found guilty—his education, his swimming career, his Olympic prospects (Miller). Because Miller remained anonymous during the trial, the media and Turner's lawyers controlled how she was perceived to the world—as a girl who got drunk and put herself into a compromising situation.

*Garrison emphasizes the role of language in Miller's telling her story and ceasing to feel ashamed.*

> This male-centric characterization of events left Miller feeling ashamed and disempowered. By writing her book and reclaiming her story, Miller took a vital step in healing and trauma management, emphasizing that she now controls the language of her narrative. She is not a girl who deserves what she got, as some would argue. Miller readily acknowledges she deserved a hangover for her actions, but never a rape.

*Notice the switching of tenses to indicate events in the past and present. Notice, too, that Garrison returns to the literary present tense in the paragraph that follows.*

> Miller's story is all too common in the college partying scene, and the regularity of such attacks contributes to the perpetuation of an environment in which women are made to feel responsible for being attacked and men are free to act as they choose. The awareness of Miller's story and, more importantly, her published story, reframe the narrative around rape culture so that the victims are not further victimized, as women work to educate men so that these attacks stop.

*Garrison introduces a final contemporary text for comparison. By citing multiple texts across time, Garrison strengthens her argument.*

> Artists and writers such as Chopin, Jackson, Clinton, Teigen, and Miller engage in the gritty work of social reform that cannot be achieved through any other medium because culture cannot change unless the language in which people talk about the culture changes. This socially reformed reality is conceived only from the creativity of intelligent minds that are able both to envision and then to describe the world as it is yet to exist. In this way, artists who work with the medium of language become the prophets.

*This conclusion looks to the future, which is a productive rhetorical or persuasive technique to give the audience an idea about what they can take away from this project.*

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*Garrison follows MLA guidelines to cite her sources.*

## Discussion Questions

1. How might Gwyn Garrison have used action to introduce her thesis? Dialogue? Is reaction the best choice? Why or why not?
2. What reasoning does Garrison offer to support her thesis?
3. What textual evidence does Garrison offer to support her thesis?
4. How does Garrison connect literary elements—particularly language and character—with real-world events? Explain why you think these connections are valid or not.
5. Are you convinced or unconvinced of the validity of the thesis? Why or why not?

## For Reference: "The Storm" by Kate Chopin (1850–1904)



**FIGURE 16.5** American author Kate Chopin, 1894 (credit: "KATE O'FLAHERTY BEFORE HER MARRIAGE TO OSCAR CHOPIN" by J.A. Scholten/The State Historical Society of Missouri, Photograph Collection, Public Domain)

> The leaves were so still that even Bibi thought it was going to rain. Bobinôt, who was accustomed to converse on terms of perfect equality with his little son, called the child's attention to certain sombre clouds that were rolling with sinister intention from the west, accompanied by a sullen, threatening roar. They were at Friedheimer's store and decided to remain there till the storm had passed. They sat within the door on two empty kegs. Bibi was four years old and looked very wise.

> "Mama'll be 'fraid, yes," he suggested with blinking eyes.

> "She'll shut the house. Maybe she got Sylvie helpin' her this evenin'," Bobinôt responded reassuringly.

> "No; she ent got Sylvie. Sylvie was helpin' her yistiday," piped Bibi.

> Bobinôt arose and going across to the counter purchased a can of shrimps, of which Calixta was very fond. Then he returned to his perch on the keg and sat stolidly holding the can of shrimps while the storm burst. It shook the wooden store and seemed to be ripping great furrows in the distant field. Bibi laid his little hand on his father's knee and was not afraid.

## II

> Calixta, at home, felt no uneasiness for their safety. She sat at a side window sewing furiously on a sewing machine. She was greatly occupied and did not notice the approaching storm. But she felt very warm and often stopped to mop her face on which the perspiration gathered in beads. She unfastened her white sacque at the throat. It began to grow dark, and suddenly realizing the situation she got up hurriedly and went about closing windows and doors.

> Out on the small front gallery she had hung Bobinôt's Sunday clothes to dry and she hastened out to gather them before the rain fell. As she stepped outside, Alcée Laballière rode in at the gate. She had not seen him very often since her marriage, and never alone. She stood there with Bobinôt's coat in her hands, and the big rain drops began to fall. Alcée rode his horse under the shelter of a side projection where the chickens had huddled and there were plows and a harrow piled up in the corner.

> "May I come and wait on your gallery till the storm is over, Calixta?" he asked.

> "Come 'long in, M'sieur Alcée."

> His voice and her own startled her as if from a trance, and she seized Bobinôt's vest. Alcée, mounting to the porch, grabbed the trousers and snatched Bibi's braided jacket that was about to be carried away by a sudden gust of wind. He expressed an intention to remain outside, but it was soon apparent that he might as well have been out in the open: the water beat in upon the boards in driving sheets, and he went inside, closing the door after him. It was even necessary to put something beneath the door to keep the water out.

> "My! what a rain! It's good two years since it rain' like that," exclaimed Calixta as she rolled up a piece of bagging and Alcée helped her to thrust it beneath the crack.

> She was a little fuller of figure than five years before when she married; but she had lost nothing of her vivacity. Her blue eyes still retained their melting quality; and her yellow hair, dishevelled by the wind and rain, kinked more stubbornly than ever about her ears and temples.

> The rain beat upon the low, shingled roof with a force and clatter that threatened to break an entrance and deluge them there. They were in the dining room—the sitting room—the general utility room. Adjoining was her bedroom, with Bibi's couch alongside her own. The door stood open, and the room with its white, monumental bed, its closed shutters, looked dim and mysterious.

> Alcée flung himself into a rocker and Calixta nervously began to gather up from the floor the lengths of a cotton sheet which she had been sewing.

> "If this keeps up, *Dieu sait* if the levees goin' to stan it!" she exclaimed.

> "What have you got to do with the levees?"

> "I got enough to do! An' there's Bobinôt with Bibi out in that storm—if he only didn' left Friedheimer's!"

> "Let us hope, Calixta, that Bobinôt's got sense enough to come in out of a cyclone."

> She went and stood at the window with a greatly disturbed look on her face. She wiped the frame that was clouded with moisture. It was stiflingly hot. Alcée got up and joined her at the window, looking over her shoulder. The rain was coming down in sheets obscuring the view of far-off cabins and enveloping the distant wood in a gray mist. The playing of the lightning was incessant. A bolt struck a tall chinaberry tree at the edge of the field. It filled all visible space with a blinding glare and the crash seemed to invade the very boards they stood upon.

> Calixta put her hands to her eyes, and with a cry, staggered backward. Alcée's arm encircled her, and for an instant he drew her close and spasmodically to him.

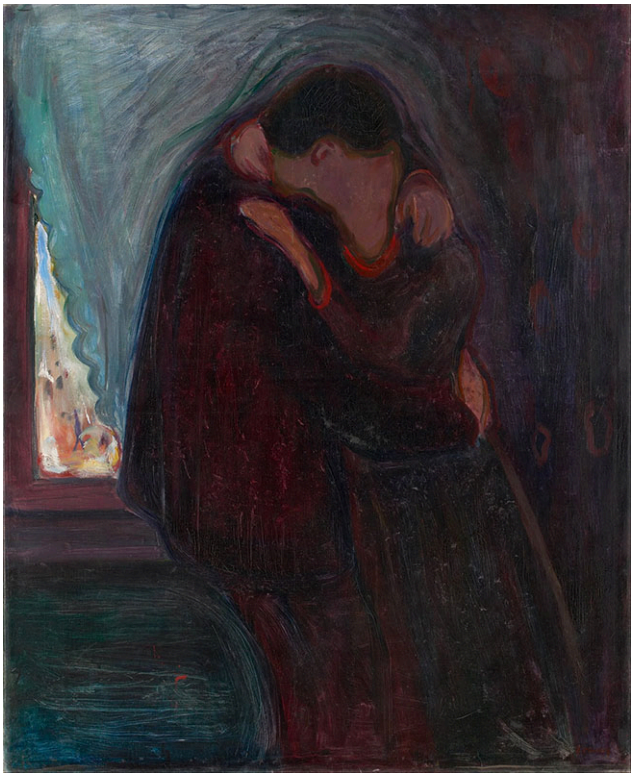


**FIGURE 16.6** *The Kiss*, 1887, by Norwegian painter Edvard Munch (1863–1944) (credit: "Edvard Munch - The Kiss" by Google Art Project/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

> "Bonté!" she cried, releasing herself from his encircling arm and retreating from the window, "the house'll go next! If I only knew w'ere Bibi was!" She would not compose herself; she would not be seated. Alcée clasped her shoulders and looked into her face. The contact of her warm, palpitating body when he had unthinkingly drawn her into his arms, had aroused all the old-time infatuation and desire for her flesh.

> "Calixta," he said, "don't be frightened. Nothing can happen. The house is too low to be struck, with so many tall trees standing about. There! Aren't you going to be quiet? say, aren't you?" He pushed her hair back from her face that was warm and steaming. Her lips were as red and moist as pomegranate seeds. Her white neck and a glimpse of her full, firm bosom disturbed him powerfully. As she glanced up at him the fear in her liquid blue eyes had given place to a drowsy gleam that unconsciously betrayed a sensuous desire. He looked down into her eyes and there was nothing for him to do but to gather her lips in a kiss. It reminded him of Assumption.

> "Do you remember—in Assumption, Calixta?" he asked in a low voice broken by passion. Oh! she remembered; for in Assumption he had kissed her and kissed her; until his senses would well nigh fail, and to save her he would resort to a desperate flight. If she was not an immaculate dove in those days, she was still inviolate; a passionate creature whose very defenselessness had made her defense, against which his honor forbade him to prevail. Now—well, now—her lips seemed in a manner free to be tasted, as well as her round, white throat and her whiter breasts.

> They did not heed the crashing torrents, and the roar of the elements made her laugh as she lay in his arms. She was a revelation in that dim, mysterious chamber; as white as the couch she lay upon. Her firm, elastic flesh that was knowing for the first time its birthright, was like a creamy lily that the sun invites to contribute its breath and perfume to the undying life of the world. The generous abundance of her passion, without guile or trickery, was like a white flame which penetrated and found response in depths of his own sensuous nature that had never yet been reached.

> When he touched her breasts they gave themselves up in quivering ecstasy, inviting his lips. Her mouth was a fountain of delight. And when he possessed her, they seemed to swoon together at the very borderland of life's mystery.

> He stayed cushioned upon her, breathless, dazed, enervated, with his heart beating like a hammer upon her. With one hand she clasped his head, her lips lightly touching his forehead. The other hand stroked with a soothing rhythm his muscular shoulders.

> The growl of the thunder was distant and passing away. The rain beat softly upon the shingles, inviting them to drowsiness and sleep. But they dared not yield.

> The rain was over; and the sun was turning the glistening green world into a palace of gems. Calixta, on the gallery, watched Alcée ride away. He turned and smiled at her with a beaming face; and she lifted her pretty chin in the air and laughed aloud.

## III

> Bobinôt and Bibi, trudging home, stopped without at the cistern to make themselves presentable.

> "My! Bibi, w'at will yo' mama say! You ought to be ashame'. You oughta' put on those good pants. Look at 'em! An' that mud on yo' collar! How you got that mud on yo' collar, Bibi? I never saw such a boy!" Bibi was the picture of pathetic resignation. Bobinôt was the embodiment of serious solicitude as he strove to remove from his own person and his son's the signs of their tramp over heavy roads and through wet fields. He scraped the mud off Bibi's bare legs and feet with a stick and carefully removed all traces from his heavy brogans. Then, prepared for the worst—the meeting with an over-scrupulous housewife, they entered cautiously at the backdoor.

> Calixta was preparing supper. She had set the table and was dripping coffee at the hearth. She sprang up as they came in.

> "Oh, Bobinôt! You back! My! but I was uneasy. W'ere you been during the rain? An' Bibi? he ain't wet? he ain't hurt?" She had clasped Bibi and was kissing him effusively. Bobinôt's explanations and apologies which he had been composing all along the way, died on his lips as Calixta felt him to see if he were dry, and seemed to express nothing but satisfaction at their safe return.

> "I brought you some shrimps, Calixta," offered Bobinôt, hauling the can from his ample side pocket and laying it on the table.

> "Shrimps! Oh, Bobinôt! you too good fo' anything!" and she gave him a smacking kiss on the cheek that resounded, "*J'vous réponds*, we'll have a feas' to-night! umph-umph!"

> Bobinôt and Bibi began to relax and enjoy themselves, and when the three seated themselves at table they laughed much and so loud that anyone might have heard them as far away as Laballière's.

**IV**

> Alcée Laballière wrote to his wife, Clarisse, that night. It was a loving letter, full of tender solicitude. He told her not to hurry back, but if she and the babies liked it at Biloxi, to stay a month longer. He was getting on nicely; and though he missed them, he was willing to bear the separation a while longer—realizing that their health and pleasure were the first things to be considered.

**V**

> As for Clarisse, she was charmed upon receiving her husband's letter. She and the babies were doing well. The society was agreeable; many of her old friends and acquaintances were at the bay. And the first free breath since her marriage seemed to restore the pleasant liberty of her maiden days. Devoted as she was to her husband, their intimate conjugal life was something which she was more than willing to forego for a while. So the storm passed and everyone was happy.

## 16.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically About Text

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Develop a writing project focused on textual analysis.
- Complete the stages of the writing process, including generating ideas, drafting, reviewing, revising, rewriting, and editing.
- Integrate the writer's ideas with ideas of others.
- Collaborate in the peer review process.

When analyzing a text, writers usually focus on the content of the text itself and deliberately leave themselves in the background, minimizing personal presence and bias. To write this way, they avoid first-person pronouns and value judgments. In reality, of course, writers do reveal their presence by the choices they make: what they include, what they exclude, and what they emphasize. Although your own subjectivity and situation will likely affect your inferences and judgments, recognizing these potential biases will help you keep the focus on your subject and off yourself.

### Summary of Assignment

Write an analytical essay about a short story or another short text of your choice, either fiction or literary nonfiction. If desired, you may choose "The Storm" by Kate Chopin, reprinted above. Consider the author's form and organization, tone, or stylistic choices, including diction and sensory or figurative language. You might also consider the historical or social context, the theme, the character development, or the relation between setting and plot or characterization. If you are free to choose your own text and topic, consider the following approaches:

- Analyze the literary components mentioned and focus your essay on their significance in the work.
- Like student author Gwyn Garrison, choose one or several components and examine how different authors use them and how they relate to broader contexts.

Convincing textual analysis essays usually include the following information:

- overview of the text, identifying author, title, and genre
- very brief summary
- description of the text's form and structure
- explanation of the author's point of view

- summary of the social, historical, or cultural context in which the work was written
- assertion or thesis about what the text means: your main task as an analyst

When writing about a novel or short story, explain how the main elements function:

- narrator (who tells the story)
- plot (what happens in the story)
- one or more characters (who are acting or being acted upon)
- setting (when and where things are happening)
- theme (the meaning of the story)

Keep in mind that the author who writes the story is different from the narrator and invented characters in it. Keep in mind, too, that what happens in the story—the plot—is different from the meaning of the story—the theme. Understanding what happens will help you discover what the text means.

The elements (https://openstax.org/r/elements) of literary or narrative nonfiction are similar to those of a fictional story *except* that everything in the text is supposed to have really happened. For this reason, the author and the narrator of the story may be one and the same. Informational nonfiction—essays, reports, and textbook chapters—is also meant to be believed; here, however, ideas and arguments must be strong and well supported to be convincing. When analyzing nonfiction, pay special attention to the author's thesis or claim and to how it is supported through reasoning and evidence. Also note interesting or unusual tone, style, form, or voice.

***Another Lens 1.*** In writing from a personal or subjective viewpoint, the writer and their beliefs and experiences are necessarily part of your analysis and may need to be expressed and examined. For example, you may write subjectively and compare and contrast your situation with that of the author or a character. You might explain how your personal background causes you to read the text in a particular way that is meaningful to you. If you choose this option, be sure to analyze the text as you would for a more objective analysis before focusing on your personal views.

***Another Lens 2.*** A leading contemporary example of narrative nonfiction writing is Jon Krakauer's (b. 1954) *Into the Wild* (https://openstax.org/r/Into-the-Wild), the story of Chris McCandless (1968– c. 1992), a young college graduate who lived at subsistence level in the backwoods of Alaska for 113 days. The text is somewhat similar thematically to Henry David Thoreau's (1817–1862) *Walden* (1854), written more than a century earlier and discussed later in this section. Both are about dropping out of society to create a meaningful life. After reading the excerpt of *Into the Wild* linked above, you may choose to write a textual analysis of it either on its own or in light of the sample analysis of Thoreau's writings later in this section. Consider comparing and contrasting McCandless's situation with Thoreau's life in Walden and how Krakauer and Thoreau use various literary elements in their writing. Topics for analysis might be setting, character traits, motives, cultural communities, historical context, and attitudes toward life and society.

## Quick Launch: Start with Your Thesis

For textual analysis, your thesis should be a clear, concise statement that identifies your analytical stance on which readers will expect you to elaborate.

### Develop a working thesis

A working thesis is referred to as such because the thesis is subject to revision. You may have to revisit it later in the writing process, for it is almost impossible to craft a thesis without having analyzed some of the text first. Your thesis, therefore, will come from the element(s) you choose to analyze, such as the following:

- an aspect or several aspects of form and structure and their significance
- social, historical, or cultural context in which the text was written and its significance
- style elements such as diction, imagery, or figurative language and their significance

- aspects of characters, plot, or setting
- overall theme of a single work or more than one work
- comparison or contrast of elements within one or more works
- relation to issues outside the text

To develop a working thesis, use the formula shown in Table 16.1, basing your answers on one of the bulleted items listed above.

| **What are you doing? + Why are you doing it?** |
|---|
| **What are you doing?** Analyzing Kate Chopin's short story "The Storm" |
| **+** |
| **Why are you doing it?** "To argue that…" |
| **=** |
| *In the short story "The Storm," author Kate Chopin uses linguistic variety to add to the character development.* |

**TABLE 16.1**

You can also start with an analytical question: *For what reason(s) does Chopin use linguistic variety?* Your initial answer might yield the thesis above. Or you can ask another analytical question, such as this one: *In what ways do the plot and setting of "The Storm" reinforce its theme?*

## Drafting: Explore Possible Areas of Analysis for Fiction: Approach 1

Analytical essays (https://openstax.org/r/Analytical-essays) begin by answering basic questions: *What genre is this text—poem, play, story, biography, memoir, essay? What is its title? Who is the author? When was it published?*

### Identify and Summarize the Text

In addition to the basic questions, analytical essays provide a brief summary of the plot or main idea. Summarize briefly, logically, and objectively to provide a background for what you plan to say about the text. This information may be incorporated into the introduction or may follow it.

### Explain the Form and Organization

To analyze the organizational structure of a text, ask: *How is it put together? Why does the author start here and end there? Why does the author sequence information in this order? What connects the text from start to finish?* For example, by repeating words, ideas, and images, writers call attention to these elements and indicate that they are important to the meaning of the text. No matter what the text, some principle or plan holds it together and gives it structure. Fiction and nonfiction texts that tell stories are often, but not always, organized as a sequence of events in chronological order. Poems may have formal structures or other organizational elements. Other texts may alternate between explanations and examples or between first-person and third-person narrative. You will have to decide which aspects of the text's form and organization are most important for your analysis.

For example, this student analyzes the point of view of Gwendolyn Brooks's poem "We Real Cool (https://openstax.org/r/We-Real-Cool).".

> Gwendolyn Brooks writes "We Real Cool" (1963) from the point of view of members of a street gang who speak as one voice. The boys have dropped out of school to spend their lives hanging around pool halls—in this case "The Golden Shovel." These guys speak in slangy lingo, such as "Strike straight," that reveals their need for a melded identity in their rebellious attitude toward life. The plural speaker in the poem, "We," celebrates what adults might call adolescent hedonism—but the speaker, feeling powerful in the group identity, makes a conscious choice for a short, intense life over a long, safe, and dull existence.

### Place the Work in Context

To analyze the context of a text, ask: *What circumstances (historical, social, political, biographical) produced this text? How does this text compare or contrast with another by the same author or with a similar work by a different author?* No text exists in isolation. Each was created by a particular author in a particular place at a particular time. Describing this context provides readers with important background information and indicates which conditions you think were most influential.

For example, this student analyzes the social context of Gwendolyn Brooks's poem "We Real Cool."

> From society's viewpoint, the boys are nothing but misfits—refusing to work, leading violent lives, breaking laws, and confronting police. However, these boys live in a society that is dangerous for Black men, who often die at the hands of police even when they are doing the right thing. The boys are hopeless, recognizing no future but death, regardless of their actions, and thus "Die soon."

### Explain the Theme of the Text

To analyze the theme of a text, determine the implied theme in fiction, poetry, and narrative nonfiction. One purpose for writing a textual analysis is to point out the theme. Ask yourself: *So what? What is this text really about? What do I think the author is trying to say by writing this text? What problems, puzzles, or ideas are most interesting? In what ways do the characters change between the beginning and end of the text?* Good ideas for a thesis arise from material in which the meaning is not obviously stated.

For example, this student analyzes one theme of Gwendolyn Brooks's poem "We Real Cool."

> For the "Seven at the Golden Shovel," companionship is everything. For many teenagers, fitting in or conforming to a group identity is more important than developing an individual identity. Brooks expresses this theme through the poem's point of view, the plural "We" repeated at the end of each line.

### Analyze Stylistic Choices

To analyze stylistic choices, examine the details of the text. Ask yourself: *Why does the author use this word or phrase instead of a synonym for it? In what ways does this word or phrase relate to other words or phrases? In what ways do the author's figurative comparisons affect the meaning or tone of the text? In what ways does use of sensory language (imagery) affect the meaning or tone of the text? In what ways does this element represent more than itself? In what ways does the author use sound or rhythm to support meaning?*

For example, this student analyzes the diction of Gwendolyn Brooks's poem "We Real Cool."

> Brooks chooses the word *cool* to open the poem and build the first rhyme. Being cool is the code by which the boys live. However, the word *cool* also suggests the idiom "to be placed 'on ice,'" a term that suggests a delay. The boys live in a state of arrested development, anticipating early deaths. In addition, the term *to ice* someone means "to kill," another reference to the death imagery at poem's end. The boys are not suggesting suicide; they expect to be killed by members of society who find them threatening.

### Support Your Analysis

Analytical interpretations (https://openstax.org/r/Analytical) are built around evidence from the text itself.

You'll note the quotations in the examples above. Summarize larger ideas in your own language to conserve space. Paraphrase more specific ideas, also in your own words, and quote directly to feature the author's diction. See Editing Focus: Paragraphs and Transitions and Writing Process: Integrating Research for more information about summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting directly. If you include outside information for support, comparison, or contrast, document the sources carefully: MLA Documentation and Format.

Use a graphic organizer such as Table 16.2 to gather ideas for drafting.

| Genre | Analysis | Your Ideas |
|---|---|---|
| If you've chosen to analyze poetry, | Consider the role of...<br>Word choice (imagery)<br>Structure of lines and stanzas<br>Sound (meter, rhyme, rhythm)<br>Figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification) | Why does the author... ? What is the effect on meaning, tone, or audience? |
| If you've chosen to analyze drama, | Consider the role of...<br>Characters and dialogue<br>Setting<br>Plot and conflict<br>Theme<br>Structure of acts, scenes, and stage directions | Why does the author... ? What is the effect on meaning, tone, or audience? |
| If you've chosen to analyze fiction or narrative nonfiction, | Consider the role of...<br>Characters (narrator or author in narrative nonfiction)<br>Setting<br>Plot (or real events in narrative nonfiction) and conflict<br>Theme<br>Diction<br>Structure (chronology, flashback or forward, foreshadowing, chapters) | Why does the author... ? What is the effect on meaning, tone, or audience? |

**TABLE 16.2** Ideas for drafting a textual analysis essay

## Drafting: Explore Possible Areas of Analysis for Literary Nonfiction: Approach 2

Although similar to fiction, narrative or literary nonfiction has a basic orientation toward exposition: relating real events in a creative way rather than inventing fictional events and characters. In reading and analyzing expository prose, you also may encounter literary language, narrative structure, characters, setting, theme, and plot development, depending on the type of prose. Therefore, your approach to analyzing nonfiction will call on many of the same strategies you use to analyze fiction. Two basic differences, however, are that literary nonfiction may have less dialogue, depending on the genre, and that the author and narrator may be the same. In other words, no intermediary or artistic filter may exist between the author and the work. The nonfiction author is assumed to be speaking a truth, which may be serious, comic, controversial, or neutral. Fictional characters, on the other hand, are creations of an author's mind; they think and speak as they were created to do.

### Planning the Essay

In writing your essay, you will need to present the same kinds of text evidence as you would when analyzing fiction to give credibility to your claims and to support your thesis. And you'll need to keep in mind the rhetorical situation—purpose, audience, stance, context, and culture—as well, for it remains the building block of an effective analysis. As in most academic essays, body paragraphs refer to the thesis through topic sentences and move consistently toward supporting it before you finally arrive at a convincing conclusion that has grown out of the analysis. In nonfiction, because you assume you are dealing with a truthful explanation of facts and views, your task should be to give a new view and understanding of something that already may be familiar to readers. In writing your analysis, consider the following plan:

- Begin your analysis of nonfiction with an introductory overview in which you include the work's genre, title, author, and publication date.
- Identify the literary point of view, if relevant: first person—*I* or plural *we*—or third-person—*he, she*, or *they*.
- Continue with a brief summary of the work, and place it in context: the work's social, historical, and cultural background will help readers follow your points about its theme.
- Present your thesis near the end of the introduction. It should be argumentative, in an academic sense, so that you can "prove" your points.
- Support your thesis with well-elaborated body paragraphs, as you do with all thesis-based writing. Include paraphrases, summaries, and quotations from the text (and outside sources, if you do research for the assignment). Body paragraphs support the topic sentences, which in turn support the thesis.
- Conclude by restating your thesis (using different words and an appropriate transition). Add a general statement about the work and its significance or, if applicable, its relation to culture, history, current events, art, or anything else outside it.

Use the applicable suggestions in Table 16.3 in planning your essay (https://openstax.org/r/planning):

| Title | |
|---|---|
| **Introduction** | Title(s), author(s), publication date(s), historical context, summary, thesis |
| **Body paragraphs (as many as needed; minimum of 3)** | Transition Claims and supporting evidence: your ideas, paraphrases and/or quotations from text |
| **Counterclaim (if any)** | Addressing opposing or negative ideas |
| **Conclusion** | Restatement of thesis, broader generalization |

**TABLE 16.3** Literary nonfiction planner

### Literary Nonfiction Model

A frequent theme in literary nonfiction is the examination of alternative ways of living, often solitary and away from society, and finding truth in individualism and self-sufficiency. Although most people live in social groups and willingly accept the identity and security that communities offer, dropping out and going it alone have long been a part of emotional as well as physical life for some.

You have the option to analyze the nonfiction accounts of writers exploring solitary human behavior in American life. If you select **Another Lens 2**, you will read an excerpt from the story of Chris McCandless (1968–c. 1992), who chose a brief and uncomfortable solitary existence in Alaska. Or you can read the following section dealing with the works of Henry David Thoreau, the American philosopher and author who dropped out of society temporarily, largely because of his strong opposition to government policies he believed to be morally wrong and because of his refusal to conform to social practices and expectations he found objectionable.

### Introduction

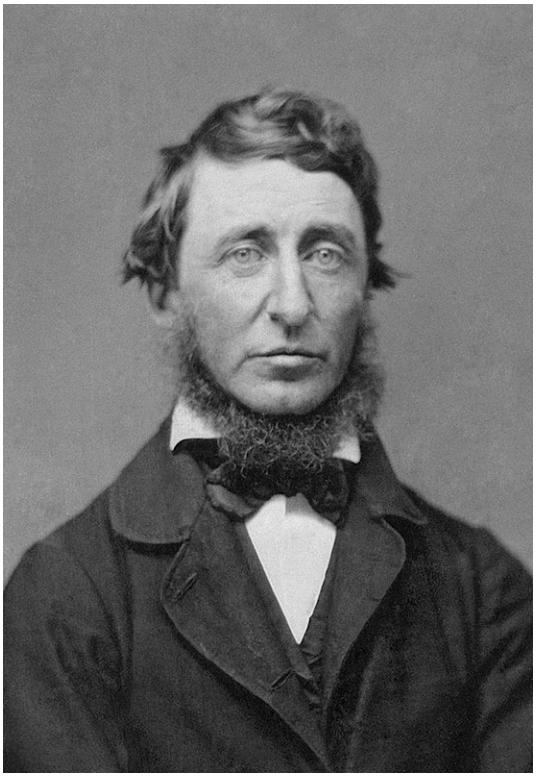


**FIGURE 16.7** Henry David Thoreau, American naturalist, philosopher, and writer (credit: "Henry David Thoreau - Restored – greyscale" by Benjamin Maxham [1821–1899]/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) is best known as a thinker and writer on nature, as reflected in his two famous works, the highly influential Civil Disobedience (https://openstax.org/r/Civil-Disobedience) (1849) and *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854). Both works celebrate individual freedoms: the right to protest against what one believes is morally or ethically wrong and the choice to live as one believes. In describing his life over a period of precisely two years, two months, and two days in a 10-by-15-foot cabin he built on Walden Pond, 20 miles northwest of Boston near Concord, Massachusetts, Thoreau wrote:

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately [carefully, unhurried], to front [confront] only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.

Thoreau's insistence on standing by his principles and on living a simple life by choice are two abiding themes in his work. Even before the physical move to Walden, Thoreau had refused to pay his poll tax (granting him the right to vote) for a number of years because he strongly objected to the government's use of his money to support enslavement and the war with Mexico. He went peacefully to jail as a result, until he was bailed out (the next day). In "Civil Disobedience," Thoreau advocates for more individual freedom and for individuals to defy unjust laws in nonviolent ways. His writings on "passive resistance" inspired the thoughts and actions of influential figures such as Indian leader Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948), American religious and civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968), and other leaders of nonviolent liberation movements. In *Walden*, Thoreau describes and advocates for a simple life in which a person breaks with society when they feel the need to express their individualism, often based on ideas others do not share.

These themes are the focus of analysis in the following excerpts from an essay by student Alex Jones for a first-year composition class.

> **The Two Freedoms of Henry David Thoreau by Alex Jones**

> Henry David Thoreau led millions of people throughout the world to think of individual freedom in new ways. During his lifetime he attempted to live free of unjust governmental restraints as well as conventional social expectations. In his 1849 political essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," he makes his strongest case against governmental interference in the lives of citizens. In his 1854 book *Walden; or Life in the Woods*, he makes the case for actually living free, as he did in his own life, from social conventions and expectations.

*The title clearly identifies Thoreau and sets the expectation that two aspects or definitions of freedom will be discussed in two different works. Alex Jones wants readers to know that millions of people worldwide figure in Thoreau's legacy. He gives the examples of "unjust governmental restraints" and "conventional social expectations" as the parts of social life Thoreau rejected, thus limiting the scope of the analysis and preparing for the body of the essay.*

*Jones notes the titles and publication dates of both works and immediately moves ahead to analyze the two works, "Civil Disobedience" first. He will show how this political statement leads to the narrative of Walden, the actual story of a man's life in temporary exile.*

> Thoreau opens "Civil Disobedience" with his statement "that government is best which governs not at all."

*The analysis moves immediately to the first work to be discussed and features the memorable quotation regarding a government that does not govern. The statement may seem contradictory, but for Thoreau it is a direct statement in that someone who allows himself to be imprisoned will find freedom by distancing himself from all others to prove his point.*

> He argues that a government should allow its people to be as free as possible while providing for their needs without interfering in daily life. In other words, in daily life a person attends to the business of eating, sleeping, and earning a living and not dealing in any noticeable way with an entity called "a government."

*Jones repeats "in daily life" to give a rhythm to his own prose and to emphasize the importance to Thoreau of daily activities that are simple and meaningful. The word government is repeated for emphasis as the negative subject of this essay—in literary terms, a powerful and constant antagonist that constrains and disempowers.*

> Because Thoreau did not want his freedom overshadowed by government regulations, he tried to ignore them. However, the American government of 1845 would not let him. He was arrested and put in the Concord jail for failing to pay his poll tax, a tax he believed unjust because it supported the government's war with Mexico as well as the immoral institution of slavery. Instead of protesting his arrest, he celebrated it and explained its meaning by writing "Civil Disobedience," one of the most famous English-language essays ever written. In it, he argues persuasively, "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison" (230). Thus, the idea of passive resistance—and accepting unjust arrest to make a point—was formed, a doctrine that advocated protest against the government by nonviolent means:
>
> > How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today? I answer that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave's government also. (224)

*Jones strengthens his own writing by calling the essay one of the most famous works ever written. This is not an ordinary technique in textual analysis, but when done for emphasis, it helps the analysis gain power. Using "instead of protesting" at the start of his sentence is another example of strong contrast and linkage.*

> For nearly 200 years, Thoreau's formulation of passive resistance has been a part of the human struggle for freedom. In fact, it changed the world by inspiring the resistance movements led by Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

*The total effect is to make Jones's analytical essay more important for readers, as Thoreau's writings have indeed changed the world despite being written humbly as the voice of one man's conscience and isolation in his own freedom.*

> Thoreau also wanted to be free from the everyday pressures to conform to society's expectations.

*Jones transitions from the first short work to the different and equally famous nonfiction narrative Walden, moving smoothly from one freedom to the next with the transition "also wanted." This second analysis of freedom is the second part of the essay's thesis.*

> He believed in doing and possessing only the essential things in life. To demonstrate his case, in 1845, he moved to the outskirts of Concord, Massachusetts, and lived by himself for just over two years in a cabin he built at Walden Pond. Thoreau wrote *Walden* to explain the value of living simply, far removed from the unnecessary complexity of society: "simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand" (66). At Walden, he lived as much as possible by this statement, building his own house and furniture, growing his own food, bartering for simple necessities, and attending to his own business rather than seeking employment from others.

*Jones uses textual evidence to support his claim. He summarizes Thoreau's activities at Walden and quotes Thoreau as evidence to reinforce the freedom of mind that simple living allows.*




**FIGURE 16.8** Setting for Thoreau's cabin at Walden Pond near Concord (credit: "Site of Thoreau's Hut, Concord, Mass" by Detroit Publishing Company/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

> Living at Walden Pond gave Thoreau the chance to formulate many of his ideas about living an unencumbered, economical life. At Walden, he lived simply to "front only the essential facts of life" (66) and to center his thoughts on "living" instead of on unnecessary details of mere livelihood. He developed survival skills that freed him from the constraints of city dwellers whose lives depended upon a web of material things and services provided by others. He preferred to "take rank hold on life and spend my day more as animals do" (117).

*Jones uses the poetic language of high rhetoric directly from Thoreau. The body of the essay gives specific evidence of how Thoreau ate, built, read, and provided for his needs, cutting away all but the essential man in the two settings of his life.*

> While living at Walden Pond, Thoreau was free to occupy his time in any way that pleased him, which for him meant mostly writing and tending his bean patch. The details of his gardening appear frequently, as he concentrated on it during his time there. He wasn't troubled by a boss hounding him with deadlines or a wife and children who needed his attention. His neighbors accused him of being selfish and did not understand that he sought most of all "to live deliberately" (66), as he felt all people should learn to do.

> Then, as now, most people had more responsibilities than Thoreau had and could not just pack up their belongings and go live in the woods—if they could find free woods to live in. Today, people are intrigued to read about Thoreau's experiences and are inspired by his thoughts, but few people can actually live or do as he suggests. The idea of life without cell phones or Internet seems inconceivable, even if one grows one's own food and lives mostly off the grid.

*The next-to-last paragraph recognizes what could be a counterclaim: not everyone in contemporary times would view living alone for two years as a pleasure. Rather, they might see it as a different kind of prison, perhaps even a dangerous one. Indeed, such deprivation has less appeal these days, and people who do go off by themselves may be seen to have questionable motives.*

> The theme of exploring how a man lives in or outside governmental control is clear in the choices he must make to define himself as a free person. Nevertheless, practical or not, Thoreau's writings about freedom from government and society have inspired countless people to reassess how they live their lives. Though unable to live as Thoreau advocated, readers everywhere remain inspired by his ideals and his belief in the two freedoms.

*Jones concludes by emphasizing the strength of Thoreau's ideas—his two freedoms—and the influence they have had in the world.*

### Review the Essay

After reading Alex Jones's essay, complete the following sentences to review his work:

- He identifies and summarizes the content by _____.
- He describes the form and structure of Thoreau's works when _____.
- He places Thoreau and his works in context by _____.
- He clearly states his own theme in reading Thoreau, which is _____.
- He indicates Thoreau's unusual language at times, such as _____.
- He gives supporting evidence for his points, such as _____.
- He includes a visual to _____.
- He concludes with a balanced and convincing viewpoint by _____.



**FIGURE 16.9** Contemporary replica of Thoreau's cabin and statue of Thoreau (credit: "Walden pond - Thoreau's house" by Luigi Franchini/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

### For Reference: excerpt from *Walden (https://openstax.org/r/Civil-Disobedience)* by Henry David Thoreau *from* "Where I Lived and What I Lived For"

> When first I took up my abode in the woods, that is, began to spend my nights as well as days there, which, by accident, was on Independence Day, or the Fourth of July, 1845, my house was not finished for winter, but was merely a defense against the rain, without plastering or chimney, the walls being of rough, weather-stained boards, with wide chinks, which made it cool at night. The upright white hewn studs and freshly planed door and window casings gave it a clean and airy look, especially in the morning, when its timbers were saturated with dew, so that I fancied that by noon some sweet gum would exude from them. To my imagination it retained throughout the day more or less of this auroral character, reminding me of a certain house on a mountain which I had visited the year before. This was an airy and unplastered cabin, fit to entertain a travelling god, and where a goddess might trail her garments. The winds which passed over my dwelling were such as sweep over the ridges of mountains, bearing the broken strains, or celestial parts only, of terrestrial music....

> The only house I had been the owner of before, if I except a boat, was a tent, which I used occasionally when making excursions in the summer, and this is still rolled up in my garret; but the boat, after passing from hand to hand, has gone down the stream of time. With this more substantial shelter about me, I had made some progress toward settling in the world. This frame, so slightly clad, was a sort of crystallization around me, and reacted on the builder. It was suggestive somewhat as a picture in outlines. I did not need to go outdoors to take the air, for the atmosphere within had lost none of its freshness. It was not so much within doors as behind a door where I sat, even in the rainiest weather. The Harivansa [important Sanskrit text] says, "An abode without birds is like a meat without seasoning." Such was not my abode, for I found myself suddenly neighbor to the birds; not by having imprisoned one, but having caged myself near them....

> For the first week, whenever I looked out on the pond it impressed me like a tarn high up on the side of a mountain, its bottom far above the surface of other lakes, and, as the sun arose, I saw it throwing off its nightly clothing of mist, and here and there, by degrees, its soft ripples or its smooth reflecting surface was revealed, while the mists, like ghosts, were stealthily withdrawing in every direction into the woods, as at the breaking up of some nocturnal conventicle. The very dew seemed to hang upon the trees later into the day than usual, as on the sides of mountains.

> This small lake was of most value as a neighbor in the intervals of a gentle rain storm in August, when, both air and water being perfectly still, but the sky overcast, mid-afternoon had all the serenity of evening, and the wood-thrush sang around, and was heard from shore to shore. A lake like this is never smoother than at such a time; and the clear portion of the air above it being shallow and darkened by clouds, the water, full of light and reflections, becomes a lower heaven itself so much the more important. From a hill top nearby, where the wood had been recently cut off, there was a pleasing vista southward across the pond, through a wide indentation in the hills which form the shore there, where their opposite sides sloping toward each other suggested a stream flowing out in that direction through a wooded valley, but stream there was none. That way I looked between and over the near green hills to some distant and higher ones in the horizon, tinged with blue. Indeed, by standing on tiptoe I could catch a glimpse of some of the peaks of the still bluer and more distant mountain ranges in the north-west, those true-blue coins from heaven's own mint, and also of some portion of the village. But in other directions, even from this point, I could not see over or beyond the woods which surrounded me. It is well to have some water in your neighborhood, to give buoyancy to and float the earth. One value even of the smallest well is, that when you look into it you see that earth is not continent but insular. This is as important as that it keeps butter cool. When I looked across the pond from this peak toward the Sudbury meadows, which in time of flood I distinguished elevated perhaps by a mirage in their seething valley, like a coin in a basin, all the earth beyond the pond appeared like a thin crust insulated and floated even by this small sheet of interverting water, and I was reminded that this on which I dwelt was but *dry land*.

> We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts. Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour. If we refused, or rather used up, such paltry information as we get, the oracles would distinctly inform us how this might be done.

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have *somewhat hastily* concluded that it is the chief end of man here to "glorify God and enjoy him forever."

> Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes...

> Why should we live with such... waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Men say that a stitch in time saves nine, and so they take a thousand stitches to-day to save nine to-morrow.

### Peer Review:

After you have completed your first draft, exchange essays with a partner for peer review. Look at the questions you answered to address the essay about Thoreau. Then, to provide helpful feedback, answer these questions about your peer's draft.

1. Does the introduction include the author, title of the work, publication date, historical context, and a brief summary?
2. What is your peer's main claim, or thesis? Is it clearly stated? If not, how might your peer clarify it?
3. Is the thesis effectively supported throughout the essay? How does each paragraph support the thesis? What evidence does each contain? Has the writer included direct quotations, paraphrases, and summary as relevant and convincing support? Is there enough information to sustain the writer's claims? How might the author improve their support? In working on this section, go through each body paragraph separately for these criteria.
4. Does the analysis address counterclaims? If not, how might the writer include them?
5. Which sentence or sentences restate the thesis? If a restatement is not there, what might the writer include?

### Revising:

Once you have feedback from a peer, consider their suggestions. Read all comments, and think carefully before making changes.

- **Use your discretion**. Sometimes writers do not agree with their peers' suggestions; indeed, authors do not always revise everything suggested by editors. However, it is important to clarify what might have prompted a response from a peer, such as "This seems like more of an unsupported opinion than text-based evidence." Here you might consider including a source citation either from the text or from an outside resource, or consider further explaining your claim. However, if you think your peer reviewer

misinterpreted or read your claim superficially, do not revise it. At all times, though, maintain ownership. It is your paper; you are the ultimate judge of whether the ideas in it represent you and your views. Never include someone else's idea in your paper if you do not understand it or believe it. Whether or not you decide to revise, be sure to read and consider all suggestions carefully.

- **Focus on global suggestions first.** Global feedback applies to your entire paper. You may have to revise your topic or thesis so that your paper meets assigned guidelines or does what it should. It is important to revise global feedback first, for these revisions might necessitate changes in content and organization, among other things.
- **Complete a close revision.** Check your paper to revise for clarity at the sentence level, and double-check citations, if you have them, for accuracy and style.

In Chapter 16, you have learned about the revision process, including how to evaluate suggestions for revision from peer review. In this activity, evaluate each revision suggestion for specificity. A specific suggestion is helpful and easy to implement. A general suggestion is not helpful and should be ignored unless you can go back and ask the reviewer to provide more details. Based on your evaluation, look at each revision suggestion and decide whether to implement or to ignore.

Access multimedia content (http://openstax.org/books/writing-guide/pages/16-5-writing-process-thinking-critically-about-text)

### Student Revision Model

Below is a paragraph from the first draft of Gwyn Garrison's paper. It was reviewed by a peer, who made the suggestions indicated. First, read the draft. Next, read the reviewer's suggestions and consider whether you would accept or reject each one. Then, read the paragraph as it appears in the final version. After each suggestion, consider why you think Gwyn Garrison accepted or rejected the reviewer's comment.

### Original Draft

> When Calixta acts outside of societal norms, she discovers the freedom of self-expression and passion. Chopin's diction evokes a spiritual transcendence that allows Calixta to exist momentarily outside social norms that exist only in the physical plane of existence: "when he possessed her, they seemed to swoon at the very borderland of life's mystery." The affair becomes a vehicle that allows Calixta to get to a place of true self-expression. The storm, an aspect of nature or the natural world, acts as the catalyst in Calixta's natural self-realization of womanhood. The storm breaks externally and internally for Calixta. Chopin's depiction of Calixta's sexual liberation and fulfillment outside of her marriage is an early step in the fight to bridge the gap between women's bodies and their sociopolitical lives. By presenting female sexuality in a way that is enlightening rather than degrading, Chopin helps destigmatize labels such as *whore,* which have been used to shame women for acting outside of traditional gender expectations.

## Peer Reviewer's Comments

1. A transition would help link this paragraph with the previous one.
2. At the beginning of the paragraph, after the first sentence, add a short description or explanation of what is happening in the scene.
3. The quotation from the text doesn't help explain your claim. Anyway, you left out a word.
4. Perhaps you could add a quotation about the storm.
5. Can you clarify the relationship between the storm and Calixta's self-realization?

### Final Version

> When Calixta acts outside of societal norms, **however**, she discovers the freedom of self-expression and passion. **All of the parts of her womanhood that have no place in the society in which she lives have been repressed until this one moment. In this scene, Chopin takes possession of the term *whore* and redefines Calixta's behavior as a transformative awakening.** Chopin's diction evokes a spiritual transcendence that allows Calixta to exist momentarily outside social norms that exist only in the physical plane of existence: "when he possessed her, they seemed to swoon together at the very borderland of life's mystery." The affair becomes a vehicle that allows Calixta to get to a place of true self-expression. The storm, an aspect of nature or the natural world, acts as the catalyst in Calixta's natural self-realization of womanhood. As the storm breaks externally, it also breaks internally for Calixta. Chopin's depiction of Calixta's sexual liberation and fulfillment outside of her marriage is an early step in the fight to bridge the gap between women's bodies and their sociopolitical lives. By presenting female sexuality in a way that is enlightening rather than degrading, Chopin helps destigmatize labels such as *whore,* which have been used to shame women for acting outside of traditional gender expectations.

## 16.6 Editing Focus: Literary Works Live in the Present

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply methods commonly used for analysis and interpretation in writing.
- Demonstrate competent use of the literary present tense in textual analysis.

Although some texts may have been written years ago, they live in the present. This expression means that when you analyze a literary text such as a story, play, poem, or novel, you use a form of the present tense in your discussion. Narration in the story may be in the past tense—the narrator tells the story as though it has already happened—but your discussion of the literary work is done in the present tense. Characters *do* this or *say* that. The leaves *fall* or the wind is *howling*, even though in the text, the leaves *fell* and the wind *was howling*. Your discussion nevertheless remains in the present tense. Also, when discussing the author in relation to the literary text, use the present tense, even if the author is no longer living or wrote the text in the past. Look at these examples:

**Incorrect:** The narrator *stated* that the time is now.
**Correct:** The narrator *states* that the time is now.
**Incorrect:** Kate Chopin *seemed* to sympathize with Calixta.
**Correct:** Kate Chopin *seems* to sympathize with Calixta.
**Incorrect:** At the end, Clarisse *was* happy to remain ignorant about her husband and Calixta.
**Correct:** At the end, Clarisse *is* happy to remain ignorant about her husband and Calixta.

### Use the Literary Present Tense with Consistency

Although the present tense is used in literary discussions and references to literary texts, some instances will occur in which you have to distinguish between times of events. Thus, using the present tense may not apply to all actions within a text. The characters within a text often have done something, or something has happened, in the past—before the action of the story. In such cases, refer to these past actions in the past tense. Also, use the past tense when referring to the author and events in the author's life that do not relate directly to the text. See the examples below:

**Incorrect:** Kate Chopin *is* born in 1850.
**Correct:** Kate Chopin *was* born in 1850.
**Incorrect:** Alcée *reminds* Calixta of what *happens* in Assumption years ago.
**Incorrect:** Alcée *reminded* Calixta of what *happened* in Assumption years ago.
**Correct:** Alcée *reminds* Calixta of what *happened* in Assumption years ago.

When revising and editing your textual analysis, review it for consistency and clarity in literary present tense when you discuss the text, events within the text, and the author's relationship to it. Use the past tense, however, when dealing with information outside the text, such as historical context or events related to the author's life. Be sure to distinguish between past and present events by using the correct tense. For more about the **literary present tense**, see Verbs.

## 16.7 Evaluation: Self-Directed Assessment

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply formats and design features for different kinds of texts.
- Assess your writing for language, clarity, coherence, and rhetorical choices, and by using a rubric.

Many writers find it difficult to assess their own work. Therefore, they rely on insights from someone outside of the process. While such insights may be useful in helping writers find their way, writers can review their own work either before someone else does or when outside reviewers are unavailable.

As a student writer, you might choose to read your work aloud or print the work in hard copy to read in a different medium. Close to the end of the process is a good time to conduct a self-directed assessment to note whether the points made, the organization, the tone, and the style of the work are helping you achieve goals for the project, whether personal, professional, or academic. You might think of this process as a type of reverse outlining, as you go back to the basic structure of your writing. Based on your rubric or evaluative criteria, create points to check on your own.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using the literary present tense as discussed in Section 16.6. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | All paragraphs in the paper reflect its purpose, stated in the thesis, and allow for a thorough analysis of a literary work. The overall organization is clear, and ideas are connected with effective transitions. Paragraphs have topic sentences and proceed logically from them to support the thesis. | The tone and language choices are well suited to the audience and purpose. The work reflects thought, fairness, general comprehension, and keen awareness of the rhetorical situation. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using the literary present tense as discussed in Section 16.6. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | Most paragraphs in the paper reflect its purpose, stated in the thesis, and allow for a strong analysis of a literary work. The overall organization is clear, and most ideas are connected with transitions. Most paragraphs have topic sentences and proceed logically from them to support the thesis. | The tone and language choices are usually well suited to the audience and purpose. The work reflects thought, fairness, comprehension, and reasonable awareness of the rhetorical situation. |
| **3**<br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using the literary present tense as discussed in Section 16.6. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | Some paragraphs in the paper reflect its purpose, which may be stated in the thesis, and may not provide a strong focus for analysis of a literary work. The overall organization is discernible, and some ideas are connected with transitions. Most paragraphs have topic sentences but may not proceed logically from them to support the thesis. | The tone and language choices are somewhat suited to the audience and purpose. The work reflects some thought, fairness, comprehension, and reasonable awareness of the rhetorical situation |

**TABLE 16.4**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using the literary present tense as discussed in Section 16.6. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | Some paragraphs in the paper reflect its purpose, which may or may not be stated in the thesis. The thesis provides minimal focus for analysis of a literary work. Other paragraphs are rambling, unfocused, and out of logical order. There is little overall organization and little use of effective transitions. Most paragraphs lack topic sentences or have more than one. | Lapses in tone and language choices make the writing unsuited to the audience and purpose. The work reflects little thought, some unfairness, questionable comprehension, and minimal awareness of the rhetorical situation. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using the literary present tense as discussed in Section 16.6. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | Few, if any, paragraphs in the paper reflect its purpose, which may or may not be stated in the thesis. The thesis provides little or no focus for analysis of a literary work. Other paragraphs are rambling, unfocused, and out of logical order. There is little or no obvious organization and little or no use of effective transitions. Most or all paragraphs lack topic sentences, have more than one, or are insufficiently developed. | Frequent lapses in tone and language choices make the writing unsuited to the audience and purpose. The work reflects little or no thought, fairness, accurate comprehension, or awareness of the rhetorical situation. |

**TABLE 16.4**

## 16.8 Spotlight on … Humanities

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe various disciplines in the humanities.
- Evaluate employment opportunities for graduates with humanities degrees.

Although all college instructors value good writing, each area of study has its own set of criteria by which writing is judged. For instance, the loose informal style and speculative content of a reflective essay might be appropriate for an English class but inappropriate for an anthropology class in which the instructor would expect the more formal structures established in that subject area.

As a discipline, the humanities include subjects that focus on human culture and values. Some subjects are literature, languages, classics, art history, film, musicology, philosophy, religion, and often history, which sometimes is placed in the social sciences. The humanities are the foundation of liberal arts and, as such, include a wide variety of writing genres. Research reports, biographies, literary analyses, ethnographies, quantitative reports, proposals, books, journal articles, poetry, film scripts, novels, stories, technical writing, and professional documents are forms of writing particular to the humanities.

As a rule, knowledge in the humanities focuses on texts and on individual ideas, speculations, insights, and imaginative connections. Interpretation in the humanities is thus relatively subjective. Accordingly, much of the writing and research in the humanities is characterized by personal involvement, lively language, and speculative or open-ended conclusions.

The field of English includes the study of not only literature but of literary theory and history, and not only composition but creative and technical writing. In addition, English departments often include linguistics, journalism, folklore, women's studies, cultural or ethnic studies, and film. In other words, within even one discipline, you might be asked to write several distinct types of papers: personal experience essays for a composition course, analyses for a literature course, abstracts or case studies for a linguistics course, procedural texts for a technical writing course, and short stories for a creative writing course. Consequently, any observations about the different kinds of knowledge and the differing conventions for writing about them are only generalizations. The more carefully you study any one discipline, the more complex it becomes, and the harder it is to make a generalization that does not have numerous explanations.

## Careers in the Humanities



Because humanities subjects emphasize critical thinking and clear writing, the skills humanities students obtain are valued in many fields other than the most obvious ones. Humanities majors have gone on to careers in law, medicine (humanities plus pre-med), advertising, journalism, TV and film writing and production, public relations, graphic design, teaching, technical and medical/scientific writing, human resources, and many others. For more information about career opportunities for humanities students, see these sites:

- Humanities and Social Sciences Careers (https://openstax.org/r/Humanities)
- Top 10 Highest Paying Jobs for Liberal Arts Majors (https://openstax.org/r/Top-10-Highest)
- 25 Great Jobs for Humanities Majors (https://openstax.org/r/Great-Jobs)

## Students' Stories

Despite strong interest in the humanities—especially in reading, writing, and language—some students avoid humanities subjects as majors because they think they won't find jobs after graduation. Such fear, however, is unwarranted, as many organizations actively seek students who major in languages or in other humanities disciplines. These graduates are valued for their ability to interpret and analyze text and to write clear, concise, and compelling prose. Moreover, employers realize that students who concentrate on studying people—whether real or fictional—develop insights into human behavior and understanding of how to deal with it. For example, these students who graduated with degrees in humanities subjects have found rewarding work in humanities-related and business fields.

Gabriela Torres majored in film studies, with a minor in theater. Although more interested in the technical aspects of both, she took creative writing classes and enjoyed performing in several college productions. Soon after graduation, Gabriela joined the human resources (HR) department of midsized corporation. Her job is to train new hires and conduct in-service workshops for current employees. Recently her role has expanded to writing, producing, and acting in training videos in which she uses the skills she learned in college—and more.

Derrek Wilson became an international studies major after he received a summer stipend to study in Europe. After only a few weeks there and trips to historic sites, Derrek says he got "hooked on history." The broad focus of his interdisciplinary major allowed him to take courses in humanities subjects: history, geography, religion, archaeology, and world literature. He had studied Spanish in high school and continued in college. Derrek graduated last year and now works as an international program coordinator for his university. Responsible for logistics of foreign students coming to the United States and for American students going abroad, he oversees housing accommodations, student visas, and travel arrangements. He loves his job and the time he gets to spend in different countries, but he plans to go to law school in a few years—with, you guessed it, a specialty in international and immigration law.

Despite his parents' warnings that he'd never find a good job, Nick Marelli majored in English. He put his literary interests to work in college as managing editor of the literary magazine and arts editor of the newspaper. When he graduated, he applied, on a whim (and to please his parents), for a management trainee position at a large insurance company. Thinking he would get nowhere without business courses, he was surprised when a recruiter called him for an interview. The interviewer then told him that the company actively seeks English majors because they know how to read carefully, digest and summarize information, think critically, and write clearly, concisely, and correctly. Nick says, "I was surprised when I heard someone other than an English teacher say that. I really like my work, where I'm learning a lot on the spot rather than in a classroom."

### Thinking, Writing, and Publishing

Critical writing requires critical thinking. When an individual or collaborative team articulates their perspective, they provide new knowledge for audiences. In essence, all texts have potential to create new knowledge. A writer of any type of text has the potential to enter a conversation and show audiences new ways to look at a subject.

Learning how to write analytically and critically offers a skill set for crafting various genres, such as information reports, proposals, cost/benefit analyses, instructions, and so on. After you have completed your analysis for this chapter, consider submitting it to an open-access academic journal that highlights the work of undergraduate students in the humanities, such as these:

Undergraduate Journal of Humanistic Studies (https://openstax.org/r/Undergraduate)

## 16.9 Portfolio: The Academic and the Personal

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Reflect on the development of composing processes and how those processes affect your work.
- Identify your strengths in writing and consider how to continue to develop your writing process.

### Reflective Writing: Genres of Reflective Writing

Reflective writing is not limited to a single genre. Because it is highly personal, it is most frequent in, but certainly not limited to, diaries, journals, autobiographies, and memoirs. One common way that it appears is in letters or essays that writers craft to reflect on, or think about, their writing process for a particular text they have written. Consider the following suggestions when you write reflectively about this assignment for your ongoing portfolio compilation:

- Write this letter, essay, or response as you would to a friend—be kind to yourself and your process, but be realistic as well.
- Highlight what you think are your present capabilities and what you would like to strengthen.
- Specifically discuss and illustrate—by giving specific examples—how well you have met the assignment objectives listed under Evaluation: Self-Directed Assessment.

To guide your portfolio reflection, answer these questions:

- What did you learn about yourself and/or the writing process in the course of writing your textual analysis?
- What did you learn about the topic and/or about writing in general?
- Which part of the writing process was most beneficial to you: drafting, peer review, conferences, or something else?
- How successfully did you address the assignment guidelines?
- How might you change your writing process to better support your growth as a writer—for example, time management, change in drafting methods, more focus on rubric, extended research, more focus on the final draft before submission?

## Further Reading

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# Image Analysis: What You See 17




**FIGURE 17.1** On the left is a carved medallion, found at Amaravati in a Buddhist shrine that dates from the later years BCE to the early CE. On the right, the individual images in the carving are outlined and numbered, explaining the narrative sequence and showing the audience how to "read" the medallion. Together, the two serve as an early example of visual rhetoric. (credit: "Chaddanta Jataja Amaravati" by Vidya Dehejia/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

**17.1** "Reading" Images
**17.2** Image Trailblazer: Sara Ludy
**17.3** Glance at Genre: Relationship Between Image and Rhetoric
**17.4** Annotated Student Sample: "Hints of the Homoerotic" by Leo Davis
**17.5** Writing Process: Thinking Critically and Writing Persuasively About Images
**17.6** Editing Focus: Descriptive Diction
**17.7** Evaluation: Relationship Between Analysis and Image
**17.8** Spotlight on ... Video and Film
**17.9** Portfolio: Interplay Between Text and Image

**INTRODUCTION** Many people spend a substantial portion of their time watching and assessing images—including photographs, memes, graphs, and videos—via television, streaming services, and social media platforms. Even the college curriculum is as much visual as it is verbal, including as it does Internet research, computer graphics, and PowerPoint presentations. These forms of media might be relatively new, but people have been creating and consuming images for millennia, as you can see in Figure 17.1. An important part of human development consists of making images, enjoying them, and talking about them.

Formerly, visual texts were created exclusively by painters, photographers, and others generally designated as

artists. Today, given the proliferation of technologies that enable the easy capture and manipulation of images, such visual texts are created by a multitude of authors. In this chapter, terms for these image creators—artist, author, composer, creator—are used interchangeably.

Chapter 17 examines the elements of visual literacy and analysis most likely to complement the textual literacy emphasized in first-year writing classes and addressed in Print or Textual Analysis: What You Read. A critical understanding of visual texts is key to helping you both as a consumer of the frequent images you encounter in reading and viewing and as a producer who incorporates images into your own writing, as addressed in Multimodal and Online Writing: Creative Interaction between Text and Image. Overall, this chapter provides a solid basis for understanding visual rhetoric and communicating about it in various situations. After study and practice, you will be able to do so while drawing on your own cultural context, background, and experience and considering your audience, purpose, and rhetorical context.

## 17.1 "Reading" Images

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define the key concepts and elements of visual rhetoric.
- Interpret visual information using the language of visual rhetoric.
- Interpret images differently based on cultural considerations.
- Choose digital and visual media according to the rhetorical situation and cultural context when writing for different audiences.
- Make informed decisions about intellectual property issues regarding images.

To compose an effective essay or a strong visual, a creator works with a number of elements that are remarkably similar from one medium to the other. Both stories and pictures contain **information** presented by a creator who has a particular point of view and arranges the work in two-dimensional space. The information is likely to be open to multiple **interpret**, which may or may not be justified by the text. Although the sharing of personal opinions and beliefs has value, the focus here is on interpreting or analyzing texts in combination with your personal experiences.

### Interpreting Visual Information

Both words and pictures convey information, but each does so in different ways that require interpretation. *Interpretation* is the sense a person makes of a piece of communication—textual, oral, or visual. It includes personal experience, the context in which the communication is made, and other rhetorical elements. (See Glance at Genre: Relationship Between Image and Rhetoric for a list of key terms related to visual elements and rhetoric.) By the time readers get to college, they have internalized strategies to help them critically understand a variety of written texts.

Images present a different set of challenges for critical readers. For example, in a photograph or drawing, information is presented simultaneously, so viewers can start or stop anywhere they like. Because visual information is presented in this way, its general meaning may be apparent at a glance, while more nuanced or complicated meanings may take longer to figure out and likely will vary from one viewer to another.



**FIGURE 17.2** Naked Raygun performance, 2007 (credit: “Naked Raygun” by Greg Dunlap/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Some images, however, do not really lend themselves to interpretation. Before trying to engage in rhetorical discourse about an image, be sure it contributes something of value. For example, Figure 17.2 shows a punk rock concert featuring the band Naked Raygun with several concertgoers in the foreground. Such pictures are common forms of memorabilia that serve an archival function. The features common to visual rhetoric—point of view, arrangement, color, and symbol—do not inspire much in the way of discussion in this particular image. Parts are blurry, some of the figures are obscure, and the picture’s purpose is unclear. Therefore, any analysis of the image may be guided more by personal opinion than by critical thinking. Such images are *not* the focus of this chapter.




**FIGURE 17.3** (credit: “DSCF1343” by K. Kendall, Portland, OR, USA/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

Figure 17.3, in contrast, depicts not merely a moment in time for the sake of memory, although it certainly does that. It contains a central, dominant figure. The color red is bold and centers the figure, giving the image

weight. It also conveys several political messages, both obvious and nuanced. The woman in the picture is wearing a mask, as people were either asked or mandated to do during the COVID-19 pandemic. The slogan on her mask reads "I can't breathe," words that were made infamous after Eric Garner (1970–2014) died as the result of an illegal chokehold inflicted by a New York City police officer during arrest. These words were repeated by George Floyd (1973–2020) in an 8-minute, 46-second video showing his murder by a Minnesota police officer who knelt on Floyd's neck. The phrase became one of several slogans of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, symbolizing the struggle that people of color endure when living in an implicitly and explicitly racist culture. Breathing—like blood—is fundamental, essential. Without breath, there is no life. Thus, this slogan draws attention to the fact that people of color may be brutalized for no reason other than their existence.

Placing the slogan on a mask is a design choice likely to provoke those who have argued against mandated mask wearing as an assault on personal liberty and who have proclaimed they could not breathe while wearing masks. **Juxtaposition**, or placing contrasting elements close together, is a technique that image creators often use for a variety of purposes: humor, irony, sarcasm, or—as in this case—disgust or outrage. The juxtaposition of the mask with a slogan referencing literal asphyxiation emphasizes the wearer's view that state violence against people of color is a more serious threat to her existence than a mask. Thus, the image is open to multiple interpretations.

### Thinking Critically

To think critically about visual information, first identify the objects, facts, processes, or symbols portrayed in the image. Taking all the information together, ask whether there is a main or unifying idea. *Is the meaning open to multiple interpretations? Is it suggested but not stated? Is it clear and unambiguous? Are there multiple levels of meaning, both stated and unstated?* When you view an image, pausing to answer such questions will sharpen your critical faculties, increase your understanding of the visual information you encounter, and help you use images more meaningfully in texts you create.

## Visual Rhetoric

Written texts rely on strategies such as thesis statements, topic sentences, paragraphing, tone, and sentence structure to communicate their message to their audience. Images rely on different strategies, including **point of view**, **arrangement**, **color**, and **symbol**. When writing about images or including them in your writing, think critically about the visual strategies they use and the effect they will have on your audience.

Using these techniques may or may not make you a proficient artist or creator of images. However, familiarity with the technical language of the visual arts will certainly enable you to describe what you observe as you build the evidence that allows you to **interpret** an image, **reflect** on it, **analyze** it, and make **persuasive arguments** about it.

### Point of View

In written texts, *point of view* refers to the "person" from whose vantage point the information is delivered, either a character in the story or a narrator outside the story. However, in photographs, drawings, and paintings, *point of view* refers to the place from which the image creator looks at the subject—where the photographer places their camera or the artist their easel.

Photographs that haven't been manipulated in a darkroom or digitally by a computer only reproduce the subject in front of the camera, as it exists in the moment the shutter opens and closes. They do not show anything to the left or right, above or below, or what comes before or after. A camera aimed to the east omits information from the north, west, and south. In other words, any photograph is the result of placing a camera in a certain location, at a certain height and distance, at a specific time of day and using a particular lens, film, and perhaps a filter. All of these decisions about where, when, and how to place the camera create the visual point of view.

You can find good examples of these kinds of limited truths in real-estate advertisements featuring photographs of houses for sale. The photograph might not reveal a landfill next door or a factory across the street—though you might infer such limitations from a low selling price or confirm them by driving past the house.




**FIGURE 17.4** (credit: “Kodak Digital Waterfall” by Nan Palmero/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

The creator of Figure 17.4 chooses to highlight the digital waterfall with its seductive lighting and colors. Meanwhile, the people interacting with the computer are barely visible, standing off to the side, some nearly out of the frame. The silhouetted profiles and darkened faces lack identifying details. These features are emphasized by the blurred people in the background. These figures, too, are unidentifiable and are looking out of the frame, uninterested. The effect is to imply that the waterfall and its computer interface dominate human interaction and possibly even human existence.

To think critically about point of view, answer the following questions:

- From what place or stance does the image creator view the subject?
- What effect does this particular point of view have on the way viewers may think or feel about the subject?
- What would happen if the vantage point were elsewhere—above or below, left or right?
- What would change in the image if the point of view were changed?

### Arrangement

In addition to point of view, artists use arrangement to signal an image’s significance to the reader. The term *arrangement* in visual texts might be compared to terms such as *order*, *organization*, and *structure* in verbal texts, though the differences are substantial. While writers *arrange*, or put together, a story, essay, or poem to take place over time—that is, the time readers need to follow the text, line by line, through a number of pages—image creators arrange pictures in the two-dimensional space of their viewfinder, paper, or canvas to invite viewers to read in space rather than time. This difference is also evident in sculpture and other three-dimensional works, which require viewers to move around them to read them spatially. In visual texts, then, *arrangement* refers to the ways in which the various parts of a picture come together to present a single coherent experience for the viewer.

In contrast to static images, which are read spatially, videos and some types of **multimodal** texts—those incorporating more than one genre, discipline, or literacy (for example, GIFs that incorporate pictures or videos with language)—combine elements of both time and space. That is, they invite viewers to examine an image in motion that changes over time. Video creators often mimic linear time by telling a story, or they

repeat key images to be interpreted differently after being seen in various contexts within the video.

One element to examine is the use of **pattern**—predictable, repeated elements within the visual field that the eye notices and seems attracted to. Just as sonnets, sestinas, and haiku follow patterns of lines, so do visual compositions. But in these, patterns are created by light and color rather than words. Documentary and commercial photographers often use visual patterns to lead viewers to an intended meaning. Patterns are especially prominent in street art, where the elements of surrounding architecture and infrastructure interact with the work, as shown in Figure 17.5.




**FIGURE 17.5** Gaza Strip mural in Prague, Czech Republic, by Blu (credit: "Gaza Strip" by Tom Hughes-Croucher/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Many patterns are suggested by mathematics. For example, the **Möbius strip** is both a mathematical construct and a visual enigma. It has one side and one boundary curve. It looks like a spiral, but it does not intersect itself. Thus, it gives the impression of being infinite. In Figure 17.5, the artist capitalizes on these features of the Möbius strip, using it to depict the seemingly endless cycle of destruction (green tanks) and reconstruction (yellow steamrollers) in one of the world's most contested pieces of real estate: the Gaza Strip.

Ownership and control of the Gaza Strip are disputed. Approximately two million people live there, many in refugee camps. Since the mid-20th century, the region has been fought over by Israel, Egypt, and Palestinian Arabs. As you contemplate the mural, think about the way its creator uses pattern and repetition to convey various ideas and emotions. The following questions may help:

- Which elements within the mural are repeated?
- Where is its center of gravity or weight?
- Where do patterns of light/dark, large/small, and color lead the eye?
- How do pattern and balance contribute to meaning in a two-dimensional image?
- What does the arrangement suggest about the meaning of the image?

### Color and Symbol

Pattern and arrangement are controlled by the image creator and intended to guide the viewer. Color and symbol allow the viewer greater latitude in interpreting the image, in part because particular colors suggest specific moods. Think about your personal reactions to different colors. *What color might you select to paint your bedroom? What is your favorite color for, say, clothing or cars?* While these may differ according to personal preference, traditional symbolic values are attached to different colors in literature and art. *Why, for instance, does red often symbolize anger or war on the one hand and romance or passion on the other? Why does black often suggest danger or death? And why does white often stand for innocence or purity? Are the*

*reasons for these associations arbitrary, cultural, or logical?*

Particular colors also suggest or reinforce social and political ideas. *What, for example, is suggested by adding a red, white, and blue American flag to a magazine advertisement for an American automobile, political poster, or bumper sticker? What is the meaning of a yellow ribbon tied to a tree in front of a house or an image of a yellow ribbon sticker attached to the tailgate of a pickup truck?* By themselves, colors do not specify political positions, arguments, or ideas, but used in conjunction with specific words or forms—a flag or ribbon, for example—the emotional power of color can be influential.

Color associations globally are complicated and highly nuanced. The following overview is brief and simplified, to be considered merely as an introduction or starting point for your research and investigations into individual artistic expressions. When you interpret an artist's use of color, one place to start is with the hues found in the natural world. Because blood is red, the color is often associated with life, heat, and passion. Yellow and green appear with the new growth of spring, so these colors often symbolize new beginnings, freshness, and hope. Both the sea and the sky are blue. Although these elements can be turbulent, many people find peace and tranquility as they reflect on them, and thus they are often associated with these emotions.



Regardless of colors' natural associations, people from around the world understand colors differently. In China, for example, red is a celebratory color associated with holidays, feasts, and the giving of gifts, whereas in some parts of Africa the color may symbolize the sacrifice necessitated by the fight for independence. In the Western world, white can represent purity or innocence and is often worn by young women at their weddings. However, in parts of Asia, white is a color of mourning.

The colors mentioned so far are mostly primary colors: red, yellow, and blue. The secondary colors—orange, green, and purple—carry more complex meanings. Both orange and the bright shade of green called neon or chartreuse are easy to see in all light conditions. Therefore, they are often used for safety purposes, on caution signs or uniforms of emergency workers. The color orange is associated with the robes of Buddhist monks, thus representing in Buddhist cultures that which is holy, whereas in the Netherlands, orange is the color of the royal family and used for patriotic purposes.

In addition to connotations of spring, the color green is also associated with Islam. In the Christian tradition, yellow and gold are colors associated with riches and abundance. Holiness is also associated with the color blue in Egyptian, Hindu, and Christian cultures (in which blue has other associations as well). Because purple has traditionally been a difficult color to manufacture, its rarity meant that only the very wealthy, often nobility or royalty, could afford to wear it—hence its association with royals and even gods. However, some cultures, such as Thai, Brazilian, and Italian cultures, associate purple with bad luck or death. Again, this overview of colors' different interpretations and associations is not intended as a guide for interpreting color in a visual image. Instead, consider all of the different ways in which color can be understood, some ways that the artist might intend for color to be interpreted, and the associations that colors have for you when you view a visual or digital image.



In this chapter, you have begun learning about how to interpret visual information through the lens of rhetoric. Color and its related symbolism help viewers interpret images.

Access multimedia content (http://openstax.org/books/writing-guide/pages/17-1-reading-images)

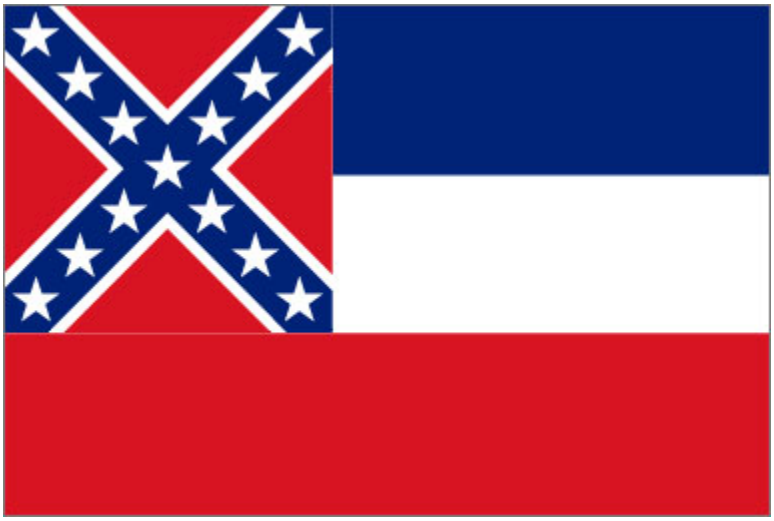


**FIGURE 17.6** State flag of Mississippi (https://openstax.org/r/State-flag), 1894–2020. This is the 1894 version, without the white stripe added in 1996. (credit: "Flag of Mississippi (1894–1906)" by Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)




**FIGURE 17.7** The current state flag of Mississippi was adopted 2021. (credit: "Flag of Mississippi" by Rocky Vaughan, et al./Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

### Symbols

Like colors, symbols are interpreted differently by individuals on the basis of their personal and cultural experiences. Here is an example of two state flags with very different symbolism: Figure 17.6 depicts the state flag of Mississippi that was adopted in 1894; Figure 17.7 depicts the one adopted in 2021. In 2021, under pressure from numerous organizations and in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, Mississippi replaced its state flag. The 1894 flag included the battle flag of the Confederacy, referencing Mississippi's history of secession and violence during the Civil War (1861–1865); the single blue, white, and red bands were a reference to the stripes on the American flag. This historical allusion, coupled with the state's history of enslavement and segregation, meant that the 1894 flag served as a stark reminder of efforts to silence Black Mississippians. In fact, Mississippi did not formally ratify the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution—proposed in 1865 to abolish slavery—until 2013, and the state remained segregated long after the Supreme Court outlawed the practice.

Mississippi continued to use the 1894 flag throughout the Reconstruction (1865–1877) and the Jim Crow laws (ca. 1877–c. 1950) and civil rights (1950s and 1960s) eras despite multiple and sustained efforts to remove any reference to the Confederate flag. In 2020, the increasing prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement

created the context in which state lawmakers were forced to consider these problems as mainstream and urgent. Further, the state came under pressure from numerous organizations, including the Southeastern Conference athletics organization (SEC), which threatened to boycott the state by no longer holding major events there if the flag were not changed.

Submitted to the legislature by Starkville-based graphic designer Rocky Vaughan (b. ca. 1977) and collaborators Sue Anna Joe, Kara Giles, and Dominique Pugh, the new flag took effect in January 2021 after voters approved it and the governor ratified it. The current flag (Figure 17.7) features a central vertical band of blue, flanked by two thin gold bands and encompassed by two broader red ones. The flag's center is dominated by a single magnolia flower, crowned by a single gold star and encircled by 20 white ones. Beneath the flower are emblazoned the words "In God We Trust."

The gold coloring is intended to celebrate Mississippi's contributions to the world of art, music, and literature. The white stars symbolize Mississippi's status as the 20th state of the Union; thus, the new flag symbolizes the state's reintegration into the Union without reference to its seditious acts in the 19th century or lingering loyalty to the beliefs that motivated them. In addition, the single gold star honors the state's indigenous people; no reference is made to the state's history of enslavement and racism.

Thinking critically about color and symbol, ask yourself these questions:

- Does the color enhance or distort the reality of the image?
- Imagine the image in shades of black, white, and gray. What would be lost and what would be gained if color were subtracted?
- Does the color work with or against the other compositional elements?
- What symbols are incorporated into the image? How might those symbols be interpreted in various contexts?
- What, if any, is the significance of referencing Indigenous but not Black Americans on the current flag?

## Selecting and Incorporating Digital and Visual Media

In addition to analyzing visual and digital media, you may be asked to find, create, or manipulate such materials for a variety of situations and audiences. Following are some considerations to keep in mind, including **copyright** issues, appropriate selections, and **technical manipulations**.

**Intellectual property laws** are complicated, change frequently, and vary by country. Sharing an image is similar to quoting a text, with one exception: you must not only cite the author in a reference list or bibliography but also secure permission to use the image. To be safe, unless an image explicitly states that you are free to share it (public domain), assume it is protected by copyright.

The texts you write will have varying degrees of formality and require different levels of diction (word choice), syntax (sentence structure), content, and tone. Similarly, the images you select should reflect the **tone**, or attitude, that you wish to convey in your text. Ask yourself these questions to decide whether an image is appropriate for your text:

**What is the image's purpose?** Include images only if they add to or supplement the text. Do not add images simply as "filler" or for audience entertainment. Such materials are more likely to confuse or distract readers than they are to enlighten or inform them.

**Is the image humorous or sarcastic?** Humor has value as entertainment by keeping the audience interested and engaged in your text and making it more memorable. However, determining what makes something funny is deeply personal. An image you find funny could be read with confusion or even offense by someone else. In formal communications, humor and sarcasm are better avoided because of the risk of misunderstanding. In creative contexts, you have greater latitude.

**Does the image include text?** Because you are already creating a text, you may wish to question the value of

inserting an image with text. Consider what information the image provides in addition to the text. For example, in Figure 17.3, the text "I can't breathe" is enhanced by its placement on a mask and, further, by the mask's presence on a Black woman. These details make the image with its text a valuable addition to a discussion or analysis.

Consider also the language of the text. You may be fluent in multiple languages, so an image with text in Spanish, French, or Japanese could have meaning for you. *Will it have meaning for your audience?* The same applies to images that include slang, jargon, or slogans with a limited shelf life. If you have to explain the image's meaning before your readers understand it, the image is probably not worth including.

**What is the image's context?** Where and when the image is placed can affect the viewer's understanding and interpretation. A picture of poverty in one country is likely to look very different from poverty in another country. Some images can be considered universal, meaning they depict situations that have significance for all people, regardless of culture, ethnicity, or historical context. For example, an image of a mother and an infant is easily recognized by anyone anywhere and is likely to evoke similar thoughts and emotions.

**What digital or technical requirements or manipulations are needed?** Finally, when you think about including an image, you'll need to consider the digital and technical requirements and manipulations necessary to do so. Aspects to consider include compatibility requirements, visibility on different devices and platforms, sizing, and placement. The technical details associated with these considerations are changing rapidly, so this chapter makes no recommendations regarding software programs or specifications. However, if an image is blurred or distorted—or invisible—the result will be confusion and frustration on the part of your reader.

### Selecting an Appropriate Image

To practice selecting appropriate images, imagine you are writing an informational webpage about the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and its responsibilities in relation to the Clean Water Act. *To illustrate those responsibilities, which of the following images would you use? Why?* (Suggested answers follow.)

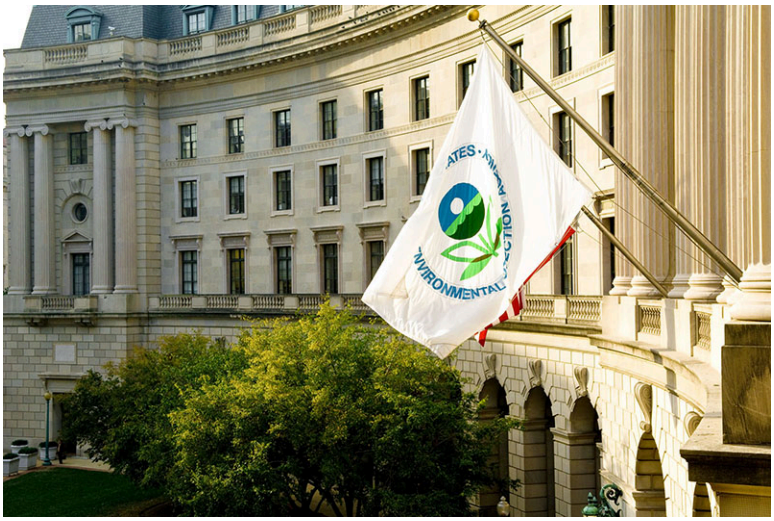


**FIGURE 17.8** Sample image 1: EPA flag with logo (credit: "Environmental Protection Agency building" by USEPA Environmental-Protection-Agency/flickr, Public Domain



**FIGURE 17.9** Sample image 2: Water pouring from a faucet into a clear glass (credit: “Water pouring from a faucet into a clear glass cup” by USEPA Environmental-Protection-Agency/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)



**FIGURE 17.10** Sample image 3: Woman holding a cup of brown liquid (credit: “Safe Drinking Water Act” by Erik Calonius/USEPA Environmental-Protection-Agency/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

### Suggested Answers

- **Sample image 1** seems like an obvious choice. It depicts the name and logo of the agency you are writing about, and nothing about it is likely to be considered controversial. However, by itself, it does not convey any useful information, so its purpose is unclear.
- **Sample image 2** depicts safe, clean drinking water from the tap. The glass emphasizes the clarity of the water, and its proximity to the tap shows the intimate role that water plays in daily life. It features no characters or setting, so it is not restricted by any obvious contextual clues. It is perfect for this piece.
- **Sample image 3** is emotionally powerful. It depicts a woman, older and likely with a low income, holding a

jar of brownish liquid. The image appears to be old, based on the coloring of the photograph, the woman's dress, and the home in the background. Its age could help make the rhetorical point that the EPA's enforcement of the Clean Water Act, passed in 1972, has been effective. However, its context is unclear, raising questions about its composition. *When and where was the photo taken? Is it set in the United States? And what is the liquid in the jar—water? Oil? Moonshine?* The image raises too many questions to be useful in this context.



# 17.2 Trailblazer

## Image Trailblazer: Sara Ludy

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Interpret images through the conceptual lens of hybridity to learn, think critically, and communicate in a variety of rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Articulate how genre conventions are shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.



**FIGURE 17.11** Images from nature inspire artists such as Sara Ludy (https://openstax.org/r/Sara-Ludy). (credit: "Plants OB 934" by USDA NRCS Montana/ Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

*"The digital sublime emerges from a collectively built hyperobject that globally connects our nervous systems."*

### Sara Ludy and Hybridity





This chapter focuses on images. Still, most of the images with which viewers interact have been either created or manipulated digitally (https://openstax.org/r/digitally) and contain textual, animated (https://openstax.org/r/animated), and cinematic content. In the field of digital manipulation, Sara Ludy (https://openstax.org/r/Sara--Ludy) is a pioneer, combining painting, sculpture, floral arrangements, animation, sound, and video. She was raised in Bluemont, Virginia, a small town in the Appalachian region. She studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and lived and worked in New Mexico and California before settling in Chicago. Her

work includes images of water, clouds, water vapor, birds, fabric, glass, and plants. American painter Georgia O'Keeffe's (1887–1986) influence—see Figure 17.12—on Ludy's work is obvious in its lush, open petals and wings, as well as in the vibrant natural colors.



**FIGURE 17.12** *Red Canna*, 1919, by Georgia O'Keeffe (credit: "Georgia O'Keeffe Red Canna 1919" by Georgia O'Keeffe/High Museum of Art, Atlanta/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

But Ludy also names British primatologist Jane Goodall (b. 1934); Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986); and American architect, inventor, designer R. Buckminster Fuller (1895–1983) among her inspirations, emphasizing the hybrid nature of her work.

The concept of hybridity pervades Ludy's work, which occurs in different media and includes a variety of topics. The concept refers to mixing and is used in disciplines that encompass discussions of language, race, ethnicity, and culture. Relating to digital and visual media, the term *hybridity* incorporates pieces from each of these disciplines as well as the blending of practical, physical, technological, and artistic methods. The result is a piece of art that represents and speaks to people from multiple walks of life in various visual and tactile ways.

In particular, the concept of hybridity in the arts refers to the relationship between digital media and the creation and experience of the artwork. Artists such as Ludy anticipate that mixture by embedding it in their work, using digital techniques to distort or change it.

The following example of Ludy's work sheds light on her contributions to contemporary art and the multiple directions in which visual and digital media are headed in the 21st century.

### Second Life: Convergence of the Virtual and the Physical

Ludy (https://openstax.org/r/Ludy) works extensively in the genre of *Second Life*, capturing and then manipulating images people have created. *Second Life* cannot be described merely as a video game, given the seriousness with which many people treat it and the lack of an ultimate goal or winning moment, but it does share features commonly found in video games. It is an animated alternative world where people spend long periods of time entertaining themselves. It represents a virtual reality in which participants design settings,

create characters, and engage in a variety of interactions. The goal is simply to be present in this virtual world, to create beautiful or intriguing spaces, and to experiment with form and color in ways that may not be possible in the real world. Ludy's *Second Life* work removes viewers even farther from the virtual experience's all-encompassing reality and heightens its surrealism using multiple layers of distance.

In interviews, Ludy encourages viewers to resist the urge to experience her work "consciously"—that is, to name or describe it. Instead, she wants them to focus on the sensory experiences they have when contemplating it. However, this advice is contrary to the goal of discourse, in which you describe and assess a work and your reactions to it. It also contradicts her own practice, in which she has commented on the nature of her practice and her intentions. Notice how, in the video, she talks about finding images in *Second Life* that resonate with a sense of familiarity. While many users may see *Second Life* as a place to invent new or unusual designs not permitted by physics, Ludy appears to be after those designs that make people feel at home, at least to the extent they can do so in a world constructed of binary code.

Elsewhere, Ludy describes the sublime as the happenstance that occurs when her virtual-reality-created scenes match a real-life experience she later has, much like witnessing an awe-inspiring natural phenomenon that appears supernatural and then realizing its natural qualities. Ludy instructs her viewers to "assume a prismatic quality" to her work (Ludy, "Artist"). Therefore, viewers should look at her images more than once, from different angles and perspectives and with different assumptions. In the case of the discovered floral arrangement she discusses, she refers to the pixelation—the radiation—the unintended effects of the digital relationship with the light and the camera.

### Discussion Questions

1. Do you consider Ludy's photographs of design elements created in *Second Life* to be her own work or the work of another person? Explain your response.
2. In what ways is Ludy's *Second Life* photography practice "natural"? In what ways is it digital, artificial, or manipulated? How do those descriptions or designations affect the way you see, reflect on, or feel about her work?
3. Ludy refers to the "artifacts" she finds in her photographic images, such as the radiant light from the top of the floral arrangement creating a pseudo-star. Do you consider such "artifacts" of artistic interest, or do you believe they are flaws that represent byproducts of one's digital limitations? Explain your response.
4. In what ways is the experience of viewing, reflecting on, and discoursing about images similar to the *Second Life* experience? In what ways is it different?

## 17.3 Glance at Genre: Relationship Between Image and Rhetoric

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Analyze and reflect on images using the language of visual rhetoric.
- Articulate how genre conventions are shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.
- Determine variations in genre conventions.

This section examines two sets of genre conventions: those associated with *visual rhetoric* and those associated with *writing about visual rhetoric*. The former include arrangement, color and symbol, composition, juxtaposition, light, line, multimodality, and point of view. These were introduced in 'Reading' Images and are summarized and defined at the end of this section. The latter conventions—reflecting, analyzing, and writing persuasively—are defined here with examples and suggestions for engaging in these kinds of writing. They serve as three frameworks for communicating the variety of human responses to images—responses that can range from apathy to repulsion, from enjoyment to bliss—using the language of visual rhetoric.

Reflecting and analyzing are addressed below. Writing persuasively is addressed in Writing Process: Thinking Critically and Writing Persuasively about Images in connection with this chapter's writing assignment. However, remember that all writing about images relies first on description and is persuasive in that its purpose is to convince readers to consider the ideas presented.

## Reflecting on Images

When you **reflect** on an image, you process its technical elements through the dual lens of critical thought and personal experience. You may ask questions such as the following:

- Does this image resonate with me? Why or why not?
- How does this image make me feel?
- What memories or associations does this image summon for me?
- How might my thoughts, feelings, and associations evoked by the image differ from those of someone else—someone of a different gender, socioeconomic context, or culture?

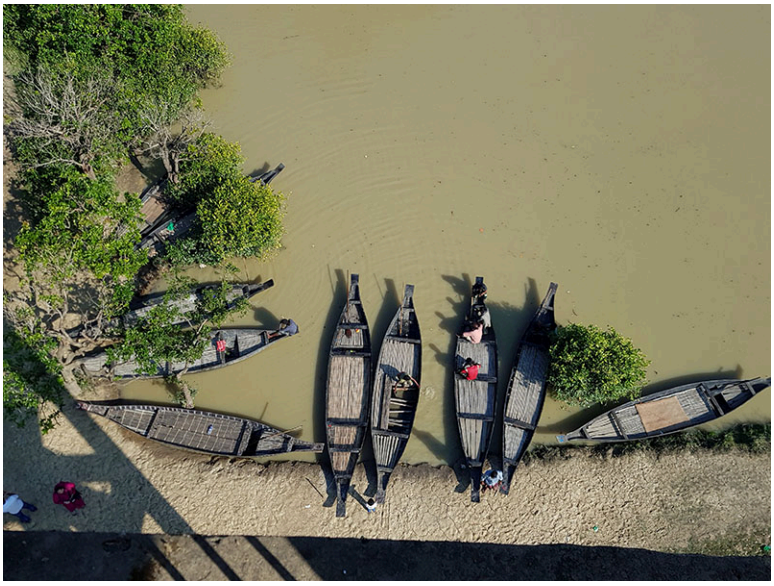


**FIGURE 17.13** Boats carrying tourists in Ratargul Swamp Forest, Bangladesh (credit: "Ratargul swampland, Sylhet" by Mostaque Chowdhury/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

To respond to some of these questions, consider Figure 17.13. Images of nature are often used to either soothe the viewer or inspire a sense of grandeur. Figure 17.13 has the capacity to do both. The repeating horizontal and vertical lines, gradient color patterns, and whimsical spots of pink and red directly offer a visual appeal that encourages meditation and reflection. A bare understanding of the context similarly lends a sensation of awe to the image. Ratargul is both a forest and a swamp in a remote part of Bangladesh that floods regularly. Tourists frequent the location, and local residents capitalize on that fact by giving them guided boat tours along the river, despite the inherent dangers.

But this image can be further informed by a viewer's variety of personal experiences. Consider, for example, the extent to which you have traveled. *Is Bangladesh within the realm of possibility for you—in the past, now, or ever? What are your experiences as a tourist or in the service industry? Do you think the boat operators and the photographer have similar or different opinions of the scene?* When you think and write critically about such questions, you deepen your understanding of your own experiences and reactions, you interact with the experiences of others, and you understand the world more broadly and deeply.

Remember that reflecting necessarily contains an element of speculation. Be careful to ground your discussion

in evidence—from the image itself, from the image's context, or from your own experience. Beyond these, such discussions devolve into self-indulgent musings that few others can share in or learn from.

## Analyzing Images

When describing an image, you might state that a line is blue. When you **analyze** an image, you might discuss what the color and the line *mean* or *do*. The images in 'Reading' Images are analyzed according to genre elements specific to visual media. In these discussions, the analysis begins with description, but it does not end there. The elements of visual rhetoric are both described and analyzed to discover the artist's intentions. (You will read a detailed analysis about painter Charles Demuth's *Dancing Sailors* in the Annotated Student Sample.)

When you analyze an image, you contribute to an ongoing global discussion, helping create the kaleidoscope that makes such rhetorical discussions meaningful. Do not worry about whether your contribution is right or wrong. Instead, consider its value to the global discussion. *What can you say that would broaden understanding of the work of art and your experience of the world?* This task may seem overwhelming, especially when you consider the work of a well-known artist. But your experiences and opinions are unique and valuable.

So far, this task sounds a lot like reflection, with one difference: reflection focuses on personal responses, reactions, feelings, and experiences, whereas analysis broadens that discussion to include the effects of various technical elements on a variety of people in different contexts. When analyzing an image, consider some of the following questions:

- Why did the creator select these particular technical elements?
- How are various audiences likely to react to them?
- How have interpretations of the image changed over time, or how are they likely to change in the future?
- What effect does historical or current context have on your interpretation?

## The Language of Visual Rhetoric

Images speak to viewers in a language that short-circuits their critical thought processes and goes directly to their sensory receptors. Yet unlike a simple, instinctive response to stimuli, the goal of critical thought, reflection, and discourse is to consider *how* and *why* viewers respond the way they do to certain images. To do so, viewers should consider the techniques that artists use to elicit such reactions. In this way, artists and viewers create a shared language of visual rhetoric in which both can discuss the virtues and demerits of a work of art as well as its historical and artistic contributions.

## Key Terms in Visual Rhetoric

- **Arrangement:** Artists arrange their work to emphasize certain aspects and to create patterns of repetition and variation. The term *composition* is often used to mean *arrangement*.
- **Color and symbol:** Images communicate their meaning in part through the variety and interplay among colors. Even the choice to use black and white or a monochrome color palette is a color choice. Symbols in images allude to deeper meanings.
- **Composition:** Composition is often used as an umbrella term encompassing all aspects of visual rhetoric. It can also be used synonymously with *arrangement* to indicate how the piece is put together.
- **Juxtaposition:** In visual art, juxtaposition is the placement of contrasting images close together to emphasize their connection, lack of connection, or incongruity.
- **Light:** Unique to images is the use of light to highlight or obscure various parts of an image or to create prismatic effects that enhance its repetitive aspects.
- **Line:** In addition to outline shapes, artists use line to focus or center the viewer's eye and then to move it across the image in certain predetermined patterns.
- **multimodal:** Multimodality is the use of more than one type of literacy within a single work. For example,

an airline display board is a multimodal work because it requires viewers both to understand ways of reading airport codes, time zones, and visual representations of temporal data and to relate that information to the their current circumstances. Multimodality is a theory, perspective, or method that incorporates the consideration of all elements of an image.

- **Point of view:** Also called **perspective**, point of view encompasses what an image includes, what it excludes, and where its focus lies.

## 17.4 Annotated Student Sample: "Hints of the Homoerotic" by Leo Davis

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Determine the context of an image.
- Analyze the rhetorical techniques common to images.
- Analyze a variety of texts according to organizational patterns and rhetorical techniques.

### Introduction

Below you will find a student analysis of a painting by Charles Demuth. As you read it, pay careful attention to the way in which the student author, Leo Davis, describes technical details of the painting, such as color, line, and technique. Also notice the way he analyzes those details, moving beyond mere description into the realms of context, analysis, and reflection.

### Meet American Modernist and Precisionist Charles Demuth (1883–1935)



**FIGURE 17.14** *Self-Portrait*, 1907 (credit: "Self portrait of Charles Demuth" by Charles Demuth/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

Charles Demuth was an American painter of the modernist and precisionist movements. Trained at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, he traveled to Europe and worked as an illustrator before striking out on his own, first as a watercolorist and then as an oil painter. His watercolors follow languid lines of vegetation, reproducing plants and flowers in stronger geometric patterns than those of his friend and fellow artist

Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986). His work in the precisionist movement, like that of other similar artists, often focuses on industrial subjects enhanced by exaggerated geometric techniques. Few human characters appear in Demuth's paintings, which tend to erase any suggestion of his own personality or brushstroke on the artwork.

Demuth was a keen wit with a vibrant social presence in New York, Paris, and London. He cultivated his friendships as avidly as he did his art, and his company was much prized. His homosexuality was likely well known among his circle of friends, although his works depicting gay subculture in major metropolitan areas were only privately circulated. These works, including *Dancing Sailors* (https://openstax.org/r/Dancing-Sailors) seen in black and white in Figure 17.15, are today shedding light on the ways in which LGBTQ people engaged with one another and society more than 100 years ago.



**FIGURE 17.15** *Dancing Sailors*, c. 1918, by Charles Demuth (credit: "Dancing sailors" by Charles Demuth/ Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### Analysis of *Dancing Sailors* by Charles Demuth

> Four male sailors dance on a checked floor with arched lines in the background. Two of the men dance with women, while two of them dance with each other. This painting is done in watercolor and graphite and focuses on the sailor on the far left. The other figures face him, and his posture draws the viewer's eye to his face. The man and woman on the far right seem completely involved with each other. The two couples in the middle are drawn sensually, with passion, but none of them focus on their own partners. Instead, the two sailors with their backs to the viewer stare at one another. The sailor on the left appears quite aggressive, with an arched back and bent knees suggesting a pelvic thrust. Although his dance partner is a woman, he holds her right hand at arm's length, away from his body, and stares past her toward the sailor next to him. Strong pencil strokes emphasize his eyes and eyebrows, pointing the viewer to the object of his stare. The central sailor is dancing with a man in a mutual embrace, but his attention is fixed on the sailor at left, his head tilted slightly and his expression receptive. The painting is signed and dated: "C Demuth - 1918 -."

***Description.*** *The initial paragraph focuses extensively on the visual elements of the painting, with a few analytical passages. Leo Davis uses descriptive, artistic terminology such as "arched," "watercolor and graphite," and "[s]trong*

*pencil strokes" to help readers visualize the painting.*

***Line and Arrangement.*** *Davis provides some details about the artistic techniques used, such as the strong pencil strokes and the way the image "emphasize[s] his eyes and eyebrows."*

***Analysis.*** *The author explains the effect of these elements and techniques to interpret the poses and intentions of the characters in the painting.*

## A Vibrant Subculture and a World in Crisis

> *Dancing Sailors* was painted by Charles Demuth (1883–1935), a key figure in early-20th-century modernism. Best known as a watercolorist, Demuth also painted the gay subculture in jazz clubs and underground bars in New York City in works that he kept secret. As a gay man, he frequently visited Manhattan during the Harlem Renaissance and participated in this culture, savoring the artistic and erotic intensity of the Jazz Age.

> Although the art movement in the early 20th century was vibrant, its context was depressing. The United States entered World War I (1914–1918) in April 1917. A month later, the Selective Service Act was passed, and thousands of American men were drafted into military service. In March 1918, the United States was hit with the influenza pandemic. Twenty million people died in the war, and another 50 million died from the flu.

> Meanwhile, in 1916, the U.S. military began using so-called blue discharges to force gay people out of the armed forces. By 1919, sailors were arrested and court-martialed for homosexual activity. It seems seriously unfair that someone who fought in the war could come back home and be convicted as a criminal just for his sexual orientation.

> In this context, with death seemingly everywhere and gay men hated, Demuth created striking watercolors that say a lot about his times. Because he did not share these paintings publicly, he was probably afraid of revealing his own homosexuality. But that did not stop him from making art that reflected his own desires. *Dancing Sailors*, now in possession of the Cleveland Museum of Art in Ohio, was not intended for public exhibition.

***Context.*** *In these four well-organized paragraphs, Davis outlines the painting's context: key details about the artist's personal life, the military and domestic situations in America, and Demuth's place in this world. Davis focuses on the aspects most relevant to the artwork, keeping the context short and pointed.*

## Tension within a Painting

> The perspective, or point of view, of the painting is high, as shown by the angle of the black-and-white checkerboard floor and where it hits the wall. The figures are shown in a practical close-up, so that their feet and the tops of their heads are not included in the frame. This perspective is very intimate, but with the audience intruding on the scene. All of the couples hold each other closely and tightly, and the audience is almost uncomfortably close.

***Point of View.*** *Davis returns to technical description, indicating the artist's perspective and how it affects the viewer.*

> Demuth uses watercolor to outline the dancers' bodies, making the clothing almost transparent. The silhouette of the pants emphasizes the bulge of thigh and calf muscles, and the arches in the background suggest erections. For both men, the buttocks are outlined and emphasized. The male dancers are clearly wearing uniforms, but Demuth chooses not to include insignias, medals, or other identifying marks. Perhaps he was simply not interested in military rank and regulation. Or maybe he wanted to direct the viewer's attention elsewhere. The two women in the painting are incidental, their bodies largely obscured by the men. Although the figures are outlined in graphite, the textured watercolor unites the dancers with the background, making them seem very much like they belong in this scene of intimacy.

***Artistic Medium and Line.*** *Davis discusses the medium—watercolor—and how Demuth's use of it creates the impression of tight clothing. Importantly, the author does not assume intent on Demuth's part, although he speculates. Instead, he limits his analysis to the details and artistic techniques of the painting.*

***Technical Description.*** *Again, the author keeps this paragraph focused on an element of artistic design: the watercolor. He backs his assertion with evidence from the painting. Instead of simply saying that the men are wearing tight clothing, he describes the artist's use of watercolor to create the impression of tight clothing.*

> The painting appears to tell a story, but only in part. The viewer is invited to fill in the blanks. The sailors in the foreground are blatantly flirting with one another. And the central sailor's direct stare at the viewer may be considered an invitation. His wide-eyed expression, slight smile, and hands curled to embrace his dance partner's torso indicate pleasure. The viewer knows something this sailor does not: his part of this story is unlikely to have a happy ending. The female dance partners, while largely obscured, are still individuals with strong personalities. The woman on the left has a vacant stare from half-closed eyes, and her indifferent posture suggests that she may be bored, but the curve of her hip is still sexual. Is she offended by her partner's distraction?

***Arrangement.*** *Davis invites viewers to "read" the painting, to see the story being told by the arrangement, which also invites them to notice the two women.*

***Rhetorical Question.*** *This technique allows the student author to pose provocative questions that have no clear answers. In combination with the accompanying analysis, the rhetorical question helps establish the tone and theme of the painting that Leo Davis wishes to explore.*

### Lasting Significance

> Demuth was a gay man during a difficult time in American history. This painting, one of many he kept private, is sympathetic and nonjudgmental. These private paintings may have been his attempt to find and show his acceptance of his own identity. During World War I, many military men came to port cities such as New York. Also during that time, Demuth enjoyed the Manhattan nightlife, and he painted a number of scenes of this changing environment. His personal involvement is interesting in and of itself. But even more so, these private paintings document the emergence of a sexual subculture and mark an important moment in American gay history.

***Context and Analysis.*** *The author uses context and analysis to reach a conclusion about Demuth's intention in creating the painting and its significance in the history of American homoerotic art.*

> Although Demuth died at the relatively early age of 52, his work remains influential in American art. The geometric background of *Dancing Sailors* shows his increased interest in architectural watercolors. Later in his career, these paintings were hailed as key to the development of the precisionist movement. His unique expressions of modernism are a precursor to the abstract expressionism that developed in the 1940s and later influenced pop art innovators such as Andy Warhol (1928–1987). Aside from its historical significance, the vibrant sensuousness of *Dancing Sailors* continues to have relevance and appeal for art lovers today.

***Context.*** *Leo Davis concludes by extending his argument for Demuth's influence, tracing the effect of his work through later artists and movements and stating the reason Dancing Sailors continues to have value as a work of art.*

## Discussion Questions

1. In which of the three types of writing about art—reflecting, analyzing, persuading— is the student author engaging? How do you know?
2. Identify some of the descriptive language specific to visuals that Leo Davis uses when talking about the painting. How does this language enhance the paper and contribute to the discussion?
3. From the essay, can you determine Davis's opinion regarding homosexuality? Why might this tone be or not be a significant part of the rhetorical situation?
4. What details does the student author include about the painter? Is any information about the painter excluded that you think would be relevant?

# 17.5 Writing Process: Thinking Critically and Writing Persuasively About Images

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Develop a writing project through multiple drafts.
- Employ a variety of drafting strategies to complete an analysis of images.
- Apply aspects of visual rhetoric to a writing project.
- Participate in the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.
- Give and act effectively on productive feedback.

In this section, you will combine what you learned earlier about reflecting on and analyzing images with another way of writing about images: writing persuasively, or persuading. Like reflecting and analyzing, writing persuasively requires clear, vivid descriptions of the technical aspects of an artwork, such as point of view, arrangement, color, and symbolism, as explained in Glance at Genre: Relationship Between Image and Rhetoric. Remember that reflecting on an image helps you make sense of both the image and your experience from different perspectives. Reading other people's reflections expands your universe of experience. Analyzing images improves your critical thinking skills by synthesizing description, reflection, and logical thinking to determine what an image's design elements mean. You write persuasively about images when you determine that an image's meaning has or does not have a value (that you define) for its viewers. For example, Leo Davis, in his analysis of *Dancing Sailors* in Annotated Student Sample, determines the homoerotic message in the image and the painter's tone or attitude toward his subject. You can also extend the scope of persuasion to make a recommendation about the status or merit of the work, as you will do in this assignment.

## Writing Persuasively about Images

Like reflection, persuasion starts with context and description and can include personal reflections. The difference is primarily in the purpose and often the tone, or attitude toward the subject and audience. The purpose generally falls into one of three categories:

- ***What is the image's value?*** In the art world, these discussions are commonplace. Major publications such as the *New Yorker* or *Harper's Magazine* publish reviews of artists, galleries, and exhibitions. Critics and scholars argue that such discussions serve to establish a society's values and to benchmark the limits of what a society will and will not tolerate. Certainly, 2020 witnessed an explosion of such conversations. Protestors created images meant for display on public property, many of which were identified as graffiti or acts of vandalism; streets and other locations were renamed to reflect a growing awareness of the role that Black excellence has played in America's history; and monuments and memorials relating to injustice were reevaluated, vandalized, and removed.
- ***What happened?*** Forensic arguments often relate to legal situations, in which lawyers, judges, and juries try to determine what happened and how to respond. In the case of images, these techniques are applied to assess the circumstances of an image's creation as well as its critical and modern reception.
- ***What should happen?*** In the public sector, officials decide whether to fund artistic works. In the private sector, companies decide on images that faithfully represent their brands and values.

In persuasive writing, the purpose is usually revealed in a **thesis statement**, a single sentence, sometimes two, that defines the author's position and gives one or more reasons for it. The thesis usually appears at the end of the introduction, although it can occur at the start of either the introduction or the conclusion.

Look again at Figure 17.3, in which a woman wears a mask that reads, "I can't breathe." Table 17.1 below outlines a thesis statement based on that image that might apply to each of the three persuasive writing purposes.

| Persuasion Purpose | Sample Thesis Statement |
|---|---|
| **What is the image's value?** | The image of the mask, its text, and the woman wearing it convey an important message that serves as a valuable artifact representing many of the complexities of 2020. |
| **What happened?** | The mask wearer is sending a valuable message that people need to hear in the context of the controversies surrounding both the pandemic and the racial situation in America in 2020. |
| **What should happen?** | The mask's message and context are inflammatory during a public health crisis; therefore, the use of masks with potentially political commentary should be discouraged in public places. |

**TABLE 17.1** Sample thesis statements by persuasion purpose

### Tone

The tone of a persuasive piece can range from educational to impassioned and is largely based on the audience to which it is directed. Most writing about images is done in the neutral tone typically adopted in academic writing, although you may find reviews or essays that are informal and others that are scholarly.

### Taking a Side

In 'Reading' Images, you read a description of and some reflections on Figure 17.3, an image of woman wearing a mask reading, "I Can't Breathe." You also read a brief analysis of the figure, combining description, historical context, and the visual design element of juxtaposition. Now, in Table 17.2, look at what two sides of a persuasive discussion of Figure 17.3 might look like.

| Side A | Side B |
|---|---|
| Purpose / Thesis | |
| Figure 17.3 represents an important moment in American history and should be included in a yearbook recording historical events of 2020. | Figure 17.3 depicts an ordinary occurrence and does not warrant inclusion in a yearbook recording historical events of 2020. |
| Audience | |
| Committee commissioned by the National Endowment for the Humanities | |
| Context | |
| The committee has been commissioned to publish a yearbook of 2020, entitled *The Year Democracy Roared*. They are looking for pictures that represent large movements in America in 2020 that tie into the country's history and depict individuals in interesting or unique settings. | |

**TABLE 17.2** Elements of a persuasive argument about an image

| Side A | Side B |
|---|---|
| Evidence | |
| • The image features a Black woman wearing a mask that reads, "I Can't Breathe."<br>• The pandemic of 2020 caused many people to wear masks, either by choice or by mandate.<br>• Some people did not support mask wearing because of their political beliefs regarding personal liberties.<br>• During 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement gained widespread support.<br>• "I Can't Breathe" was one of several slogans adopted by the Black Lives Matter movement.<br>• The image juxtaposes the mask with the slogan in an ironic statement open to multiple interpretations. | • Many people wore masks in 2020 for reasons unassociated with politics or controversy.<br>• Many people decorated their masks with a variety of images and slogans.<br>• The choice of whether to wear a mask was, in many cases, not a choice but a mandate.<br>• This woman is not in obvious distress or at a protest.<br>• The image includes another woman, reflected in the first woman's sunglasses, not wearing a mask, calling into question the seriousness of her mask message.<br>• The woman does not appear to be part of a larger movement, engaged in a unique or interesting activity, or placed in an unusual setting. |

**TABLE 17.2** Elements of a persuasive argument about an image

## Summary of Assignment: Writing Persuasively about an Image

Public works projects such as stadiums or convention centers, private developments such as condominiums and shopping centers, and online spaces such as websites and social media platforms all commission artists to create exclusive works for display. These works are intended to reflect the vision of the artist as well as to promote the brand or mission of the space. Imagine that you have been asked to analyze an artist's work to determine whether the artist should contribute to the development of a local space that you select. Select the work of an artist, either Sara Ludy (https://openstax.org/r/Sara.Ludy) or another artist whose work is familiar to you or whose work you would like to learn more about. See Further Resources at the end of this chapter for suggested museums to visit in person or online. You can choose from historical figures or living artists. You can even choose an artist who illustrated a graphic novel you have read. Once you have chosen an artist and an image created by that artist, identify the aspects of the work you wish to assess, and support your analysis with technical descriptions of the image. Then, explain why you reached your decision about the artist's contribution to the selected space.

The parts in this section will take you through the development of a sample essay, using the example of American sculptor James Earle Fraser's (1876–1953) *Equestrian Statue of Theodore Roosevelt*. As you follow along in this process, consider how it applies to your topic. Think of the process as divided into these six steps:

1. Identify the rhetorical situation.
2. Outline the elements you intend to analyze.
3. Write an introduction in which you frame the image and the context in which you intend to discuss it.
4. As you draft, or before you draft the body of the essay, write topic sentences to identify the focus of each paragraph on a specific technical or contextual aspect of the image.
5. Build your paragraphs by describing the relevant elements.
6. Conclude by suggesting directions to consider in the future.

***Another Lens 1.*** Visit Sara Ludy's website (https://openstax.org/r/Sara.Ludy) and select an image, a rendering, or an animation that speaks to you in some way, and identify the technical aspects you wish to assess. Support your analysis with descriptions of the image, using the vocabulary introduced in "Reading" Images and Glance

at Genre: Relationship Between Image and Rhetoric. Then, as an option, consider whether or not you would advise an individual to purchase the work or how you would advise an organization to use it (or not use it) as a representative image—for example, as part of a logo or cover for a publication.

***Another Lens 2.*** Another option for assessing an artist's work is to compare and contrast this work with another piece, either by Sara Ludy or by a different artist. In doing so, you may consider ways in which the artist and their work have changed over time, or you may consider the influence one artist has on another. Finally, you may consider the images in different contexts through the lens of the artists' experiences, places in history, personal identities, and artistic practices.

***Another Lens 3.*** Consider a work from a multimodal perspective. If you are interested in the connections of art and culture, consider choosing a piece of historic or contemporary Native American art. You can find information and view images at the websites for the National Museum of the American Indian (https://openstax.org/r/National) and the *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists* (https://openstax.org/r/Hearts-of-Our) exhibition at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Create an **infographic** or a short video assessing the chosen artwork. An infographic incorporates multiple images and texts into a single image that can be read and understood quickly. A short video could work in a similar way, but the images would be presented sequentially with narration, either spoken or written. Your multimodal work should consider the elements of visual rhetoric discussed throughout this chapter and combine reflection with analysis and persuasion. See Multimodal and Online Writing: Creative Interaction between Text and Image for more information on creating a multimodal work.

### Quick Launch: Identify Rhetorical Context




**FIGURE 17.16** *Equestrian Statue of Theodore Roosevelt* , 1940, by James Earle Fraser, New York City (credit: "Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Hall entrance" by edwardhblake/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

In this writing example, the statue of former U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) (Figure 17.16) is analyzed as part of the museum's decision to keep it or remove it. To begin, the author of this paper (a college student, U.S. citizen, and nursing major) defines the rhetorical situation: purpose, audience, genre, stance,

context, and culture. Complete the first step in the assignment as this author has done by consulting the writer's triangle to sketch out these elements. The writer's triangle (Figure 17.17) includes audience, genre, and stance and is surrounded by the circle of context/culture. The image allows you to "shorthand" your ideas about these elements during the brainstorming phase, as the author has done beneath the figure.

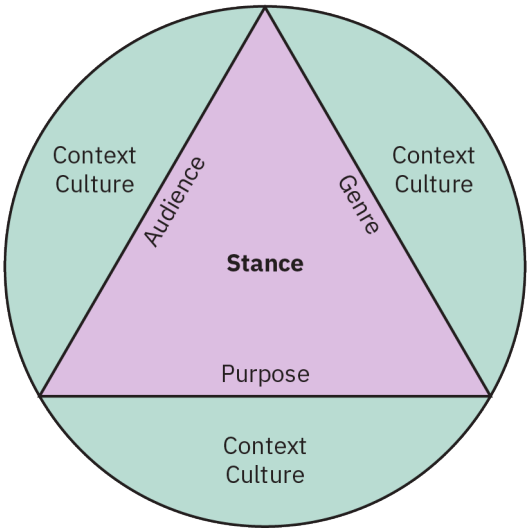



**FIGURE 17.17** Writer's triangle (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

- **Purpose:** To analyze the Equestrian Statue of Theodore Roosevelt
- **Audience:** Instructor, fellow students, and U.S. residents
- **Genre:** Print or digital newsletter or magazine article
- **Stance:** To support the American Museum of Natural History's decision to remove the statue of Theodore Roosevelt
- **Context:** Roosevelt's presidency and what he accomplished, the relationship between him and the American Museum of Natural History, and the elements of the statue warranting its inclusion or exclusion
- **Culture:** Critics have said that the statue depicts Black people and Native Americans as conquered and culturally substandard.

Note: Do not confuse context with your rhetorical situation, which, in this case, is a writing assignment for a college course, part of a portfolio and a learning technique in which you practice a type of civil discourse. Meanwhile, context in this case refers to the image—the circumstances of its creation, its technical elements, and how its meaning may change over time.

Sometimes the elements of your rhetorical situation are not made explicit. Signs that you need clarification include the following:

- Trouble getting started
- Difficulty understanding how much background information to provide
- Not knowing which terms are too technical or which need to be defined

For clarity about purpose, audience, genre, or culture, talk to your peers and instructor using the questions in Table 17.3 as a guide.

| | Questions to Consider | Your Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **Purpose** | With regard to the image, are you writing to describe, to reflect, to analyze, or to evaluate (persuade)? | |
| **Audience** | Who is the audience? What do they already know about the image? What do they need to know? Toward what cultural issues might you need to show sensitivity? | |
| **Genre** | What are the characteristics of the genre in which you will compose your analysis of the image? | |
| **Stance** | What direction should your thesis statement take? | |
| **Context** | Within what social, political, economic, or cultural context was the image created, and for what purpose? | |
| **Culture** | What cultural issues are related to the image? From what cultural viewpoint are you writing? What is the cultural viewpoint of your audience? | |

**TABLE 17.3** Questions to determine the elements of your rhetorical situation

Regarding context, you may need to do some research on the image:

- Who is the image's author?
- When was it created?
- For what purpose was it created?
- Has the image been featured in reviews or the news?
- Does the image include important symbols or references?

After you have defined your rhetorical situation, write a working thesis for your paper. Consider using one or a combination of these frames. You may change the phrasing as needed to make your point.

- The artist's choice of _____ shapes the viewer's understanding of _____.
- The artist incorporates _____ to symbolize _____.
- The image's point of view reveals that _____.
- The artist's style, including _____, suggests that _____.
- The image evokes feelings of _____.

## Drafting: The Visual to the Textual

After you have a working thesis, move on to the next major step: outlining the visual elements you intend to analyze. Review the material in "Reading" Images and Glance at Genre: Relationship Between Image and Rhetoric. In the case of the Roosevelt statue, the author has thought about which technical elements of the statue to analyze. The author also has considered the important aspects of the historical context shaping Theodore Roosevelt's life, presidency, and legacy; the museum and the cultural events in the year the statue was erected; and the cultural events in the year the decision is being made about whether to remove the statue. Remember that you may need to do some additional research to supplement your understanding of the context.

### Analyze the Image

With a larger understanding of your subject's social, political, and cultural context, you can now begin to analyze the image. Limit your descriptions to what you can see and what your observations imply. Consider the following examples:

- **Pattern.** Identify the repetition of the figures, but note the differences in the ways each is depicted. Identify any lines or other elements that are repeated with variation.
- **Point of view.** The statue is tall and on a pedestal, requiring viewers to look up or see it from a distance.
- **Arrangement.** Three figures are arranged in a triangle, suggesting an apex with two supporting angles. Among the figures, the president is tallest, always visible, whereas the two accompanying figures can be seen fully only from either the front or the back. From the side, one or the other is always obscured.
- **Symbolism.** Each man is dressed in the clothing representative of his homeland. The two to the side are clearly allegorical, whereas the one on top is given individuality and freedom of expression.
- **Conclusion.** Outline criteria that could be used in the future to determine how symbols of or memorials to historical figures should be assessed.

### Write an Introduction

In your introduction, name the artist, the image, and the context in which you intend to discuss it. See the suggestions above for research you may need to do regarding context. If you do research, remember to cite the sources you use because this information did not originate with you. The context may consist of one or two paragraphs, depending on how much information your audience needs to understand your analysis. (This is one reason to have a good understanding of your audience.) This type of introduction appears frequently in visual analyses and persuasive papers.

The two keys to writing a strong context are (1) being selective about what you include and (2) framing your own analysis. For example, Theodore Roosevelt is an important historical figure, and many books have been written about him. Even two paragraphs are insufficient to summarize every relevant detail about him. Likewise, the American Museum of Natural History plays a significant role in documenting mammalian life and has a vital, if at times controversial, role in American scientific history. In the two paragraphs below, the author selects details about the president, the museum, and the statue that both highlight the reasons they are admired and touch on their potential failings. These details are not all-inclusive; they are carefully culled from all of the available information to lead up to the subsequent analysis, which focuses on the reasons to remove the statue. The last sentence in the second paragraph is the thesis, in which the author states her agreement with the museum's decision.

### Contextual Introduction

> Theodore Roosevelt cultivated a hearty outdoor lifestyle, exploring the Dakota Territory in the 1890s, serving as a Rough Rider during the Spanish-American War (1898), and advocating for the conservation of America's natural resources. Despite criticism for the way in which he acquired the land and rights to construct the Panama Canal, he was widely respected both at home and abroad, being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (1906) for helping negotiate a peace treaty between Japan and Russia. After his presidency, he traveled extensively throughout Africa and South America, where he killed many animals and returned them to serve as specimens in America's natural history museums. He was himself shot while campaigning, but as the bullet did not penetrate his lung, he gave his speech regardless, earning him the reputation of a bull moose.

> A statue commemorating Roosevelt was presented to the public in 1940, two decades after his death, and placed in front of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, where Roosevelt served as governor from 1899 to 1900. On one side of Roosevelt, depicted on horseback at the center of the sculpture, walks an African person, and on the other an Indigenous person. All three figures have a straight, proud posture and look directly ahead of them, toward the future. Given its placement, the statue is likely intended as an allegory, depicting the men of two continents—Africa and North America, including its Indigenous people—on a voyage of discovery and learning. Over time, however, and given the hierarchical framing of the image, with the White man clothed in a suit and atop a horse, central to the image, the statue's meaning has changed, leading to the praiseworthy and long-awaited decision to remove it in 2020.

### Create Topic Sentences

Use the models below to create your own topic sentences to focus each paragraph on a specific technical or contextual aspect of the image.

- **Pattern.** The sculpture unites the three figures—four, including the horse—primarily through the repetition of musculature, armor, weapons, and costumes.
- **Point of view.** Because the sculpture is large, tall, and set on a pedestal, it requires viewers either to look up at it or to regard it from a distance—both postures requiring a certain degree of reverence.
- **Arrangement.** The sculpture's three human figures are arranged in a triangle, suggesting an apex with two supporting angles.
- **Symbolism.** Each man is dressed in the clothing of his homeland, giving each allegorical significance as racial, rather than individual, representations.

### Build Body Paragraphs

Support each topic sentence by describing in detail the elements you have chosen to assess. When describing the image, avoid overuse of adjectives and adverbs. Use concrete rather than abstract nouns. Abstract nouns name ideas, such as *perspective* or *theme*; concrete nouns refer to specific, tangible elements, such as *triangle*, *line*, or *granite*. Incorporate strong verbs as well as the necessary forms of *to be* (*is*, *are*, *was*, *were*). Think about what the features in the image are *doing*—the ways they interact with one another, the space around them, and the viewer's relationship to them. Finally, avoid speculation while going beyond description. Keep the discussion rooted in the evidence, and show readers what the evidence points to, what it means.

### Sample Body Paragraph: Arrangement

> The sculpture's three human figures are arranged in a triangle, suggesting an apex with two supporting angles. President Roosevelt is by far the tallest of the three and always visible from whichever angle the viewer faces the sculpture. Meanwhile, the two flanking figures can be seen fully only from the front or the back, suggesting that they lack nuance or subtlety because they can be seen and understood only directly. When seen from an angle, they are either overshadowed by the White man on horseback or disappear from view. Similarly, level with the Native American and the African is the horse, all three depicted with sharply defined muscles, highlighting their strength. Roosevelt is similarly well defined but fully clothed and towering over both the animal and the two men. Overall, the sculpture suggests, at the very least, a hierarchy among the three men and, at worst, a dominance of the White man over those of color.

### Formulate a Conclusion

After you have developed the body paragraphs in which you analyze and reflect on the image, conclude by expanding on your thesis and suggesting directions to consider in the future. One important role of the conclusion is to further the discourse by showing how this rhetorical moment is merely one example of other such discourses and how they can be used productively in other contexts. In this case, an effective strategy

would be to outline criteria for memorials of historical figures, even those with complicated legacies and flaws.

### Sample Conclusion

> The people concerned with public spaces—city planners, museum curators, and government and other leaders—must determine who is worthy of remembrance and how. In doing so, they need to consider historical, contextual, cultural, and artistic concerns, and they must seek and respond to public input. Now is the time to draft guidelines for these decisions.

## Peer Review: Separate the Personal from the Technical

After you have drafted your paper, you are ready to review the work of your peers while they review your work. Keep in mind that you and your peers are almost certainly going to respond to images differently. This is the value of critical discourse about visual rhetoric: pooling shared responses and experiences helps develop a greater understanding of the human condition. As you review your peers' writing, part of your task is to separate your personal responses from the writer's analysis of the image's technical elements.

Here are some topics and questions to get you started on a peer analysis of someone else's work:

- **Consider the context, including culture.** Indicate places where the writer has done well or can supply more information.
  - In what ways has the author included enough information to prepare you for the analysis?
  - What else would you like to know?
  - Is any information superfluous or irrelevant?
  - In what ways has the author addressed cultural issues—their own and those of the intended audience?
  - What else should be considered?
- **Read the first sentence of each paragraph.** Write your answers to these questions.
  - Does a clear outline emerge?
  - What, if any, changes can you suggest to improve the flow?
- **Examine each paragraph.** Highlight places where descriptions or analyses are insufficient, and make suggestions for improvement.
  - In what ways does the paragraph reflect a clear, vivid, and technical description of the image?
  - In what ways does the paragraph move beyond description into analysis to explain the effect of the technical elements?
- **Read the conclusion.** If the author has not outlined strategies for the future or contributed to ongoing discourse, provide your suggestions, or brainstorm some ideas with them.

## Revising: Hone Your Practice

Writing the first draft is hard work, and you are right to feel pride and a sense of accomplishment after completing it. Thus, any critique can feel unjust and even personally wounding. Remember, though, that writing is a process and that everyone is an apprentice, working toward expertise and, eventually, mastery. So take every opportunity you can to learn from others and hone your skills.

First, reward yourself for completing the first draft. You may choose to take a long walk, prepare a favorite meal, or enjoy some leisure time with friends. Savor the moment. Time away from the writing process is time for your writing and thinking muscles to recover. Consider some light reading. Think about it this way—you'll never build muscle if you go to the gym all day while you starve yourself. In the same way, you've expended a lot of vocabulary and sentence- structure energy. Feed it to rebuild it.

Finally, return to your work with a goal in mind and a plan to put it into place. Look at the feedback you received. *Does your work require major revision or minor tweaks?* If the latter, then your task is simple: make a

to-do list and get started! If the former, go back to the drawing board and diagnose your own process, considering the following questions:

- Is your current understanding of context, culture, audience, or purpose different from what it was at the outset? If so, what changes do you need to make?
- Are your descriptions insufficient, unclear, or vague? Revisit "Reading" Images and Glance at Genre: Relationship Between Image and Rhetoric and consider the terminology and techniques introduced there in light of your image.
- Is your analysis insufficient or missing? Review Glance at Genre: Relationship Between Image and Rhetoric and the example in Writing Process: Thinking Critically and Writing Persuasively about Images. Reflect on your image and consider your assumptions.
- Do you have a clear introduction, conclusion, and body paragraphs with topic sentences? Is each paragraph fleshed out with meaningful descriptions and analysis?

After you think about these topics and take notes based on your thoughts, you can make a plan and revise your work with confidence.

## 17.6 Editing Focus: Descriptive Diction

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply editing strategies to highlight the features of visual rhetoric.
- Edit to include concrete nouns and descriptive language when writing about images.
- Identify instances of wordiness and overused modifiers and edit to eliminate them.

People reading about visual and digital images expect to encounter vivid, descriptive language that allows them to picture the image as they read. Particularly helpful is detailed language, such as precise names for colors (for example, aqua, teal, or navy for different shades of blue) or similes (for example, *steel blue like the October sky seen through a heavy Los Angeles smog*). This type of language helps readers visualize the image differently and broadens their range of experience. Such descriptive writing incorporates your personal experience with the elements of visual rhetoric discussed in this chapter.

Consider the following suggestions to help you bridge the gap between your experience and that of your reader.

- **First, use concrete, rather than abstract, nouns.** An abstract noun is a word such as *concept* or *practice*. It refers to an idea rather than a thing. A concrete noun refers to something visible or tangible: *arc*, *circle*, or *line*. Your reader can identify concrete nouns in the image and follow your description more meaningfully.

  **Example 1**

  **Original:** The artist used a lot of colors for the face instead of dividing it into lights and darks.

  **Revision:** The French painter Henri Matisse (1869–1954) used blues and greens, along with reds and yellows, to depict the woman's face instead of separating it into realistic color and shading.

  **Example 2**

  **Original:** By the placement of the figures, the sculptor depicts dominance.

  **Revision:** By placing the African and Indigenous figures behind and lower than the central figure mounted on horseback, the sculptor depicts the dominance of the White man, Theodore Roosevelt.

- **Second, use adjectives sparingly.** Readers rely on subjects and verbs to draw meaning from sentences. Those are the words that light up the synapses and neurons in people's brains. They are the characters and actions in stories, while all other words act as "filler." Although they provide color, interest, and detail, they lack the power of subjects and verbs. So let your subjects and verbs pack the punch, and reserve

adjectives and adverbs for special occasions.

Consider the advice given by one of America's classic writers, Mark Twain (1835–1910): "When you catch an adjective, kill it. No, I don't mean utterly, but kill most of them—then the rest will be valuable. They weaken when they are close together. They give strength when they are wide apart. An adjective habit, or a wordy, diffuse, flowery habit, once fastened upon a person, is as hard to get rid of as any other vice."

**Example 1**

**Original:** Inside and outside, the big, shiny memorial building was covered with many very small, brightly colored tiles.

**Revision:** Both the interior and exterior of the memorial were adorned with mosaics.

**Example 2**

**Original:** The bleak meadow, which looked very dreary and not very serene, with bits of snow all around, was the perfect backdrop for the majestic eagle and its massive nest.

**Revision:** The snow dotting the meadow made it look bleak rather than serene, highlighting the majesty of both the eagle and its nest.

- **Finally, strengthen verbs by removing weak, wordy structures.** *There are* and *it is* are two such structures. If you look deeper into the sentence, you usually can find a verb masquerading as a noun. While you're at it, eliminate unnecessary or filler words, such as prepositions or repetitive conjunctions.

  **Example 1**

  **Original:** It is obvious that the artist intended that the painting should be something that projects clarity and insight.

  **Revision:** The artist obviously intended the painting to project clarity and insight.

  **Example 2**

  **Original:** Throughout the United States near the end of the landscape painting era, there was growing disillusionment among artists with the naturalness of nature.

  **Revision:** As the landscape painting era neared an end, U.S. artists became increasingly disillusioned with the naturalness of nature.

### Practice Using Descriptive Diction

Revise the following descriptions to eliminate abstract nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and extra words. Be sure to keep the same meaning.

1. The dirty, grimy, broken walls in the artist's painting of the building really show anyone looking at it that there is no one living there because of the condition or maybe some other reason.
2. The drawing is really very beautiful; the artist has done a great job of making the face look like the real person's face, especially the features.
3. In the picture, there are flowers in a vase and some food and other things on a table; in the background, there is a cat.

## 17.7 Evaluation: Relationship Between Analysis and Image

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply or challenge measurement outcomes for written discourse in the field of visual rhetoric.
- Compare your written work with evaluation criteria.

Below are the criteria that your instructor will use to assess your written work for this chapter. As you read them, consider how they align with the elements of visual rhetoric identified and analyzed throughout this chapter. As you plan, write, and revise, consult the following rubric carefully to ensure that you are meeting the critical cultural and rhetorical expectations for assessing images. Consider also ways you might usefully and creatively challenge such expectations—for example, by adopting a unique voice in which to write that rejects language such as "point of view" but still results in an effective piece of persuasive writing.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using descriptive diction, as discussed in Section 17.6, and employing sensory detail. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The thesis and organization are clear. Paragraphs are evenly and fully developed, with topic sentences. Sentence structure is balanced. The introduction offers a clearly relevant context, and the conclusion is insightful. The writer has used transitions to ensure coherence throughout. | The author demonstrates consistent skill in using the technical language associated with visual rhetoric—line, light, and point of view, for example—and consistently speaks to the reader in an engaging and professional tone. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using descriptive diction, as discussed in Section 17.6, and employing sensory detail. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The thesis and organization are clear. Paragraphs are evenly and fully developed, with topic sentences. Sentence structure is generally, if not consistently, balanced. The introduction offers a relevant context, and the conclusion is insightful. The writer has used transitions to ensure coherence in most places. | The author demonstrates some mastery of the technical language associated with visual rhetoric—line, light, and point of view, for example—and usually speaks to the reader in an engaging and professional tone. |
| **3**<br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using descriptive diction, as discussed in Section 17.6, and employing sensory detail. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The thesis and organization are fairly clear. Some paragraphs may lack topic sentences, or topic sentences may be unclear. Some paragraphs may be undeveloped. Sentence structure may be unbalanced. The introduction offers a relevant context, and the conclusion is adequate, if not insightful. Transitions may be missing in key places. | The author demonstrates familiarity with, if not mastery of, the technical language associated with visual rhetoric—line, light, and point of view, for example—and usually speaks to the reader in an engaging and professional tone. There may be occasional lapses in vocabulary, tone, or comprehension. |

TABLE 17.4

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using descriptive diction, as discussed in Section 17.6, and employing sensory detail. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The thesis may be implied rather than stated, and the organization may be unclear. Paragraphs may lack topic sentences and may be undeveloped. Sentence structure is likely to be simplistic. The introduction offers little context, and the conclusion is impractical or simplistic. Few transitions provide minimal, if any, coherence. | The author demonstrates little, if any, familiarity with the technical language associated with visual rhetoric—line, light, and point of view, for example. The tone may be inconsistent and informal or unprofessional at times. There may be occasional lapses in vocabulary and comprehension as well. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: using descriptive diction, as discussed in Section 17.6, and employing sensory detail. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The thesis is missing or irrelevant to the assignment. Paragraphs are unevenly developed and poorly organized.<br>Sentence structures and word choices may be simplistic or exhibit substantive errors that impede comprehension. The introduction or conclusion may be missing. Alternatively, the introduction provides no context, or the conclusion merely summarizes the paper. Lack of transitions contributes to general incoherence. | The author demonstrates little, if any, familiarity with the technical language associated with visual rhetoric—line, light, and point of view, for example. The tone is inconsistent and often informal or unprofessional. There may be lapses in vocabulary and comprehension as well. |

**TABLE 17.4**

## 17.8 Spotlight on … Video and Film

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Examine and apply key techniques used in film and movies to personal rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Implement a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences.
- Create a multimodal work that incorporates visual rhetorical techniques.



**FIGURE 17.18** Ken Burns (https://openstax.org/r/Ken-Burns) (b. 1953), American historian and documentarian (Credit: "KenBurns" by Jim Wallace/Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY-2.0)

## Lights, Camera Angles, Actions

This chapter focuses largely on still images, but many of the same principles apply to moving images, or film. Documentaries in particular combine a series of still or moving images with historical and narrative text. This section shows how the concepts of visual rhetoric apply to the documentary work of Ken Burns. It also encourages you to examine your experience through such techniques by creating a film autobiography.

The field of movie and film artistry is vast, constituting an entire field of study in its own right. One notable figure in the field is the American history film documentarian Ken Burns (b. 1953), who is responsible for nearly 200 films as writer, director, producer, or all of the above. From *The Civil War* (1990) to *The Vietnam War* (2017), from *Jackie Robinson* (2016) to *Country Music* (2019), Ken Burns has documented the American experience in richer and more layered ways than can be achieved via print text alone.

Burns's style is deceptively simple. His documentaries are narrated in an informative, objective manner, sometimes by a well-known figure in politics, sports, or entertainment whose work is related to the documentary topic. The images consist of archival footage, which differs depending on the topic, ranging from black-and-white photographs to grainy home videos. These are interspersed with interviews from eyewitnesses and experts.

Of the many techniques that Burns employs, three are of particular interest: **foreshadowing**, **the personal vs. the universal**, and **juxtaposition**.

### Foreshadowing

Documentaries are not known for being riveting, suspenseful, edge-of-your seat thrillers, but Ken Burns keeps audiences enthralled for hours on end. *The Civil War*, for example, consists of nine episodes totaling 11 hours and 30 minutes. One important way Burns keeps audiences engaged is by implying that things are not as they seem or that a major change is just on the horizon. Such warnings are delivered by his narrators often just after a peak emotional moment either of contentment and resolution or of fear and anxiety. The effect is to

make the audience question what could possibly happen next and to keep them tuned in for the next episode.

### The Personal vs. the Universal

History may move in giant sweeps across times and places, but it happens day by day with the mundane choices made by ordinary people. Burns excels at highlighting the small, personal tales of individuals who changed the course of history and the ways massive historical movements affected individual people's lives. The back-and-forth of these forces plays out in his work like a delicate ballet in which the lead dancers move toward and away from one another on stage, amplifying the tension each time.

### Juxtaposition

Like any serious historian, Burns is interested not merely in *what* happened but also in *why.* This investigation requires that he go beyond appearances, a challenge for a filmmaker who relies on images to make his meaning clear to viewers. Burns often demonstrates for viewers how people and events converge by showing an ordinary American soldier, farmer, or sports figure, for example, alongside a powerful political figure. Alternatively, he may pan out from a newspaper headline only to zoom in on a story printed deep within the fold. In the viewer's mind, the placement of such figures plants an impression that is immediately upended or replaced. The experience can be jarring, but the technique leads to deep learning and retention, which is one reason Burns's documentaries leave a lasting impression on his audience.

Burns often works in conjunction with the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), which funds and airs much of his work. To see these techniques in action, visit his page on the PBS website and watch a short clip of his biography of Jack Johnson (https://openstax.org/r/short-clip) (1878–1946), the first Black American heavyweight boxer to became world champion—in the height of the Jim Crow era.

## Publish Your Work: Film Autobiography

Make a documentary of your own! Document the process of writing your essay or select a meaningful moment in your life—an event, an anniversary, an accomplishment, a disappointment—and create a 3–5 minute multimodal video about it, incorporating video, still images, and text that explore the significance of the moment in your life. Post your finished product to YouTube. Table 17.5 lists resources you can use to produce and publish your video, including ways to limit viewership and address privacy concerns.

**Video Creation Software**

| Name | Notes | Location |
|---|---|---|
| Lightworks | Best for beginners. Includes stock images. | LWKS (https://openstax.org/r/LWKS) |
| VideoPad | Open access and easy to use. Limited functionality. | VideoPad (https://openstax.org/r/VideoPad) |
| HitFilm Express | Somewhat advanced. Allows special effects. Must share status update on social media to use. | HitFilm (https://openstax.org/r/HitFilm) |
| OpenShot | For intermediate users. | OpenShot (https://openstax.org/r/OpenShot) |

**YouTube Resources**

| Description | Location |
|---|---|

**TABLE 17.5** Resources for making a film autobiography

**Video Creation Software**

| Name | Notes | Location |
|---|---|---|
| | Upload videos to YouTube privately so that you control who sees them and when. | YouTube (https://openstax.org/r/YouTube) |
| | Set your YouTube audience to comply with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. | Channel Setting (https://openstax.org/r/Channel-Setting) |
| | Set your YouTube video to be visible only to your professor and classmates. | Sharing With a Specific Audience (https://openstax.org/r/Sharing-With) |

**TABLE 17.5** Resources for making a film autobiography

A film autobiography about your experiences with writing and images can help you consider the way you use images in discourse. It also serves as good practice in thinking critically about your experiences and their relation to both images and language. Finally, a film autobiography allows you to communicate your experiences and reflections with others, expanding their worldview as well as your own.

## 17.9 Portfolio: Interplay Between Text and Image

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Articulate your use of images in light of their rhetorical context and elements.
- Analyze images rhetorically both in and out of academic settings.

The consideration of visual rhetoric is not merely an academic exercise. Because visual and digital images are ever-present, thinking critically about them is a meaningful way of interacting with the world, reflecting on attitudes and behaviors, and communicating with others. You can apply what you learned in this chapter by considering the images surrounding you: those you see on advertisements in public spaces, those you view on television and other streaming services, and those you see and post on social media platforms.

### Interacting with Images Online



As you add your essay to your portfolio, continue conscious and reflective practice in your own writing by thinking about an image you recently posted on one of your social media platforms. Consider the following questions, returning to "Reading" Images as needed.

- Does it contain information open to interpretation?
- What is its point of view?
- How is it arranged?
- What colors or symbols does it use, and what associations might these have for you or others?

Draft an analysis of your own image-posting behavior to include in your course portfolio. The purpose is both to showcase and continue practicing the writing skills and techniques you learned from this chapter and to assess and reflect upon the ways in which you interact with visual and digital images. Remember to include the following elements in your analysis:

- **Introduction.** Establish the context. Material here should include relevant information about you, your posting platforms and behaviors, and the image you posted. Should you choose to write a persuasive piece, your introduction should include a thesis statement identifying your position and one or more reasons for it.
- **Paragraphs with clear topic sentences.** Focus each paragraph on a technical element of the image, and ensure that it contains a mixture of description and either reflection, analysis, or persuasion. Begin each

paragraph with a topic sentence identifying the paragraph's focus.

- **Image(s).** Because you are describing and assessing the image you posted, a copy of it will go a long way toward helping your audience understand it. If the image is in the public domain, embed it with a citation. If not, embed a link so viewers can see it on the Internet.
- **Citations.** Understanding context often requires research. Furthermore, images have creators who deserve recognition for their work. Follow MLA guidelines to cite all of your sources, including the image.
- **Conclusion.** Go beyond summarizing to identify future image-posting practices that you intend to consider and would encourage others to consider.

In conclusion, this chapter explains the concepts associated with both visual rhetoric and writing about visual and digital images. Through the numerous examples, analyses, and procedures outlined here, you can connect your personal and cultural experiences to the visual and digital images with which you interact. In doing so, you can make meaningful connections with a variety of audiences, permitting a broader understanding of the world and its many visual depictions.

## Further Reading

The following is a list of some texts and museums that can help deepen your understanding of visual rhetoric.

Creation Art Center. Miami, FL, www.creationartcenter.org/

El Museo del Barrio. New York, NY, www.elmuseo.org/

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Honeywill, Paul. *Visual Language for the World Wide Web*. Intellect, 1999.

The Honolulu Museum of Art. Honolulu, HI, honolulumuseum.org/

Jenks, Chris, editor. *Visual Culture*. Routledge, 1995.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Los Angeles, CA, www.lacma.org/

McClean, Shilo T. *Digital Storytelling: The Narrative Power of Visual Effects in Film*. MIT P, 2007.

National Memorial for Peace and Justice. Montgomery, AL, museumandmemorial.eji.org/memorial

National Museum of Mexican Art. Chicago, IL, nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org/

O'Connell, Mark, and Raje Airey. *The Illustrated Dictionary of Signs and Symbols*. Anness, 2009.

Perelman, Chaïm, and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. Translated by John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver, U of Notre Dame P, 1969.

The Rubin Museum of Art. New York, NY, rubinmuseum.org/

The Smithsonian National Museum Network. Washington, DC (collections with special cultural interests detailed below)

Asian Pacific American Center, smithsonianapa.org/

Latino Center, latino.si.edu/latino-center

National Museum of African American History and Culture, nmaahc.si.edu/

National Museum of the American Indian, americanindian.si.edu/

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art, asia.si.edu/

Stocchetti, Matteo, and Karin Kukkonen, editors. *Images in Use: Towards the Critical Analysis of Visual Communication*. John Benjamins, 2011.

Tuskegee Airmen National Historical Museum. Detroit, MI, www.tuskegeemuseum.org/

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Pearce, Matt. "148 Years Later, Mississippi Ratifies Amendment Banning Slavery." *Los Angeles Times*, 18 Feb. 2013, www.latimes.com/nation/la-xpm-2013-feb-18-la-na-nn-mississippi-ratifies-slavery-amendment-20130218-story.html.

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# Multimodal and Online Writing: Creative Interaction between Text and Image

# 18




**FIGURE 18.1** Multimodal text incorporates many different types of communication, making it visually and aurally compelling as well as highly accessible for audiences. (credit: "Computer Internet Tools Gadgets Edited 2020" by www.mechanicalcaveman.com/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

**18.1** Mixing Genres and Modes
**18.2** Multimodal Trailblazer: Torika Bolatagici
**18.3** Glance at Genre: Genre, Audience, Purpose, Organization
**18.4** Annotated Sample Reading: "Celebrating a Win-Win" by Alexandra Dapolito Dunn
**18.5** Writing Process: Create a Multimodal Advocacy Project
**18.6** Evaluation: Transitions
**18.7** Spotlight on . . . Technology
**18.8** Portfolio: Multimodalism

**INTRODUCTION** Chances are you already have a great deal of experience with **multimodal** composition—that is, writing or creating content by combining different types of communication. Much of your experience may come from digital spaces, perhaps even from platforms such as social media that you don't associate with academics. According to literature examining adolescent and young adult literacy skills, young adults incorporate a great deal of multimodal communication—which includes sound, images, movement, and text—into their everyday lives to express themselves and connect with others. Social media has no doubt hastened the spread of multimodal communication, and its prevalence in the world is unprecedented. Perhaps you have never believed that your experience with digital and multimodal writing connects to academic composition, but indeed it does. Just as technology has changed how people interact with the world, multimodal composition has altered how they create content. In this chapter, you will learn how to combine

your experience in creating and using multimodal composition with established writing practices, particularly those used in argumentative writing, to generate connected content that creates meaning.

Multimodal composition begins where any other composition does: with the **rhetorical situation**, or the circumstance of communication in which one person (the composer) uses communication to influence the perspective of another (the audience). All multimodal compositions are created for a specific time and place and a particular audience who views the world in an explicit and culturally influenced way. As a writer, you make choices based on the rhetorical situation: context, audience, purpose, genre, and culture. You consider the strengths and weaknesses of all the possible means and tools available for reaching your rhetorical goals. By identifying the audience, determining what you need to tell the audience, and analyzing the best way to do that (including which types of media to use), you are empowered to create an effective and targeted composition.

In many ways, multimodal composition opens a range of possibilities by offering you any number of tools to make meaning, rather than limiting you to text alone. For example, a sportswriter might rely heavily on visuals to engage readers and demonstrate a runner's prowess, or they might create infographics to relay statistics about the athlete or the meet itself.



**FIGURE 18.2** Composers often use images to engage readers and relate details that are difficult to express with words alone. (credit: "ISST 2014 Munich" by R. Boed/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Websites require a balance of text, images, and careful formatting to present information in ways that are easy to digest and not overwhelming for the reader. In fact, the most difficult part of this type of creation may be choosing among the available tools to create meaning *effectively* without doing too much or too little. In some ways, the flexibility of websites can make it hard to know where to get started—or where to end.

This chapter presents a blog post by Alexandra Dapolito Dunn, formerly of the Environmental Protection Agency. Studying this article and the components of multimodal writing that Dunn chooses to use will help you understand how different platforms and rhetorical needs require different elements of text, media, and modes. Later in the chapter, you will learn how to address a range of audiences through your own textual and digital compositions.

## 18.1 Mixing Genres and Modes

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Address a range of audiences using a variety of technologies.
- Adapt composing processes for a variety of modalities, including textual and digital compositions.
- Match the capacities of different print and electronic environments to varying rhetorical situations.

The writing genre for this chapter incorporates a variety of modalities. A **genre** is a type of composition that encompasses defined features, follows a style or format, and reflects your purpose as a writer. For example, given the composition types *romantic comedy*, *poetry*, or *documentary*, you probably can think easily of features of each of these composition types. When considering the multimodal genres, you will discover that genres create **conventions** (standard ways of doing things) for categorizing media according to the expectations of the audience and the way the media will be consumed. Consider film media, for example; it encompasses genres including drama, documentaries, and animated shorts, to name a few. Each genre has its own conventions, or features. When you write or analyze multimodal texts, it is important to account for genre conventions.

A note on text: typically, when referring to text, people mean written words. But in multimodal genres, the term *text* can refer to a piece of communication as a whole, incorporating written words, images, sounds, and even movement. The following images are examples of multimodal texts.

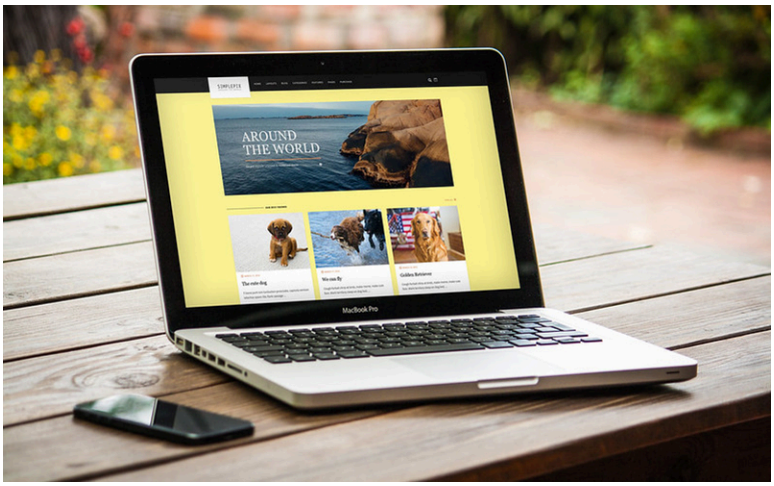



**FIGURE 18.3** A website is a multimodal text that combines images and words. It may incorporate sound and animation as well. (credit: “SimplePix - Responsive WordPress Blog Magazine Theme #2” by Serge Kij/flickr, CC BY 2.0)



**FIGURE 18.4** A theatrical performance, as shown in this dance image, is a multimodal text combining drama, music, movement, and visual design. Other theatrical performances combine different elements. (credit: "Danses d'Okinawa (musée Guimet, Paris)" by Jean-Pierre Dalbéra/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

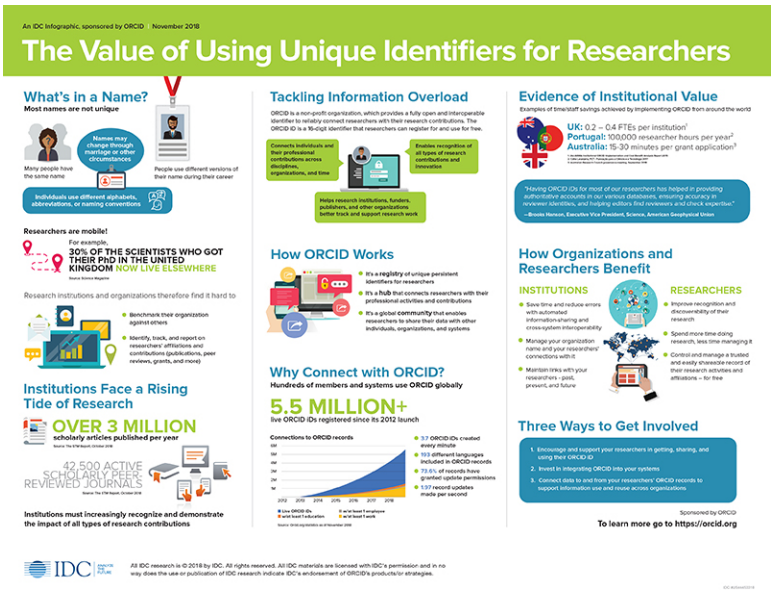



**FIGURE 18.5** An infographic is a multimodal text that combines words and different types of graphics to convey information succinctly. (credit: "ORCID Infographic 2019" by ORCID/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

Multimodal genres are uniquely positioned to address audiences through a variety of **modes**, or types of communication. These can be identified in the following categories:

**Linguistic text:** The most common mode for writing, the linguistic mode includes written or spoken text.

**Visuals:** The visual mode includes anything the reader can see, including images, colors, lighting, typefaces, lines, shapes, and backgrounds.

**Audio:** The audio mode includes all types of sound, such as narration, sound effects, music, silence, and ambient noise.

**Spatial:** Especially important in digital media, the spatial mode includes spacing, image and text size and

position, white space, visual organization, and alignment.

**Gestural:** The gestural mode includes communication through all kinds of body language, including movement and facial expressions.

Multimodal composition provides an opportunity for you to develop and practice skills that will translate to future coursework and career opportunities. Creating a multimodal text requires you to demonstrate aptitude in various modes and reflects the requirements for communication skills beyond the academic world. In other words, although multimodal creations may seem to be little more than pictures and captions at times, they must be carefully constructed to be effective. Even the simplest compositions are meticulously planned and executed. Multimodal compositions may include written text, such as blog post text, slideshow text, and website content; image-based content, such as infographics and photo essays; or audiovisual content, including podcasts, public service announcements, and videos.



**FIGURE 18.6** Multimodal compositions aren't always complicated. Even a single photo can create a major impact on readers. (credit: "3-187 Infantry soldier scanning ridge in Bak Defense" by Sgt. Jeffrey Alexander/Wikimedia Commons, Defense.gov Photo Essays, Public Domain)

Multimodal composition is especially important in a 21st-century world where communication must represent and transfer across cultural contexts. Because using multiple modes helps a writer make meaning in different **channels** (media that communicate a message), the availability of different modes is especially important to help you make yourself understood as an author. In academic settings, multimodal content creation increases engagement, improves equity, and helps prepare you to be a global citizen. The same is true for your readers. Multimodal composition is important in addressing and supporting cultural and linguistic diversity. Modes are shaped by social, cultural, and historic factors, all of which influence their use and impact in communication. And it isn't just readers who benefit from multimodal composition. Combining a variety of modes allows you as a composer to connect to your own lived experiences—the representation of experiences and choices that you have faced in your own life—and helps you develop a unique voice, thus leveraging your knowledge and experiences.

## 18.2 Trailblazer

### Multimodal Trailblazer: Torika Bolatagici

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify various rhetorical and culture contexts while reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communication.
- Demonstrate that genre conventions vary and are shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.



**FIGURE 18.7** Torika Bolatagici (https://openstax.org/r/4S3YIw-PFAs) works to bring attention to indigenous artists. Speculation exists as to the origin of this wall- like stone structure; some believe it was constructed by early peoples of Australia. (credit: "Man-made stone wall" by Rupert Gerritsen/Wikimedia Commons, CC0).

*"I can never deny the deeply personal place that the work comes from."*

#### Digital Representations of Embodiment and Cultural Identity

Torika Bolatagici is a creator, educator, and art historian who works with various modalities, including photography (https://openstax.org/r/photography), video, fine art, and mixed media (https://openstax.org/r/mixed_media). Bolatagici was born in Tasmania and, as a young person, spent time living in Hobart, Tasmania; Sydney, Australia; and her father's village of Suvavou, Fiji. Her work has been featured across the globe, including in exhibits in the United States, Taiwan, and Mexico as well as throughout New Zealand and Australia. She has a PhD from the School of Art and Design, University of New South Wales, where she wrote her dissertation on "Somatic Sotia: Commodity, Agency and the Fijian Military Body."

In 2013 and 2014, Bolatagici coordinated the Contemporary Pacific Arts Festival (https://openstax.org/r/contemporary_specific), curating an experience that focused on Pacific arts practices in Australia. She invited speakers to present on themes spanning activism and the arts, cultural appropriation, and contemporary artistic practices. Bolatagici now works as an educator, lecturing on art and performance at Deakin University in Australia, and has led youth arts workshops in the local Pacific community.

Reflecting on the beginnings of her career, she describes going through her undergraduate coursework and feeling the responsibility of bringing "brown-ness" to the classroom. After finding that higher education largely dismissed the lived experiences of marginalized communities and spending time at the Stuart Hall Library at the Institute of International Visual Arts, Bolatagici was inspired to create the pop-up Community Reading Room in Melbourne, Australia, in 2013.

Through the pop-up room, she hoped to engage the community in international visual arts and culture. She began her initiative by sharing her own personal collection, including texts and anthologies of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) art. The Community Reading Room provides an emphasis on contemporary art and theory from Africa, the Americas, and Oceania.

Bolatagici has incorporated a variety of media (https://openstax.org/r/variety) into her academic and professional portfolios, describing how her work helps her not only represent diverse cultures (https://openstax.org/r/represent) but also explore her own identity. From photo essays (https://openstax.org/r/photo_essays) to academic papers, her compositions are anchored by the common thread of representing marginalized people and experiences, particularly those related to communities of color. Her creative output has focused on representation of mixed-race identity, Pacific arts practices, and militarism. Through mixed media, she investigates relationships between visual culture and historiography (study of historical writings); human ecology (study of relationships between humans and their natural, social, and created environments); and the intersection of gender, knowledge, and globalization.

Bolatagici describes her work as interdisciplinary, creating components across a wide range of media. Instead of limiting herself, she allows her work to flow naturally, staying focused in the moment. With these unique components, she looks at the relationship between visual culture and human ecology. This interdisciplinary approached emerged for Bolatagici even before she knew it as multimodalism. Because her interests in college varied so greatly, she pursued a media arts degree so that she could explore visual arts as they related to cultural studies. This pursuit grew into a career that now includes new modes and media sources, such as photography, video, and mixed media.

Choosing a multimodal approach because it better communicates the complex subjects she conveys, Bolatagici draws on her own experiences in order to represent the experiences of marginalized people at the forefront of her compositions. For Bolatagici, creating in any form is bigger than the page, and she aims to bring her reality to life through visual, textual, and multimedia creations that communicate in four dimensions.

Read Bolatagici's weekly journal (https://openstax.org/r/freshmilk) during her residency in Barbados.

### Discussion Questions

1. How does using a multimodal approach allow Bolatagici to communicate her lived experience?
2. Why does representation matter in multimodal composition? How has Bolatagici addressed this in her methods?
3. What role can multimodal compositions play in exploring experiences beyond your own?
4. How can multimodal works at times better communicate aspects of culture and history than literary text alone?
5. In what sense is bringing communities together an important aspect of Bolatagici's work?

## 18.3 Glance at Genre: Genre, Audience, Purpose, Organization

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify key genre conventions, including structure, tone, and mechanics.
- Implement common formats and design features for different text types.
- Demonstrate how genre conventions vary and are shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.

The multimodal genres of writing are based on the idea that modes work in different ways, with different outcomes, to create various vehicles for communication. By layering, or combining, modes, an author can

make meaning and communicate through mixed modes what a single mode cannot on its own. Essentially, modes "cooperate" to communicate the author's intent as they interweave meanings captured by each.

For example, think of a public service announcement about environmental conservation. A composer can create a linguistic text about the dangers of plastic pollution in oceans and support the ideas with knowledge of or expertise in the subject. Yet words alone may not communicate the message forcefully, particularly if the audience consists of people who have never considered the impact of pollution on the oceans. That composer, then, might combine the text with images of massive amounts of human-generated plastic waste littering a shoreline, thus strengthening the argument and enhancing meaning by touching on audience emotions. By using images to convey some of the message, the composer layers modes. The picture alone does not tell the whole story, but when combined with informational text, it enhances the viewer's understanding of the issue. Modes, therefore, can be combined in various ways to communicate a rhetorical idea effectively.



**FIGURE 18.8** The addition of various types of media can enhance the impact of a composition and thus increase the reader's understanding of an issue. (credit: "Polluted Beach on the Red Sea in Sharm el-Naga, Port Safaga, Egypt" by Vberger/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## Audience Awareness

As with any type of composition, knowing your **audience** (the readers and viewers for whom you are creating) will help you determine what information to include and what genre, mode(s), or media in which to present it. Consider your audience when choosing a composition's **tone** (composer's attitude toward the audience or subject), substance, and language. Considering the audience is critical not only in traditional academic writing but also in nearly any genre or mode you choose. Ask yourself these questions when analyzing your audience's awareness:

- What (and how much) does the audience already know about the topic? The amount of background information needed can influence what genre, modes, and media types you include and how you use them. You don't want to bore an audience with information that is common knowledge or overwhelm an audience with information they know nothing about.
- What is the audience's viewpoint on the subject? Are you creating for a skeptical audience or one that

largely agrees with your rhetorical arguments?
- How do you relate to your audience? Do you share cultural understanding, or are you presenting information or beliefs that will be unfamiliar? This information will help you shape the message, tone, and structure of the composition.

Understanding your audience allows you to choose rhetorical devices that reflect **ethos** (appeals to ethics: credibility), **logos** (appeals to logic: reason), and **pathos** (appeals to sympathy: emotion) to create contextually responsive compositions through multiple modes.



It important to address audience diversity in all types of composition, but the unique aspects of multimodal composition present particular opportunities and challenges. First, when you compose, you do so through your own cultural filter, formed from your experiences, gender, education, and other factors. Multimodal composition opens up the ability to develop your cultural filter through various methods. Think about images of your lived experiences, videos capturing cultural events, or even gestures in live performances. Also consider the diversity of your audience members and how that affects the content choices you make during composition. Avoiding **ethnocentrism**—the assumption that the customs, values, and beliefs of your culture are superior to others—is an important consideration when addressing your audience, as is using bias-free language, especially regarding ethnicity, gender, and abilities.

## Blogs, Vlogs, and Creative Compositions

Among the modes available to you as a composer, **blogs** (regularly updated websites, usually run by an individual or a small group) have emerged as a significant genre in digital literature. The term *blog*, a combination of *web* and *log*, was coined in 1999 and gained rapid popularity in the early 2000s. In general, blogs have a relatively narrow focus on a topic or argument and present a distinctive structure that includes these features:

- A headline or title draws in potential readers. Headlines are meant to grab attention, be short, and accurately reflect the content of the blog post.
- An introduction hooks the reader, briefly introducing the topic and establishing the author's credibility on the subject.
- Short paragraphs often are broken up by images, videos, or other media to make meaning and supplement or support the text content.
- The narrative is often composed in a style in which the author claims or demonstrates expertise.
- Media such as images, video, and infographics depict information graphically and break up text.
- Hyperlinks (links to other internet locations) to related content often serve as evidence supporting the author's claim.
- A call to action provides clear and actionable instructions that engage the reader.

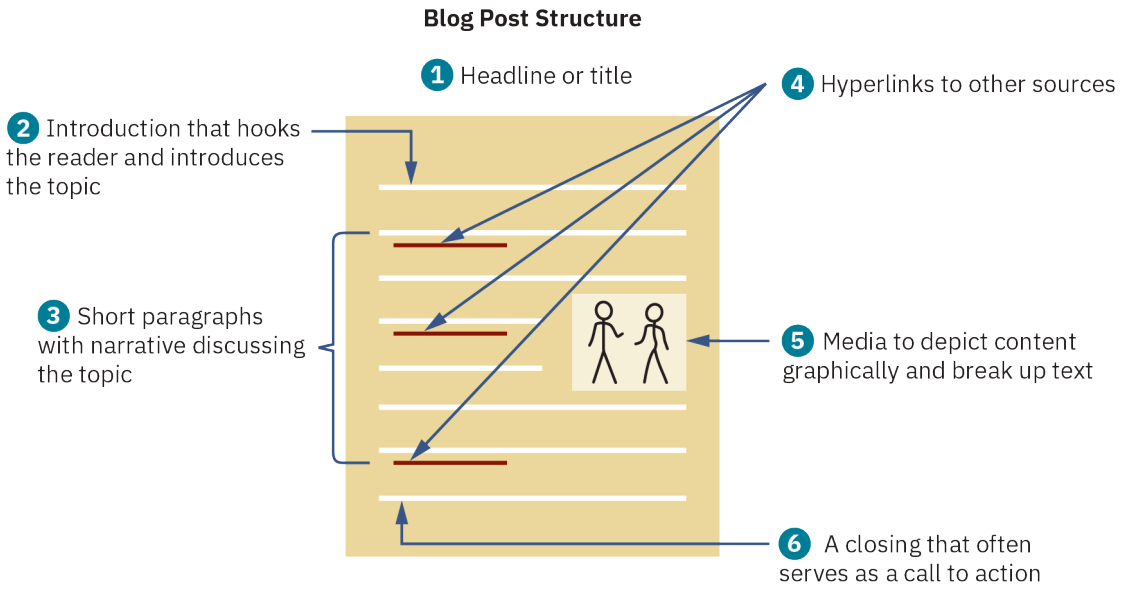



**FIGURE 18.9** A blog post typically has these labeled parts. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

Blogs offer accessibility and an opportunity to make meaning in new ways. By integrating images and audiovisual media, you can develop a multimodal representation of arguments and ideas. Blogs also provide an outlet for conveying ideas through both personal and formal narratives and are used frequently in industries from entertainment to scientific research to government organizations.

Newer in the family of multimodal composition is the video blog, or **vlog**, a blog for which the medium is video. Vlogs usually combine video embedded in a website with supporting text, images, or other modes of communication. Vlogging often takes on a narrative structure, similar to other types of storytelling, with the added element of supplementary audio and video, including digital transitions that connect one idea or scene to another. Vlogs offer ample opportunities to mix modalities.

Vlogs give a literal *voice* to a composer, who typically narrates or speaks directly to the camera. Like a blogger, a vlog creator acts as an expert, telling a narrative story or using rhetoric to argue a point. Vlogs often strive to create an authentic and informal tone, similar to published blogs, inviting a stream-of-consciousness or interview-like style. Therefore, they often work well when targeted toward audiences for whom a casual mood is valuable and easily understood.




**FIGURE 18.10** Vlogs are video blogs that offer the opportunity for composers to voice their thoughts in a stream-of-

consciousness style or interview-like style. (credit: "BloggerCon IV Day 2 24Jun06 – 13" by Roland Tanglao/flickr, CC0 1.0)

Other creative compositions include websites, digital or print newsletters, podcasts, and a wide variety of other content. Each composition type has its own best practices regarding structure and organization, often depending on the chosen modalities, the way they are used, and the intended audience. Whatever the mode, however, all multimodal writing has several characteristics in common, beginning with effective, intentional composition.

## Effective Writing

Experimenting with modes and media is not an excuse for poorly developed writing that lacks focus, organization, thought, purpose, or attention to mechanics. Although multimodal compositions offer flexibility of expression, the content still must be presented in well-crafted, organized, and purposeful ways that reflect the author's purpose and the audience's needs.

- To be well-crafted, a composition should reflect the author's use of literary devices to convey meaning, use of relevant connections, and acknowledgment of grammar and writing conventions.
- To be organized, a composition should reflect the author's use of effective transitions and a logical structure appropriate to the chosen mode.
- To be purposeful, a composition should show that the author addresses the needs of the audience, uses rhetorical devices that advance the argument, and offers insightful understanding of the topic.

Organization of multimodal compositions refers to the sequence of message elements. You must decide which ideas require attention, how much and in what order, and which modalities create maximum impact on readers. While many types of formal and academic writing follow a prescribed format, or at least the general outline of one, the exciting and sometimes overwhelming features of multimodal possibilities open the door to any number of acceptable formats. Some of these are prescribed, and others more open ended; your job will inevitably be to determine when to follow a template and when to create something new. As the composer, you seek to structure media in ways that will enable the reader, or audience, to derive meaning. Even small changes in media, rhetorical appeal, and organization can alter the ways in which the audience participates in the construction of meaning.




Within a medium—for example, a video—you might include images, audio, and text. By shifting the organization, placement, and interaction among the modes, you change the structure of the video and therefore create varieties of meaning. Now, imagine you use that same structure of images, audio, and text, but change the medium to a slideshow. The impact on the audience will likely change with the change in medium. Consider the infamous opening scene of the horror movie *The Shining* (1980). The primary medium, video, shows a car driving through a mountainous region. After audio is added, however, the meaning of the multimodal composition changes, creating an emphasis on pace—management of dead air—and tone—attitude toward the subject—that communicates something new to the audience.



**FIGURE 18.11** The opening scenes of *The Shining* feature the serene-looking Saint Mary Lake with its Wild Goose

Island. The addition of the audio mode, music featuring ominous-sounding horns (https://openstax.org/r/ominous), not only communicates new information to viewers but also shapes an emphasis on drama and danger. (credit: "The upper end of St. Mary Lake and Wild Goose Island, Glacier National Park, Montana. Photo taken from Going-to-the-Sun Road" by Ken Thomas/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## Exploring the Genre

These are the key terms and characteristics of multimodal texts.

- **Alignment:** the way in which elements such as text features, images, and particularly text are placed on a page. Text can be aligned at the left, center, or right. Alignment contributes to organization and how media transitions within a text.
- **Audience:** readers or viewers of the composition.
- **Channel:** a medium used to communicate a message. Often-used channels include websites, blogs, social media, print, audio, and video-hosting sites.
- **Complementary:** describes content that is different across two or more modes, both of which are necessary for understanding. Often audio and visual modes are complementary, with one making the other more meaningful.
- **Emphasis:** the elements in media that are most significant or pronounced. The emphasis choices have a major impact on the overall meaning of the text.
- **Focus:** a clear purpose for composition, also called the central idea, main point, or guiding principle. Focus should include the specific audience the composer is trying to influence.
- **Layering:** combining modes in a single composition.
- **Layout:** the organization of elements on a page, including text, images, shapes, and overall composition. Layout applies primarily to the visual mode.
- **Media:** the means and channels of reaching an audience (for example, image, website, song). A medium (singular form of *media*) can contain multiple modes.
- **Mode:** the method of communication (linguistic, visual, audio, or spatial means of creating meaning). Media can incorporate more than one mode.
- **Organization:** the pattern of arrangement that allows a reader to understand text or images in a composition. Organization may be textual, visual, or spatial.
- **Proximity:** the relationship between objects in space, specifically how close to or far from one another they are. Proximity can show a relationship between elements and is often important in layout.
- **Purpose:** an author's reason for writing a text, including the reasoning that accounts for which modes of presentation to use. Composers of multimodal texts may seek to persuade, inform, or entertain the audience.
- **Repetition:** a unifying feature, such as a pattern used more than once, in the way in which elements (text features, typeface, color, etc.) are used on a page. Repetition often indicates emphasis or a particular theme. Repetitions and patterns can help focus a composition, explore a theme, and emphasize important points.
- **Supplementary:** describes content that is different in two or more modes, where a composer uses one mode to convey primary understanding and the other(s) to support or extend understanding. Supplementary content should not be thought of as "extra," for its purpose is to expand on the primary media.
- **Text:** written words. In multimodal composition, text can refer to a piece of communication as a whole, incorporating written words, images, sounds, and movement.
- **Tone:** the composer's attitude toward the subject and/or the audience.
- **Transitions:** words, phrases, or audiovisual elements that help readers make connections between ideas in a multimodal text, including connections from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, and mode to mode. Transitions show relationships between ideas and help effectively organize a composition.

# 18.4 Annotated Sample Reading: “Celebrating a Win-Win” by Alexandra Dapolito Dunn

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read a diverse range of texts in different genres to identify how conventions are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and audience expectation.
- Read effectively for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communication in various rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Demonstrate the relationships between ideas, patterns of organization, and verbal and nonverbal elements.

## Introduction

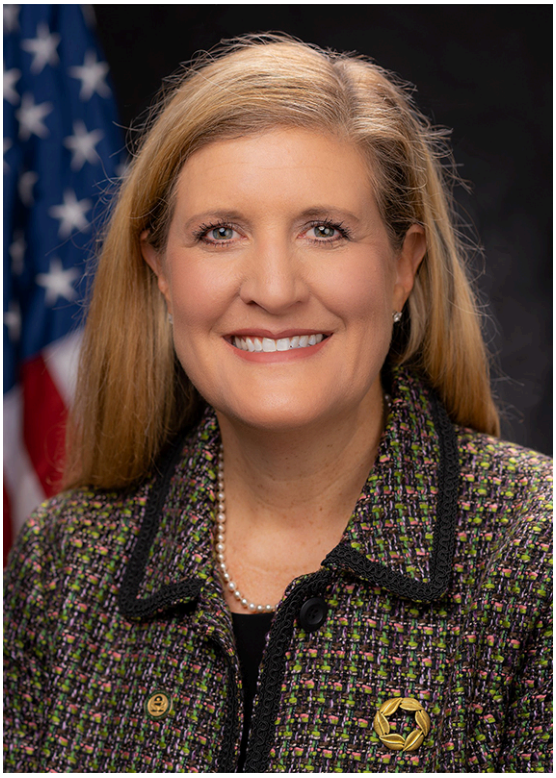


**FIGURE 18.12** Alexandra Dapolito Dunn (credit: “Alex Dunn, assistant administrator at US EPA” by Eric Vance/ Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

As a multimodal composer, you may choose to employ ethos, a rhetorical method of persuasion. In this context, ethos is an appeal to readers in order to establish the author’s credibility and character. In a rhetorical appeal, you can use ethos through fair, neutral language to show trustworthiness. In multimodal composition, ethos aims to convince readers that you are a reliable and an ethical expert on the subject. When using ethos, authors present sources that support their argument in balanced and honest ways, revealing their writing to be reliable. Authors also seek to understand their audience, establishing commonalities between those who support the issue, those who are undecided or indifferent, and those who dissent. Often, authors invoke the words or ideas of respected figures, authorities, or even religious texts when using ethos to convince readers. Analyzing multimodal compositions can help you learn how to use rhetorical frames in the multimodal composing process. In the blog post you are about to read, the author uses ethos, along with structural aspects of multimodal texts, to establish herself as a trustworthy expert on the subject of pollution prevention. Studying the components of multimodal writing in this blog will help you understand how multimedia platforms utilize elements of text, media, and modes.

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### "Celebrating a Win-Win: 30 Years of Progress under the Pollution Prevention Act" by Alexandra Dapolito Dunn (b. 1967)

> On this day in 1990, a new era was ushered in for Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the nation when the Pollution Prevention (P2) Act was signed into law. The act gave the agency new tools to join with states, tribes, and communities to prevent pollution *before* it happens. It also marked a shift in the paradigm of environmental protection, which had been mostly focused on end-of-pipe pollution control and clean-up strategies.

***Headline and Tone.*** *The linguistic headline immediately allows readers to know the author's position on the subject, and its visual component of boldfaced text allows readers to understand that it's important. Not only does it clearly preface the article by informing the reader of its topic (the Pollution Prevention Act), but it also presents the author's positive attitude toward the subject through the words celebrating and win-win.*

***Context.*** *Dunn contextualizes the Pollution Prevention Act, showing it as a positive national achievement that partnered the government with the people to prevent pollution.*

> Equally important, the P2 Act strengthened EPA's role as an ally of American businesses, helping them save billions of dollars and improve operations. As EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler has said, "It's far better to prevent pollution from occurring than to go in after the fact and clean it up."

***Quotation from an Authority.*** *This quotation from the EPA administrator supports Dunn's assertion that the P2 Act is good for America. The quotation helps lend credibility to the author's claim that the P2 Act has been a success over the past 30 years.*

***Purpose.*** *Dunn's purpose is to show how the P2 Act has been successful over time. Thus far, she has supported the claims that it has improved the environment and helped local governments and private businesses.*

> The P2 Act greatly expanded the opportunities for "source reduction" to reduce or prevent pollution at the source through cost-effective changes in production, operation, and raw materials use. These changes can reduce the amount of pollution entering a waste stream or the environment prior to recycling, treatment or disposal, and can offer industry substantial savings in reduced raw material, pollution control, pollution clean-up and liability costs.

***Short Paragraphs.*** *Dunn uses short, easily digestible paragraphs in her blog post. Short paragraphs are visually effective on a screen and ensure that the reader is not overwhelmed by text while helping the writer organize ideas.*

***Ethos.*** *Dunn uses neutral, measured language to convince the reader that she is a reliable and ethical expert.*

> One of EPA's first pollution prevention successes was with its 33/50 Program, a voluntary program under which companies committed to reduce their releases of 17 top priority chemicals 33 percent by 1992 and by 50 percent by 1995. Subsequent EPA programs built on the 33/50 and P2 model and are still working to reduce pollution across the country today including EPA's WaterSense (https://openstax.org/r/watersense), Safer Choice (https://openstax.org/r/safer_choice), Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (https://openstax.org/r/environmentally), Green Chemistry (https://openstax.org/r/green), and our SmartWay Transport Partnership Program (https://openstax.org/r/smartway). President Trump acknowledged the effectiveness of these and other EPA programs in a 2018 Executive Order that directed federal agencies to use EPA's P2 resources to meet their statutory sustainable purchasing requirements.

***Hyperlinks.*** *Hyperlinks are a functional tool and employ the visual mode to command the reader's attention. Dunn uses hyperlinks to the EPA programs she names, establishing the agency as a source of pollution prevention efforts and, as a result, an expert on the issues covered in the blog post. In addition, she links to the presidential executive*

*order, which establishes credibility.*

> The P2 Act also serves as an authority for collecting information from reporting facilities through the Toxics Release Inventory (https://openstax.org/r/toxics) (TRI) about their management of certain toxic chemicals, including source reduction approaches. Since this reporting began in 1991, we have learned that over 24,000 unique facilities have taken more than 450,000 actions to prevent pollution and reduce the amount of toxic chemicals entering the environment, such as spill and leak prevention measures, using safer chemicals, modifying industrial processes, and updating operating procedures.

***Transition between Paragraphs.*** *By using the word also, Dunn signals that she is shifting to another success the EPA has achieved in preventing pollution.*

***Statistics as Supporting Evidence.*** *To support the impact of the P2 Act, Dunn uses statistics as evidence to show that the act has facilitated the prevention of pollution and toxic chemicals.*

> Perhaps the most impactful and collaborative program to grow out of the P2 Act is EPA's P2 Grants Program. Since 1990, EPA has awarded more than 1,200 grants to state, tribal, non-profit, and university partners to work directly with U.S. businesses to develop and implement source reduction techniques. With the assistance from P2 grants, businesses have been able to save over $1.5 billion since 2011 while also reducing the use of hazardous materials by over 570 million pounds.

***Supporting Evidence.*** *Dunn provides evidence of the success of the P2 Act by showing how one program has helped local governments and private businesses save money.*

> As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Pollution Prevention Act today, I would like to thank all our state and local pollution prevention partners, as well as all the businesses that have joined with us to score a true win-win for the American people.

***Audience.*** *Although this blog is written on a public government website, Dunn shifts focus at the end to directly address businesses and local governments that have partnered with her or her organization.*

You can access this post on the EPA blog (https://openstax.org/r/win-win).

### Discussion Questions

1. Why does Dunn choose to use neutral language rather than emotional appeals in this blog post?
2. Why does Dunn focus on the impact of the P2 Act on businesses, particularly on how the act is financially beneficial to those organizations?
3. How might this blog post differ if the intended audience were different?
4. What is the effect of Dunn's shift to addressing specific partners at the end of the post?
5. In your opinion, does Dunn effectively establish herself as a trusted source? Why or why not?

## 18.5 Writing Process: Create a Multimodal Advocacy Project

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Craft textual and digital compositions using various genres of modes and technologies.
- Match different modes of communication to various rhetorical situations.
- Identify various genres of multimodal and online writing.

Now you will experiment with using multiple modes to create an advocacy project. An advocacy project tells the story of an overarching problem—for example, world hunger—and uses multiple modalities to inform readers about that issue and to propose change. You may be familiar with similar advocacy projects; perhaps

you have been involved with them in your everyday life. Think carefully about advocacy initiatives you know of or have encountered, and find out whether you can pinpoint the answers to these three questions: *What problem is being addressed? Who is the intended audience? What mode or modes are being used, including what media?* Then think about what works. *How do the chosen media speak to the specific audience? Why might the initiative's creators have made those choices?*

After you have chosen a cause and begun working through the composition, you might want to tweak the modes you are working with, including how they relate to one another. You may find, for example, that your primary communication to readers would be better achieved with a different mode or that you need stronger transitions to move your reader through your rhetorical appeal. Don't be afraid to experiment, revise, and examine your project from different angles. Just like a literary text, a multimodal composition is a living document, one that can be improved over time with peer review and revision. As you work, focus your project by concentrating on addressing your audience, purpose, and organization.

## Summary of Assignment

Create a multimodal advocacy project for a cause or an issue that you choose or that your instructor chooses for you. If you are free to choose your own topic, here is a short list from which you may draw inspiration:

- Providing clean and safe water
- Ending gun violence
- Addressing nutritional needs of children locally or around the world
- Anti-bullying
- Reducing your carbon footprint
- Access to health care
- Anti-racism
- Vaccination policies
- Social media and free speech
- Climate change
- Immigration

You may also use these brainstorming questions to narrow down your topic:

- What are you passionate about?
- Where do you notice a need in your community / the world?
- What ideas do you have for addressing the issue?
- What existing campaigns do you find compelling, and why?
- What existing projects can you build on, and how?
- What goals do you hope to achieve?

Choose a need or an issue that is important to you, because you will develop a rhetorical appeal to inform and convince your audience. Although world hunger is an important issue and may not be a bad example, consider choosing problems that you encounter locally, even in your everyday life. The closer you are to the issue, the more easily you will be able to develop rhetorical appeals. As you compose your project, consider the best modes and methods to communicate your ideas. Consider how to add and combine different modalities to increase audience impact without overdoing it.




**FIGURE 18.13** As you brainstorm potential topics for your advocacy project, consider issues that directly impact your community as a starting point. (credit: "Blog Camp 2017" by gdsteam/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

***Another Lens 1.*** To broaden your perspective on advocacy, find ways to connect directly to those whom the issue most closely affects. Ensure that your proposed advocacy provides pragmatic and helpful solutions to the problem for the targeted audience. For example, if you choose to create a project based on the need for education opportunities for young mothers who have survived domestic abuse, advocating for full-time schooling options with no consideration for childcare would be neither pragmatic nor helpful. In other words, don't assume you know best. Open yourself to information gleaned from research, interviews, or informal conversation. If possible, try to speak with someone whom your project will affect.

Determine what others are already doing to address the need you have identified, and decide whether to build on that work or take a different route. Identify the most effective means of translating the vision you decide on for your audience, which may differ from the audience targeted by other advocacy groups.

***Another Lens 2.*** Another option for approaching this project is to identify and analyze multimodal advocacy initiatives already occurring on a large scale today. Some well-known ones include Charity: Water (https://openstax.org/r/water), Free Rice (https://openstax.org/r/rice), It Gets Better (https://openstax.org/r/it_gets), and Upworthy (https://openstax.org/r/upworthy). After choosing an advocacy campaign to research, consider the following:

- What is the purpose of the advocacy initiative? What do the organizers want to achieve?
- Whom does the initiative address? (Knowing the target audience will help you analyze how effectively the organizers use a multimodal approach to reach them.)
- How does the initiative persuade its audience? Are rhetorical appeals used, and if so, how? Why do you think these choices are made?
- What modes of communication are being used? (These may include social media platforms and streams.) Does the campaign rely more on textual or non-textual media to convey its message? How are modes combined, and how effective are these choices?

After thinking about these questions, create an addition to this advocacy initiative. Introduce your composition by explaining what you have included and why.



**FIGURE 18.14** Look to successful advocacy projects, such as the It Gets Better Campaign (https://openstax.org/r/ItGetsBetter) supported by former President Barack Obama, as a model of the potential for incorporating multimodal elements into your project. (credit: "President Barack Obama" by Official White House Photo by Pete Souza/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## Quick Launch: Defining a Primary Purpose and Goal

After you have decided on your topic, the first step is to identify the primary **purpose**, or reason, for your advocacy project. Your goal is what you want to accomplish with it. Do you intend to inform people about an issue they are likely to know little about, or do you want to inspire people around you to take action in creating a sustainable solution that addresses the issue at hand? Goals are broad statements and can be general and abstract, as in the case of this goal: *Improve access to clean water for students in Flint, Michigan.*

Part of identifying your goal is to articulate your **claim**, or assertion, about the issue you have chosen. Your claim is equivalent to a thesis in a traditional written essay. Identifying your purpose and goal will help you decide how to structure your project and, ultimately, which media and modes to employ.

Consider also your audience. You already have learned and discussed the importance of understanding your audience's perspective, including social, cultural, or linguistic factors that could affect your communication. Understanding what your audience knows, their lived experiences, and what is important to them will help you shape your narrative. Complete these sentence starters to organize your ideas and begin the planning stages of your project.

**Define the situation.**

My project focuses on _____, which is a problem because _____.

**Define your purpose.**

The purpose of my project is to _____, which will be accomplished by _____.

**Write a thesis, hypothesis, or line of inquiry.**

The issue I'm addressing is _____.

My position on the issue is _____.

Write your thesis as a declarative sentence. See Writing Process: Creating a Position Argument for help writing a thesis. _____.

**Define your goals and objectives.**

I will try to _____ by _____.

**Define your audience.**

The intended audience for my project is _____. They are _____ (familiar/unfamiliar) with the issue. I will reach them by _____.

After you define the situation, it is time to choose the mode or modes to communicate your ideas to your audience. For example, will you write an op-ed, or opinion piece, in which you formally discuss the issue and advocate for change? Will you write and deliver a speech that relies on rhetorical devices to convey your passion for the issue? You might also consider advertisements and public service announcements (PSAs), including audio and video versions, as other effective ways to "sell" a concept, often combining modes for added impact. For examples, peruse The Op-Ed Project (https://openstax.org/r/op-edproject) or the Ad Council (https://openstax.org/r/adcouncil).

Just as your choice of topic must be rhetorically sound and specific, your choice of mode should be based on the circumstances under which your audience will best meet and respond to your advocacy project. This decision may feel daunting, because composing within the multimodal genres means that you have many options. You might choose a video advertisement, a visual flyer, a performance, a photo essay, or something completely different. Consider the modes you might use to accomplish your goals, responding to the needs of your audience.

| | Linguistic Mode | Visual Mode | Audio Mode | Spatial Mode | Gestural Mode |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Uses in Composition** | written text<br>word choice<br>organization<br>tone | color<br>style<br>size<br>perspective | sound<br>narration<br>music/effects<br>silence | arrangement<br>proximity<br>organization | body language<br>facial expressions |
| **Primary Types of Media (media may cross multiple modes)** | print or digital media (newspaper, blog, professional publication) | infographic<br>photo essay<br>advertisement<br>PSA<br>website/blog/vlog | speech<br>advertisement<br>radio<br>podcast<br>vlog | infographic<br>photo essay<br>website/blog/vlog | speech<br>presentation<br>vlog |

**TABLE 18.1**

## Drafting: Varying Purposes for Integration of Media or Other Genres

Once you have determined your purpose and audience and have considered the impact of including multiple modes and media, it is time to begin drafting your project.

### Gathering Information

The first step in any project is to collect and analyze sources. You will likely need to explore relevant research, data, and literature that already address your topic. The following questions are a good place to start: *What do you already know about the issue you have chosen to address? What do you need to learn, and where can you find that information?*

When considering the data and research you read and collect, it is important to address multiple perspectives, particularly regarding culture, language, and social issues. It is essential to have a clear understanding of the needs of the community you seek to advocate for, as defined by that community.

Now plan for the ways in which your project will create and support the argument, the modes and media you will use, and how these will reach your audience. Start by completing a graphic organizer like Table 18.2. Begin with what you already know, including the sources of that information, formal research you have done, and informal or anecdotal data you have. After looking carefully at what you have, ask yourself what you still need to learn about the topic to understand and communicate the issue to your audience. Finally, brainstorm for strategies to learn that information. These may include research, interviews, or other methods of data collection. Then carry out that information collection until you have what you need.

| What I already know | Source(s) of that information | Information and data that I need to collect | Where I can find information |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

**TABLE 18.2** Planning Chart

### Determine Modes and Media

Once your research is complete (or, at least, once you have a good enough foundation to get started), determine which modes and media you will employ to address your audience. Research, like composition as a whole, is largely an open-ended process, one in which you may need to experiment to determine whether the modes, media, and genres you choose accurately and effectively communicate your purpose to the audience. A good way to make this decision is to create a mockup or storyboard. A **mockup** is a visual representation of compositions that are basically static. You can use a mockup for media such as websites, posters, or photo essays. A **storyboard** is a sequence of drawings that represents the progression of a piece that moves through time. You can use a storyboard for media such as videos or podcasts.

Use graphic organizers like Figure 18.15 and Figure 18.16 for your mockup or storyboard. Remember to consider *all* modes, including linguistic, visual, audio, spatial, and gestural, and what impact they will make on your audience.

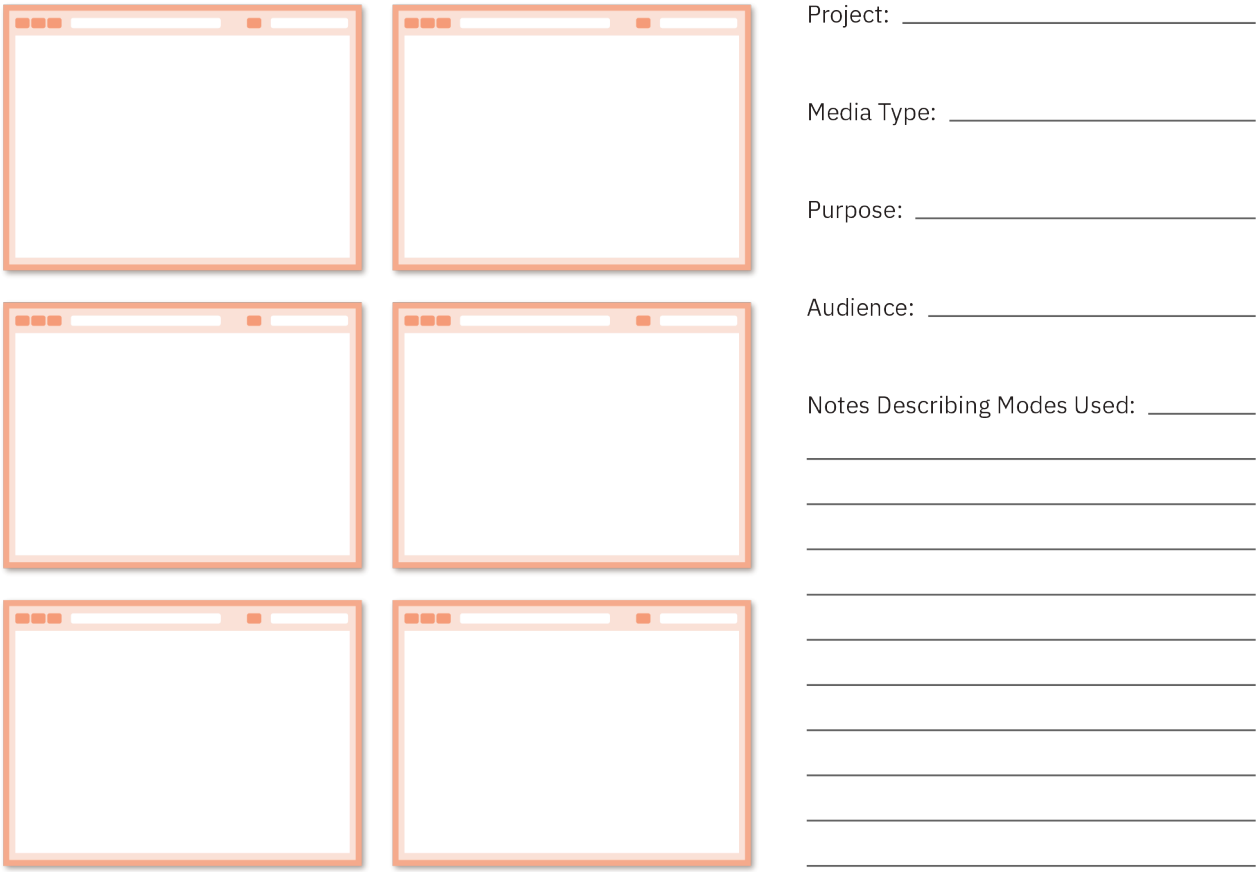



**FIGURE 18.15** Mockup (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

Project: _____ Media Type: _____

Purpose: _____ Audience: _____

**FIGURE 18.16** Storyboard (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

When you finish, look over your mockup or storyboard. Then consider whether your choices effectively address the needs of your audience. For example, a student composing a project calling for humanitarian efforts to improve the living conditions of citizens in war-torn Syria might choose the genre of a photo essay, with visual media and captions used as a powerful way to tell the story. This choice will be more effective than relying mainly on text or other means alone.



**FIGURE 18.17** Destruction from the Syrian War (credit: "A destroyed part of Raqqa" by Mahmoud Bali/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

That student might ask and answer questions such as the following:

- What do I want to convey? The desperate situation in Syria because of the war
- Who is my audience? Online readers interested in current events

- How do the media I've chosen speak to the audience? They tell a story more powerfully than text can by itself.

As you brainstorm, don't feel obligated to include every piece of information or media you collect. You'll want to choose carefully, ensuring that the information and media you use serve your audience and rhetorical goals.

### Introduce Other Genres

After establishing the primary genre, it's time to define the purpose for introducing other genres, including how you will introduce them smoothly with seamless transitions. In the example above, the student chooses a photo essay as the primary genre. A photo essay usually includes multiple pictures, laid out on a blog or website with or without text. If there is an opportunity to directly address the audience, the student might consider writing a script to incorporate the genre of presentation. Or they might choose to create a slideshow or video, incorporating a voice-over or textual quotations. All of these choices depend on their purpose as the composer, the rhetorical methods they believe will work best, and a knowledge of their audience, including how best to respond to social and cultural needs. It's important not to incorporate more modes simply for the sake of having more. Each choice you make will either enhance or detract from your purpose.

### Compose

Countless tools are available for creating multimodal texts. At first, this project may seem daunting as you ponder which tool to choose and possibly learn to use new technology. However, you will likely find you can use tools that are not only familiar but also readily available. Software and apps that you already have on your phone, tablet, or laptop, such as PowerPoint, Google Slides, and Keynote, not only are useful for slideshows but also allow you to create graphics and videos that you can upload to YouTube with a single click. You can record podcasts by using the memo feature on your phone or a free online recording tool and then upload them to SoundCloud.

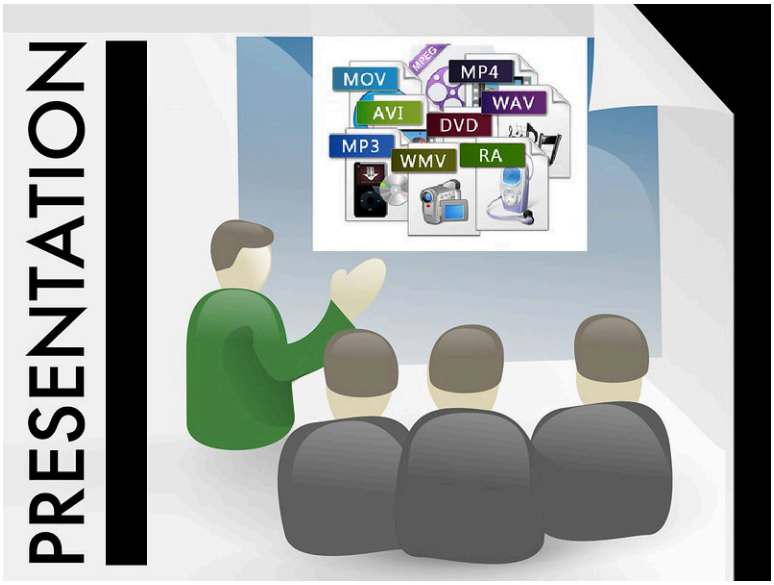



**FIGURE 18.18** Finding tools to create a multimodal composition doesn't have to be difficult or complicated. Often, you are able to use familiar and readily available tools. (credit: "powerpoint-presentation in format video" by downloadsource.fr/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

After you have created your mockup or storyboard, it is time to create the first draft of your project. Sometimes called a *first cut*, particularly in audiovisual presentations, this is the next step in drafting the composition's basic elements. It is also your chance to experiment with the modes and media you have considered to determine what works and what doesn't. This first cut creates a **prototype**, a preliminary model or draft, that you will revise according to feedback from peer review. Consider this prototype as a starting point. Keep in

mind that the composition process, like the writing process, is **recursive**, not linear. You can move from drafting to research to revising and organizing at any point.

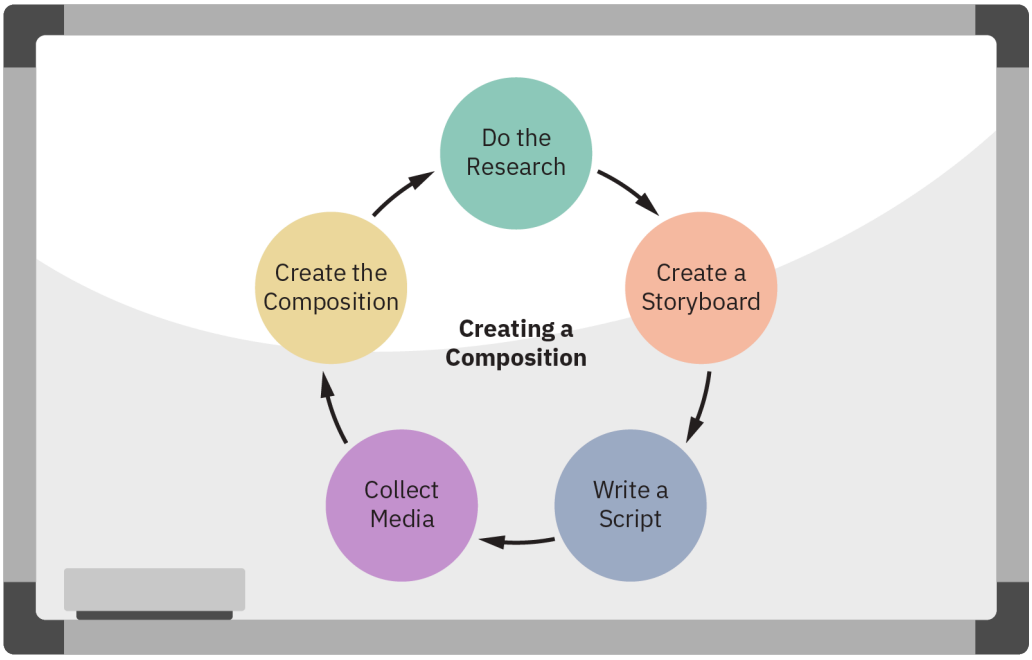



**FIGURE 18.19** Like written composition, multimodal composition is a recursive process. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

Though your options for your project may seem endless, this is how the student drafted the photo essay about the war in Syria. Because the composition primarily uses the visual mode, the student created a mockup, which includes the photo from Figure 18.17 as well as other photos and shared information.



The second Battle of Raqqa occurred in 2017, with United States troops joining forces with the Syrian Democratic Forces to take control of the city. The battle began with multiple airstrikes that killed dozens of citizens and culminated months later after many more deaths. Over 80% of the city was left uninhabitable.

**FIGURE 18.20** Sample mockup (credit: "SDF fighters in Raqqa downtown" by (top left), (top right) & (center right) Mahmoud Bali/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain; (center left) Voice of America Kurdish/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain; (bottom) United States Marine Corps/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

As shown here, this mockup is basic; it contains only the photographs the author has chosen and a short textual excerpt that provides context and more information to support the image. Although there were other options for this photo essay, the student considered them and decided to use only images with some supporting text, basing this choice on purpose, audience, and organizational principles. As you consider your options, begin by focusing on one mode, then build a mockup according to your audience and purpose. The mockup may be as simple as an outline of a speech or a PowerPoint template to which you add text and images. The idea is to create a concrete piece to use for your prototype.

Creating the prototype is the next step. Remember that this is the stage at which you consider which elements of mode and media to use and put them "on the page." Keeping in mind the purpose, organization, and audience, design a prototype that meets those guiding principles.

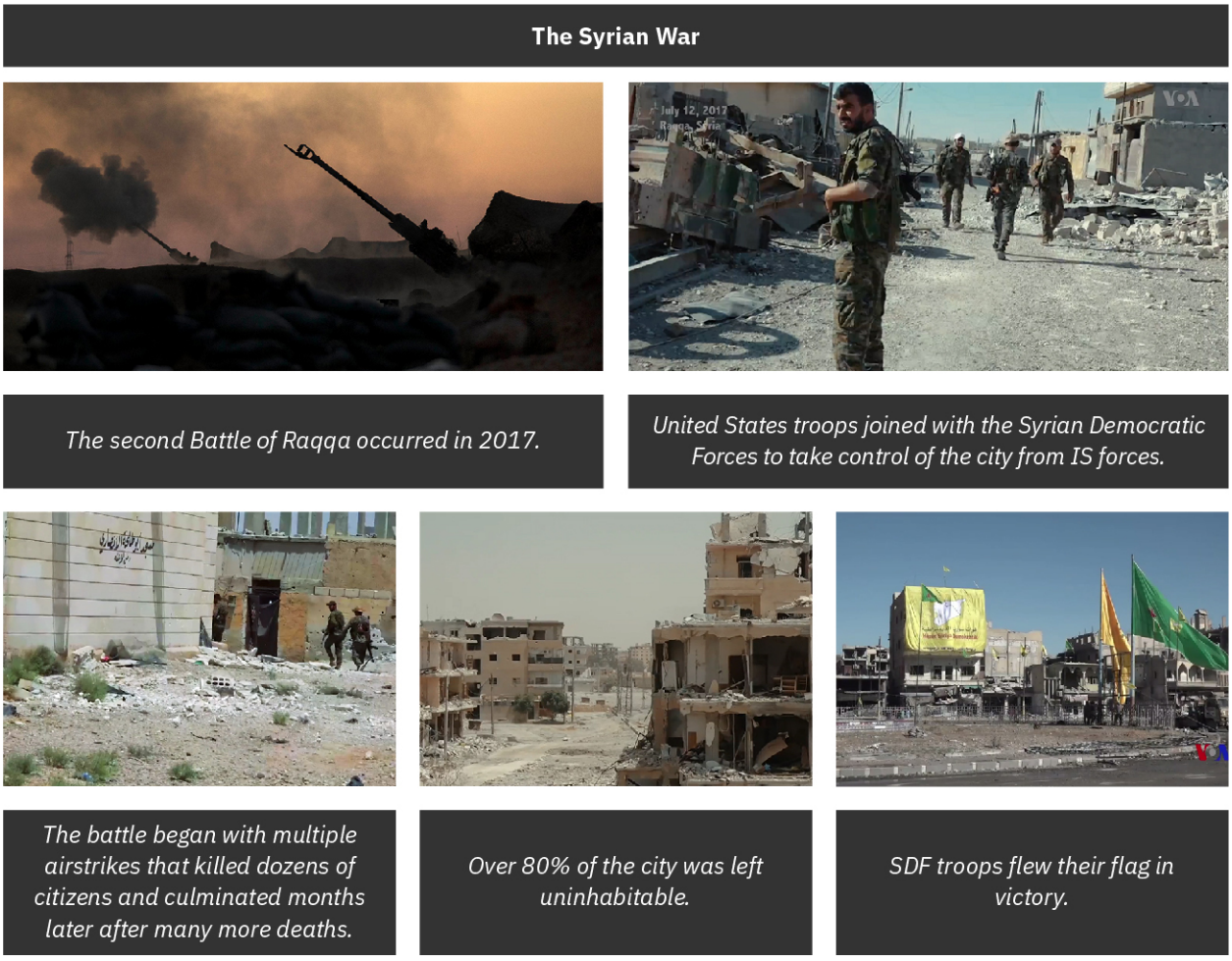



**FIGURE 18.21** Sample prototype (credit: "SDF, YPG, and YPJ flags in Raqqa centre" by (top left) United States Marine Corps/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, (top right), (bottom left) & (bottom center) Mahmoud Bali/ Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain; (center right) Voice of America Kurdish/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

For the prototype, the student made several choices related to the visual mode, incorporating both textual and graphic images. Remember that the composer stated an intent to convey the desperate situation in Syria resulting from war and is speaking to an audience of online readers interested in current events.

The first element added is a **headline**, "The Syrian War." It allows the reader to know immediately what the topic is and get a general idea of the context of the photo essay. The student has taken the text from the mockup and for each picture created a **caption**—a short statement that provides context for each event depicted and helps readers progress through the narrative of the photo essay. In addition, the composer has chosen to stage the captions against a black backdrop with white space between each photograph and caption, a visually appealing layout that is effective in its use of transitions. The images set against the black background stand out. Viewers can easily understand that they are supposed to read each row from left to right and understand the relationship between each picture and the one following it.

With these adjustments, the student has completed the prototype. It is now ready for peer review.

## Peer Review: Asking Specific Questions of the Writer

Peer review is an important step in helping you determine the ways in which your multimodal composition works well and how it can be improved. Peer review allows you to gain an outside perspective on your writing and composing processes and thus makes it easier to clear up any questions related to organization, purpose, audience, and genre.

For your review, provide your peer reviewer with your mockup or storyboard and your prototype. Seeing your process may help your reviewer offer feedback and suggestions. Your peer reviewer can use the following questions to think critically about your project, focusing on both its strengths and its areas for improvement, and to guide their feedback. Your response to these questions will guide your revision process.

### Questions about Topic

- How did you choose the focus of the composition?
- How did you narrow down the scope of your topic? Should it be broadened or narrowed further?

### Questions about Purpose

- My reaction after reading or viewing the composition is _____ because _____. Does this reaction match your intent for the composition?
- In my opinion, the thesis of this composition is _____. If this is your thesis, how can you strengthen your rhetorical arguments to better support it? If you intended to have a different thesis, how can you restate your claims to clarify the composition's purpose?
- The project uses sufficient evidence to support your claim that _____. How can you better support the claim that _____?

### Questions about Audience and Culture

- What audience are you trying to reach? What are the characteristics of this audience?
- What do you want your audience's reaction to this composition to be?
- How have you accounted for the similarities and differences between you and your audience?
- Are the elements of the composition accessible and meaningful to the audience?

### Questions about Genre and Media

- The genre of this text is _____, including conventions common to this genre such as _____. Optional: You might consider including other conventions such as _____ in order to strengthen the content by _____. How does this genre best capture the message you want to convey?
- The media chosen within the project's genre (do/do not) effectively communicate the author's intent by _____. How could using other media such as _____ increase the impact of the communication?
- A transition that works well in this composition is _____. How can you create a more effective transition here: _____?

## Revising: Responding to Questions

You will next revise your project, using your discretion to incorporate your peer reviewer's feedback. After considering reviewer comments, actively engage with that feedback to plan your revisions. As with textual compositions, revisions to multimodal compositions often involve rewording, shifting ideas, and rewriting to better address your audience and purpose.




**FIGURE 18.22** As you consider revisions, keep in mind your audience and purpose. In this brochure, notice how the author creates a balance between textual information and visual elements such as color, size, and space. (credit: "Brochure Design" by Evan Courtney/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

### Answering Questions

To begin the revision process, answer the questions your peer reviewer has posed. Focus first on the rhetorical situation, including your composition's topic, purpose, and audience as well as questions surrounding culture. Reflect on improvements you might make to represent and communicate the rhetorical situation within the scope of a multimodal composition. Consider using these sentence frames to answer your reviewer's questions.

- The reason I chose this genre is _____ (relate to purpose/audience/organization). I could better communicate by _____.
- I used rhetorical appeal through _____. This is effective in this way: _____ but can be strengthened further by _____.
- I considered the culture of (myself/viewers or readers/subject of composition) by _____. Other cultural components I would like to consider or address are _____. My plan to do that is _____.

Next, answer questions about genre and media. *How might the tools available serve you more effectively? Is your choice of media the most effective to communicate with your audience? What aspects of the primary genre are key to helping you convey your issue? How can you introduce other genres, or aspects of other genres, to strengthen the impact?* In responding, be mindful of creating smooth transitions and content that is uncluttered and clear in meaning. Consider using these sentence frames to answer your reviewer's questions.

- The genre _____ captures the message I am trying to convey by _____. I could strengthen this communication by _____.
- Using new media such as _____ or _____ could increase the impact of the communication by _____.
- My plan for _____ (media/mode) and _____ (media/mode) to work together is _____. I will revise my composition to achieve that by _____.
- I will strengthen my transitions by _____.

The student composer of the prototype above might answer a reviewer's questions in the following way:

> I chose the photo essay genre to show the effects of war in Syria in an expressive, meaningful way. I designed a simple layout contrasting the colors black and white to organize the narrative. I primarily called on pathos to invoke the emotions and values of viewers, drawing them in with powerful images, but I think I could strengthen the emotional appeal by rearranging the pictures and more clearly addressing the most powerful statement: that 80 percent of the city was left uninhabitable. I also think my headline could be more attention grabbing, and I plan to revise it to draw viewers in and more accurately reflect the subject matter. I will revise my composition to achieve a more effective presentation by editing my text to make it more direct and by reordering my photos to leave viewers with a more forceful statement.

### Revising

In creating multimodal compositions, revising can refer to taking multiple pieces of content and arranging, rearranging, deleting, and adding to the greater whole. Consider the project on the war in Syria. If choosing to create a video of the photo essay with a voice-over, the student might rearrange the order of photographs or choose which photos to show during particular audio clips, depending on the student's reflection on the peer reviewer's questions.

Alternatively, the student might choose to keep the same format, thinking that it best expresses what they hope to communicate. However, the student might make revisions based on the peer reviewer's feedback and their own reflection, in which the student mentions revising the text, reordering photos, and changing the headline. Consider this revision of the sample photo essay, in Figure 18.23.

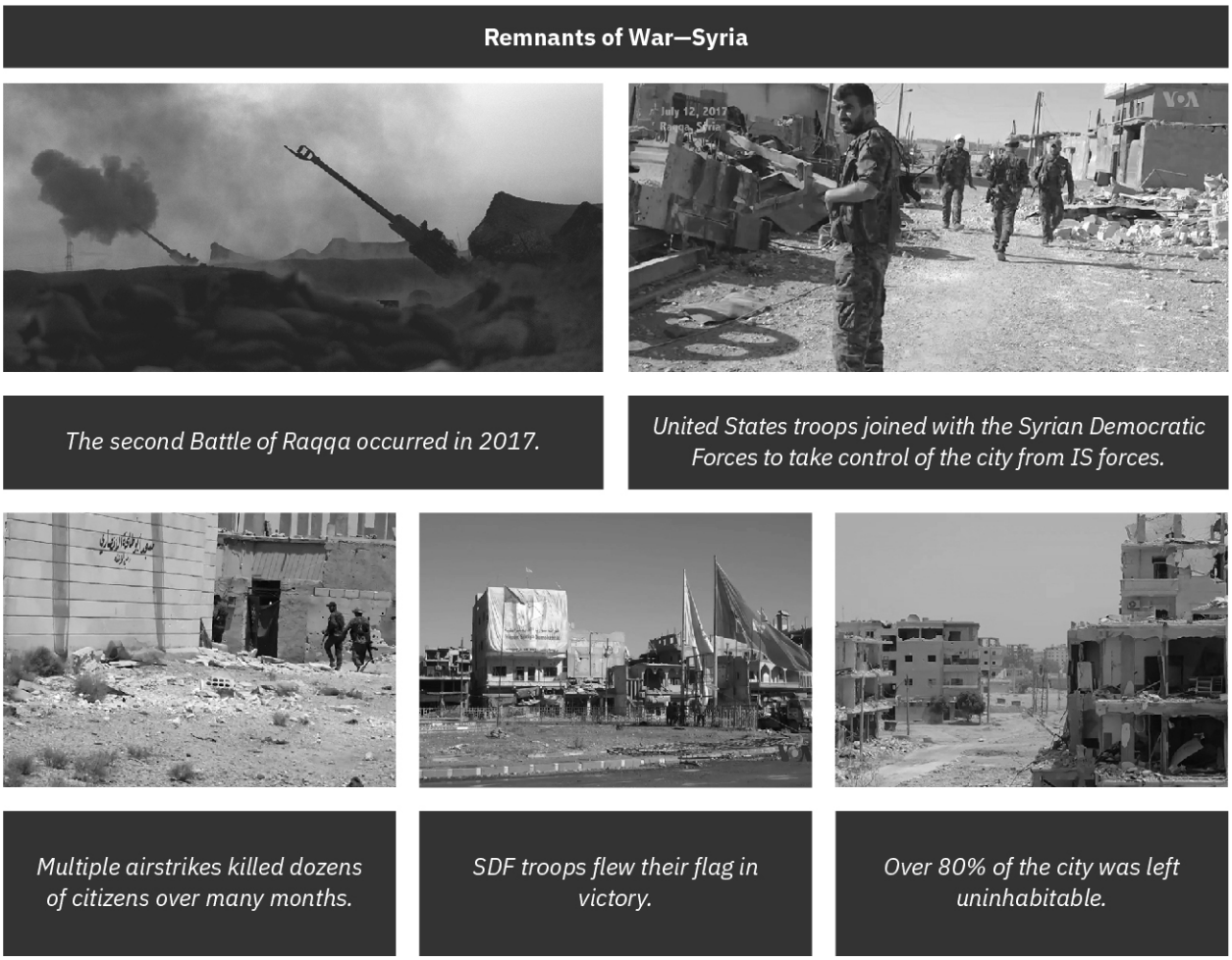



**FIGURE 18.23** Sample revision (credit: "SDF fighters in Raqqa downtown" by (top left) United States Marine Corps/ Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, (top right), (bottom left) & (bottom right) Mahmoud Bali/Wikimedia Commons,

Public Domain; (bottom center) Voice of America Kurdish/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The author makes revisions according to peer reviewer feedback and reflection of that feedback, particularly as it relates to purpose, organization, and audience. To get a better sense of the revision process, carefully examine the student's thought process.

> I revised the headline from "The Syrian War" to "Remnants of War—Syria." This headline is more engaging for readers and viewers and better reflects the purpose of my project: to convey the desperate situation in Syria resulting from the war that has ravaged citizens' lives.

> I changed the aesthetic by using a black-and-white filter on the photos. Not only does this contrast with the white space and white text, creating a more organized and cleaner look, it more effectively appeals to readers' emotions by emphasizing the destitution left by the Syrian War.

> I rewrote the captions of the final three pictures to make them closer to one another in word count, which is visually more pleasing. But even more important, they create a more powerful narrative, building upon one another.

> I reordered the final two pictures, ending on what I consider the most powerful image and most powerful statement: that 80 percent of the city was uninhabitable after the war. I intend to increase viewers' emotional responses with these changes.

Remember that you do not have to accept every suggestion a peer reviewer makes, but do give each question and suggestion careful thought. Pay close attention to your reviewer's questions and their perception of your purpose and audience in particular, ensuring that they match yours. And again, don't be afraid to experiment. One benefit of multimodal composition, particularly when created with digital media, is that it is relatively quick and easy to manipulate. One valuable tip is to duplicate your work in different workspaces as you make changes, thus saving the major elements of your project should something go wrong.

## 18.6 Evaluation: Transitions

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Implement conventions from a variety of modes and media to address a range of audiences.
- Match the capacities of different genres to various rhetorical situations.

Ask a peer to use the rubric below to read through your draft. Pay special attention to **transitions** in your composition. Remember that although transitions in various genres may differ, logical transitions are an important element in helping your audience "read" your text.

Linguistic text uses transitions to create relationships between sentences, between paragraphs, and between sections of text. Consider this sentence-to-sentence transition from "Celebrating a Win-Win: 30 Years of Progress under the Pollution Prevention Act" by Alexandra Dapolito Dunn.

> The act gave the agency new tools to join with states, tribes, and communities to prevent pollution *before* it happens. **It also** marked a shift in the paradigm of environmental protection, which had been mostly focused on end-of-pipe pollution control and clean-up strategies.

The phrase *it also* helps readers connect the ideas from each sentence: that the Prevention Pollution Act provides new tools *and* that it focuses on preventing pollution instead of the former strategy of addressing pollution after it occurs. The next sentence from the article begins a new paragraph.

> **Equally important**, the P2 Act strengthened EPA's role as an ally of American businesses, helping them save billions of dollars and improve operations.

Here, the author uses the transition phrase *equally important*, signaling a new idea related to the Prevention Pollution Act (that it saved American businesses money) and providing context for how it ranks in importance

(it is equally important). You can refer to Editing Focus: Paragraphs and Transitions for more information on textual transitions.

In multimodal compositions, you will have to think about transitions differently. First, consider how images and blank space work together when modes are mixed. Often, a margin of space around images helps organize a composition. Colors and other visual features can also serve as transitions, as seen in the following graphic. An important part of multimodal compositions is readability, particularly related to density of text. How might you revise this graphic to increase readability?




**FIGURE 18.24** United Nation poster (credit: "UNSR FOAA natural resources poster 2015 A1 (A/HRC/29/25)" by Maina Kiai/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Further, a composer must make decisions about how different media interact with one another when more than one genre is introduced. Think about multimodal compositions you encounter in your everyday life, such as websites or flyers. Those that are effective may have a host of different features, modes, and media, but they likely have elements in common: they are visually appealing, organized, and provide the information you need without overwhelming. Consider Figure 18.25, a photo essay located at the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter plant in Fort Worth, Texas.




**FIGURE 18.25** (credit: "Defense.gov photo" by Cherie Cullen/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The composer uses different modes to communicate clearly and help readers transition between ideas. While photographs of varying sizes are the primary media used to emphasize the evolution of aircraft design, the composer includes text boxes that overlay photographs and aid in providing context and transition between ideas. In addition, some of the photographs have been cut out and placed so as to rise above the flat surface of the background. In this case, the composer has chosen not to employ white space but to layer the text boxes and photographs on top of a large background photograph. Also missing are long textual blocks. The composer presents the necessary information in short excerpts and quotations.

## Rubric

As you know, *how* you present content within your compositions is as important as what content you choose to include. Moving smoothly among elements, genres, and incorporations of various media has a powerful impact on how your audience experiences your composition. Refer to the following rubric throughout the process to help you evaluate your transitions and other conventions.

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 Skillful | The composition effectively communicates a position through a variety of genres, introducing media successfully. The composition also shows ample evidence of the composer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The composer's position or claim is stated clearly, well supported, and directly related to the advocacy issue. The composer's ideas and the media chosen are always clearly presented. Concepts are consistently linked with linguistic, visual, or multimedia transitions that effectively connect ideas. | The project makes clear, substantive, and focused claims advocating for an issue. The composition effectively demonstrates the composer's understanding of purpose, organization, audience, and culture. |
| 4 Accomplished | The composition communicates a position adequately through a variety of genres, introducing media moderately successfully. The composition also shows some evidence of the composer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The composer's position or claim is stated and adequately supported. The ideas and media chosen are connected. Most concepts are linked with linguistic, visual, or multimedia transitions that connect ideas well. | The project makes mostly clear, substantive, and focused claim advocating for an issue. The composition usually demonstrates the composer's understanding of purpose, organization, audience, and culture. |
| 3 Capable | The composition's communication is sometimes unclear. Introduction of genres and media may be unfocused and ineffectual occasionally. The composition also shows limited evidence of the composer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The composer's position or claim is stated and reasonably well supported but may show lapses of convincing support at times. The ideas and media used are not always clearly connected. Some concepts are linked with linguistic, visual, or multimedia transitions, but the transitions may not smooth or appropriate. | The project makes claims that are sometimes unclear, lacking substance, or unfocused while advocating for an issue. The composition is missing some elements that demonstrate the composer's understanding of purpose, organization, audience, and culture. |

**TABLE 18.3**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 Developing | The composition's communication is often unclear. Introduction of genres and media is more unfocused than focused. The composition also shows emerging evidence of the composer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The composer's position or claim is weakly supported. Evidence is either insufficient or irrelevant. The ideas and media used are not effective for the purpose. If linguistic, visual, or multimedia transitions are present, they are usually ineffective or unrelated. | The project makes claims that are unclear and shows little substance or focus. The composition does not demonstrate the composer's understanding of purpose, organization, audience, and culture. |
| 1 Beginning | The composition does not communicate a position and the use of genres and media is ineffective. The composition shows little to no evidence of the composer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The composer's position or claim is not supported. The ideas and media used are disconnected. The composition is missing linguistic, visual, or multimedia transitions, or those used are incorrect, ineffective, or insufficient. | The project's claims are extremely weak. The composition has no discernible purpose, organization, audience, and culture. |
| **Comments:** | | | |

**TABLE 18.3**

## 18.7 Spotlight on . . . Technology

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Implement a variety of technologies while matching them to environments used to address rhetorical situations.
- Match the capacities of different modes and media to various rhetorical situations.

Technology is a crucial element in multimodal composition. In fact, the emergence of digital technology has vastly changed the landscape of multimodal composition in recent years. The rise of technology has resulted in new communication and composition practices in people's social, academic, and professional lives. Technology also plays a role in the rhetorical approach to writing and composition, increasing the complexity of expression, communication, and persuasion. Indeed, technology has both challenged and transformed long-held ideas about what it means to write.

Within the genre of multimodal composition, there is a growing call for design advocacy, part of which means redefining and recontextualizing the rhetoric of design to make multimodal compositions more inclusive not only for those with differing abilities but also for those marginalized according to social, technological, and cultural equity.

### Digital Deserts

One challenge posed by the incorporation of technology in multimodal composition is the presence of **digital**

**deserts**, or places affected by a digital divide, where residents have no access to the high-speed internet connections required to consume and create digital media. The Federal Communications Commission produced data indicating that in 2017, 21.3 million Americans lacked access to high-speed internet service, and of those people, 2.2 million households had no internet access at all. Studies show that this data may be understated, with even more people living in digital deserts. Rural parts of the country are disproportionately affected, but people living in low-income urban areas make up a significant portion of these numbers.

To participate in the consumption or creation of most multimodal composition, students need access to high-speed internet, defined by the FCC as a download speed of 25 Mbps and an upload speed of 3 Mbps. When no such access exists, cultural, social, and educational disparities arise within the genre of multimodal literature. Students who have less access to the technology required to read, view, or create multimodal works are excluded from this relatively new form of literature, leading to cultural underrepresentation and placing them at academic and social disadvantages.

## Enhancing Usability and Accessibility

Other considerations affecting multimodal compositions are usability and accessibility for readers of differing abilities. These may be associated with speech, hearing, vision, and/or motor impairments, among others. Universal accessibility aims to produce content that all people, regardless of abilities, can use, often with assistive technologies, solutions, and tools. Although new fields within the education landscape, such as universal design, have made great strides in usability and accessibility, multimodal content can enhance these strides in unique ways for students and for all consumers of multimodal compositions.

Multimodal compositions often include interaction constraints. These can be thought of as filters that limit a user's ability to access consumer content effectively. For example, a person who has vision impairment may experience interaction constraints when attempting to consume a photo essay. This constraint can be eased through technologies that help make the media more meaningful, such as text and audio alternatives that help the user experience the composition in a way similar to its original form.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are intended to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities. However, creators of multimodal compositions can adapt and apply WCAG rules and principles, such as those discussed below, even to compositions that are not web based.

### Provide Informative Titles and Headings

Content titles and headlines that accurately describe and distinguish the composition from others are helpful for contextualizing the composition. A headline usually refers to a composition within something larger, such as an article in a magazine, whereas a title encompasses an entire entity in itself, such as a novel or story that stands on its own. Consider the headline of the blog post you read earlier, "Celebrating a Win-Win: 30 Years of Progress under the Pollution Prevention Act." This headline is informative, telling the audience that the post is about the progress of the Pollution Prevention Act. It also informs readers of the author's perspective on this topic, clearly indicating her belief in the success of the act. For the photo essay about the war in Syria, the student writer revised the original headline to the more specific and meaningful *Remnants of War—Syria*.

### Use Headings and Subheads to Convey Meaning and Structure

Headings and short subheads group related information, clearly describe sections of text or media, and provide an outline of the content. Although they are a standard feature of informational texts, headings and subheads can be explored within multimodal compositions as organizational and accessibility features, as they are used in the poster shown in Figure 18.24, *United Nations poster*. The subheads clarify the structure of the composition, indicating features such as the introduction and author's objectives, and provide transitions between sections.

### Make Link Text Meaningful

When using hyperlinks within a multimodal composition, write text that describes the content of the link

target. Instead of using vague text such as "click here" or simply using the URL as the hyperlink, use the opportunity to include relevant information about the content of the link. This added content serves as a transition and emphasizes the relationship between the media. Alexandra Dapolito Dunn does this in the blog post in Annotated Sample Reading, specifying in her text the content of the link used:

> President Trump acknowledged the effectiveness of these and other EPA programs in a 2018 Executive Order that directed federal agencies to use EPA's P2 resources to meet their statutory sustainable purchasing requirements.

### Write Meaningful Text Alternatives for Graphics

All images and other graphic representations should have meaningful alternative text that helps readers understand the information portrayed in the image and its significance to the function of the composition. Consider Figure 18.26:



**FIGURE 18.26** Masses waving flags excitedly cheer for their national soccer teams. (credit: "Long Street party, Final Draw, FIFA 2010 World Cup Cape Town, South Africa "by flowcomm/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Briefly, the caption provides context and any other important information that cannot be gathered simply by looking at the image. Alternative (Alt) text, in contrast, describes *only* the information that can be gathered by simply looking at the image (the "what the image shows" part of the caption sentence). Alt text for this image might read "Large crowd of soccer fans waves national flags." Alternative text is imperative for those who have vision impairments because it enables them fuller comprehension of the media.

### Create Transcripts and Captions for Media

Audiovisual content, such as videos and podcasts, can be especially challenging for users with visual or auditory disabilities. Therefore, include clear and specific transcripts and captions to guide users through content in your multimodal compositions. In video transcripts, describe visual content (for example, "Joey enters the room" whenever that action occurs). For audio content, include text that indicates spoken information and other sound that is important for understanding the content (for example, "Trumpets softly

play the national anthem in the background"). Again, these small additions make your multimodal media accessible to consumers of all abilities.




**FIGURE 18.27** Closed captions and other forms of accessible text help those with different abilities consume multimodal text. The captioning in this image indicates that one figure offers help and the other figure shows appreciation. (credit: "Closed-Caption-Example" by Palmtree3000/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## Publishing Your Work

One of the most exciting parts of composing is publishing your work. Technology affords multimodal composers numerous options for publishing. Whether or not you create your composition through digital means, you can use technology in the publishing process. First, know that you want your published product to be a finished work that incorporates the revisions and edits you made during the peer review process. This step is occasionally skipped in the multimodal composition process, mostly because digital publishing can be more accessible than other traditional publishing methods. Nevertheless, as a composer, you want your published product to be your best work.

Depending on which modes and media you include, consider the following options for publishing your multimodal advocacy project.

- Blogs, which usually include text, images, and videos, can be self-published on free or inexpensive web-based platforms such as WordPress, Adobe Experience Manager, and others. Any author or group can start a blog and create posts that incorporate multimodal content.
- As an alternative to blogs, consider the digital **flipbook** format, the equivalent of a digital magazine. Platforms such as Issuu allow content creators to organize content in a format in which the viewer scrolls left and right by "flipping" pages. Flipbooks offer more options for layout, organization, and transitions.
- You may instead choose to publish your completed composition on a **video** hosting site such as YouTube or Vimeo.
- You can also use technology to publish non-digital multimodal compositions, such as performances, presentations, or hard-copy posters and the like. This kind of publication typically involves another layer of mode mixing, such as recording a live performance or uploading a picture of an artwork to a digital platform.

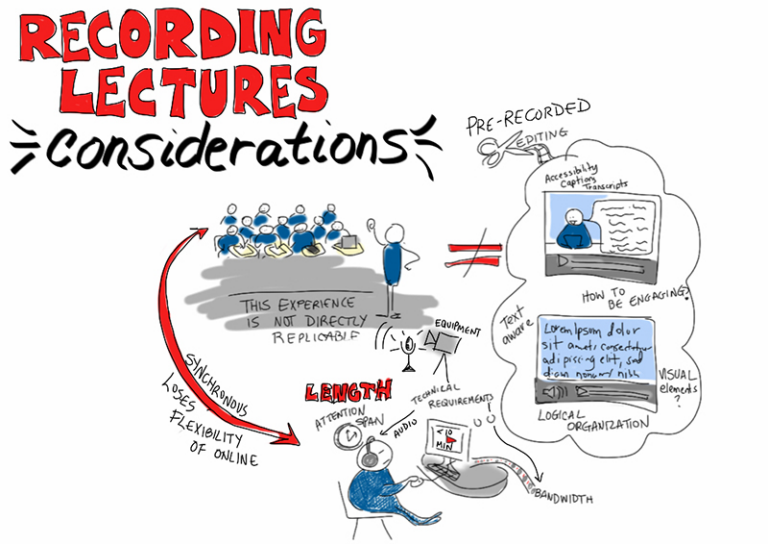



**FIGURE 18.28** Publishing a multimedia composition will allow you to present your best work to spread your message. (credit: "Recording Lectures ... Considerations" by Giulia Forsythe/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

No matter what technology you choose, you will want to follow an organized writing process and ensure that your choices honor your purpose, your audience, and the organization you have chosen for your work. Thinking specifically about your advocacy project, consider what you want to accomplish and to whom you are speaking. *What digital publishing options can accomplish your goals? How does your intended audience consume digital media?* Choosing your publication method is as important as choosing the modes and media.

## 18.8 Portfolio: Multimodalism

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Write about the development of multimodal composition.
- Compose a reflection on how the processes affect your work.

After creating your multimodal advocacy project, think critically about the development process, including how you chose genres, modes, and specific media to include; your process for creating transitions; and ways in which you incorporated usability and accessibility into your finished project.

### Reflective Writing: Letter to Your Instructor

As you reflect on your multimodal composition and the process you used to create it, answer these questions, supporting your answers with evidence from your project. Then compose a letter to your instructor that incorporates your answers and addresses any other parts of the composition process that come to mind.

- How would you articulate your role as a composer? (Hint: Who are you as the author—what is your identity in this role? To whom are you speaking, and for what purpose?)
- Why did you choose the advocacy topic that you did? Do you have a personal connection?
- On which parts of the composition process (planning, research, drafting, revising) did you spend the most time? Why did these parts occupy you the longest? What, if anything, would you change if you could do it again?
- How did considering your audience change your development process? What opportunities did you have to think critically about social and cultural issues?
- Why did you choose the rhetorical devices that you did? What factors helped you decide on them? How did the situation influence your rhetorical appeals?
- What factors helped you determine the primary genre, mode(s), and media you chose? Did you change

those elements at any point in the composition process? If so, why?
- How did peer review and revision help clarify your ideas, organization, or composition?
- How did you show relationships between the ideas and media? What changes did you make to improve your transitions?
- What did you learn about your topic and the composition process through the revision process?
- How did you address considerations for usability and accessibility, using technology or otherwise?
- Which parts of the composition came more easily than others?
- How did thinking about publishing affect your final product?

## Further Reading

These titles are examples of multimodal compositions that will help you view and analyze the variety of possibilities present in the multimodal genres.

The following is an example of the podcast genre, which uses the aural mode. However, the accompanying website incorporates multiple supporting modes, with images, hyperlinks, and other information that bring in other genres to increase understanding.

Ridgen, David, host. "The Family." *Someone Knows Something*, season 1, episode 1, CBC, 26 Feb. 2016.

The following is an example of the photo essay genre, though the author has turned his photo essay into a video, incorporating a different supporting mode.

Kalina, Noah. *Noah Takes a Photo of Himself Every Day for 20 Years*. *YouTube*, uploaded by Noah Kalina, 13 Jan. 2020.

The following is an example of a public service announcement, delivered as a video. Note the use of multiple modes and the rhetorical devices present in convincing viewers to pursue careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math).

*Wishes*. CA Technologies, 6 Jan. 2017.

The following is an example similar to the photo essay genre, although it incorporates elements of a blog with a text introduction.

*The Picture Show: Photo Stories from NPR*. NPR, 2021.

The following is an example of the documentary genre, a primarily visual genre that uses various rhetorical devices to persuade the audience.

*Food, Inc*. Directed by Robert Kenner, Magnolia Pictures / Participant / River Road Entertainment, 2008.

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# Scripting for the Public Forum: Writing to Speak

19



**FIGURE 19.1** American crisis manager, lawyer, author, and television producer Judy Smith (b. 1958) speaks at the Roanoke College Regional Forum. Smith and her company, Smith & Company, served as the inspiration for the ABC television series *Scandal*, which ran from 2012 to 2018. (credit: "Judy Smith" by roanokecollege/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**19.1** Writing, Speaking, and Activism
**19.2** Podcast Trailblazer: Alice Wong
**19.3** Glance at Genre: Language Performance and Visuals
**19.4** Annotated Student Sample: "Are New DOT Regulations Discriminatory?" by Zain A. Kumar
**19.5** Writing Process: Writing to Speak
**19.6** Evaluation: Bridging Writing and Speaking
**19.7** Spotlight on ... Delivery/Public Speaking
**19.8** Portfolio: Everyday Rhetoric, Rhetoric Every Day


**INTRODUCTION** While writing academic text may take up the bulk of your time as a student, other aspects of life involve writing as well, especially as you move toward an engaged social life and a career. One personal or professional task in particular is writing to speak. Whether speaking as part of a classroom assignment, a planned address, a professional presentation, or recording a video to post to a video-sharing social media platform, **script writing** shares much more with traditional academic writing than you might first believe. A successful speaking event is not achieved by a perfectly planned outline or even extensive research and knowledge on a topic—although these are important aspects. No, the key to memorable speech is the speaker's connection with an **audience**, or group of listeners.

Greek philosophers and educators wrote the first texts for public speaking over 2,000 years ago. In fact, Greek

philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE) wrote the treatise *On Rhetoric*, which covers many of the same concepts and topics you will encounter in this chapter, including rhetorical appeals, awareness of audience, and organization. As it turns out, effectively engaging an audience through speech is a time-honored endeavor. But new technologies, channels, and avenues of communication have expanded the opportunities for more and more voices to be heard.

In this chapter, you will read about podcast trailblazer Alice Wong, read a student script, and write your own script or outline advocating for a cause of your choice. Speaking of activism, you will discover how script writing and activism go hand in hand, opening new possibilities for communicating with your audience.

## 19.1 Writing, Speaking, and Activism

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Articulate how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes.
- Identify and apply rhetorical concepts such as shifts in voice, diction, tone, formality, design, medium, and structure appropriate to a speech.
- Match the capacities of different environments to varying rhetorical situations.



The **genre** of this chapter is script writing. A genre is a type of composition that uses specific features, follows a particular style or format, and is shaped by the author's **purpose**, or what the author wants to accomplish. In a script, the purpose is what the author wants to communicate to the audience and wants the audience to think about or do after the speech. Speech is often used as a vehicle to persuade audiences or move them to action.

### Writing for and beyond the Academy



By now, you are likely familiar with the concept of **rhetoric**, which, in academic terms, describes how writers and speakers use language to persuade. Rhetoric has its roots in ancient Greece, dating back to Homer's epic poems (mid-8th century BCE), and was developed by the philosophers Socrates (c. 470–399 BCE) and Aristotle into a system for understanding and teaching persuasion. If you have ever analyzed a speech or story to determine how the author develops or supports claims, chances are you have studied rhetoric. Refer to Rhetorical Analysis: Interpreting the Art of Rhetoric and Position Argument: Practicing the Art of Rhetoric for more about rhetoric.



**FIGURE 19.2** Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle was a leading thinker who proposed concepts of rhetoric that you continue to use today. (credit: "Aristotle transparent" by Alvaro Marques Hijazo/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

However, rhetoric is not simply an academic exercise designed to be used in formal writing or literature. Rhetoric is the basis of the spoken language people use every day, and it has a purpose. As an example, think of a commercial or advertisement. Advertisers use rhetoric to try to convince an audience that their beauty product is superior to other companies' products, or that it's cooler to drive their car than another car. Indeed, effective speech uses some form of rhetoric, combined with purpose, to make an impact on an audience.

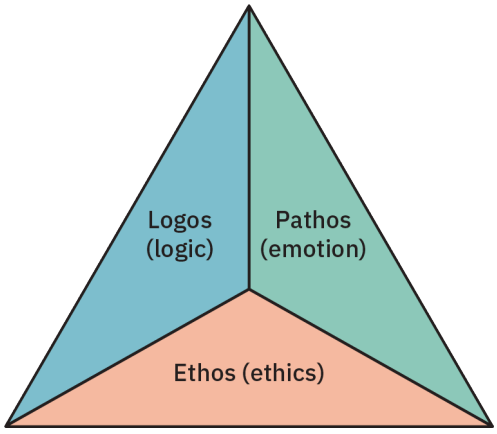



**FIGURE 19.3** Writers and speakers often use rhetorical appeals to persuade their audiences. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

Figure 19.3 illustrates how three types of appeal form the elements of a strong argument. In brief, these are the rhetorical appeals available to writers:

- **Ethos** is an appeal to ethics, which, in rhetorical terms, helps establish the writer's or speaker's credibility. You must establish credibility with your audience so that they feel they can trust what you say. Ethos often invokes the speaker's character and qualifications on the subject. Speakers may strengthen their ethical

appeal by using or referring to patriotic or religious documents in their speeches.

- **Logos** is an appeal to logic and intelligence. Logos appeals rely on strong and sound reasoning, often supported by facts and statistics. Support your position with **critical thinking** and clear, credible **evidence**. To give yourself credibility, use respected, reliable sources that are properly attributed.
- **Pathos** is an appeal to emotion. Supporting your position by using pathos involves evoking in your audience emotions, such as fear, anger, sympathy, guilt, or sorrow. This appeal often involves dramatic or vivid language, anecdotes or illustrations, and a more personal tone. For more information on ethos, logos, and pathos, see Rhetorical Analysis: Interpreting the Art of Rhetoric and Position Argument: Practicing the Art of Rhetoric.

## Identifying General Purpose

The purpose of speech, like any type of writing, is directly related to the **rhetorical situation**, which defines how a speaker will use communication to influence an audience's perspective. Speech is created for a specific time, place, and audience, by a speaker who makes choices on the basis of the rhetorical and cultural context.

Speech typically falls into one of three categories. Some speak to teach the audience something or to explain something. The purpose of this speech is to **inform**. Some speak to influence an audience's beliefs, behaviors, or attitudes. The purpose of this speech is to **persuade**. Some speak to amuse the audience. The purpose of this speech is to **entertain**. In some instances, the purposes will overlap; a speaker may want both to persuade and to evoke emotion, for example. Consider President Franklin D. Roosevelt's (1882–1945) Pearl Harbor speech (https://openstax.org/r/Pearl_Harbor). It was delivered as an informational speech on December 8, 1941, at a joint session of Congress to address Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor, which occurred a day earlier. However, Roosevelt crafted the speech to stir emotions and convince Congress to formally declare war against Japan, officially bringing the United States into World War II (1939–1945).

When writing to speak, consider whether you want to inform, entertain, or persuade your audience. These purposes are often combined, as in the Pearl Harbor speech, and the medium through which you present speech may use different formats and channels (podcast, YouTube, Facebook Live, Periscope, Vimeo, presentation to a live audience, and so on). However, your ultimate goal will always be to connect meaningfully with your audience to achieve your general purpose.

The formula for establishing your purpose is fairly straightforward. Identify your audience, determine what you want to tell them, then analyze the best way to reach them. By following these steps, you will have defined your purpose, and you can create effective and meaningful speech.

### Informative Speech

Informative speech explains, describes, or demonstrates. The speaker's aim is to provide information that will be comprehensible to audience members. Informative speech may cover topics such as describing a location, an object, or a person; explaining an idea or how to operate something, a thermostat, for example; or demonstrating how to change a tire. The speech will be organized according to the specific purpose and audience. Informative speech usually incorporates media—for example, visuals, three-dimensional objects, or video—to illustrate the content of the speech.

### Entertaining Speech

Entertaining speech features the use of humor to connect with an audience. This speech may comment on the humor present in everyday situations or use humor for social commentary. When you speak to entertain, you will call upon elements of humor such as self-deprecation, physical comedy, absurdity, wordplay, topical observation, or dark comedy.

### Persuasive Speech

Persuasive speech seeks to convince audience members of something or influence their beliefs, values, or behavior. This type of speech either reinforces an audience's existing beliefs on a topic, changes their beliefs,

or inspires them to act on something. When you speak persuasively, you will use many of the same principles you used when you wrote the position argument in Position Argument: Practicing the Art of Rhetoric.

You likely will present your **thesis**, or statement of your position, at the beginning of your script and then devote most of the script to supporting that position. On the other hand, you might consider presenting the thesis later in the script, after you have provided compelling evidence to support it. In this case, the delayed thesis creates a dramatic effect. You might also save it for the end if you know your audience is likely to disagree with it. You can structure a script written to persuade as a five-part argument with the following features:

- An **introduction** that hooks, or engages, the audience sets the **tone**, or writer's attitude toward the audience or subject, and states the thesis if is presented early.
- **Background information** provides **context** and details for the situation being discussed. These are closely linked to purpose and explain why the audience should care about the topic.
- The **body** of the script explains the argument (if persuasive) and provides compelling reasons and evidence.
- **Refutation of counterclaims** disproves or rules out objections.
- A **conclusion** presents a closing argument, stating or restating the thesis and summarizing the main points of the script.
- **Transitions** within the script guide the listener smoothly from one idea to the next.

## Audience Awareness

When you are writing to speak, audience awareness is particularly important. After all, the audience is often right there in front of you! Your goal is to speak directly to them, to evoke emotion or make them react, even if silently. Consider your audience when choosing your tone, language, and approach to a topic. Knowing your audience and crafting your writing for them will help you connect and thus fulfill your purpose. Among the most famous speeches of all time, Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech (https://openstax.org/r/I_Have_a) is known for inspiring civil rights progress in the United States.



**FIGURE 19.4** Considering your audience is an important part of writing for speech. Here, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968) connects to an enthusiastic audience. The photograph was taken on August 28, 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., when Dr. King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. (credit: "USMC-09611" by Slick-o-bot/U.S. Marine Corps/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

All speech is designed for a particular audience at a particular time. Because effective speakers seek to know their audience, they consider demography, the statistical study of human populations, focusing on categories such as age, gender, education, religion, race, and so forth. **Demographics** are the statistical data gathered from studies in these and other areas relating to populations. Although your audience may be quite specific and you may know some of its demographics, it is important to design your script outline to include examples, ideas, and appeals that are broadly understood. The circumstances that lead your audience to you will also influence their interest and reaction to your presentation. A presentation to a captive audience—those who attend because of some outside force rather than their own choice—will require you to spend more time building common ground than you would with an audience you know to be more receptive. Contrast this situation with a speech at a political rally, where voluntary attendees are likely to share political beliefs. As is evident, understanding your audience is imperative to knowing how to speak to them. Considering their attitudes, beliefs, cultures, and values, including those they share with one another and with you as the speaker, will allow you to understand how much attention you need to devote to convincing the audience of your viewpoint.

When analyzing your audience in this way, you also will want to consider their prior knowledge and relationship with the topic. *Do they already have a solid understanding of the topic?* If they do, there is no need to spend much time on background information. *Are they largely opposed to the premise of your thesis?* If so, you will need to provide effective reasoning and strong evidence to convince them. The amount of background knowledge required will influence how you shape your script or outline and thus your speech.

Audience awareness also can help you decide which rhetorical appeals and devices to use within your script. You need to consider how you relate to the audience. *Are you an expert on a topic? Are you a peer in their community? Do you (or they) have cultural intricacies that influence your understanding of the topic?* These questions, combined with cultural awareness, can guide your composition.

### Cultural Context



**Culture**—the shared values, customs, arts, and other traits of a group of people—is an important consideration when developing a relationship with your audience. Speech—particularly formal, persuasive speech—is a part of the American social and political systems. Candidates for political office commonly use speech during campaigns. Consider former president Barack Obama's (b. 1961) introductory speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention (https://openstax.org/r/introductory_speech), which political scholars credit with his rise to the presidency. Lawyers regularly use speech to argue their cases before judges and juries. Religious leaders have long used speech from the pulpit to challenge and influence congregants. Moreover, as American culture morphs and grows, speech has become an important part of everyday life in ways not witnessed in earlier times.

Radio and television have existed as vehicles for delivering speech for many years. But in the past two decades, speech has found new outlets, including podcasts (streamed spoken-word audio), YouTube videos, and social media videos. This influx of new formats has created a cultural shift, making speech, and by extension its influences on a large audience, more accessible and representative. This shift has also increased the level of social, political, and economic activism. Understanding the cultural context of your audience and the subject of your speech is as important as any other part of it, for this context will dictate whether your words are effectively received.

# 19.2 Trailblazer

## Podcast Trailblazer: Alice Wong

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Articulate how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes.
- Match the capacities of different environments (e.g., print, electronic) to varying rhetorical situations.



**FIGURE 19.5** In this photo taken in 1990, Alice Wong participates via robot in the 25th anniversary celebration of the Americans with Disabilities Act. (credit: "Alice Wong participated at the 25th anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act via robot" by Pete Souza/The White House/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

*"Stories are the closest we can come to shared experience."*

### The Disability Visibility Project

Alice Wong (b. 1974) is an activist, writer, and media creator from San Francisco, California. After graduating from Indiana University in 1997 with majors in English and sociology, Wong went on to earn a master's degree in sociology from the University of California, San Francisco, where she later worked. Wong has been widely published, including feature pieces appearing in publications ranging from the *New York Times* to *Teen Vogue*, and her activism work has been featured in CNN's series *United Shades of America (https://openstax.org/r/Unitedshades)*. In addition to writing, Wong regularly creates multimedia content, including podcasts. From 2013 to 2015, she was a member of the National Council on Disability, appointed by then president Barack Obama.

Wong founded and serves as the director of the Disability Visibility Project (DVP), an online community that aims to create a space where disability media and culture are recognized, created, and shared. The project is personal for Wong, who has been unable to walk since childhood. The DVP also provides an online place for people to share and connect about disability culture. The organization encourages those living with disabilities to share their stories through the website or the app StoryCorps (https://openstax.org/r/storycorps), which collects and shares oral history. The DVP curates "disabled media" from these collected oral histories in the form of tweets, audio clips, podcasts, blog posts, images, and so on. The project also publishes original written

and multimedia content created from the perspectives of people who are disabled. Topics include issues related to **ableism** (discrimination against people with disabilities), culture, and politics.

Wong is also the host and a coproducer of the Disability Visibility Project podcast (https://openstax.org/r/Disability_Visibility), launched in 2017. She uses the podcast to give a voice and platform to issues concerning politics and culture as they relate to disability rights and social justice. Through conversations with diverse guests, Wong amplifies disability media and culture on topics ranging from health care to climate change to the arts, and everything in between.

Wong has also partnered with #CripTheVote (https://openstax.org/r/CriptheVote), a nonpartisan campaign to bring awareness of disability issues into the public and political arenas, and Access Is Love (https://openstax.org/r/accessislove), an initiative to build accessibility into everyday life. She is the editor of *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century*, an anthology of personal stories from members of the disability community. The book contains curated text such as blog posts, manifestos, eulogies, and testimonies to Congress in order to bring to light the diverse experiences of people in this community. The aim of the anthology is intersectional, meaning it emphasizes the crossroads of living with disabilities and other issues, including race, class, gender, culture, and religion.

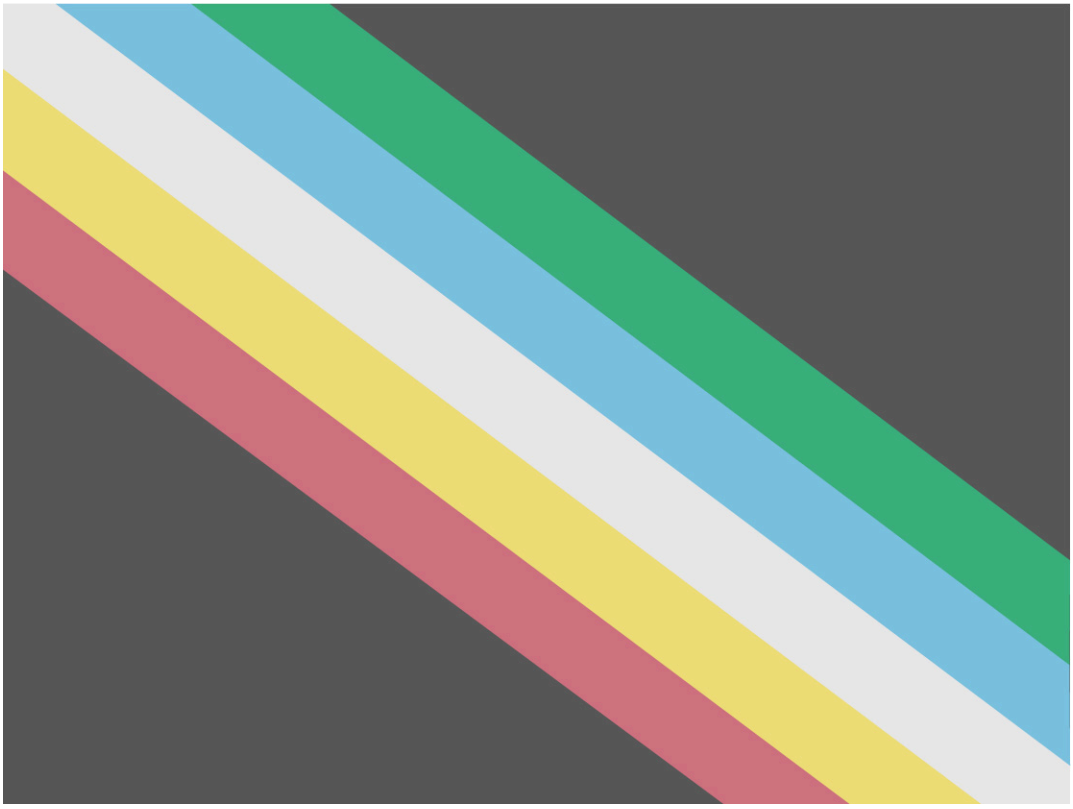


**FIGURE 19.6** The disability pride flag was redesigned in 2021 in order to be more inclusive by utilizing muted colors and straight diagonal lines. Each color represents differen disabilites, experiences, and identities: red for physical disabilities, gold for neurodiversity, white for invisible disabilities and disabilities that haven't been diagnosed, blue for emotional and psychiatric disabilities, and green for sensory disabilities. The faded black background acknowledges and mourns victims of violence and abuse. (credit: "Visually safe disability pride flag," by Ann Magil, Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

## Discussion Questions

1. Why might Alice Wong look to speech and other media to communicate activist ideas surrounding the disability community?

2. How is the impact of writing for speech different from writing for print? What comes across when an activist speaks rather than represents their ideas in print?
3. How does social media both enhance and limit accessibility within the disabled community? How is this true for other cultural communities?
4. Wong says that storytelling can be more than written words. How can other forms of media—she lists emojis, memes, selfies, and tweets—communicate rhetorical ideas as effectively as, or more effectively than, traditional written storytelling?

## 19.3 Glance at Genre: Language Performance and Visuals

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply appropriate genre conventions for structure, tone, mechanics, format, and design in writing speech.
- Demonstrate relationships between ideas, patterns of organization, and interplay of verbal and nonverbal elements.
- Articulate how genre conventions are shaped and vary by purpose, culture, and expectation.

Oral communication skills are integral to personal and professional success. While many aspects of script writing are similar to those used in writing for print or electronic formats, speech incorporates another domain with its own considerations.

### Writing for Listeners and Readers

The script for a speech may begin as a traditional text, but it must be written and delivered in a way that makes it available and accessible to readers and listeners alike. Think of your favorite radio show or podcast. If the author wrote as if composing a written text with no consideration for listeners, the effect for listeners would likely be compromised.

When writing for listeners, think about not only what you want to express but also how you can best support your ideas and claims. Because speech relies heavily on audience members' auditory skills, listeners with little practice in these skills or who learn better through visual or experiential text may be at a disadvantage. Therefore, the speaker-writer must make a concerted effort to support listeners in other ways.

### Writing for Delivery

Text for speech will be only as good as its delivery. If you write for speech in the exact way you write an academic paper, the result is likely to be lackluster, for speech is immediate—that is, it makes an impact as soon as it is heard. A powerful written argument, if orally delivered without voice modulation or emphasis, is unlikely to move listeners and likely to have fluency glitches, as written sentences tend to be longer and more complex. Although topical outlines for a paper and a script might look similar, the way you translate ideas into writing for speech will vary to increase effectiveness. One strategy for making this "conversion" is to read your script aloud during or after writing. Hearing the script will allow you to make revisons and edits to ensure oral fluency, or smooth delivery, including pronunciation, phrasing, stress, and tone.

You can write effectively for delivery by doing the following:

- Support information by including visual and audio aids to help the audience remember and understand information.
- Demonstrate information through action, such as dynamic movement or demonstrations.
- Engage your audience with vocal techniques such as gestures, inflection, changes in speed and pitch, and strategically placed pauses.

## Writing with Media

Script writing and presentations often take a multimedia approach. Multimedia can include a variety of channels, media types, and visual aids, including videos, images, infographics, and animations that enhance understanding and bring a new level of engagement among media consumers. The use of media can reinforce the content of a script or presentation, provide a vehicle for delivery, and generally enhance the speaker's purpose and message.

While formal speeches are still featured at contemporary political, religious, and academic events, other forms of media have become alternatives to traditional public addresses. Free and readily available video platforms such as YouTube mean that more people than ever before are able to share their experiences. Also free and readily accessible for the most part, podcasts are increasingly used as a vehicle to share ideas through an oral medium. Plus, podcasts such as *Serial* (https://openstax.org/r/Serial) have led to changes within the criminal justice system. Social media platforms now are filled with multimedia, including video, audio, and images, that play a more prominent role than at the time these platforms first were launched. As you develop your presentation in the next section of this chapter, consider which methods of presentation you might explore in order to harness the power of media to your benefit.

## Key Terms

Below are key terms and characteristics of scripts and other oral media.

- **audience:** the people for and to whom a script is written.
- **Body:** the middle and main portion of a script, in which key ideas, evidence, and reasons are presented and elaborated.
- **Citation:** credit given to a source used in a writer's research.
- **Conclusion:** the final portion of a script, in which the thesis and key ideas are reiterated and/or expanded to include action or additional consideration.
- **ethos:** appeal to readers'/listeners' ethics, establishing authority and credibility.
- **Evidence:** information, such as facts, statistics, and examples, that proves or disproves the validity of a key idea.
- **Introduction:** the first portion of a script, in which the author engages the audience and usually states the thesis.
- **Logos:** appeal to readers'/listeners' logic, or reasoning.
- **Parallelism:** a rhetorical technique of using similar words, phrases, or other grammatical constructions to connect related ideas, emphasize a point, or add rhythm.
- **Pathos:** appeal to readers'/listeners' emotions.
- **purpose:** a writer's reason for creating a script, often to persuade readers/listeners to agree with a viewpoint or take action.
- **reasoning:** logical and sensible explanation of a concept.
- **Repetition:** a rhetorical technique of repeating a key word or phrase for emphasis.
- **Rhetorical appeals:** methods of persuasion, including ethos, logos, and pathos.
- **Rhetorical devices:** ways that writers use language to convey meaning, create emphasis, and draw attention to their words and ideas. Repetition and parallelism are rhetorical devices.
- **Signpost language:** statements that help the audience know where your presentation is going. Transitions are examples of signpost language.
- **Topic:** the subject of a script.
- **Thesis:** a statement indicating a writer's/speaker's position on the topic.

# 19.4 Annotated Student Sample: "Are New DOT Regulations Discriminatory?" by Zain A. Kumar

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how conventions of writing, including rhetorical devices, reflect purpose, culture, or audience expectations.
- Analyze the relationships between ideas and patterns of organization in a speech.

## Introduction

A script may take many forms, but effective speakers connect with their audience, clearly state a main idea or thesis, and support that thesis by backing up key ideas with evidence and reasoning. In this feature, you will read a speech that examines whether U.S. Department of Transportation regulations discriminate against people who depend on service animals. The full transcript of the speech, rather than the outline, is provided here to allow you to study aspects of delivery as well as preparation. Notice not only the disapproving tone and conversational style but also the way in which the author builds and supports the thesis.

## LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

### It's a Dog Fight

> Several years ago, I sat in the waiting area of a major airport, trying to ignore the constant yapping of a small, clearly agitated dog being restrained with difficulty on the lap of a fellow passenger. An airline rep approached the passenger and asked the only two questions allowed by law: "Is that a service animal? What service does it provide for you?"

> "Yes. It keeps me from having panic attacks," the woman said defiantly, and the airline employee retreated.

> Shortly after that, another passenger arrived at the gate. She gripped the high, stiff handle on the harness of a Labrador retriever that wore a vest emblazoned with the words "The Seeing Eye." Without warning, the smaller dog launched itself from its owner's lap, snarling and snapping at the guide dog. The owner of the small dog jumped up and retrieved her animal from the Labrador's vest and stomped back to her seat. That neither she nor the still-yapping dog had an obvious panic attack amazed me, as I questioned, to myself of course, what service was being provided—other than a moment of exercise for the woman and her dog.

***Introduction.*** *The opening anecdote grabs the listener's attention with a relatable story about an interaction at an airport. It provides an illustration of the point that Zain A. Kumar will make next in the introduction.*

***Pathos.*** *Using strong words such as snarling and snapping, Kumar connects his argument to emotions.*

***Tone.*** *Kumar clearly expresses disapproval of the small dog and its owner, implying that the woman is lying and the dog is untrained.*

> The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has recently established new regulations regarding service animals on domestic and international flights. This regulation has provoked a flurry of protests by people who are accustomed to taking their pets for free in airplane cabins by claiming they are emotional support animals. Are these new regulations discriminating against persons with disabilities? Let's look at some details.

***Signpost Language.*** *Kumar uses a rhetorical question, or a question used for effect and not meant to be answered, to establish the central discussion in the script: whether restrictions put in place for service animals infringe on the rights of people with disabilities. This signpost language tells listeners that this is important information.*

***Introduction.*** *Following the anecdote, this introductory paragraph establishes the problem and provides background information.*

***Tone.*** *Kumar's use of rhetorical questions and phrases such as Let's look at creates an informal, conversational tone that is well suited to script.*

> The new rule has 12 provisions. The first is the definition: a service animal is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability.

***Definition.*** *The definition of a service animal provides context for the focus of the script.*

> Okay, how was the service dog trained? Well, as a puppy it lived with a foster family that taught it basic behavior and socialization. When it was between 13 and 19 months old, it came to the Seeing Eye campus to work with an individual instructor for four months of intensive training. At the end of the four months, the dog took a final exam: leading the instructor successfully on a field trip to New York City. About 75 percent of the dogs pass this training and are matched with a person who is blind or visually impaired. The new owner works with the dog and its instructor for an additional 25 days on campus before the owner and the dog go home. But the training doesn't end there. The new owner continually reinforces the dog with praise and correction, and The Seeing Eye staff members are always available for telephone consultations and even home visits if needed.

***Tone.*** *The question opening the paragraph contributes to the conversational tone of the script.*

***Evidence.*** *This paragraph firmly establishes the "credibility" of the guide dog, detailing its training. This rigorous process will be contrasted with the background of the emotional support dog from the opening anecdote to draw a comparison.*

> Now, what about that emotional support dog in the airport? The law requires no specific training for emotional support animals. The rationale is that their presence is enough to support people who have anxiety, depression, or stress. The only requirement is that the animal be manageable in public and not create a nuisance. In light of this requirement, the little dog did not do well.

***Evidence.*** *This paragraph contrasts the guide dog with the emotional support dog and shows that the latter cannot meet even the minimum standard set by the airlines.*

> The second provision of the new DOT regulation is that emotional support animals are no longer considered service animals. However, the third provision grants psychiatric service animals the same status as other service animals. In other words, a person with an emotional or psychiatric disability can still obtain and travel with a service companion that has appropriate documentation.

***Transition.*** *This signpost language allows the listener to know that the author is moving from one key idea to another.*

> Three other regulations deal with this documentation. The DOT has developed forms attesting to the animal's health, behavior, and training. Airlines may require these to be submitted 48 hours before travel or may require them at the departure gate. Providing these forms is no problem for a passenger with a Seeing Eye–certified or other officially trained dog.



**FIGURE 19.7** Certified Seeing Eye dogs provide accessibility to those with vision impairments. (credit: "Kaye Kay-Smith and Patsy Reddy" by New Zealand Government, Office of the Governor-General/Wikimedia Creative Commons, CC BY 4.0)

> But what about the certification for an emotional support animal? Until the new regulations were passed, this wasn't a problem. A person wishing to claim a pet as an emotional support animal could simply go online and purchase certification from a for-profit agency. On one such site, for $54, a basic kit offers lifetime registration in a national database maintained by the company, plus a framed certificate, ID card with leash clip, and two official-looking vest patches. "Deluxe" and "premium" packages added more goodies for $114 and $154, respectively. The applicant could also obtain a certification letter from a licensed mental health professional for an additional fee. Just out of curiosity, I took the free online assessment—10 multiple-choice questions like these: "In the past two weeks, how often have you had little interest or pleasure in doing things that you usually like to do?" "How often have you felt sad or depressed?" "How often have you felt worried, anxious, or on edge?" The multiple choice options were *never*, *sometimes*, or *often*; I replied with 5 *often*, 4 *sometimes*, and 1 *never* response. My results were immediate: "Congratulations! Based on your responses, you are a good candidate to qualify for an ESA." All that was left for me to do was fill in my credit card info and upload a photo of my pet to have a certified emotional support animal. This certification, by the way, must be renewed annually—for a fee. Big surprise!

***Supporting Evidence.*** *Though it has not yet been expressly stated, audience members should have a sense of the thesis. This anecdote serves as evidence that Kumar will use to support the claim that regulations are not discriminatory.*

***Tone.*** *The sarcastic words "Big surprise!" reflect Kumar's disapproval of the for-profit agency issuing certification for service animals.*

> Additional DOT regulations allow airlines to require that service animals be harnessed, leashed, or tethered at all times in the airport and on the aircraft and to limit a single passenger to two service animals. The regulations also allow airlines to require a service animal to fit within its handler's foot space on the aircraft. This is not a hardship; I have personally seen a full-grown Labrador tuck herself comfortably into the space for carry-ons and go to sleep.

***Personal Anecdote.*** *Kumar frequently uses personal anecdotes to support his points and establish credibility on the subject.*

> The bottom line? I don't believe the DOT's new regulations are discriminatory.

***Thesis.*** *Although the structure is unusual, Kumar finally states the thesis: the new regulations do not discriminate*

*against persons with disabilities.*

> Developed after receiving over 15,000 comments from individuals with disabilities; airline and airport personnel, including flight attendants; and other members of the public, these restrictions close loopholes that have been exploited by pet owners who want to take their pets along in airplane cabins without using a pet carrier or paying the pet fee. Individuals with a genuine need can still be accompanied by their documented and trained service animals—including psychiatric service animals—when they travel. In fact, travel just became less challenging in one major respect: people no longer have to abide fake emotional support animals having fuzzy four-footed panic attacks during the trip.

***Logos.*** *Kumar uses logical appeals to support the thesis, talking through points in an organized and rational manner.*

***Reasoning.*** *Drawing on previous anecdotes, evidence, and explanations, Kumar explains why the new regulations do not discriminate against people with real disabilities.*

***Parallel Conclusion.*** *Kumar concludes the speech in the same casual manner and tone as the rest of the script. In addition, the ending is meaningful, once again drawing in the reader's/listener's attention by circling back to the opening anecdote.*

### Discussion Questions

1. What is the impact of opening the introduction with an anecdote?
2. Which parts of the script show that the author has a good understanding of the audience and is trying to connect with them? Explain your response.
3. Why has the author used rhetorical questions within the script?
4. Why might the author have chosen to save the thesis for near the end of the script? What effect does this placement have on the overall text?
5. How does the author support the thesis with reasoning? In your opinion, is it sufficiently supported? Why or why not?

## 19.5 Writing Process: Writing to Speak

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Develop a writing project through multiple drafts.
- Compose texts that use rhetorical concepts appropriately in a speech.
- Apply effective shifts in voice, diction, tone, formality, design, medium, and structure.
- Demonstrate orality as an aspect of culture.
- Provide and act on productive feedback to works in progress through the collaborative and social aspects of the writing process.
- Adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities.

Now it's time to try your hand at writing a script or speaking outline for a public audience. Decide on a topic, and take that topic through the planning, drafting, and revision processes. Remember that even the informal writing you do when planning a script or speaking outline is **recursive**, meaning it is not linear. You will probably go back and forth between sections and processes.

You may question of the wisdom of preparation before speaking to the public. After all, you may post regularly to social media, for example, without following the processes of drafting and revising. However, "winging it" when it comes to speech is not a wise strategy. As a genre, social media in particular lends itself to short and simple messaging. Viewers allow producers very little time and attention before clicking to view the next item. Some sources say that you have 10 seconds to get the attention of a viewer; by the one-minute mark, you may

have lost up to 45 percent of your viewers. Live adult audiences will pay attention for about 20 minute increments before their minds begin to wander; for young audiences, the time is even less. Given that knowledge, you must craft your message accordingly.

## Summary of Assignment: Writing to Speak, Speaking to Act

You may have heard that merely believing in a cause is not enough; you must take action to create change. As you keep the idea of social, political, or economic change in mind, your task is to develop an outline as the basis for a speech to a live audience or on a social media platform of your choice. The topic is an issue you care about. Speaking from an outline rather than from a written script helps ensure that your speech is natural and smooth. Your audience should not feel as though you are reading aloud to them. If you are free to choose your own topic, consider a cause meaningful to you, or consider using one of the following suggestions as your topic or as inspiration for it:

- Police and mental health services reform
- Standards-based reform in education
- Global human rights
- Liberty and justice for all
- Reduction of carbon emissions

Your speech may incorporate multimedia components as you see fit. You'll also need to plan how to access the audience or platform you have in mind.

As you craft your outline, keep in mind your audience, your purpose for addressing them, and your support for that purpose by using key ideas, reasons, and evidence. When planning your script, use an organizer to collect information so that you can support your ideas credibly with a well-developed argument.

### Using Your Authentic Voice



Unlike most formal academic papers, oral presentations give you an opportunity to consider how you might challenge formal writing conventions by delivering your script in your authentic voice. Oral compositions offer an opportunity to bring through conventions of your own culture, perhaps including discursive patterns of language and grammar and challenges to standard language ideologies. As always, keep your audience and purpose in mind as you make choices about your use of language.

### Researching and Narrowing the Topic



After choosing the overall subject of your script, research the general topic to learn about context, background information, and related issues. Then narrow the topic and focus your research, as guided by your working thesis and purpose. You can return to Argumentative Research: Enhancing the Art of Rhetoric with Evidence, Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information, and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources to review research processes, including how to allow research to shape your thesis and organization.

After choosing a topic, you will probably need to narrow it further. One way to achieve this task is by **brainstorming**, which involves generating possible ideas and thoughts quickly and informally. A basic, fast-paced brainstorming technique is simply to list all your possible ideas on paper and combine those that are related. Then you can eliminate some ideas to narrow the range. For example, for this assignment, you might list all of the causes toward which you feel sympathetic. Beginning with an idea that already interests you will help you remain enthusiastic about the idea and generate a positive tone that will come across to the audience and maximize the effectiveness of the presentation.

For example, if you're interested in the environment, your brainstorm might include the following:

- Animal endangerment
  - Deforestation

- Ocean pollution
  - Plastic waste
- Rising carbon levels
- Global warming

If you think you still need new ideas at this point, spend some time researching advocacy organizations. Next, expand each idea by creating subtopics. This activity will help you eliminate topics that are difficult to elaborate on—or at least you will know that you need to conduct more research. In summary, follow this process as you choose and narrow your topic:

1. Brainstorm ideas that already interest you or with which you have experience.
2. Circle topics appropriate for the assignment.
3. Cross out topics that you think you cannot make relevant to the audience. Remember, you are developing a presentation for a public forum.
4. For remaining topics, flesh out subtopics with ideas you might cover in your script. You should have between two and five key ideas; three is fairly typical.
5. Eliminate topics for which you lack sufficient material, or do the necessary research to obtain more.
6. Finally, decide on a topic that you have the resources to research.



***Another Lens.*** Because this chapter focuses on activism and you have read the Trailblazer feature about Alice Wong's work in the disability activism space, think about content consumers (readers, listeners) who experience the world through the lens of disability. Challenge yourself to create content that meets the needs of diverse consumers. Because the assignment is an activist script outline for a presentation, it naturally lends itself to those who are abled in the areas of sight and hearing. Consider people who are visually impaired or hard of hearing. *How might you adapt your script and its delivery to make it accessible to all?*

One option to consider is visual representation of your presentation through an infographic that depicts the thesis, main reasoning, and evidence to reach those who cannot hear a speech. Or consider how you might adapt the delivery of a script to reach those who experience visual limitations. By making considerations for accessibility, you will strengthen your message for all who interact with it.

## Quick Launch: Outlining

Before your presentation, create an outline of the main ideas you plan to discuss. An **outline** is a framework that helps you organize your major claims, reasoning, supporting details, and evidence. Creating an outline is also a way to create a natural flow for your ideas and provide a foundation for engaging your audience. Doing this basic organizational work at the beginning will help you present your ideas so that they will have the greatest impact on your audience.

The first step in creating your outline is to develop a **purpose statement**. This one-sentence statement reveals what you hope to accomplish in the presentation—that is, your objective. The purpose statement isn't something that you will include in your actual presentation; the purpose statement is for you. It will help you keep your audience at the center of your script, create a central idea, and, most of all, give you a realistic goal. One example of a purpose statement for an informational speech might read, "By the end of this presentation, my audience will better understand the impact of plastic waste on the ocean and the world." Or, for a persuasive speech, a purpose statement on a similar topic might read, "By the end of this presentation, my audience will feel compelled to reduce their use of disposable plastic."

Although a speaking outline resembles an outline for an academic paper, with special considerations for the genre, it does not need to be as detailed as an outline for a research paper. Rather, a speaking outline will form the framework for speech. Feel free to write your outline as complete thoughts, sentence fragments, or even bullet points.

A presentation's basic format is relatively similar to most other writing: an introduction, three to five major supporting points, and a conclusion. The major differences will be the genre-specific choices you make about presenting this information.

### Introduction

Like most persuasive writing, your presentation needs an introduction that establishes its purpose. The introduction should engage the audience, present the topic and main ideas, and validate the speaker's credibility. Engaging your audience is important. You can capture an audience's attention by relating an anecdote or a quotation, posing a question, using humor, relating surprising facts or statistics, or any other method you think will do the job.

The introduction will usually lead seamlessly into a definitive statement of the main theme or claim. As you would include a thesis in the introduction of a piece of persuasive writing, your introduction here also should include a statement that previews the main idea and briefly touches on key points. Though you are outlining your presentation rather than writing a full script, it is a good idea to write your thesis so that you clearly identify your aim. When presenting, you won't have to read your script word for word, but recording the thesis clearly will enable you to summarize the central idea of your presentation easily.

Finally, the introduction is your opportunity to establish credibility with your audience and to tell them why they should listen to what you have to say. Include a brief statement of your credentials, experience, and knowledge that demonstrates your credibility or authority on the topic.

### Body

The main section of the outline, the body is the longest part of the script and the one in which you present key points to support the main idea. Each key point should stem organically from the script's goal and your thesis. Although standard practice is to present three key ideas, you may choose to have between two and five. Any fewer, and you won't support your thesis sufficiently; any more, and your audience will lose track of them. Back each key idea with several points, including reasoning, evidence, and audiovisual support.

You can organize your key ideas in several ways. Determining an organizational pattern helps you narrow the central ideas generated from research and allows you to plan material for your script. Topical patterns break main ideas into smaller ideas or subcategories. After dividing the topics into subtopics, consider the most logical order of points. There is often no right answer to this order, so feel free to move your ideas around to create the greatest impact. For example, a topic discussing World War II battles might best be presented in **chronological order** (listed or arranged according to time sequence), but a topic broken down to address the causes of World War II (diplomatic factors, nationalism, World War I peace treaty) may not fit into an obvious pattern. In a persuasive script, **problem-and-solution** or **cause-and-effect** patterns of reasoning may be the best way to organize ideas. These and other organizational patterns are discussed in Reasoning Strategies: Improving Critical Thinking.

### Conclusion

This portion of the script provides a summary and is your final opportunity to make an impression on your audience. Typically, in this section, you restate the thesis convincingly and, if applicable in a persuasive script, tell your audience what you believe they should do. Also, you briefly revisit each key idea in the context of how it supports your thesis. Strong conclusions are especially important in scripts.

One strategy for writing conclusions is the "mirrored" conclusion that ties back to the introduction. For example, if you use a statistic to engage your audience's attention, you return to that statistic in the conclusion. Consider the following example.

> ***Introduction:*** It takes 450 years for one plastic bottle to decompose in a landfill. Now consider the fact that, according to the U.S. government, at least **50 million** plastic bottles are thrown away *each day* in the United States.

> ***Mirrored Conclusion:*** Each time you're tempted to reach for a plastic bottle, contemplate the **50 million** that end up in landfills each year. Consider other options that spare our environment from the centuries of decomposition that each one contributes to.

For writers who have difficulty beginning, one idea is to reverse-engineer the structure of the script. Beginning with the conclusion will help you know where you need to end up, thus making it easier to create a roadmap for getting there. This strategy can provide consistency and add emphasis to the key ideas in the script.

### Outline

Keeping in mind the basic parts of a script outline, you can now begin to craft a skeletal version your own. Use a graphic organizer like Table 19.1 to gather and organize your initial thoughts.

| **Topic:** | **General Purpose:** | **Purpose Statement:** |
|---|---|---|
| **Introduction** | Hook: | |
| | Thesis: | |
| **Body** | Key Idea 1:<br>• Reason(s):<br>• Evidence: | |
| | Key Idea 2:<br>• Reason(s):<br>• Evidence: | |
| | Key Idea 3:<br>• Reason(s):<br>• Evidence: | |
| **Conclusion** | Restatement of Thesis: | |
| | Closing Statement: | |

**TABLE 19.1** Presentation outline

A sample skeletal outline might include the following information.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Topic:**<br>Plastic waste | **General Purpose:**<br>To convince people not to use plastic water bottles. | **Purpose Statement:**<br>By the end of this speech, my audience will feel compelled to reduce their use of disposable plastic. |
| **Introduction** | Hook:<br>It takes 450 years for one plastic bottle to decompose in a landfill. Now consider the fact that, according to the U.S. government, at least **50 million** plastic bottles are thrown away *each day* in the United States. | |
| | Thesis:<br>We should reduce our use of disposable plastic. | |
| **Body** | Key Idea 1: Plastic production increases carbon emissions and contributes to global warming.<br>• Reason(s): Plastic production requires a lot of energy and resources.<br>• Evidence: **1.5 million barrels of oil are used each year to make plastic bottles.** | |
| | Key Idea 2: Most plastic is never recycled.<br>• Reason(s): Recycling plastic is not efficient.<br>• Evidence: **Only 9% of plastic ever produced has been recycled.** | |
| | Key Idea 3: Plastic waste is filling our landfills.<br>• Reason(s): Plastic manufacturing is increasing, and there is nowhere to put all the used plastic.<br>• Evidence: **40% of plastic is single-use then thrown away.** | |
| **Conclusion** | Restatement of Thesis:<br>All people should reduce their use of disposable plastic. | |
| | Closing Statement:<br>Each time you're tempted to reach for a plastic bottle, contemplate the 50 million that end up in landfills each year. Consider other options that spare our environment from the centuries of decomposition that each one contributes to. | |

**TABLE 19.2** Sample outline

## Drafting: Signpost Language; Tone, Repetition and Parallelism; Media and Other Visuals; and Cultural Cues

After you have analyzed your audience, selected and narrowed the topic, researched supporting ideas, and

created a skeletal outline, you can begin adding flesh to the outline. Gather all supporting material for your topic, and consider the various ways to include notes about effective language and delivery.

### Signpost Language

The function of signs is to direct people to the places they are going. Think of a road sign that points to an exit off the highway. Signs also can warn people of places they should *not* go. Similarly, in presentations, **signposts** are statements that help the audience know where your presentation is going. These may include

- a **preview statement** that offers an overview of the path and topics your script will take on;
- **transition statements** between the introduction and body, between key points and ideas, and between the body and the conclusion; and
- a **conclusion statement** that ends the script.

Table 19.3 shows examples of signpost language. Notice the boldfaced words, called **transitions**, which help readers and listeners navigate between ideas and concepts. Signposts should clearly connect ideas, are often parallel (repeated words or grammatical forms), and mark the most important parts of an argument or explanation.

| Signpost | Example |
|---|---|
| Preview | "**Today, I'd like to introduce you** to the organization ReStart, a community outreach that makes a difference for those experiencing homelessness in our community." |
| Transition (introduction to body) | "**First**, let's look at how ReStart was formed." |
| Transition (key idea to key idea) | "**Let's begin** by examining the reasons some people experience homelessness, which can help you understand the need for an organization like ReStart." |
| Transition (key idea to key idea) | "**Now that you understand** something about homelessness, let's look at how ReStart addresses the problem." |
| Transition (key idea to key idea) | "**It's not just** the staff at ReStart that can help. You can play a role in helping those experiencing homelessness too." |
| Conclusion (restatement of thesis) | "**Thus, as you can see**, ReStart is an organization with a long history in the Kansas City area, one that not only provides services to those experiencing homelessness but also offers an opportunity for volunteers to play a role." |

**TABLE 19.3** Signpost language

### Tone

Tone is a writer or speaker's attitude as it is conveyed in a composition or script. A writers or speaker's language choices as well as other elements specific to speech, such as gestures and body language, help create tone. The tone of a presentation depends largely on its purpose, audience, and message.

Consider this text from Annotated Student Sample.

> Without warning, the smaller dog launched itself from its owner's lap, snarling and snapping at the guide dog. The owner of the small dog jumped up and retrieved her animal from the Labrador's vest and stomped back to her seat. That neither she nor the still-yapping dog had an obvious panic attack amazed me, as I questioned, to myself of course, what possible service was being provided—other than a moment of exercise.

The author's tone of disapproval is evident when he relates the actions of the untrained, unrestrained dog causing trouble for others. The attitude is emphasized by words with negative connotations such as *snarling* and *stomped*.

The tone you choose for your script will help you relate to your audience. It can help your audience feel connected to you and promote your credibility as well as that of the message you wish to impart.

Notice, too, the use of the first person in script writing. While you may have been taught not to use first-person pronouns in most formal or academic writing, speech is completely different. Even in formal scripts, the use of *I* helps connect listeners to the speaker. In general, effective speakers also use simple, declarative statements in the active voice (subject + verb + object) to emphasize their key ideas and to keep audiences focused on them. Longer, complex sentences may cause audience members to lose focus. Thoughts and sentences should flow conversationally. See Clear and Effective Sentences for more about effective sentences, including use of the active voice.

### Repetition and Parallelism

Repetition and parallelism are literary devices that authors and speakers use for emphasis, persuasion, contrast, and rhythm. In **repetition**, a word, phrase, or sound is repeated for effect. Repetition is also employed in a variety of figurative language. The following example is an excerpt from the surrender speech of Chief Joseph (1840–1904), the Nez Percé leader who surrendered to the U.S. Army in 1877 after the U.S. government had appropriated Nez Percé land. Rather than be forced to live on reservations, Chief Joseph and his followers unsuccessfully attempted to flee to Canada, a journey of about 1,500 miles, during which they were pursued and vastly outnumbered by the U.S. Army. Notice the use of repetition to emphasize the cold and the death toll.

> I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed; Looking Glass is **dead**, Too-hul-hul-sote is **dead.** The old men are all **dead**. . . . He who led on the young men is **dead**. It is **cold**, and we have no blankets; the little children are **freezing to death**. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are—perhaps **freezing to death**. I want to have time to look for my children. . . . Maybe I shall find them among the **dead**.

**Parallelism** is the use of similar or equivalent constructions of phrases or clauses to emphasize an idea. Parallelism is especially helpful for organizational and structural concerns in a script or composition. Consider this excerpt from President John F. Kennedy's (1917–1963) inaugural address:

> Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall **pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe** in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

Kennedy uses parallelism for impact as well as to organize his support for the idea that the United States works collaboratively for "the success of liberty." Parallelism and repetition can work hand in hand as organizational strategies and to emphasize ideas in your script.

**Anaphora** and **epistrophe** are two related forms of parallelism.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Anaphora:** repetition of the first word or phrase across phrases or sentences | "**We shall fight** on the beaches, **we shall fight** on the landing grounds, **we shall fight** in the fields and in the streets, **we shall fight** in the hills."<br>—Winston Churchill's "We Shall Fight on the Beaches" |
| **Epistrophe:** repetition of the last word or phrase across phrases or sentences | "And that the government of **the people**, by **the people**, for **the people**, shall not perish from the Earth."<br>—Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address<br>"For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish **all forms of human poverty** and **all forms of human life**."<br>—John F. Kennedy's inaugural address |

**TABLE 19.4**

You can hear examples of parallelism and repetition in audio excerpts on the website American Rhetoric (https://openstax.org/r/American_Rhetoric).

In Chapter 19, you have learned about rhetorical techniques used in speech, including parallelism, repetition, and signpost language.

Access multimedia content (http://openstax.org/books/writing-guide/pages/19-5-writing-process-writing-to-speak)

### Media and Other Visuals

Because speeches are auditory by nature, you can enhance their effectiveness by using media and other visual aids. These elements can add emphasis, help the audience understand a complex idea, or otherwise support your message. But be careful not to detract from your speech with the media you choose. A common error speakers make is to include too much or irrelevant media.

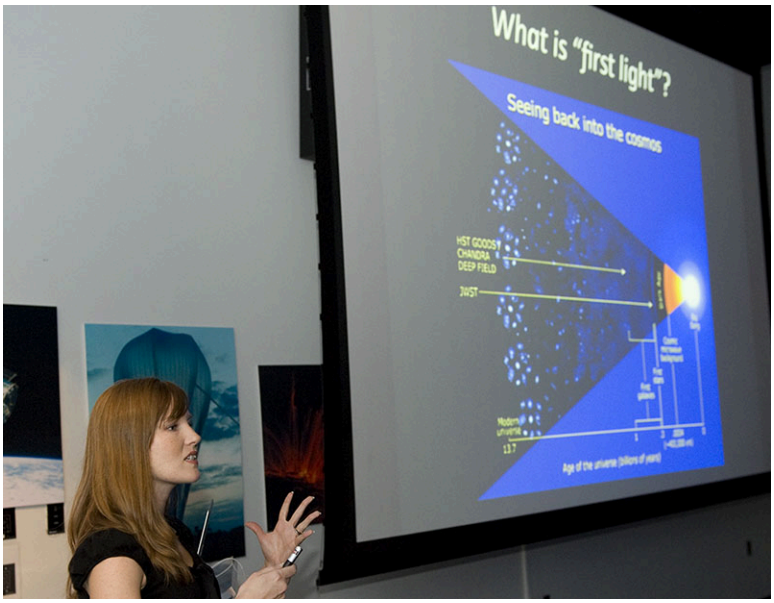



**FIGURE 19.8** Visual aids and other media can enhance an audience's understanding during a public address. (credit: "James Webb Space Telescope Night at the NASA Goddard Visitor Center" by NASA/GSFC/Bill Hrybyk/flickr,

CC BY 2.0)

When considering media and visual aids, remember to keep in mind your audience, purpose, and message. Note these considerations about media and visual aids:

- Use media in a way that doesn't clutter or overwhelm your presentation. The media you choose should enhance, not detract from, your message.
- Ensure that visuals are large enough for the audience to see. Create or obtain media that is clear, concise, and of high quality. Tiny, hard-to-read graphs or muffled audio clips will only frustrate your audience.

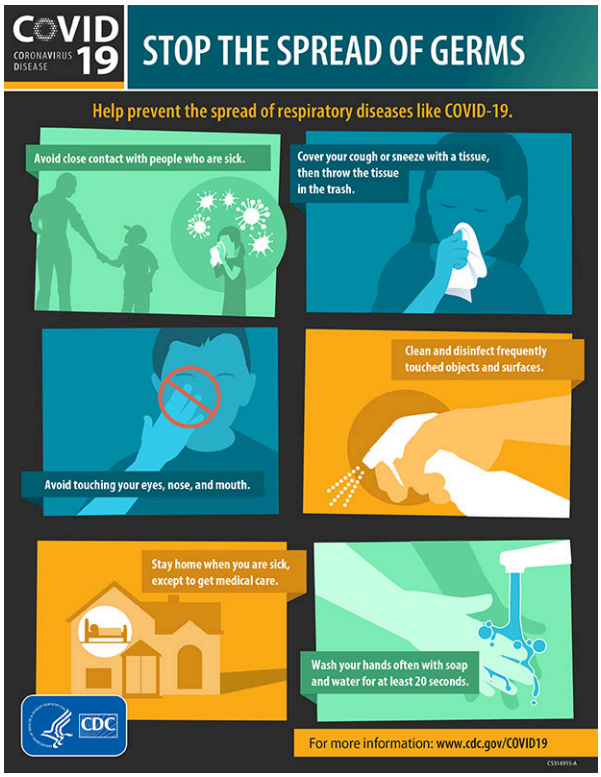



**FIGURE 19.9** Infographics are one example of how a speech can be enhanced by multimedia content. (credit: "Stop the Spread of Germs (COVID-19)" by United States Health and Human Services/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

- Keep a consistent visual style, including font, colors, backgrounds, and so on.
- Provide space and time for your audience to listen to, read, and/or view media and other visuals in your presentation.
- Consider accessibility; think about an audience member who relies on an interpreter or who is visually impaired. *How can you make your presentation accessible to that person?*
- Ensure that your media engages the audience, thus making your speech delivery more dynamic.
- If using technology, make every effort to test it before your presentation.

### Read Aloud

As you finish drafting your script, consider all the potential aspects of language and organization you might use to create meaning for your audience. Remember that you will give your presentation orally. Therefore, during drafting, take a few minutes at key points—after completing a section, for example—to practice your presentation by reading it aloud. Listen to how it sounds and make adjustments as you go along, considering the oral elements of speech that lend themselves to fluency.

## Peer Review: Using Symbols

After you have completed the first draft of your outline, peer review can help you refine your ideas, improve your organization, and strengthen your language. One aspect of effective peer review is marking the text for revision. You and your peers can do this kind of marking by using symbols, which allow reviewers to give feedback quickly and thoughtfully without overwhelming the writer with notes.

Figure 19.10 below provides some of the editing marks to use for proofreading and review. Peer reviewers may also write in the margin to indicate issues with organization, tone, or flow of ideas.

| | Editing Marks |
|---|---|
| | insert a word, letter, or phrase |
| | delete |
| | capitalize |
| | change to lowercase |
| | insert period |
| | insert comma |
| | insert an apostrophe |
| | insert quotation marks |
| | insert space |
| | close up space |
| | transpose letters or words |
| | start a new paragraph |
| | check spelling |
| | move right |
| | move left |
| | |

**FIGURE 19.10** Editing symbols (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

## Revising: Interpreting and Responding to Symbols and Context Cues

After a peer has reviewed and provided feedback on your first draft, you will begin the revision process. Remember that writing is recursive, meaning it is not linear. Although revision won't go on forever, it's important to revise your work at each point in the writing process. In fact, even though you are officially working with the first draft, it is likely your writing has already undergone some process of revision. You will want to continue this process to strengthen your writing, respond to peer review, and ensure that your script fulfills your intent. Consider the items in the following checklist.

### Checklist for Revision

☐ Read the draft aloud.
- Is it organized logically?
- Is the topic immediately clear?

☐ Ensure that the script has a clear purpose.
☐ Think about your audience.

- Does the script respond to what the audience already knows about the subject?
- Does it support new knowledge?
- Have you taken culture into consideration?

☐ Review the introduction to determine whether it hooks the audience and establishes a thesis.
☐ Review the sentences in each paragraph and the order of the paragraphs to ensure that the organization supports the thesis.
☐ Review the conclusion to ensure that it supports the thesis and provides a strong ending.
☐ Read the script again after making revisions to find ways to improve transitions and connections. Consider tone, signpost language, parallelism, and repetition.
☐ Review the draft for conventions, including grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

## 19.6 Evaluation: Bridging Writing and Speaking

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Produce effective written and oral content based on genre conventions, including common formats and design features.
- Demonstrate understanding and use of genre conventions for structure, coherence, tone, and mechanics.

Ask a peer to use the following rubric to evaluate your final presentation draft. The rubric covers oral fluency, rhetorical choices, and organizational principles necessary for creating a strong presentation. After going through the rubric, your peer reviewer may leave comments or other feedback to help you understand their reasoning. Although you may not agree with all of their ideas, peer reviewers offer an opportunity for you to get an outsider's perspective on your writing. Be sure to ask questions about parts you do not understand, and listen closely to your peer reviewer's reasoning. Then review your script again according to the feedback you think you can address.

## Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5 Skillful** | The outline and its delivery have a clear focus and thesis, exemplify strong oral fluency, and appeal to readers' intelligence and sympathies. The outline also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The topic or claim is stated clearly and is expertly supported with abundant credible evidence. The writer's ideas are always clearly presented and linked with appropriate transitions. The conclusion ties back to the thesis. Media and visual aids are skillfully used as support. | The language is consistently clear and appropriate and accurately reflects the overall tone. The writer consistently demonstrates awareness of the audience and highly skilled use of rhetorical strategies and devices, such as parallelism and repetition. |
| **4 Accomplished** | The outline and its delivery have a generally clear focus and thesis, exemplify moderate oral fluency, and generally appeal to readers' intelligence and sympathies. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The topic or claim is stated clearly and is supported with sufficient credible evidence. The writer's ideas are usually presented clearly and linked with appropriate transitions. The conclusion ties back to the thesis. Media and visual aids are used appropriately as support. | The language is usually clear and appropriate and accurately reflects the overall tone. The writer usually demonstrates awareness of the audience and skilled use of rhetorical strategies and devices, such as parallelism and repetition. |
| **3 Capable** | The outline and its delivery have a somewhat clear focus and thesis, exemplify some oral fluency, and appeal somewhat to readers' intelligence and sympathies. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The topic or claim is stated fairly clearly and is supported with sufficient, if not abundant, credible evidence. The writer's ideas are presented fairly clearly, but the writing may be choppy because of insufficient or inappropriate transitions. The conclusion may be missing or may not tie back to the thesis. Media and visual aids may not be used appropriately as support—too many, too few, too small, or inaudible. | The language is usually clear but may be inappropriate at times and may not always reflect the overall tone. The writer demonstrates some awareness of the audience and use of rhetorical strategies and devices, such as parallelism and repetition, but more are needed for a strong presentation. |

**TABLE 19.5**

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The outline and its delivery have evidence of an emerging focus and thesis, exemplify emerging oral fluency, and provide limited appeal to readers' intelligence and sympathies. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The topic or claim is unclear and insufficiently supported with credible evidence. The writer's ideas are unclear and disconnected, a result of insufficient or inappropriate transitions. The conclusion may be missing or may not tie back to the thesis. Media and visual aids contribute little to the presentation. | The language may be unclear or inappropriate and may not reflect the overall tone. The writer demonstrates little, if any, awareness of the audience and little use of rhetorical strategies and devices, such as parallelism and repetition. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The outline and its delivery have little to no focus or thesis, show little evidence of oral fluency, and provide little to no appeal to readers' intelligence or sympathies. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The topic or claim is not supported with credible evidence. The writer's ideas are unclear and disconnected, a result of insufficient or inappropriate transitions. There is no clear conclusion. Media and visual aids either are missing or contribute little to the presentation. | The language is unclear and inappropriate and does not reflect the overall tone. The writer demonstrates little or no awareness of their audience and little to no use of rhetorical strategies or devices, such as parallelism and repetition. |

**TABLE 19.5**

## 19.7 Spotlight on … Delivery/Public Speaking

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Implement various technologies effectively to address an audience, matching the capacities of each to the rhetorical situation.
- Apply conventions of speech delivery, such as voice control, gestures, and posture.
- Identify and show awareness of cultural considerations.

Think of a speech you have seen or heard, either in person, on television, or online. Was the speech delivered well, or was it poorly executed? What aspects of the performance make you say that? Both good and poor delivery of a speech can affect the audience's opinion of the speaker and the topic. Poor delivery may be so distracting that even the message of a well-organized script with strong information is lost to the audience.

### Speaking Genres: Spoken Word, Pulpit, YouTube, Podcast, Social Media

The world today offers many new (and old) delivery methods for script writing. While the traditional presidential address or commencement speech on a stage in front of a crowd of people is unlikely to disappear,

newer script delivery methods are now available, including many that involve technology. From YouTube, which allows anyone to upload videos, to podcasts, which provide a platform for anyone, celebrities and noncelebrities alike, to produce a radio-like program, it seems that people are finding new ways to use technology to enhance communication. Free resources such as YouTube Studio (https://openstax.org/r/YouTube_Studio) and the extension TubeBuddy (https://openstax.org/r/TubeBuddy) can be a good starting place to learn to create these types of media.

### Voice Control



Whether the method is old or new, delivering communication in the speaking genre relies not only on words but also on the way those words are delivered. Remember that voice and tone are important in establishing a bond with your audience, helping them feel connected to your message, creating engagement, and facilitating comprehension. Vocal delivery includes these aspects of speech:

- **Rate of speech** refers to how fast or slow you speak. You must speak slowly enough to be understood but not so slowly that you sound unnatural and bore your audience. In addition, you can vary your rate, speeding up or slowing down to increase tension, emphasize a point, or create a dramatic effect.
- **Volume** refers to how loudly or softly you speak. As with rate, you do not want to be too loud or too soft. Too soft, and your speech will be difficult or impossible to hear, even with amplification; too loud, and it will be distracting or even painful for the audience. Ideally, you should project your voice, speaking from the diaphragm, according to the size and location of the audience and the acoustics of the room. You can also use volume for effect; you might use a softer voice to describe a tender moment between mother and child or a louder voice to emphatically discuss an injustice.
- **Pitch** refers to how high or low a speaker's voice is to listeners. A person's vocal pitch is unique to that person, and unlike the control a speaker has over rate and volume, some physical limitations exist on the extent to which individuals can vary pitch. Although men generally have lower-pitched voices than women, speakers can vary their pitch for emphasis. For example, you probably raise your pitch naturally at the end of a question. Changing pitch can also communicate enthusiasm or indicate transition or closure.
- **Articulation** refers to how clearly a person produces sounds. Clarity of voice is important in speech; it determines how well your audience understands what you are saying. Poor articulation can hamper the effect of your script and even cause your audience to feel disconnected from both you and your message. In general, articulation during a presentation before an audience tends to be more pronounced and dramatic than everyday communication with individuals or small groups. When presenting a script, avoid slurring and mumbling. While these may be acceptable in informal communication, in presented speech they can obscure your message.
- **Fluency** refers to the flow of speech. Speaking with fluency is similar to reading with fluency. It's not about how fast you can speak, but how fluid and meaningful your speech is. While inserting pauses for dramatic effect is perfectly acceptable, these are noticeably different from awkward pauses that result from forgetting a point, losing your place, or becoming distracted. Practicing your speech can greatly reduce fluency issues. A word on **verbal fillers**, those pesky words or sounds used to fill a gap or fluency glitch: utterances such as *um*, *ah*, and *like* detract from the fluency of your speech, distract the audience from your point, and can even reduce your credibility. Again, practice can help reduce their occurrence, and self-awareness can help you speak with more fluency.

### Gestures and Expressions



Beyond vocal delivery, consider also physical delivery variables such as **gestures** and **facial expressions**. While not all speech affords audiences the ability to see the speaker, in-person, online, and other forms of speech do. Gestures and facial expressions can both add to and detract from effective script delivery, as they can help demonstrate emotion and enthusiasm for the topic. Both have the ability to emphasize points, enhance tone, and engage audiences.

**Eye contact** is another form of nonverbal, physical communication that builds community, communicates comfort, and establishes credibility. Eye contact also can help hold an audience's attention during a speech. It is advisable to begin your speech by establishing eye contact with the audience. One idea is to memorize your opening and closing statements to allow you to maintain consistent eye contact during these important sections of the script and strengthen your connection with the audience.

Although natural engagement through gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact can help an audience relate to a presenter and even help establish community and trust, these actions also can distract audiences from the content of the script if not used purposefully. In general, as with most delivery elements, variation and a happy medium between "too much" and "too little" are key to an effective presentation. Some presenters naturally have more expressive faces, but all people can learn to control and use facial expressions and gestures consciously to become more effective speakers. Practicing your speech in front of a mirror will allow you to monitor, plan, and practice these aspects of physical delivery.



**FIGURE 19.11** Body language such as facial expressions and gestures can help your audience interpret another level of meaning when you address them publicly. (credit: "Mamallapuram, Indian Dance Festival, Bharatanatyam dancer" by Arian Zwegers/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

### Posture and Movement

Other physical delivery considerations include posture and movement. Posture is the position of the body. If you have ever been pestered to "stand up straight," you were being instructed on your posture. The most important consideration for posture during a speech is that you look relaxed and natural. You don't want to be slumped over and leaning on the podium or lectern, but you also don't want a stiff, unnatural posture that makes you look stilted or uncomfortable. In many speeches, the speaker's posture is upright as they stand behind a podium or at a microphone, but this is not always the case. Less formal occasions and audiences may call for movement of the whole body. If this informality fits your speech, you will need to balance movement with the other delivery variables. This kind of balance can be challenging. You won't want to wander aimlessly around the stage or pace back and forth on the same path. Nor will you want to shuffle your feet, rock, or shift your weight back and forth. Instead, as with every other aspect of delivery, you will want your movements to be

purposeful, with the intention of connecting with or influencing your audience. Time your movements to occur at key points or transitions in the script.

### Cultural Considerations

Don't forget to reflect on **cultural considerations** that relate to your topic and/or audience. Cultural awareness is important in any aspect of writing, but it can have an immediate impact on a speech, as the audience will react to your words, gestures, vocal techniques, and topic in real time. Elements that speakers don't always think about—including gestures, glances, and changes in tone and inflection—can vary in effectiveness and even politeness in many cultures. Consideration for cultural cues may include the following:

- **Paralanguage**: voiced cultural considerations, including tone, language, and even accent.
- **Kinesics**: body movements and gestures that may include facial expressions. Often part of a person's subconscious, kinesics can be interpreted in various ways by members of different cultures. Body language can include posture, facial expressions (smiling or frowning), and even displays of affection.
- **Proxemics**: interpersonal space that regulates intimacy. Proxemics might indicate how close to an audience a speaker is located, whether the speaker moves around, and even how the speaker greets the audience.
- **Chronemics**: use of time. Chronemics refers to the duration of a script.
- **Appearance**: clothing and physical appearance. The presentation of appearance is a subtle form of communication that can indicate the speaker's identity and can be specific to cultures.

### Stage Directions

You can think proactively about ways to enhance the delivery of your script, including vocal techniques, body awareness, and cultural considerations. Within the draft of your script, create **stage directions**. An integral part of performances such as plays and films, stage directions can be as simple as writing in a pause for dramatic effect or as complicated as describing where and how to walk, what facial expressions to make, or how to react to audience feedback.

Look at this example from the beginning of the student sample. Stage directions are enclosed in parentheses and bolded.

> Several years ago, I sat in the waiting area of a major airport, trying to ignore the constant yapping of a small dog cuddled on the lap of a fellow passenger. An airline rep approached the woman and asked the only two questions allowed by law. **(high-pitched voice with a formal tone)** "Is that a service animal? **(pause)** What service does it provide for you?"

> **(bold, defiant, self-righteous tone)** "Yes. It keeps me from having panic attacks," the woman said defiantly, and the airline employee retreated. **(move two steps to the left for emphasis)**

> Shortly after that, another passenger arrived at the gate. **(spoken with authority)** She gripped the high, stiff handle on the harness of a Labrador retriever that wore a vest emblazoned with the words "The Seeing Eye." **(speed up speech and dynamic of voice for dramatic effect)** Without warning, the smaller dog launched itself from its owner's lap, snarling and snapping at the guide dog. **(move two steps back to indicate transition)**

## Your Turn

Now it's your turn. Using the principle illustrated above, create stage directions for your script. Then, practice using them by presenting your script to a peer reviewer, such as a friend, family member, or classmate. Also consider recording yourself practicing your script. Listen to the recording to evaluate it for delivery, fluency, and vocal fillers. Remember that writing is recursive: you can make changes based on what works and what doesn't after you implement your stage directions. You can even ask your audience for feedback to improve your delivery.

### Podcast Publication

If possible, work with your instructor and classmates to put together a single podcast (https://openstax.org/r/podcast) or a series of podcasts (https://openstax.org/r/podcasts) according to the subject areas of the presentations. The purpose of these podcasts should be to invite and encourage other students to get involved in important causes. Work with relevant student organizations on campus to produce and publicize the podcasts for maximum impact. There are many free resources for creating podcasts, including Apple's GarageBand (https://openstax.org/r/GarageBand) and Audacity (https://openstax.org/r/Audacity).

## 19.8 Portfolio: Everyday Rhetoric, Rhetoric Every Day

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Write reflectively about the process of creating a script for a presentation.
- Demonstrate how the composing process affects the final product.

Reflecting on your writing enhances the writing process by allowing you to deepen your understanding of the process of drafting, revising, and evaluating. Now that you have finished another writing project, it's time to add another section to your portfolio. Think critically about the process you followed for this assignment, reflecting on how your writing developed over time, specifically as it relates to writing for an audience.

### Reflective Task

As you reflect on writing for your presentation, ask yourself the following questions:

- How did you decide on the topic and subject of your script?
- How did the research process inform the development of your thesis?
- How did you organize your outline? Why did you choose this method of organization?
- What sources did you use to develop key points?
- How did you engage the audience in the introduction of your script? What methods of engagement did you use?
- How did you build credibility and engagement with your audience?
- How did collaboration with peers help you as you wrote and revised your script?
- What specific feedback was helpful in the revision process?
- How did you incorporate structural elements such as tone, parallelism, and repetition into your writing? How did they affect the text?
- What considerations for delivery did you make within your writing?
- Did you find writing for speech more or less difficult than writing a traditional paper? In what ways?
- What might you do differently if you were to begin again or write a different script?
- What insights about your topic did you gain from writing your paper?

## Further Reading

The following titles are well-known examples of script within the genre.

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# Portfolio Reflection: Your Growth as a Writer

# 20



**FIGURE 20.1** Mount Hood, Oregon. Seeing and reseeing, as in this lake reflection, is a practice that may help you think and understand with greater clarity. (credit: "Mount Hood reflected in Mirror Lake, Oregon" by Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

## CHAPTER OUTLINE


**20.1** Thinking Critically about Your Semester
**20.2** Reflection Trailblazer: Sandra Cisneros
**20.3** Glance at Genre: Purpose and Structure
**20.4** Annotated Sample Reading: "Don't Expect Congrats" by Dale Trumbore
**20.5** Writing Process: Looking Back, Looking Forward
**20.6** Editing Focus: Pronouns
**20.7** Evaluation: Evaluating Self-Reflection
**20.8** Spotlight on … Pronouns in Context


**INTRODUCTION** Reflecting on your work is an important step in your growth as a writer. Reflection allows you to recognize the ways in which you have mastered some skills and have addressed instances when your intention and execution fail to match. By recognizing previous challenges and applying learned strategies for addressing them, you demonstrate improvement and progress as a writer. This kind of reflection is an example of recursive (https://openstax.org/r/recursivity). At this point in the semester, you know that writing is a recursive process: you prewrite, you write, you revise, you edit, you reflect, you revise, and so on. In working through a writing assignment, you learn and understand more about particular sections of your draft, and you can go back and revise them. The ability to return to your writing and exercise objectivity and honesty about it is one of skills you have practiced during this journey. You are now able to evaluate your own work, accept another's critique of your writing, and make meaningful revisions.

In this chapter, you will review your work from earlier chapters and write a reflection that captures your growth, feelings, and challenges as a writer. In your reflection, you will apply many of the writing, reasoning, and evidentiary strategies you have already used in other papers—for example, analysis, evaluation, comparison and contrast, problem and solution, cause and effect, examples, and anecdotes.

When looking at your earlier work, you may find that you cringe at those papers and wonder what you were thinking when you wrote them. If given that same assignment, you now would know how to produce a more polished paper. This response is common and is evidence that you have learned quite a bit about writing.

## 20.1 Thinking Critically about Your Semester

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Reflect on and write about the development of composing processes and how those processes affect your work.
- Demonstrate honesty and objectivity in reflecting on written work.

You have written your way through a long semester, and the journey is nearly complete. Now is the time to step back and reflect on what you have written, what you have mastered, what skill gaps remain, and what you will do to continue growing and improving as a communicator. This reflection will be based on the work you have done and what you have learned during the semester. Because the subject of this reflection is you and your work, no further research is required. The information you need is in the work you have done in this course and in your head. Now, you will work to organize and transfer this information to an organized written text. Every assignment you have completed provides you with insight into your writing process as you think about the assignment's purpose, its execution, and your learning along the way. The skill of reflection requires you to be critical and honest about your habits, feelings, skills, and writing. In the end, you will discover that you have made progress as a writer, perhaps in ways not yet obvious.



## 20.2 Trailblazer

### Reflection Trailblazer: Sandra Cisneros

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify and analyze an author's reflections.
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically about a writer's reflections.




**FIGURE 20.2** Sandra Cisneros (credit: "Sandra leyendo parte de su obra" by Embassy of the United States-Argentina/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

*"She experiments, creating a text that is as succinct and flexible as poetry, snapping sentences into fragments."*

## Finding a Home in Writing

Poet and novelist Sandra Cisneros (b. 1954) is best known for her novel *The House on Mango Street* (1983). Born in Chicago, Illinois, Cisneros was the only girl in a family of seven children. When she was a child, her father moved the family several times between Chicago and Mexico City, the capital of Mexico. With these moves back and forth between the two countries, Cisneros felt detached from both cultures, forcing her to create her own path to understand herself better.

In school, Cisneros was encouraged to write poems and quickly became known for her writing. However, her interest in writing did not fully take hold until college, when she took a creative writing course. She graduated with a BA from Loyola University in Chicago in 1976 and earned an MFA from the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa in 1978. While there, she had an epiphany: "I was in this class, we were talking about memory and the imagination,... and I realized: 'My god, I'm... different from everybody in this classroom'" (Rodríguez Aranda 65). This important reflection encouraged Cisneros to write about what others could not: her own experience. The unique part poetry, part prose writing style that she crafted to relay her experiences eventually found its place among traditional literary genres, giving voice to the once voiceless.

In her memoir, *A House of My Own: Stories from My Life* (https://openstax.org/r/A_House) (2015), Cisneros reflects on her journey as a writer through subjects such as autonomy, home, culture, and environment. She does so by introducing her memories, which develop into a kind of dialogue between the young writer she once was and the successful writer she is today. In the title essay, "A House of My Own"—originally the introduction to the 25th anniversary edition of *The House on Mango Street*—Cisneros writes, "The young woman in this photograph is me.... She thinks stories are about beauty." By describing herself in the third person from the vantage point of herself as a successful writer, Cisneros creates space for reflection—the act of thinking about the arc of her life. She wonders how this young woman with so many fears had the courage to chart her own path in life. Upon reflection, previously unexamined gifts from her parents provide some answers. In *A House of My Own,* Cisneros says that she became a writer because of her mother, "who was unhappy being a mother" and was "banging on the bars of her cell all her life," and because of her father, who wanted Cisneros to marry and have babies and so didn't mind if she "majored in something silly like English": "In a sense, everything I have ever written has been for him, to win his approval." Cisneros's reflection suggests that in some ways, her life has been about rebirthing herself into a form that her mother would be proud of and a form her father would come to understand—a form beyond the circumstances of her original birth.

This reflective dialogue across time mirrors the way in which Cisneros sees herself: as someone who writes from multiple perspectives. Being an American and a Mexican, she writes in two languages and uses elements

of both cultures to create characters that she picks up from memory, chance meetings, visits to various places, and dreams. She cobbles these parts together to form a title or maybe just a first line, giving her mind time to percolate, waiting for the rest of the story to emerge. This is the work of reflection—giving oneself time to think, to make connections, to feel, and to put words to ideas.

### Discussion Questions

1. In what ways did the realization that she was different from other students spur Sandra Cisneros's journey as a writer?
2. What is the purpose of reflection in Cisneros's writing?
3. What strategies does Cisneros use to generate reflective writing?
4. What themes emerge when you think about your journey as a writer this semester? Do similarities exist between your themes and Cisneros's? Explain
5. What dialogue might emerge between the writer you were at the beginning of the semester and the writer you are now? If applicable, describe an epiphany, or sudden realization, you might have had about your writing.

## 20.3 Glance at Genre: Purpose and Structure

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify conventions of reflection regarding structure, paragraphing, and tone.
- Articulate how genre conventions are shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.
- Adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities.

**Reflective writing** is the practice of thinking about an event, an experience, a memory, or something imagined and expressing its larger meaning in written form. Reflective writing comes from the author's specific perspective and often contemplates the way an event (or something else) has affected or even changed the author's life.

### Areas of Exploration

When you write a reflective piece, consider three main areas of exploration as shown in Figure 20.3. The first is the **happening**. This area consists of the events included in the reflection. For example, you will be examining writing assignments from this course. As you describe the assignments, you also establish context for the reflection so that readers can understand the circumstances involved. For each assignment, ask yourself these questions: *What was the assignment? How did I approach the assignment? What did I do to start this assignment? What did I think about the assignment?* If you think of other questions, use them. Record your answers because they will prove useful in the second area.

The second area is **reflection**. When you reflect on the happening, you go beyond simply writing about the specific details of the assignment; you move into the writing process and an explanation of what you learned from doing the work. In addition, you might recognize—and note—a change in your skills or way of thinking. Ask yourself these questions: *What works effectively in this text? What did I learn from this assignment? How is this assignment useful? How did I feel when I was working on this assignment?* Again, you can create other questions, and note your responses because you will use them to write a reflection.

The third area is **action**. Here, you decide what to do next and plan the steps needed to reach that goal. Ask yourself: *What does (and does not) work effectively in this text? How can I continue to improve in this area? What should I do now? What has changed in my thinking? How would I change my approach to this assignment if I had to do another one like it?* Base your responses to these questions on what you have learned,

and implement these elements in your writing.

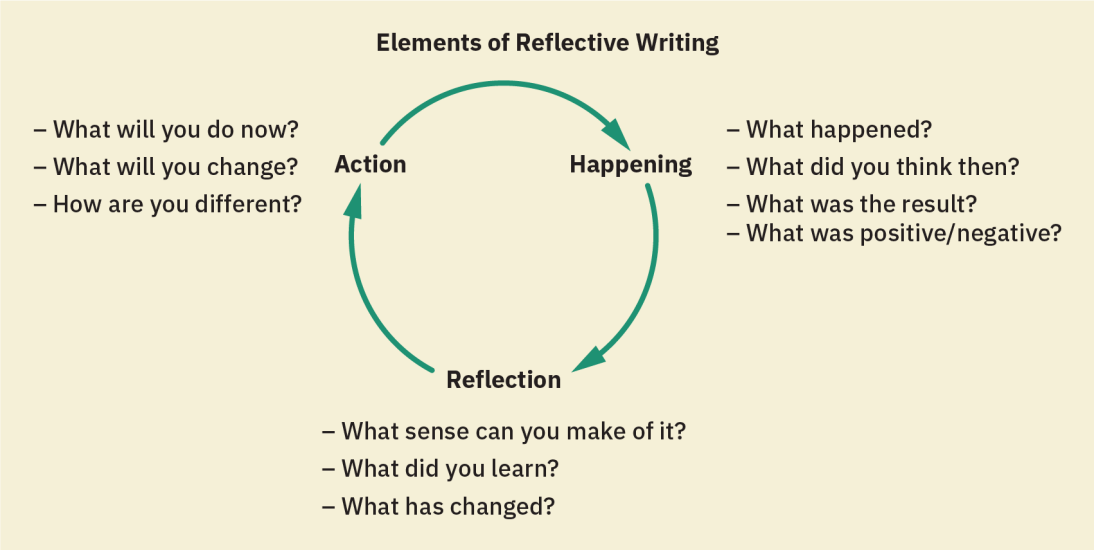



**FIGURE 20.3** Elements of reflective writing (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

## Format of Reflective Writing

Unlike thesis statements, which often come at the beginning of an essay, the main point of a piece of reflective writing may be conveyed only indirectly and nearly always emerges at the end, almost like an epiphany, or sudden realization. With this structure, readers are drawn into the act of reflecting and become more curious about what the writer is thinking and feeling. ln other words, reflective writers are musing, exploring, or wondering rather than arguing. In fact, reflective essays are most enlightening when they are not obviously instructive or assertive. However, even though reflective writing does not present an explicit argument, it still includes evidence and cohesion and provides lessons to be learned. As such, elements of persuasion or argument often appear in reflective essays.

### Discovery through Writing

Keep in mind, too, that when you start to reflect on your growth as a writer, you may not realize what caused you to explore a particular memory. In other words, writers may choose to explore an idea, such as why something got their attention, and only by recalling the details of that event do they discover the reason it first drew their attention.

When you tell the story of your writing journey this semester, you may find that more was on your mind than you realized. The writing itself is one thing, but the meaning of what you learned becomes something else, and you may deliberately share how that second level, or deeper meaning or feeling, emerged through the act of storytelling. For example, in narrating a writing experience, you may step back, pause, and let readers know, "Wait a minute, something else is going on here." An explanation of the new understanding, for both you and your readers, can follow this statement. Such pauses are a sign that connections are being made—between the present and the past, the concrete and the abstract, the literal and the symbolic. They signal to readers that the essay or story is about to move in a new and less predictable direction. Yet each idea remains connected through the structure of happenings, reflections, and actions.

Sometimes, slight shifts in voice or tone accompany reflective pauses as a writer moves closer to what is really on their mind. The exact nature of these shifts will, of course, be determined by the writer's viewpoint. Perhaps one idea that you, as the writer, come up with is the realization that writing a position argument was useful in your history class. You were able to focus more on the material than on *how* to write the paper because you already knew how to craft a position argument. As you work through this process, continue to note these

important little discoveries.

### Your Writing Portfolio

As you recall, each chapter in this book has included one or more assignments for a writing portfolio. In simplest terms, a writing portfolio is a collection of your writing contained within a single binder or folder. A portfolio may contain printed copy, or it may be completely digital. Its contents may have been created over a number of weeks, months, or even years, and it may be organized chronologically, thematically, or qualitatively. A portfolio assigned for a class will contain written work to be shared with an audience to demonstrate your writing, learning, and skill progression. This kind of writing portfolio, accumulated during a college course, presents a record of your work over a semester and may be used to assign a grade. Many instructors now offer the option of, or even require, digital **multimodal** portfolios, which include visuals, audio, and/or video in addition to written texts. Your instructor will provide guidelines on how to create a multimodal portfolio, if applicable. You can also learn more about creating a multimodal portfolio (https://openstax.org/r/creating) and view one by a first-year student (https://openstax.org/r/first-year).

## Key Terms

As you begin crafting your reflection, consider these elements of reflective writing.

- **Analysis:** When you analyze your own writing, you explain your reasoning or writing choices, thus showing that you understand your progress as a writer.
- **Context:** The context is the circumstances or situation in which the happening occurred. A description of the assignment, an explanation of why it was given, and any other relevant conditions surrounding it would be its context.
- **Description:** Providing specific details, using figurative language and imagery, and even quoting from your papers helps readers visualize and thus share your reflection. When describing, writers may include visuals if applicable.
- **Evaluation:** An effective evaluation points out where you faltered and where you did well. With that understanding, you have a basis to return to your thoughts and speculate about progress you will continue to make in the future.
- **Observation:** Observation is a close look at the writing choices you made and the way you managed the rhetorical situations you encountered. When observing, be objective, and pay attention to the more and less effective parts of your writing.
- **Purpose:** By considering the goals of these previous assignments, you will be better equipped to look at them critically and objectively to understand their larger use in academia.
- **Speculation:** Speculation encourages you to think about your next steps: where you need to improve and where you need to stay sharp to avoid recurring mistakes.
- **Thoughts:** Your thoughts (and feelings) before, during, and after an assignment can provide you with descriptive material. In a reflective essay, writers may choose to indicate their thoughts in a different tense from the one in which they write the essay itself.

When you put these elements together, you will be able to reflect objectively on your own writing. This reflection might include identifying areas of significant improvement and areas that still need more work. In either case, focus on describing, analyzing, and evaluating *how* and *why* you did or did not improve. This is not an easy task for any writer, but it proves valuable for those who aim to improve their skills as communicators.

# 20.4 Annotated Sample Reading: “Don’t Expect Congrats” by Dale Trumbore

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify and analyze the elements and organizational pattern of a reflective essay.
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically about a writer’s reflections.

## Introduction



**FIGURE 20.4** Dale Trumbore

Dale Trumbore (https://openstax.org/r/Dale_Trumbore) (b. 1987) is a Southern California composer and writer. In addition to composing for chorus and orchestra, Trumbore often writes reflectively about artistic conflict and its resolution. In her book *Staying Composed* (2019), she writes about the anxiety and self-doubt that often accompany a career in the arts: "You have to be willing to be a little vulnerable. Real people are flawed." In the following blog post, she reflects on gender in her career field.

### LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

#### Womanhood and Composition

I am a female composer. As such, my compositions have been programmed on a concert about motherhood, though I do not have children; neither did most of the other women programmed on that concert. I've been asked mid-composition to change the theme of a piece, so the commission would relate to womanhood. (I did, but I didn't rewrite the minute-and-a-half of music I'd composed back when the commission's theme was "outer space.") I've been asked to sum up what it means to be a woman in a one-minute piece; I tried, but that piece ended up being about exactly how impossible the task is.

***Establishing Context.*** *Trumbore sets up the conditions for this reflective essay by mentioning some of the challenges she has encountered and what she has done about them. She also mentions the difficulty of trying to "sum up" the entirety of her experience as a woman.*

The hundredth anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment… in 2020… and the aftermath of the #MeToo movement have created a perfect storm of what I think of as Lady Composer Commissions: pieces that ask the composer to reflect the experience of being a woman in her work. Equally popular these days is the Lady Composer Concert, which 1) features works by composers who identify as women, and 2) connects the music of these composers for no reason other than that they all share a gender identity.

***Context.*** *By providing additional context, Trumbore gives readers some background information and insight into the focus of the essay.*

Promotion of these concerts on social media often goes like this: "We're so excited to feature the work of Lady Composer 1, Lady Composer 2, Lady Composer 3, Lady Composer 4 [etc.]!" The general tone of these posts seems to be: "Look at all of the women we rounded up! We found so many of them!" When I am tagged in these posts, I never know whether to share them, like them, or un-tag myself as quickly as possible and hope the conductor doesn't notice.

***Observation.*** *Trumbore points to part of the social and culture disparity between genders and questions how to respond. This reflection shows awareness of her discomfort and uncertainty about larger meanings.*

Now, I know these concerts mean well, and I would certainly never tell anyone to stop programming the works of underrepresented composers. As someone who relies on commissions and royalties to pay the rent, I'm also grateful to have my music programmed on any concert at all. But every time I'm tagged in a post for a concert like this—with no theme other than "Here's A Bunch of Lady Composers"—I feel as though someone has drawn a sharp-edged square around my identity. I am positive that these concerts are programmed with earnest and kind intentions; nevertheless, they make me wonder whether any conductor thinks I want to be programmed like this, like I am some exotic and fragile butterfly to be pinned down, labeled appropriately, and locked away in a glass box.

***Purpose.*** *Trumbore uses reflection to see the larger purpose of the concerts. She also questions that purpose and uses the metaphor of a butterfly to emphasize the situation as she leads into the main purpose of the essay.*

One of my two cats, Cotton, is obsessed with catching and eating flies. He'll stalk one around our small house for hours before he finally catches and eats the thing, and he's nearly always more preoccupied with the stalking than the meal itself. But immediately after he's finally caught one, he comes over to my husband or me and meows, wanting recognition for his work: a gentle pat on the head, maybe, or a "Good job!" In our house, we call this routine "congrats," as in: "Cotton just swallowed his second fly of the day, then came over for more congrats."

***Vignette and Description.*** *Trumbore breaks the flow of the essay with a vignette—a brief scene—offering a look into her life. The vignette connects this part of the essay with the next and establishes a concrete example of her feelings.*

This is exactly how the Lady Composer Concerts and their inevitable social media promotion have started to feel to me: like they are an elaborate exercise in seeking congrats. They are not programmed with the audience in mind; if anything, they come off as self-congratulatory. ("Look how woke we are!") If these concerts were serving the audience, they would have a theme beyond "a bunch of women wrote this music."

***Metaphor.*** *Trumbore compares the cat's "congrats" routine with the promotion of the concerts.*

***Purpose.*** *In addition, she reiterates the larger purpose of the essay by highlighting the topic of gender disparity.*

All you need to do to find this concept ridiculous, of course, is to flip the gender: Imagine a conductor saying that any random collection of pieces clearly belong together on the same program, because they all were written by men.

***Analysis and Evaluation.*** *Trumbore defines what is not a valid concert theme and suggests that readers consider a new position—to judge the gender inequality situation among composers as she does.*

I am certainly not the first person to talk about this; I give the above example of gender-flipping whenever I talk about Lady Composer Concerts, and I've heard other friends do the same. Still, every time I bring this up, I hope it will be for the last time: "Music by Women" is not a theme. Collecting a bunch of pieces written by female composers does not in and of itself constitute an inspired concert program. It certainly doesn't deserve congrats.

***Analysis.*** *Defining what she considers a theme, Trumbore continues to explain her position and elaborate on the reality she experiences.*

If you're called to promote the work of composers who identify as women, consider—the same as you would with

any other program—what the music and/or texts have in common. What's the through-line of this music or collection of texts, regardless of the gender of who wrote it? Is the experience of hearing these particular compositions enhanced by virtue of their sharing a program? Does the order of the program present a narrative? Are there any other pieces, including pieces by composers who identify as men, that would better round out this particular program?

***Analysis.*** *These questions engage the reader and beg for answers while again pointing to her reflection on the concerts.*

***Speculation.*** *Further, she is hinting at a way of changing the status quo in the questions she asks.*

Whenever I discuss "Women in Music"—something else I'm often asked to do—I'm struck once again by the fact that we're somehow still having the conversation about the lack of Lady Composers. I feel conflicted whenever I'm asked to talk about the role of women in music; I wish we didn't need to have that discussion, and I resent being asked to talk about it over and over again. At the same time, if I'd like to hear more conversations in the classical music world about systemic inequality—and I would—I have to be willing to talk about this myself.

***Thoughts and Speculation.*** *Trumbore notes her frustrations with discussions focused on gender and music and then suggests that she would rather focus on the inequalities if she would be willing to discuss this issue.*

But a single Lady Composer Concert is unlikely to single-handedly resolve the fact that for centuries, classical music has revered the music of white, mostly dead, usually European men as the highest quality music of all time. In Music History classes, most of us are taught that this is the worthiest music to study. In Music Theory classes, we analyze these scores. Whenever we sing in a chorus, we are at the mercy of what our conductor presents as the worthiest music, and if that is exclusively the work of white and dead and European and male composers, who can blame us for subconsciously thinking that this is the music most worthy of programming?

***Thoughts and Context.*** *Trumbore reflects on her education and notes some of the problematic, and perhaps sexist, elements of music education. Note again her use of questions to involve readers.*

We don't (just) have a lack of Lady Composers or a dearth of Lady Composer Concerts. We have an entire educational system designed to teach us to esteem the music of dead white men above the music of all other composers.

***Analysis and Evaluation.*** *Trumbore responds to her own question and expands her rationale of reconsidering music education. In addition, the brevity of this paragraph encourages readers to focus on the larger message in the last sentence.*

So I'm more than happy to congratulate anyone championing the work of historically underrepresented composers. Yes, please! Let's talk about systemic oppression and racism and the discrimination that composers who are not white and/or male have faced for centuries. Let's talk about implicit bias and financial privilege and how all of it affects which voices we perceive as most worthy of our attention.

***Speculation.*** *Trumbore drives home the point of the previous paragraph and makes it more explicit for readers, indicating what she would like to see happen.*

And yet it's equally important to acknowledge that no single concert will fix that systematic imbalance. If it was going to, the Lady Composer Concert would have already done this, because the Lady Composer Concert has been around for decades. The Lady Composer Concert is a stale concept; we've tried it already, and we're still having this conversation.

***Speculation.*** *In this paragraph, Trumbore suggests a potentially new direction and opportunity, on which she elaborates in the next paragraph. In other words, through this reflection, she has arrived at a new way of seeing the world.*

I want to propose an idea that is new, though. If you truly want to champion the works of historically

underrepresented composers, what would it look like if you did the loudest work behind the scenes?

What if you had bold conversations about why you feel compelled to program more historically underrepresented groups of composers, but for the concert itself, you presented your program the same way you would any other program—highlighting the specific compositions, thematic material, and the reasons that your audience should come hear this music?

What if you championed compositions written by these composers without needing to mention their race or gender as part of the promotion of your concert? What if you identified instead what you find most meaningful, exceptional, and unique about their compositions?

And what if you told your peers about these works that you love? Over time, maybe that specificity—naming the pieces you love, not just a string of composers' names—would eliminate another common problem I've heard conductors discuss: trouble finding quality repertoire written by underrepresented composers.

***Analysis and Speculation.*** *After a series of thoughtful questions about underrepresented groups of composers, Trumbore provides a way to move forward, not by giving directions, but by asking questions that lead readers to obvious answers.*

If you're having trouble finding such repertoire, let your peers and friend-colleagues know that you're searching for this work. Ask for recommendations. You can always reach out to composers directly with requests for perusal scores, too. I'm always more than happy to send along perusals when conductors are looking for new works, and I'm even happier if I'm asked for works that fit a specific theme. Getting to know a new composer's work can be as simple as sending them a quick email through their website's contact form. Ask if they have any pieces that might be a good fit for your upcoming concert season's themes. You might even name some of the other works you already have in mind for that program and see if that composer can recommend compatible works from their catalogue.

***Thoughts and Speculation.*** *This paragraph continues setting up a way to move forward and helps connect it to the previous paragraphs. It reveals more of Trumbore's thoughts on what she wants to do and her ability to do it.*

Truth be told, I don't want to write another piece about "being a woman." I want to write pieces about emotions that are hard to capture in words but easy to express in music, because music has room to hold a staggering amount of complexity and nuance. I want to be given commissions with specific concert themes, even oddly specific ones. Especially oddly-specific ones; please, give me your commissions for works with texts about weddings that must also include percussion, or pieces to pair with Taiwanese music about the sea.

***Evaluation.*** *Trumbore begins to use pathos and urges readers to understand her position. She also explains how she works and what works best for her.*

I will rise to each challenge; this is what I do for a living, and I'm good at my job. I'll find a text that adheres to each theme and write the best music I can write at this moment in time. I do this best when I don't also have to wonder whether I am single-handedly summing up the entirety of what it means to "be a woman." If the texts I choose or the music I write happens to capture some aspect of the female experience—of a female experience—great. Still, that will have been my decision to make.

***Thoughts.*** *In reflecting, Trumbore acknowledges what she needs to do next and begins to gain momentum by describing specific activities to meet her goals.*

When you program the works of underrepresented composers, don't act like my cat does with a freshly-caught fly. Don't proudly rattle off the names of women in a Facebook post like you've hunted down their music and are laying it at the feet of your audience. Your audience deserves better; they deserve a concert with an actual theme.

***Coherence.*** *By bringing back the cat, Trumbore reminds readers of the "congrats" metaphor she established earlier as she continues to advocate for needed change.*

When it comes time to promote the work of historically underrepresented composers, present their

compositions—these works you've come to love—as you would any other excellent repertoire. Shout from the rooftops why you love each composition. Tell your colleagues and friends. Tell your board members. Tell your audience. And once you have, don't expect congratulations for doing so. You don't need or deserve praise simply for doing your job as a conductor. After all, programming music that you admire and respect—sharing that music, teaching that music, advocating for that music—is reward enough. Isn't it?

***Speculation.*** *In this concluding paragraph, Trumbore encourages action toward implementing her points, or at the very least toward a different way of thinking. The reflection encourages readers, too, to reflect on their feelings, their experiences, and potential ways to change or improve.*

### Discussion Questions

1. What is the "happening," and which parts of Dale Trumbore's essay describe it?
2. What parts of Trumbore's essay show reflection?
3. What parts of Trumbore's essay describe an action that results from the reflection?
4. How does Trumbore use her cat to make a reflective point? What effect might it have for readers?
5. What might you do differently if you were Trumbore and wanted to focus on a similar topic?

## 20.5 Writing Process: Looking Back, Looking Forward

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply composing processes and tools as a means to discover and reconsider ideas.
- Reflect on the development and insights of composing processes and how they affect your work.
- Adapt and apply composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities.

One of the best ways to reveal who you are as a writer is to show yourself becoming aware of your strengths and weakness. This awareness can help you discover not only new ways of seeing the world but also new insights into yourself. Although such awareness can occur for unexplainable reasons, it usually happens when you encounter new ideas or have experiences that change you in some way. Reflection allows you to begin this journey. To grow as a writer, look back at your previous writing. If you look back at a drawing you did in first grade, you might find it funny or cute. Additionally, and more likely than not, you could do that same drawing now with a lot more detail and skill than you did back then. Think about writing in the same way: as you add to your writing skills and abilities, you become more proficient and can take on more challenging writing tasks. In this section, as you reflect on your writing development during the course, you will find areas of strength and weakness. The weaker areas are the ones you will want to improve.

### Prewriting

Before beginning your reflective essay, take some time to review your work from the course. Write a few sentences or paragraphs about specific aspects of each assignment, such as its purpose, your feelings, what you learned, what you did well (and not so well), and where you think you can do significantly better. This prewriting work will be useful later.

### Summary of Assignment: Portfolio Reflection and Self-Evaluation

In the form of a letter (e.g., "Dear Reader"), respond to several questions and discuss various topics related to your writing development in this course. For example, you might be asked to identify and discuss your strongest piece of writing. For each claim you make about your strongest assignment, provide reasoning and evidence from your portfolio to support the statement. When you quote directly from your own writing, be sure to state which assignment or draft you are quoting. Within the context of your responses, include commentary on most of the following course topics as well as others that have been significant:

- Writing processes (organizing graphically, outlining, drafting, conferencing, revising, editing, publishing, recursivity)
- Rhetorical situation, rhetoric, and persuasion
- Reasoning strategies, textual and rhetorical analysis
- Evidentiary strategies: evaluation, research
- Word choice, leads, transitions
- Thesis statement, structure and organization, introductions, conclusions
- Showing, not telling; descriptive writing
- Voice; feelings, as hindsight or in process

Depending on the nature of your portfolio, you may be able to create a digital or multimodal reflective letter, as mentioned in Glance at Genre: Purpose and Structure.

***Another Lens.*** Using reflective organization and strategies, create a fictionalized story for readers. Some fiction writers base their stories on real events, adding material or characters to help readers connect the plot points and make the story more memorable and engaging. For example, consider a school-like setting and a host of characters. Incorporate dialogue, details of setting, and other story elements to develop characters and create tension.

### Once Upon a Time

> James sat silently across the room as Rafael read the paper James had worked so hard to write. He could not have been more nervous watching Rafael, the best writer in the class, review his work. No one had ever read James's work other than a teacher. His heart was racing, and beads of sweat formed on his forehead.
>
> "What do you think?" James asked. Rafael rolled his eyes before locking eyes with James.
>
> "I'm not finished yet," Rafael answered and returned to the paper, ignoring James.
>
> James stared at him, contemplating the meaning of every facial wrinkle and twitch of a finger: what did they mean? After several aching minutes, Rafael picked up a pen and wrote for several minutes with a slight smile on his face. He took a long breath, walked over to James, and handed the paper back with a sheet full of notes.
>
> He smiled and said, "It's a strong paper. I made some notes I hope you find useful. I was confused only a few times, so you could look at where I made suggestions for when you revise." James smiled back, and the look on his face showed surprise and relief.
>
> After quickly reviewing the comments, James turned to his close friend Jess and said, "He didn't destroy my paper and actually gave me some good suggestions."

In this example, James, Rafael, and Jess are not real people, but the characters show how students may react during a peer-review workshop. Of course, you might decide to write about a less-than-ideal experience in which Rafael laughs at James's work and Jess steps in to help him revise. Or you might set the story in a different time or place and create an entirely different situation. Whatever you decide, use your course experience and some creativity to create scenarios in which a character reflects on their writing in ways that are meaningful and useful not only for you but also for your readers. Then weave these characters into a larger narrative. It might end in a published class book or website of student writing and require James to give a speech about one of his papers, or it might end in another scenario that follows logically from the narrative you have created. Regardless of where you take the story, include realistic elements of reflection as well as how your main character develops across the story, faces a challenge, and finds a way to overcome it.

You can show character development in several different ways. One way is to be inside a character's mind. To portray a character thinking rather than talking, employ **internal monologue** by using sentence fragments and other nonacademic writing conventions to show that a person's thought process doesn't follow conventional rules of language. For example, a character named Bethany describes her thoughts when

revising her first paper. She writes an internal monologue—readers hear her talking to herself while she tries to focus on revision. Note how she provides clues for readers to understand what is going on around her.

> OMG, I cannot believe I wrote that! How could I write about a calligraphy pen when I don't even own a calligraphy pen? I'm not even sure what one looks like! Bonkers! I wonder if the other people in my class are staring at me right now. I'm afraid to look up. I casually tilt my head up and see no one paying any attention to me whatsoever. Wonderful! I'm just another writer in a writing class.

In this example, the character works through a process of reflection based on her experience. She cannot believe she wrote about a calligraphy pen, but perhaps because of her nervousness with writing, this quirk has become a unique aspect of her character. You might create other such quirks in one of your characters, such as a character who always reads aloud, even in the middle of class, or one who taps a pen on their forehead loudly as they read. Then you can use that as a tool to point to another aspect of what you learned in your actual course. When writing this fictionalized piece, be mindful of your focus, which is to reflect on your development as a writer during this course.

### Quick Launch: Establishing Criteria for Growth

To get started, you will need to organize your thoughts. After you have reviewed each chapter and its related assignment, reflect on your successes and challenges. Use a graphic organizer similar to Table 20.1 to get started. If the information already filled in for Chapter 1 works for you, use it. If it doesn't, change it accordingly. If you skipped the suggested review of your assignments, do it now. Otherwise, use your notes as you complete the chapter reflection table below. Skip any rows related to chapters that you did not cover in class.

| Chapter Number | Key Skills Learned | Successes | Challenges |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Summarize, Analyze, Evaluate | Analyzing wasn't hard, but I learned to do it better because I really had to think about what the sentence meant and explain it in my own way. | I had a hard time with evaluation because I wasn't comfortable giving my opinion since I'm just a student. However, I got more comfortable writing about complex topics and ideas. |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | | |
| 7 | | | |
| 8 | | | |
| 9 | | | |
| 10 | | | |
| 11 | | | |

**TABLE 20.1** Chapter reflection table

| Chapter Number | Key Skills Learned | Successes | Challenges |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | | | |
| 13 | | | |
| 14 | | | |
| 15 | | | |
| 16 | | | |
| 17 | | | |
| 18 | | | |
| 19 | | | |
| 20 | | | |

**TABLE 20.1** Chapter reflection table

Once you have completed your own version of the table, use it to guide you as you begin writing. Take each assignment and stay focused on its goal. In doing so, you may notice a pattern in the assignments that helped you learn. If you do, incorporate that pattern into your reflective essay, and use it to create a theme.

## Drafting: Getting Started and Following Through

As you work through the task of reflecting, consider the purpose of each assignment and your approach to it, in addition to the information you have included in the chapter reflection table. Also, read some models to help stimulate your reflective thinking: Final Reflective Essay by Andrew Duffy (https://openstax.org/r/Andrew_Duffy); Final Reflection by Anthony Roco (https://openstax.org/r/Anthony_Roco); E-Portfolio Reflection by Sean Porter (https://openstax.org/r/Sean_Porter); or this Portfolio Summative Reflection (https://openstax.org/r/Portfolio_Summative). Then, use the template below as a way to create your own unique reflection on yourself as a developing writer. Focus on the larger impact of what you have learned. Also offer some insight on what you still need to work on, and explain why. Each aspect that you write about will show a level of progress and awareness toward improvement. Just as important, it will help you focus on future

writing assignments and allow you to recognize your growth as a writer.

**Portfolio Reflection Template**

Dear Reader,

Welcome to my English Composition portfolio. Here, you will find _____.

**Complete this statement:** *This semester, I learned that I am (not) a writer because* _____.

**Answer these questions in paragraph form. For each claim you make, show your reasoning and provide quoted evidence from your portfolio:**

- Which is the strongest piece of writing in the portfolio?
  - What are the strengths of this essay, and why do you think so?
  - In what specific ways has your writing improved this semester?
  - How does this essay demonstrate this improvement?
- Which is the least effective piece of writing in the portfolio?
  - What are the weaknesses of this essay, and why do you think so?
  - If you could revise this essay one more time, what would you change, and why?
  - Specifically, which writing skills still need work, and how will you continue to work on them?
- How did the process of revision help you re-envision your essays and make changes?
  - In what ways was it useful to see what other students were writing?
  - How did knowing that others would provide feedback during drafting affect your writing process?
  - How did revision affect your skills as a peer workshop partner?
- In what ways did your writing process evolve over the course of the semester?
  - Discuss the issue of perspective, such as when you first entered the course and now.
  - What did you learn about writing through its genres, elements of the rhetorical situation, processes, skills, and strategies?
  - How have you changed as a writer?
  - How have your feelings about writing changed?
- Finish this statement: *Before I took this class, I never knew* _____.

Sincerely,

*Your Name*

**TABLE 20.2**

### Structuring Your Responses

As you respond to each of the questions above, use a paragraph planner such as this one.

| Topic Sentence/Claim | Reasoning Strategy (Circle All Used) | Quoted Evidence from Portfolio |
|---|---|---|
| | Revisit Reasoning Strategies: Improving Critical Thinking to find frames and word banks that will help you employ these strategies. | |
| The strongest piece of writing in my portfolio is _____ because _____. | Analogy<br>Cause and effect<br>Classification and division<br>Comparison and contrast<br>Problem and solution<br>Definition | Shows my use of descriptive writing/figurative language: "Learning a foreign language is like learning to ride a bicycle: you must learn to perform multiple tasks at the same time." |
| The strengths of this essay are _____, _____, and _____. | Analogy<br>Cause and effect<br>Classification and division<br>Comparison and contrast<br>Problem and solution<br>Definition | |
| This semester, I improved my skills as a writer in the following ways: _____ and _____. | Analogy<br>Cause and effect<br>Classification and division<br>Comparison and contrast<br>Problem and solution<br>Definition | |
| This essay demonstrates these skills in that it _____. | Analogy<br>Cause and effect<br>Classification and division<br>Comparison and contrast<br>Problem and solution<br>Definition | |

**TABLE 20.3** Paragraph planner

# 20.6 Editing Focus: Pronouns

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar.
- Implement appropriate pronouns in written work.

You likely use **Pronouns** —words that substitute for nouns or noun phrases—in every text that you write, including this portfolio reflection. Pronouns are one of the eight main parts of speech, the others being nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections.

## Reference, Antecedent, and Case

### Reference

Pronoun reference is the practice of using pronouns to replace nouns. The important thing to know about pronoun reference is that every pronoun must match the noun it replaces in terms of gender and number. **Gender** refers to the noun as either masculine, feminine, or neuter.

**Masculine: Jorge** is an educated man. **He** is Toby's neighbor.

**Feminine:** Rico's **sister** decided to go skating. **She** came back early.

**Neuter:** The **car** has four new **tires**. **It** runs much better with **them**.

However, if you're not certain of someone's gender identity or don't want to project it on them, use the gender-neutral pronouns *them*, *they*, and *their*. See Spotlight on... Pronouns in Context for more about using gender-neutral pronouns.

**Gender neutral:** Pat likes to eat pizza. They like pineapple and bacon with lots of cheese.

**Number** means singular or plural.

**Singular:** Toby has **one daughter**. **She** is studying art.

**Plural:** Jorge has **two children**. **They** go to the same school.

In addition to gender and number, **clarity** is often a major issue when using pronouns. For example: *When Lizzie smacked her arm into the glass window, she broke it.* Did Lizzie break her arm, or did she break the window? In this case, the reference is not clear. One way to clarify the meaning would be to write the sentence this way: *Lizzie broke the window when she smacked her arm into it.*

### Antecedent

The **antecedent** is the noun, nouns, or other pronoun or pronouns that the pronoun replaces. The antecedent usually appears earlier in the sentence or in a previous sentence, and the pronoun appears later in the same sentence or in another sentence.

**Example 1:** Although my **friends** tease me about my dancing style, I love **them** anyway.

**Example 2: Mariah** said **she** wanted to go home.

**Example 3:** The **car** was far away. Jessica couldn't see what model **it** was.

### Case

Pronoun case refers to the grammatical function of the pronoun in a sentence. Pronouns that are the **subjects** (the person, place, or thing that performs the action of the verb or represents what or whom sentence is about) of a sentence are written in the **subjective case**. For example: ***I*** *like pizza*. Pronouns that are **objects** (nouns or pronouns affected by the action of a verb) of a sentence or preposition are written in the **objective case**. For

example: *Laura gave **him** the baseball. Jorge and Toby were standing in front of **us** in line*. Lastly, **possessive pronouns** pronouns show ownership and are written in the **possessive case**. For example: *The cat picked up **its** toy. Those notes are **his** and **mine**.*

You already know that you cannot have a sentence without a subject and that subjects and objects in sentences must be nouns or pronouns. Remember, a pronoun is a stand-in for a noun. It is always playing substitute for a noun or nouns "already out there somewhere." Imagine writing without pronouns:

> When **Marcy** woke this morning, **Marcy** had a headache, so **Marcy** went to **Marcy's** medicine cabinet and took one of **Marcy's** headache pills that **Marcy's** doctor had prescribed for **Marcy**.

Instead:

> When Marcy woke this morning, **she** had a headache, so **she** went to **her** medicine cabinet and took one of **her** headache pills that **her** doctor had prescribed for **her**.

## Types of Pronouns

When you think of pronouns, **personal pronouns** such as those discussed in the previous section, referring to a specific person or object, are likely the first that come to mind. However, the world of pronouns extends to reflexive, indefinite, and demonstrative pronouns as well.

### Personal Pronouns

Knowing the difference between **subject personal pronouns** and **object personal pronouns** will help you use them correctly.

| Form | First Person | Second Person | Third Person |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Subject** | I, we | you | he, she, it, they |
| **Object** | me, us | you | him, her, it, them |
| **Possessive** | my, mine, our, ours | your, yours | his, hers, its, their, theirs |

TABLE 20.4

| Subject Position | Object Position |
|---|---|
| I | me |
| you | you |
| she | her |
| he | him |
| it | it |
| we | us |
| they | them |
| who | whom |
| whoever | whomever |

TABLE 20.5

Seeing both versions across from each other helps emphasize that each personal pronoun has its counterpart. In other words, if it isn't *we*, then it is *us*, and if it isn't *me*, then it is *I*.

**Correct** → ***She*** *is such a sweet little dog.*

**Incorrect** → ***Her*** *is such a sweet little dog.*

It is fairly obvious here which pronoun is correct. You have been saying it correctly all along, probably without being able to articulate the grammatical rule that made you do so. However, knowing the subject or **object distinction** can be especially helpful in knowing whether to use *I* or *me*. People often make mistakes when a sentence has a plural object. For example:

Jasmine and **I** ordered pizza for dinner. The pizza was delivered to Jasmine and **me**.

In the first sentence, the plural subject is *Jasmine* and *I*. *I* is the subject personal pronouns. In the second sentence, *me* is an **object of the preposition** (*to*), and the object personal pronoun—*me*—is correct. If the second sentence had the singular object pronoun *me*, no problem would arise. You would simply say that the pizza was delivered *to me*, not *to I*. Remember that an object personal pronoun stays an object personal pronoun no matter how many other objects are part of it.

### Reflexive Pronouns

**Reflexive pronouns** are straightforward. They are pronouns that "reflect," as an image does in a mirror. They refer to the same person or thing.

**John** couldn't stop looking at **himself** in the mirror.

*John* is the original noun, or antecedent, and *himself* is the pronoun that points back at him. Note that reflexive pronouns *always* end in *self* or *selves*.

| First Person | Second Person | Third Person |
|---|---|---|
| myself, ourselves | yourself, yourselves | himself, herself, itself, themselves |

**TABLE 20.6**

### Indefinite Pronouns

While reflexive pronouns always refer to themselves—that is, the subject and object are the same person, place, thing, or idea—**indefinite pronouns** are the opposite. As their name suggests, they are not definite; they are *in*definite and do not refer to specific nouns. They do get their meaning across, but the nouns they refer to are not known. These are some of the most common indefinite pronouns:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| all | either | most | other |
| another | everybody | much | several |
| any | everyone | nobody | some |
| anybody | everything | none | somebody |
| anything | few | no one | someone |
| both | many | nothing | something |
| each | more | one | |

**TABLE 20.7**

### Demonstrative Pronouns

**Demonstrative pronouns** point directly at something. They use all their pronoun power to indicate their preference, so much so that when someone uses a demonstrative pronoun, it is hard *not* to imagine them pointing at something directly. Good news and bad news come along with demonstrative pronouns. The good news is that there are only four demonstrative pronouns: *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*. The bad news—and it's not really bad—is that words that commonly play the role of pronouns are multitalented. The same word can play another role (part of speech) in a sentence. Sometimes these four words function as **adjectives**, which always modify nouns and pronouns. In the sentence *That is my car*, the word *that* is playing the role of a pronoun. It is the subject of the sentence. Only nouns or pronouns can be subjects. However, if the sentence read *That car is mine*, then *that* would be an adjective because it modifies (tells something about) the noun *car*.

## Common Mix-Ups

- **It's** vs. **its:** This is an easy one to mix up but easy to correct. **It's** means **it is** or **it has**. For example: ***It's*** *a hot day* or ***It is*** *a hot day*. **Its** refers to possession. For example: *This car has* ***its*** *problems*. To be sure you are correct, substitute *it is*. To say *The car has* ***it is*** *problems* makes no sense, so **its** is correct.
- **Who** vs. **whom:** Perhaps the most effective way to recognize which to use is to equate **who** to *he* and **whom** to *him*. For example: ***Who/Whom*** *wrote the book?* ***He*** *wrote the book*, so *who* is correct. Remember that *whom* is in the objective case. Think about it like this: ***whom*** is like *them*, so you might say, *This is for them*. Therefore, *This is for whom?* or *Whom is this for?* would be correct.
- **I** vs. **me: I** is always a subject; **me** is always an object. So *Demarcus and I left the building* is correct

because *I* is the subject. Conversely, *Give the package to me* and *You gave me good advice* are both correct because *me* is an object. Remember to use the correct pronoun with compound objects, as in the sentence *Reflection has helped other class members and **me** improve our writing.*

In Chapter 20, you have learned how to use different types of pronouns to substitute for nouns and noun phrases. You have also learned about common mix-ups when using pronouns.

Access multimedia content (http://openstax.org/books/writing-guide/pages/20-6-editing-focus-pronouns)

## 20.7 Evaluation: Evaluating Self-Reflection

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Articulate how genre conventions for structure, tone, and mechanics vary.
- Evaluate a written work for critical language awareness, clarity and coherence, and rhetorical choices.

As you know, one of the most important aspects of improving as a writer is the ability to evaluate yourself and your writing. Certainly, writing assignments help you, but it is important to learn this kind of evaluation for yourself and work to improve. Moreover, as you deconstruct your writing, you will recognize some aspects that carry over to other courses and disciplines, thus demonstrating the universality of writing. Use this rubric to help you plan, write, or review your reflective essay.

### Rubric

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5**<br>**Skillful** | The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: clear use of pronouns, as discussed in Section 20.6. The text shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer consistently explains their progress, clearly demonstrating purpose and a combination of thought and narrative in an expert way. Well-chosen transitions and consistently clear connective ideas link the parts of the reflection. | The writer consistently provides meaningful analysis, examples, explanations, observations, speculation, and honest criticism that lead to a thoughtful and purposeful self-evaluation. |
| **4**<br>**Accomplished** | The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: clear use of pronouns, as discussed in Section 20.6. The text shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer explains their progress, clearly demonstrating purpose and a combination of thought and narrative. Transitions, if not always enough, and generally clear connective ideas link the parts of the reflection. | The writer usually provides meaningful analysis, examples, explanations, observations, speculation, and honest criticism that lead to purposeful and thoughtful self-evaluation. However, some areas may be somewhat less developed than others. |

TABLE 20.8

| Score | Critical Language Awareness | Clarity and Coherence | Rhetorical Choices |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3**<br>**Capable** | The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: clear use of pronouns, as discussed in Section 20.6. The text shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer explains their progress, if not always clearly demonstrating purpose and a combination of thought and narrative. Some transitions help achieve coherence, but there are not quite enough, nor are ideas consistently connected. | The writer provides some meaningful analysis, examples, explanations, observations, speculation, and honest, if sometimes superficial, criticism that lead to purposeful and occasionally thoughtful self-evaluation. Some or even most areas may be less developed than others. |
| **2**<br>**Developing** | The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: clear use of pronouns, as discussed in Section 20.6. The text shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The writer attempts to explain their progress but does not clearly demonstrate purpose or a combination of thought and narrative. There may be too much of one or too little of both. Transitions are either missing or ineffective, as are connecting ideas. The essay may be difficult to follow throughout or in places. | The writer provides a minimum of meaningful details, analysis, examples, explanations, observations, speculation, and honest criticism that lead to purposeful and thoughtful self-evaluation. Some or even most areas may be far less developed than others, or all areas may need considerable elaboration. |
| **1**<br>**Beginning** | The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter: clear use of pronouns, as discussed in Section 20.6. The text shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways. | The paper shows little or no progression through the writer's growth and demonstrates minimal attention to purpose or a combination of thought and narrative in a useful way. There may be too much of one or too little of both. Transitions are either missing or ineffective, and the essay may be difficult to follow throughout or in places. | The writer provides few meaningful details, analysis, examples, explanations, observations, speculation, or honest criticism that leads to purposeful and thoughtful self-evaluation. Most areas are seriously undeveloped. |

**TABLE 20.8**

## 20.8 Spotlight on … Pronouns in Context

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Recognize and avoid gender bias in writing and general language use.
- Apply conventions of usage and current terminology to writing, including gender-neutral pronouns when applicable.

By now, you have a working knowledge of what pronouns are and how to use them. This section focuses on

more nuanced uses of pronouns and their place in the contemporary world—an emerging field of interest as people work to develop language that best captures their multiple identities.

## Eliminating Gender Bias

It is important to remember that many thoughtful and powerful English-language works from the past took masculine words for granted. English use of words such as *man*, *men*, *he*, *him*, and *his* was, one would hope, meant to include both men and women. Consider Thomas Jefferson's "All men are created equal" and Thomas Paine's "These are the times that try men's souls." The contemporary equivalent of those words might be "All people are created equal" and "These are the times that try our souls," which are two of several possible fixes for such gender exclusivity. When you read historic texts, recognize that the rules were different then, and the writers are no more at fault than the culture in which they lived. Contemporary writing, however, should reflect inclusivity, which in turn reflects the culture in which you live today. (See Spotlight on... Bias in Language and Research for more about language bias.)

As you edit to avoid gender-biased language, you will notice that English does not have an agreed-upon gender-neutral third-person singular pronoun to match the gender-neutral third-person plural pronouns (*they*, *their*, *them*). Writers and speakers use *he* (*him*, *his*) for men and *she* (*her*, *hers*) for women. In the sentence "Everybody has his own opinion," the indefinite pronoun *everybody* needs a singular pronoun to refer to it. Although it is grammatically correct to say, "Everybody has his own opinion," the sentence excludes women. But until recently, it was considered grammatically questionable to write, "Everybody has their own opinion," although *their* is gender neutral. When editing, be alert to such constructions, and consider these ways to use or fix them:

- Make the sentence plural: "People have their own opinions."
- Include both pronouns *(This solution excludes people who do not fall within a gender binary.):* "Everybody has his or her own opinion."
- Eliminate the pronoun: "Everybody has an opinion."
- Alternate masculine and feminine pronouns throughout your sentences or paragraphs, using *she* in one paragraph and *he* in the next. Be careful, though; to avoid confusing readers, you might change them in each section or chapter.

Most writers have used all of these solutions at one time or another. As always, use the strategy that makes for the clearest, most graceful writing.

Additionally, it has become more common and generally accepted to use *they*, *their*, and *them* as singular pronouns. However, depending on the context, using a plural pronoun to refer to a single individual can be confusing to readers when its antecedent is unclear.

## Pronouns for Nonbinary and Transgender People

You cannot always know how individuals identify themselves, nor can you assume their gender is either male or female. The best approach with people you don't know is simply to ask which pronouns they prefer and to respect their choice. Some people identify themselves with the pronouns *they/them/theirs*, and this preference is generally acceptable politically, socially, and grammatically. Other gender-neutral pronouns exist as well, such as *ze/hir/hirs*, but they are used less often. If you are unsure, an option is simply to use the person's name.

If an individual has a specific identity and prefers a masculine, feminine, or gender-neutral pronoun, there are ways they can inform people of it. (Notice the use here of *they* as a singular pronoun.) For example, if one identifies as female, that person can include the pronouns *she/her* as part of their email signature: "Jane Doe (she/her)." Similarly, a person who identifies as nonbinary can include the preferred pronouns *they/them/their* in their signature.

### Write about Pronouns

Take a moment and write about how pronoun use impacts you. Also, write about how people understand each other through pronouns, while being mindful of the differences between people. Think carefully about perspectives on gender, and be sure to respect other points of view and interpretations of pronoun use. Finally, explain how pronoun use is an important component of identity.

As an additional exercise, review your portfolio and (re)consider your use of pronouns. Your development as a writer and enhanced understanding of pronouns will provide new insight into their use. *Where might you have made other decisions about pronouns, and what impact might they have had?* Consider including these insights in your reflective essay.

### Avoid Discriminatory Language

Above all, your writing should not hurt people or exclude any group from humanity. As you edit, ensure that your language does not discriminate against categories of people based on gender, race, ethnicity, social class, or sexual orientation—or anything else.

## Further Reading

The following texts provide additional information or examples regarding reflective writing in various disciplines and settings.

Bolton, Gillie, and Russell Delderfield. *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development*. 5th ed., Sage Publications, 2018.

Dillard, Annie. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. 1974.Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2013.

Stevens, Dannelle D., and Joanne E. Cooper. *Journal Keeping: How to Use Reflective Writing for Effective Learning, Teaching, Professional Insight, and Positive Change*. Stylus Publishing, 2009.

Tan, Amy. *Where the Past Begins: A Writer's Memoir*. Ecco, 2017.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden.* 1854. *Project Gutenberg*, www.gutenberg.org/files/205/205-h/205-h.htm.

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# HANDBOOK

OUTLINE

**H 1.** Introduction
**H 2.** Paragraphs and Transitions
**H 3.** Clear and Effective Sentences
**H 4.** Sentence Errors
**H 5.** Words and Language
**H 6.** Point of View
**H 7.** Verbs
**H 8.** Pronouns
**H 9.** Punctuation
**H 10.** Mechanics
**H 11.** Quotations
**H 12.** Index and Guide to Documentation
**H 13.** MLA Documentation and Format
**H 14.** APA Documentation and Format
**H 15.** Further Reading
**H 16.** Works Cited

## H 1. Introduction

This handbook is a brief yet comprehensive reference for you to consult as you write papers and other assignments for a college course. You can refer to it as you draft paragraphs and polish sentences for clarity, conciseness, and point of view. You can read it to learn how to identify and revise common sentence errors and confused words. You can use it to help you edit your writing and fine-tune your use of verbs, pronouns, punctuation, and mechanics. And you can have it open as you integrate and cite quotations as well as other source material in your papers in MLA or APA style.

Designed as a reference tool, the handbook is organized to help you get answers to your questions. You do not need to read the entire handbook to get helpful information from it. For example, if your instructor has noted that you need to work on comma splices, you can refer to Sentence Errors, before you turn in a final draft of your writing. If you know you frequently misuse commas, refer to Punctuation, and check your sentences against the advice there. And if you, like many writers, can't remember which punctuation marks go inside and outside quotation marks, refer to Quotations. Becoming familiar with the handbook and the various topics will allow you to use it efficiently.

## H 2. Paragraphs and Transitions

Paragraphs help readers make their way through prose writing by presenting it in manageable chunks. Transitions link sentences and paragraphs so that readers can clearly understand how the points you are making relate to one another. (See Editing Focus: Paragraph and Transitions for a related discussion of paragraphs and transitions. See Evaluation: Transitions for a related discussion of transitions in multimodal compositions.)

### Effective Paragraphs

Paragraphs are guides for readers. Each new paragraph signals either a new idea, further development of an existing idea, or a new direction. An effective paragraph has a main point supported by evidence, is organized in a sensible way, and is neither too short nor too long. When a paragraph is too short, it often lacks enough

evidence and examples to back up your claims. When a paragraph is too long, readers can lose the point you are making.

## Developing a Main Point

A paragraph is easier to write and easier to read when it centers on a main point. The main point of the paragraph is usually expressed in a **topic sentence**. The topic sentence frequently comes at the start of the paragraph, but not always. No matter the position, however, the other sentences in the paragraph support the main point.

## Supporting Evidence and Analysis

All the sentences that develop the paragraph should support or expand on the main point given in the topic sentence. Depending on the type of writing you are doing, support may include evidence from sources—such as facts, statistics, and expert opinions—as well as examples from your own experience. Paragraphs also may include an analysis of your evidence written in your own words. The analysis explains the significance of the evidence to the reader and reinforces the main point of the paragraph.

In the following example, the topic sentence is underlined. The supporting evidence discussed through cause-and-effect reasoning comes in the next three sentences. The paragraph concludes with two sentences of analysis in the writer's own words.

> Millions of retired Americans rely on Social Security benefits to make ends meet after they turn 65. According to the Social Security Administration, about 46 million retired workers receive benefits, a number that reflects about 90 percent of retired people. Although experts disagree on the exact numbers, somewhere between 12 percent and 40 percent of retirees count on social security for all of their income, making these benefits especially important (Konish). These benefits become more important as people age. According to Eisenberg, people who reach the age of 85 become more financially vulnerable because their health care and long-term care costs increase at the same time their savings have been drawn down. It should therefore come as no surprise that people worry about changes to the program. Social Security keeps millions of retired Americans out of poverty.

## Opening Paragraphs

Readers pay attention to the opening of a piece of writing, so make it work for you. After starting with a descriptive title, write an opening paragraph that grabs readers' attention and alerts them to what's coming. A strong opening paragraph provides the first clues about your subject and your stance. In academic writing, whether argumentative, interpretative, or informative, the introduction often ends with a clear **thesis statement**, a declarative sentence that states the topic, the angle you are taking, and the aspects of the topic the rest of the paper will support.

Depending on the type of writing you're doing, you can open in a variety of ways.

- **Open with a conflict or an action.** If you're writing about conflict, a good opening may be to spell out what the conflict is. This way of opening captures attention by creating a kind of suspense: *Will the conflict be resolved? How will it be resolved?*
- **Open with a specific detail, statistic, or quotation.** Specific information shows that you know a lot about your subject and piques readers' curiosity. The more dramatic your information, the more it will draw in readers, as long as what you provide is credible.
- **Open with an anecdote.** Readers enjoy stories. Particularly for reflective or personal narrative writing, beginning with a story sets the scene and draws in readers. You may also begin the anecdote with dialogue or reflection.

The following introduction opens with an anecdote and ends with the thesis statement, which is underlined.

> Betty stood outside the salon, wondering how to get in. It was June of 2020, and the door was locked. A

> sign posted on the door provided a phone number for her to call to be let in, but at 81, Betty had lived her life without a cell phone. Betty's day-to-day life had been hard during the pandemic, but she had planned for this haircut and was looking forward to it: she had a mask on and hand sanitizer in her car. Now she couldn't get in the door, and she was discouraged. In that moment, Betty realized how much Americans' dependence on cell phones had grown in the months she and millions of others had been forced to stay at home. Betty and thousands of other senior citizens who could not afford cell phones or did not have the technological skills and support they needed were being left behind in a society that was increasingly reliant on technology.

### Closing Paragraphs

The **conclusion** is your final chance to make the point of your writing stick in readers' minds by reinforcing what they have read. Depending on the purpose for your writing and your audience, you can summarize your main points and restate your thesis, draw a logical conclusion, speculate about the issues you have raised, or recommend a course of action, as shown in the following conclusion:

> Although many senior citizens purchased and learned new technologies during the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of older people like Betty were unable to buy and/or learn the technology they needed to keep them connected to the people and services they needed. As society becomes increasingly dependent on technology, social service agencies, religious institutions, medical providers, senior centers, and other organizations that serve the elderly need to be equipped to help them access and become proficient in the technologies essential to their daily lives.

## Transitions

**Transitional words and phrases** show the connections or relationships between sentences and paragraphs and help your writing flow smoothly from one to the next.

### Flow

A paragraph flows when ideas are organized logically and sentences move smoothly from one to the next. Transitional words and phrases help your writing flow by signaling to readers what's coming in the next sentence. In the paragraph below, the topic sentence and transitional words and phrases are underlined.

> Some companies court the public by mentioning environmental problems and pointing out that they do not contribute to these problems. For example, the natural gas industry often presents natural gas as a good alternative to coal. However, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists, the drilling and extraction of natural gas from wells and transporting it through pipelines leaks methane, a major cause of global warming ("Environmental Impacts"). Yet leaks are rarely mentioned by the industry. By taking credit for problems they don't cause and being silent on the ones they do, companies present a favorable environmental image that often obscures the truth.

### Transitional Words and Phrases

Following are some transitional words and phrases and their functions in paragraphs. Use this list when drafting or revising to help guide readers through your writing. (See Editing Focus: Paragraphs and Transitions for another discussion on transitions.)

| Type of Transition | Examples |
|---|---|
| to compare or show similarity | likewise, similarly, in like manner |
| to contrast or change direction | but, yet, however, nevertheless, still, at the same time, on the other hand, conversely |
| to add to | also, and, furthermore, next, then, in addition |
| to give examples | for example, for instance, to illustrate, specifically, thus |
| to agree or concede | certainly, of course, to be sure, granted |
| to summarize or conclude | finally, in conclusion, in short, in other words, thus, in summary |
| to show time | first, second, third, next, then, soon, meanwhile, later, currently, concurrently, at the same time, eventually, at last, finally |
| to show a spatial relationship | here, there, in the background, in the foreground, in the distance, to the left, to the right, near, above, below |

**TABLE H1**

# H 3. Clear and Effective Sentences

This section will help you write strong sentences that convey your meaning clearly and concisely. See Editing Focus: Sentence Structure for a related discussion and practice on effective sentences.

## Emphasis

The most emphatic place in a sentence is the end. To achieve the strongest emphasis, end with the idea you want readers to remember. Place introductory, less important, or contextual information earlier in the sentence. Consider the differences in these two sentences.

**Less Emphatic** Angel needs to start now if he wants to have an impact on his sister's life.

**More Emphatic** If Angel wants to have an impact on his sister's life, he needs to start now.

## Concrete Nouns

General nouns name broad classes or categories of things (*man, dog, city*); **concrete nouns** refer to particular things (*Michael, collie, Chicago*). Concrete nouns provide a more vivid and lively reading experience because they create stronger images that activate readers' senses. The examples below show how concrete nouns, combined with specific details, can make writing more engaging.

**All General Nouns** Approaching the library, I see people and dogs milling about outside, but no subjects to write about. I'm tired from my walk and go inside.

**Revised with Concrete Nouns** Approaching Brandon Library, I see skateboarders and bikers weaving through students who talk in clusters on the library steps. A friendly collie waits for its owner to return. Subjects to write about? Nothing strikes me as especially interesting. Besides, my heart is still pounding from the walk up the hill. I wipe my sweaty forehead and go inside.

## Active Voice

**Active voice** refers to the way a writer uses verbs in a sentence. Verbs have two "voices": active and passive. In the **active voice**, the subject of the sentence acts—the subject performs the action of the verb. In the **passive voice**, the subject receives the action, and the object actually becomes the subject. Although some passive sentences are necessary and clear, a paper full of passive-voice constructions lacks vitality and becomes wordy.

Active-voice verbs make something happen. By using active verbs wherever possible, you will create stronger, clearer, and more concise sentences.

> **Passive Voice** On the post-training survey, the anti-harassment tutorial was rated highly informative by employees.
>
> **Revised in Active Voice** On the post-training survey, employees rated the anti-harassment tutorial highly informative.

## Conciseness

Concise writing considers the importance of every word. Editing sentences for emphasis, concrete nouns, and active voice will help you write clearly and precisely, as will the following strategies. To be concise, eliminate wasted words and filler—*not* ideas, information, description, or details that will interest readers or help them follow your thoughts. (For more on conciseness, see Editing Focus: Sentence Structure.)

### Use Action Verbs

Using action verbs is one of the most direct ways to cut unneeded words. Whenever you find a phrase like the ones below, consider substituting an action verb.

| Instead of the phrase . . . | Use an action verb |
|---|---|
| reach a decision, come to a decision | decide |
| made a choice | chose |
| hold a meeting | meet |
| arrive at a conclusion | conclude |
| have a discussion | discuss |

TABLE H2

### Cut Unnecessary Words and Phrases

Eliminate words and phrases that do not add meaning. Consider the following sentences, which say essentially the same thing.

> **Wordy** In almost every situation that I can think of, with few exceptions, it will make good sense for you to look for as many places as possible to cut out needless, redundant, and repetitive words and phrases from the papers, reports, paragraphs, and sentences you write for college assignments. (49 words)
>
> **Concise** Whenever possible, cut needless words and phrases from your college writing. (11 words)

The wordy sentence is full of early-draft language in three chunks. The first chunk comes at the beginning of the sentence. Notice how *In almost every situation that I can think of, with few exceptions, it will make good*

*sense for you to look for as many places as possible* is reduced to *Whenever possible* in the concise sentence.

The second chunk of the wordy sentence is *needless, redundant, and repetitive.* The concise version reduces those four words to *needless* because the words have the same meaning. The third chunk of the wordy sentence comes at the end. Notice how *papers, reports, paragraphs, and sentences you write for college assignments* is reduced to *your college writing.* The meaning, although expanded to all writing, remains the same.

The following phrases are common fillers that add nothing to meaning. They should be avoided.

- a person by the name of
- for all intents and purposes
- in a manner of speaking
- more or less

Some common filler phrases have single-word alternatives, which are preferable.

| Replace a common filler phrase . . . | With a single word |
|---|---|
| at all times | always |
| at the present time | now |
| at this point in time | now |
| for the purpose of | for |
| due to the fact that | because |
| the reason being | because |
| in the final analysis | finally |
| last but not least | finally |

TABLE H3

### Avoid *there is/there are* and *it is*

Starting a sentence with *there is, there are,* or *it is* can be useful to draw attention to a change in direction. However, starting a sentence with one of these phrases often forces you into a wordy construction. Wordiness means the presence of verbal filler; it does not mean the number of words, the amount of description, or the length of a composition. (For more on these constructions, see Editing Focus: Sentence Structure.)

> **Wordy** There is often uncertainty about whether or not employees are required to turn on their cameras during online meetings, and there are some employees who don't. However, it is the expectation of employers that cameras be turned on.
>
> **Concise** Employees are often uncertain whether they must turn on their cameras during online meetings, and some don't. However, employers expect cameras to be turned on.

## Parallelism

Within a sentence, **parallelism**—the repetition of a word or grammatical construction— creates symmetry and balance, makes an idea easier to remember, and sounds pleasing to the ear. In the first example below, the parallelism is established by the repetition of the phrase beginning with *who*. In the second example, the

parallelism is created by the underlined nouns.

**Unparallel** After 25 years, the battle over the reintroduction of wolves continues between environmental activists, who support it, and hunters and people who own cattle ranches and are opposed.

**Parallel** After 25 years, the battle over the reintroduction of wolves continues between environmental activists, who support it, and cattle ranchers and hunters, who oppose it.

**Unparallel** Exercises that improve core strength include crunches, leg lifts, and when you do push-ups and planks.

**Parallel** Exercises that improve core strength include crunches, leg lifts, push-ups, and planks.

## Variety

Varying the length and structure of sentences makes your writing more interesting to read.

### Simple Sentences

A **simple sentence** has one idea expressed in a single main clause (also known as an independent clause). A **main clause** contains a subject and a predicate and can stand alone as a sentence. A simple sentence can be short or long, as shown in the examples below. The phrases in the long sentence add information, but the sentence remains a simple sentence nonetheless because it has only one clause.

The coronavirus spread around in the world in 2020.

School-age children and college students were pushed into virtual learning environments in March 2020, with schools closing for unspecified lengths of time.

### Compound Sentences

A **compound sentence** contains two or more main clauses that are equally important to the meaning of the sentence. (A main clause contains a subject and a predicate and can stand alone as a sentence.) You can create compound sentences in the following ways:

- **Compound Sentence Using a Coordinating Conjunction**

  Create a compound sentence by using a **coordinating conjunction**—*for, and, nor, but, or, yet,* or *so (fanboys)*—to join main clauses. To remember the coordinating conjunctions, use the mnemonic device *fanboys.*

  Restaurants and small retailers experienced steep drops in revenue during the pandemic, **and** many were forced to close.

  Restaurants and small retailers experienced steep drops in revenue during the pandemic, **yet** many survived the downturn.

- **Compound Sentence Using a Semicolon**

  A semicolon can join two main clauses that are closely related in meaning. When using a semicolon, you must have a complete sentence before and after it.

  Restaurants and small retailers experienced steep drops in revenue during the pandemic**;** many were forced to close.

- **Compound Sentence Using a Semicolon and Transitional Word or Phrase**

  A **transitional words or phrases** such as *however, in fact, meanwhile, therefore, consequently, as a result, instead,* or *furthermore* indicates the relation of two or more equally important ideas in the main clauses.

> Restaurants and small retailers experienced steep drops in revenue during the pandemic**;** **however**, many survived the downturn.

### Complex Sentences

A **complex sentence** contains one main clause (a clause that contains a subject and a predicate and can stand alone as a sentence) and one or more subordinate clauses (also known as dependent clauses). **Subordinate clauses** begin with a subordinating word or phrase such as *although, because, even if, when, whenever, since, as though, whether, as long as, until,* or *while*. The main clause expresses the main idea of the sentence, and the subordinate clause expresses the less important idea. Like a main clause, a subordinate clause has a subject and verb; however, unlike a main clause, it cannot stand alone as a sentence. A subordinate clause punctuated as a sentence is a type of sentence fragment. The subordinate clauses in the following sentences are underlined.

> Although the federal government provided financial assistance, the money came too late for many businesses. When schools and universities shut down in March of 2020, students had to learn at home, a situation that proved challenging for many households.

### Compound-Complex Sentences

A **compound-complex sentence** contains two or more main clauses (clauses that contain subjects and predicates and can stand alone as sentences) and one or more subordinate clauses (clauses that begin with a subordinating word such as *although, because, even if, when, whenever, since, as though, whether, as long as, until,* and *while*). A compound-complex sentence is an effective structure to use when you want to express three or more ideas in a single sentence. The example sentence has two main clauses (double underline) and three subordinate clauses (single underline).

> When school districts reopened, parents had to decide whether they wanted their children to attend classes in person, and they had to be ready for classes to move online if there were outbreaks of the coronavirus in their community.

## H 4. Sentence Errors

These four common sentence errors can make your writing hard to read: fragments, comma splices, run-on sentences, and mixed constructions.

### Sentence Fragments

A **sentence fragment** is a group of words that lacks a subject, a verb, or both, or it is a subordinate clause (a clause that begins with a subordinating word such as *although, because, since,* and so on) punctuated as though it were a sentence by itself. Although most are grammatical errors, sentence fragments can be used judiciously in conventional writing so long as the purpose is clear to readers and the fragment is clearly intended.

### Unintentional Sentence Fragments

Often a sentence fragment follows a complete sentence and expands on it, as illustrated in the examples below (fragments are underlined). You can correct most fragment errors by attaching the fragment to the sentence to which it belongs or by rewriting the fragment as a complete sentence.

> **Sentence Fragment** People think that they will be happy if they are well off. That money will make everything better.
>
> **Revised by Attaching the Fragment to a Complete Sentence** People think that they will be happy if they are well off and that money will make everything better.
>
> **Sentence Fragment** Psychologist David Myers explains how students have increasingly chosen to attend college to make more money. Thus further explaining his point of people's desire to use money

to gain happiness.

**Revised by Attaching the Fragment to a Complete Sentence** Psychologist David Myers explains how students have increasingly chosen to attend college to make more money, thus further explaining his point of people's desire to use money to gain happiness.

**Sentence Fragment** Although income grew, people's happiness did not. With rich people reporting that even though they had plenty of money, their happiness had not changed much.

**Revised by Adding a Verb** Although income grew, people's happiness did not. Rich people reported that even though they had plenty of money, their happiness had not changed much.

**Sentence Fragment** For many people, increased income is being spent on the things that people are unable to pay less for. Things like taxes, childcare, transportation, and housing.

**Revised by Adding a Subject and a Verb** For many people, increased income is being spent on things that people are unable to pay less for. These include taxes, childcare, transportation, and housing.

### Intentional Sentence Fragments

Intentional sentence fragments force quick reading, inviting readers to stitch meaning to together. Intentional fragments are most common in creative writing and advertising.

The rabbit darted out of the shadows. A flash of movement. The dog lunged and strained at the leash.

## Comma Splices

A **comma splice** is a common error that occurs when two complete sentences are joined by a comma. You can correct a comma splice by adding a coordinating conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet,* or *so),* adding a period and creating two sentences, adding a coordinating conjunction and creating a compound sentence, or subordinating one clause and creating a complex sentence.

**Comma Splice** The author sheds light on the financial sacrifice many mothers make**,** they take care of their children without compensation and often lose professional status.

**Revised with a Coordinating Conjunction** The author sheds light on the financial sacrifice many mothers make, **for** they take care of their children without compensation and often lose professional status.

**Comma Splice** Many college students see their education as the way to become wealthy**,** some are sacrificing happiness to pursue high-paying careers.

**Revised with a Period** Many college students see their education as the way to become wealthy**. S**ome are sacrificing happiness to pursue high-paying careers.

**Comma Splice** Psychologist David Myers conducted multiple surveys asking people about their attitudes about money**,** the results revealed that people felt they needed more regardless of how much they had.

**Revised with a Semicolon** Psychologist David Myers conducted multiple surveys asking people about their attitudes about money**;** the results revealed that people felt they needed more regardless of how much they had.

**Comma Splice** Love cannot be paid for**,** it is a gift that parents give because they love their children.

**Revised with a Semicolon and Transitional Word or Phrase** Love cannot be paid for**; indeed,** it is a gift that parents give because they love their children.

**Comma Splice** Students are choosing majors to enable them to earn more money**,** they are under the misconception that earning money guarantees happiness.

**Revised with a Subordinate Clause** Students are choosing majors to enable them to earn more money **because** they are under the misconception that earning money guarantees happiness.

## Run-on Sentences

In a **run-on sentence**, two or more complete sentences are not separated by any punctuation. Like comma splices, most run-on sentences can be revised in one or more of the following ways: adding a coordinating conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet,* or *so*), adding a period and creating two sentences, separating the sentences with a semicolon, separating the sentences with a semicolon and transitional word or phrase (such as *on the other hand, however, consequently,* and so on), or turning the less important sentence into a subordinate clause starting with a subordinating word such as *although, because, if, when, since*, and so on.

**Run-on Sentence** The DNR eventually designated the area as crucial habitat the protection came too late to save the nesting birds.

**Revised with a Comma and a Coordinating Conjunction** The DNR eventually designated the area as crucial habitat**, but** the protection came too late to save the nesting birds.

**Run-on Sentence** Most people realize that being wealthy won't just happen many college students choose a major that will ensure they make money.

**Revised with a Period** Most people realize that being wealthy won't just happen**.** Many college students choose a major that will ensure they make money.

**Run-on Sentence** Parents do not expect any financial reward they care for their children out of love and responsibility.

**Revised with a Semicolon** Parents do not expect any financial reward**;** they care for their children out of love and responsibility.

**Run-on Sentence** The average American family's expenses have risen faster than incomes they have saved less than prior generations.

**Revised with a Semicolon and Transitional Word or Phrase** The average American family's expenses have risen faster than incomes**; as a result,** they have saved less than prior generations.

**Run-on Sentence** College students have the opportunity to choose any major they tend to choose those that offer immediate opportunities to earn money when they graduate.

**Revised with a Subordinate Clause** **Although** college students have the opportunity to choose any major**,** they tend to choose those that offer immediate opportunities to earn money when they graduate.

## Mixed Sentence Constructions

A **mixed sentence** contains parts that do not fit together because of grammar or meaning. In the following example, the writer needs to revise either the second part to fit with the first part or the first part to fit with the second. (See Editing Focus: Mixed Sentence Constructions for more on mixed sentence constructions.)

**Mixed Sentence** By starting my general studies classes last semester gave me the opportunity to take classes in my major this fall.

**Second Part Revised** By starting my general studies classes last spring, I had the opportunity to take classes in my major this fall.

**First Part Revised** Starting my general studies classes last spring gave me the opportunity to take classes in my major this fall.

***Just because . . . doesn't mean* Constructions.** *Just because . . . doesn't mean* constructions are common in

speech but should be avoided in writing.

**Just because** Just because I want to be a doctor doesn't mean I will get into medical school.

**Revised** Simply wanting to be a doctor doesn't guarantee admission to medical school.

**Revised** Although I want to be a doctor, I will need to work hard to get into medical school.

# H 5. Words and Language

The English language is rich and always evolving, offering you many ways and words to express yourself in writing and speech.

## Language Varieties

English is not one language but many, made up of regional and social dialects. In addition, groups speak using specialized language among themselves that can be difficult for outsiders to understand. As a writer, be aware of the audience for your writing. Use language that your readers will understand directly or from context.

### Dialects

English **dialects** are distinctive versions of the language used in geographical regions and/or by particular social or ethnic groups. Standard American English, the English spoken by newscasters, is one such dialect, as are African American Vernacular English, Creole, Appalachian English, and others. English dialects have many features in common, but each has particulars of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. (For an in-depth discussion of dialects and academic writing, see Spotlight on … Variations of English.)

### Slang

Groups of people with similar skills and interests often develop **slang** that allows them to express ideas quickly and vividly. Slang also signals knowledge about a particular topic, such as meme culture, music, sports, and more. Slang is generally considered too casual for most academic writing, but it may be appropriate for personal essays. In your papers, be aware of your purpose and audience when choosing to use slang. Avoid using slang that your readers are unlikely to understand.

### Technical Expressions

Experts in many professional fields use specialized and technical expressions that allow them to communicate efficiently and clearly with each other. Such language is often incomprehensible for nonexperts and should be avoided in writing for general readers. (For tips on writing about a technical topic for an audience of nonspecialists, see Spotlight on … Discipline-Specific and Technical Language.)

## Biased Language

Biased words and expressions exclude or demean people on the basis of gender, sex, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, social class, or physical or mental traits.

### Biased Language Based on Sex and Gender

English includes words and expressions that are considered biased based on sex and gender, such as *mankind, businessman, chairman, fireman,* and so on. These are commonly replaced by gender-neutral words such as *humanity, businessperson, chair* or *chairperson,* and *firefighter.* (See Spotlight on … Bias in Language and Research for more on language bias.)

In addition, the English pronoun *he* has traditionally been used as the gender-neutral pronoun. For example, the construction *A doctor should have a caring attitude toward his patients* was once common but is now widely viewed as gender biased because many doctors are not men. For a discussion of the pronoun *he* used as the gender-neutral pronoun, see Pronouns.

### Labels and Stereotypes

Be sensitive to labels and stereotypes that may insult a group of people you are writing about. Avoid labels that don't put people first, such as *cancer victim* and *wheelchair-bound.* Don't make assumptions about entire groups of people that promote stereotypes, such as *teenagers are rebellious, elderly people don't hear well, conservatives are rich,* or *women are more emotional than men.* (See Spotlight on ... Bias in Language and Research for more on language bias.)

## Exact Words

As a general rule, use plain, direct words in your writing. Avoid reaching for a word that sounds fancy or impressive, especially if you are unsure about the meaning. If you use a word that is only vaguely familiar to you, look it up in a dictionary to ensure you are using it correctly. (You can type the word and "def" to get a definition.) Doing so has the added benefit of building your vocabulary.

### Words Commonly Confused

The words in the following list are commonly confused or misused by writers. As you write, consult this list or use a reliable online tool, such as Merriam-Webster (https://openstax.org/r/merriam-webster), to check the meanings and usage of words you're unsure of. Keep a list of words that cause you trouble as you become aware of them. Then, after you draft a document, do a search for the words on your list. (For a discussion of homonyms, homographs, and homophones, see Editing Focus: Words Often Confused.)

| Confusing Words | Definitions and Examples |
|---|---|
| accept, except | *Accept* means "to receive willingly." *Except* is used mostly as a preposition meaning "excluding." *He accepted all the gifts except mine.* |
| advice, advise | *Advice* is a noun meaning "guidance." *Advise* is a verb meaning "to recommend." *My mother gives good advice when she advises me about my college courses.* |
| affect, effect | The verb a*ffect* means "to produce a change in." The noun *effect* means "result." *The wine affected me, but it seemed to have no effect on my roommate.* |
| all ready, already | *All ready* means "completely prepared." *Already* means "happened by or before now." *We were all ready for the trip, but the train had already left.* |
| all right, alright | *All right* is always two words meaning "acceptable" or "satisfactory." *Alright* is an informal spelling. |
| all together, altogether | *All together* means "everyone or everything together." *We put the tickets all together for safekeeping. Altogether* means "completely" or "entirely." *The book is altogether incomprehensible.* |
| allusion, illusion | An *allusion* is an indirect or implied reference. *The poem includes an allusion to the Bible.* An *illusion* creates a false impression of reality. *Magic relies upon illusion, seeing what you believe instead of what is really there.* |
| A lot | *A lot* is always two words meaning "much" or "many."<br>*Alot* is a misspelling. |

TABLE H4

| Confusing Words | Definitions and Examples |
|---|---|
| apart, a part | *Apart* denotes a separation. *Social distancing requires people to stand six feet apart from each other. A part* denotes a segment of something. *The dog is a part of our family.* |
| bare, bear | As verbs, *bare* means "to uncover." *Bear* means "to endure." *Bear with me while I bare my soul.* |
| complement, compliment | *Complement* means "to add to" or "to complete." *Compliment* means "to make an approving remark." *Many people now compliment the fresh gray paint that complements the exterior stone on the house. Complimentary* also means "free" or "without cost." *Because they sold advertising space for the newspaper, they received complimentary tickets to the game.* |
| conscience, conscious | *Conscience* is a noun that refers to the awareness of one's actions being right or wrong. *I have a guilty conscience. Conscious* is an adjective meaning "awake" or "alert." *She remained conscious after hitting her head on the windshield.* |
| disinterested, uninterested | *Disinterested* means "impartial." *Uninterested* means "not interested." *She was chosen as a disinterested party to hear both sides of the disagreement. Unfortunately, she was uninterested in the dispute.* |
| elicit, illicit | *Elicit* is a verb meaning "to bring out." *Illicit* means "unlawful." *His claims elicited a response from the mayor about the effort to stop demand for illicit drugs.* |
| emigrate, immigrate | People *emigrate,* or leave, one country. They *immigrate* to a new country to live. *When my family emigrated from Chile, they immigrated to the United States.* |
| everyday, every day | *Everyday* is an adjective meaning "common," "ordinary," or "used daily." *Every day* is a noun phrase meaning "every day." *Everyday tasks are ones you do every day, like brushing your teeth and washing dishes.* |
| farther, further | *Farther* refers to distance. *I can't carry these groceries any farther. Further* means "in addition," "more," and "to a greater extent" and refers to abstractions like time or amount. *I can't discuss this issue any further.* |
| fewer, less | *Fewer* refers to items that can be counted. *Less* refers to items that cannot be counted: *I have fewer assignments than my roommate, and she has less time than I do. Cacti need less water than other plants.* |
| good, well | *Good* is an adjective. *That color looks good on you. Well* is an adverb. *Marguerite speaks Chinese well. Well* is used as an adjective only in reference to health. *She looks well after recovering from the flu.* |
| imply, infer | *Imply* means "to suggest." *Your email implies you're upset. Infer* means "to conclude." *I infer from your email that you're upset.* |
| its, it's | *Its* is a possessive pronoun. *The dog wagged its tail. It's* is a contraction of "it is" or "it has." *It's my turn. Its* followed by an apostrophe is incorrect. |

**TABLE H4**

| Confusing Words | Definitions and Examples |
|---|---|
| lay, lie | *Lay* means "to put or set something down." *Please lay the books on the table. Lie* means "to be in or move into a horizontal position" or "to be situated." *I need to lie down and rest my eyes. The towns lie near the waterfalls.* Note also that *lay* is the past tense of *lie. I fell asleep as soon as I lay down to rest my eyes.* |
| lead, led | The past tense of the verb *to lead* is *led.* The noun *lead* (rhymes with *red*) is the metal. *Nina led a group of tourists past the old lead mine.* |
| lose, loose | *Lose* is a verb meaning to "mislay" or "not win." *I lose a sock every time I do laundry. These teams never lose their games. Loose* means "not tight" or "not secure." *The loose shutters may be unsafe in a storm.* |
| myself, herself, himself, yourself, ourselves, themselves, yourselves | Do not use the *-self* pronouns in place of a personal pronoun in an effort to sound more formal: *Malia and I* [not *myself*] *wrote the report. The report was written by Malia and me* [not *myself*]. Use the *-self* pronouns in the following situations: *Malia wrote the report herself. She treats herself to brunch on Sundays.* |
| peak, peek, pique | *Peak* means "a highest point" or "to reach a highest point." *After a difficult climb, the hikers finally reached the peak. Peek* means "a secretive look" or "to take a secretive look." *My brother peeked at his birthday gifts.* As a verb, *pique* means "to spark interest." *The two classes piqued her interest in physics.* As a noun, *pique* also means "irritation." *His pique at her probing questions was obvious.* |
| precede, proceed | *Precede* means "to go before." *The example that precedes this one is* peak/peek/pique. *Proceed* means "to go forward." *The judge's decision allowed the lawsuit to proceed.* |
| prejudice, prejudiced | *Prejudice* is a noun that is sometimes used incorrectly in place of *prejudiced*, an adjective. *His outrageous views were highly prejudiced* [not *prejudice*]. |
| principal, principle | *Principal* has several meanings: "a chief or head, particularly of a school," "a capital sum of money," or "first or highest in rank, importance, or value." *Principle* refers to a "rule of conduct or action." *The school principal outlined the principles behind the code of conduct. The small principal in their savings account is not their principal source of income.* |
| raise, rise | *Raise* means "to lift" or "to grow" and always takes an object. *She raised her hand to tell the story of how she raised three children on her own. Rise* means "to get up" and does not take an object. *Like the sun, the moon rises in the eastern sky.* |
| set, sit | *Set* means "to put" or "to place" and takes an object. *He set the groceries on the table. Sit* means "to be seated" and does not take an object. *She sits in the same seat for every class.* |
| than, then | *Than* is used to compare. *I am older than you. Then* indicates time. *Do your homework, and then we'll get pizza.* |

**TABLE H4**

| Confusing Words | Definitions and Examples |
|---|---|
| that, which | *That* is used to introduce information essential to the meaning of a sentence. *The phone that I bought five years ago no longer charges fully. Which* is most often used to introduce information that is nonessential to the meaning of a sentence. *My iPhone 7, which I bought five years ago, no longer charges fully.* (For more on nonessential and essential information, see Editing Focus: Commas with Nonessential and Essential Information.) |
| that, who, which | Use *that* and *which* to refer to things and most animals. *The tiger that had escaped was found.* Use *who* to refer to people and animals with names. *Doctors who treated COVID-19 patients were often called heroes.* |
| their, there, they're | *Their* is a possessive pronoun. *There* indicates place. *They're* is a contraction of "they are." *The Smiths rescued their missing cat from that tree over there; they're happy to have him back.* |
| to, too, two | *To* can be a preposition indicating direction. *I am going to the pool.* Or it can be part of an infinitive (the *to* form of a verb). *I like to swim. Too* means "also" or "excessively." *Do you like to swim too? Two* is a number. *I swim two times every week.* |
| unique, unusual | *Unique* means "one of a kind." *Unusual* means "uncommon." Saying that something is more unique than something else is incorrect because something unique cannot be compared. Use *unusual* instead when comparing. |
| weather, whether | *Weather* refers to the state of the atmosphere. *Whether* refers to alternatives. *Whether we attend the game in person or watch it on TV depends on the weather.* |
| who's, whose | *Who's* is the contraction of "who is" or "who has." *Who's going to the game? Whose* is the possessive form of "who." *Whose backpack is this?* |
| your, you're | *Your* is the possessive form of "you." *You're* is the contraction of "you are." *You're going to be relieved that I found your earring behind the desk.* |

**TABLE H4**

# H 6. Point of View

**Point of view** refers to the vantage point from which a story, event, report, or other written work is told. The point of view in which you write depends on the genre in which you are writing. For example, you will likely use first person in personal narrative writing. For most academic writing, you'll use third person. (See Editing Focus: Characterization and Point of View for a related discussion of point of view in narrative writing.)

## First Person

In the first-person point of view, the writer or narrator (*I, we*) is present in the writing. First person is commonly used in personal writing genres, such as literacy narratives, memoirs, and profiles, as well as in fiction.

> After midnight—my paper started, my exam studied for—I leave the library and head back to my apartment. In the dark, I listen closely when I hear footsteps behind me, and I step to the edge of the sidewalk to let a man pass. At my door, I fumble for my key, open the door, turn on the light, and step inside. I am safe, ready to eat, read a bit, and return to my paper.

## Second Person

Second-person point of view is used occasionally when an outsider (*you*) becomes part of a story. It should not be confused with a writer or speaker using "you" when directly addressing an audience (*you*). Nor should it be confused with giving instructions (*drive forward, add one cup of brown sugar, close the door*) or with its similar use in textbooks such as this one. However, second person is not considered appropriate in most academic writing.

Writers often slip into second person when they intend to write in third person. In the example below, the writer starts in third person and shifts by accident to second person. To check your sentences for second person, search your documents for *you*, and revise as needed.

> **Shift from Third Person to Second Person** The federal government should raise the minimum wage because it has the responsibility to ensure people earn a wage you can live on. The current minimum wage, $7.25 per hour, is not enough to pay rent, let alone support a family. Many people cannot lift themselves out of poverty. A higher minimum wage can help you.
>
> **Revised** The federal government should raise the minimum wage because it has the responsibility to ensure workers earn a wage they can live on. The current minimum wage, $7.25 per hour, is not enough to pay a single person's rent, let alone support a family. Many people cannot lift themselves out of poverty. A higher minimum wage can help them.

## Third Person

The third-person point of view (*he, she, it, they*) is customary for fiction and for academic writing, such as research papers, reports, visual and textual analysis papers, argumentative essays, and the like. Third-person point of view emphasizes the information instead of the writer.

> The hikers and other passive trail users argue that mountain bikes should not be allowed on narrow trails traditionally traveled by foot and horse. They point out that the bikes' wide, treaded tires cause erosion, that the bikers' high speeds startle hikers and horses, and that their presence on trails disrupts the tranquility that hikers and bird watchers seek.

# H 7. Verbs

In a sentence, a verb expresses an action, an occurrence, or a state of being.

## Subject-Verb Agreement

In many sentences, making the verb agree with the subject is straightforward: *I run every day. My sister runs every other day. Sometimes our brother joins us, and all of us run together.* However, subject-verb agreement gets tricky in the following circumstances. (See Editing Focus: Subject-Verb Agreement for more on subject-verb agreement.)

### Agreement with Compound Subjects

Two or more subjects joined by *and* take a plural verb in most sentences:

> Yoga and meditation are effective activities for relieving stress.

However, when the parts of the subject form a single idea or unit, the verb is singular:

> Macaroni and cheese is my favorite meal.

When compound subjects are joined by *or* or *nor,* the verb agrees with the word closest to it:

> Either your aunts or your mother remembers where your great-grandmother's grave is located.
>
> Neither the image nor the words convey the message of the advertisement clearly.

## Agreement When Words Come between Subject and Verb

The verb must agree with the subject even when words and phrases come between them:

The cost of the flights is prohibitive.

A box of invitations with stamps and return addresses was on the desk.

## Agreement When the Verb Comes Before the Subject

The verb must agree with the subject, even when it comes before the subject:

Are James and Tamara at the front of the line?

There were three people ahead of us in line.

Under the table are a newspaper and a magazine.

## Agreement with *Everyone* and Other Indefinite Pronouns

An indefinite pronoun is general; it does not refer to a specific person, place, or thing. Most indefinite pronouns take a singular verb, but not all. Those that take a singular verb include *anybody, anyone, anything, each, everybody, everyone, everything, nobody, no one, nothing, one, somebody, someone,* and *something*.

Everyone in the class has prepared a research proposal.

Nobody among the accused suspects admits to the crime.

The following indefinite pronouns take a plural verb: *both, few many, others,* and *several.*

Several of the students in the class have proposed researching hurricanes.

Both of the suspects deny committing the crime.

Several indefinite pronouns take a singular or plural verb depending on whether the word they refer to is singular or plural. These include *all, any, enough, more, most, neither, none,* and *some.*

Most of the class has proposed researching a topic related to climate change. (*Most* refers to *class.*)

Most of the students in the class have proposed researching a topic related to climate change. (*Most* refers to *students.*)

Neither the students nor the teachers have proposed a field trip. (*Neither/nor* refers to *students* and *teachers.*)

## Agreement with Collective Nouns

Collective nouns such as *audience, band, class, crowd, family, group,* or *team* can take a singular or a plural verb depending on the context. When the group acts as a single unit, which is the most common construction, use a singular verb:

The band rehearses every day.

When the group acts individually, use a plural verb, or to avoid confusion, add the word *members* and use a plural verb.

The jury do not agree on a verdict.

The jury members do not agree on a verdict.

## Agreement with Words Such as *News* and *Statistics*

Some nouns that end in *-s*, such as *athletics, economics, measles, news, physics, politics,* and *statistics* seem plural but are usually regarded as singular in meaning. In most situations, these words take a singular verb:

Day after day, the news was bad.

Statistics fulfills a math requirement for many college majors.

When a word like *economics, politics,* or *statistics* refers to a specific situation, use a plural verb:

The economics of the situation are hard to comprehend.

### Agreement with Titles and Words Used as Words

Whether singular or plural in form, titles and words used as words take singular verbs:

Directed by Spike Lee, *Da 5 Bloods* centers around four veterans returning to Vietnam to find the remains of their squad leader and the fortune they hid together.

*Children* is the plural form of *child*.

## Verb Tense

**Tense** expresses the time of a verb's action—the past, present, or future. Tense comes naturally in speech, but it can be tricky to control in writing. The following guidelines will help you choose the appropriate tense for your writing and use it consistently. (See Editing Focus: Verb Tense Consistency for a related discussion of consistent verb tense.)

### Verb Tense in Narrative Writing

Personal experience stories, such as literacy narratives, memoirs, personal essays, or profiles, can be written in either the past or the present tense. Although the most natural way to tell a story about a past experience is to write in the past tense, the present tense can draw readers into the story and give the illusion that the experience is happening as they are reading it. In the following examples, the writer describes driving with her Native American grandfather to a tribal conference. Notice the difference between the past and present tense.

**Narrative Writing Using Past Tense** I sat silently next to Grandfather and watched him slowly tear the thin white paper from the tip of the cigarette. He gathered the tobacco in one hand and drove the van with the other. I memorized his every move as he went through the motions of the prayer, which ended when he blew the tobacco out the window and into the wind.

**Narrative Writing Using Present Tense** I sit silently next to Grandfather and watch him slowly tear the thin white paper from the tip of the cigarette. He gathers the tobacco in one hand and drives the van with the other. I memorize his every move as he goes through the motions of the prayer, which ends when he blows the tobacco out the window and into the wind.

### Verb Tense in Academic Writing

Academic disciplines differ in their tense preferences for signal phrases used in formal essays and reports to introduce and discuss evidence. A **signal phrase** is a verb that tells readers the words or ideas that follow come from another source. Signal phrases include words such as *argues, asserts, claims, comments, denies, discusses, implies, proposes, says, shows, states,* and *suggests.* (For more discussion and a more extensive list of signal phrases, see Editing Focus: Integrating Sources and Quotations.)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| acknowledges | declares | observes |
| admits | endorses | poses |
| agrees | explains | posits |

**TABLE H5**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| argues | finds | proposes |
| asserts | grants | reports |
| believes | illustrates | reveals |
| claims | implies | says |
| comments | insists | shows |
| concedes | maintains | states |
| concludes | notes | suggests |
| thinks | writes | |

**TABLE H5**

If you are writing for a course in English, a foreign language, or a related discipline and using MLA documentation style, you generally will use the present tense or the present perfect tense in signal phrases.

**Present Tense** The film critic Manohla Dargis claims that . . .

**Present Perfect Tense** The film critic Manohla Dargis has claimed that . . .

When you are analyzing a work of literature, common practice is to use the literary present tense in discussing both the work of the author and the action that occurs in the work:

Being cool is key to the lives of the speakers in "We Real Cool," a poem by Gwendolyn Brooks. Brooks uses short lines and stanzas in which speakers list what it means to be cool: dropping out of school, staying out late, playing pool, drinking, carousing, and so on. Being cool unites the speakers, and they celebrate their lifestyle, even as they acknowledge in the final line of the poem that their coolness may cause them to die young.

(For more on literary present tense, see Editing Focus: Literary Works Live in the Present.)

If you are writing for a course in history, art history, philosophy, religion, or a related discipline in the humanities, you generally will use the present tense or the present perfect tense in signal phrases.

**Present Tense** The historian Eduardo Galeano argues that . . .

**Present Perfect Tense** The historian Eduardo Galeano has argued that . . .

On the other hand, if you are writing for a course in the social sciences, such as psychology, political science, or economics; a course in the natural sciences, such as biology, chemistry, or physics; or a technical field such as engineering, you will generally use past tense or present perfect tense for most signal phrases.

**Past Tense** The study found that individuals who identify as transgender . . . (past tense)

**Present Perfect Tense:** Several recent studies have found that individuals who identify as transgender . . .

## Verb Tense Consistency

Whichever tense you choose, be consistent throughout a piece of writing. You may need to shift tenses to indicate actual changes in time, but the governing tense should remain constant. (See Editing Focus: Verb Tense Consistency for a related discussion of consistent verb tense.)

**Inconsistent** Blinking back tears, I clutched my two-year-old son to my chest, kiss his forehead, and

will gather my things. It is 2003, and I was headed to active duty in Iraq with the National Guard. I hug my spouse, my mom, my dad, my brothers, and my grandma. Then I turn and climbed on the bus that takes me to a future that, in all honesty, was terrifying to me.

**Consistent** Blinking back tears, I clutched my two-year-old son to my chest, kissed his forehead, and gathered my things. It was 2003, and I was headed to active duty in Iraq with the National Guard. I hugged my spouse, my mom, my dad, my brothers, and my grandma. Then I turned and climbed on the bus that would take me to a future that, in all honesty, was terrifying to me.

## Irregular Verbs

Most verbs are **regular** and form the past tense and past participle forms by adding *-d* or *-ed.*

I bake/I baked/I have baked
She discovers/she discovered/she has discovered
They shovel/they shoveled/they have shoveled

Some verbs, however, are **irregular** and form the past tense and participle in another way. Below are a few of the approximately 200 irregular verbs in English. For a comprehensive list of irregular verbs, see this list (https://openstax.org/r/this_list).

begin/began/begun
bring/brought/brought
buy/bought/bought
do/did/done
drive/drove/driven
fall/fell/fallen
go/went/gone
have/had/had
is/was/been
lead/led/led
hide/hid/hidden
ring/rang/rung
run/ran/run
see/saw/seen
sing/sang/sung
sit/sat/sat
shake/shook/shaken
speak/spoke/spoken
take/took/taken
wear/wore/worn
write/wrote/written

## Verb Mood

Verbs have three moods: indicative, imperative, and subjunctive. **Mood** can be said to indicate a speaker's attitude or intention.

### Indicative Mood

Use the **indicative mood** to state a fact or an opinion or to ask a question:

Thousands of women currently serve in the military.

I think college tuition is expensive.

The weather was awful for much of the winter but will improve soon.

Have you submitted your request for time off?

### Imperative Mood

Use the **imperative mood** to give instructions and commands. The subject, *you*, is often implied but not stated:

(You) Use the online form to request time off.

(You) Submit your request for time off by Friday.

You must submit your request on time.

### Subjunctive Mood

Use the **subjunctive mood** to express wishes, suggestions, or requirements or to state hypothetical or unlikely conditions:

The rules state that every member be present for the vote.

I wish you were here to see the exhibition.

The governing board could be more effective if all members were active.

Students who failed the class would have passed had they completed all assignments.

## H 8. Pronouns

A **Pronouns** is a word used in place of a noun. Some pronouns are *I, you, he, she, we, they, who,* and *everyone*. The noun a pronoun replaces or refers to is its **antecedent**. (See Editing Focus: Pronouns for a related discussion of pronouns.)

### Pronoun Reference

A pronoun should refer to a clear and specific antecedent.

**Clear Antecedent** All nine members of the school board voted in favor of changing the district's mascot. They explained their reasoning during the meeting. (*They* refers clearly to *members.*)

**Unclear Antecedent** In Smith's essay, she explains why many American families have less money saved and more debt than families in the 1970s.

**Revised** In her essay, Smith explains why many American families have less money saved and more debt than families in the 1970s.

Problems with pronoun reference occur in the following situations:

**Vague *this, that, which,* or *it.*** The pronouns *this, that, which,* and *it* should not refer to words expressing an idea, an event, or a situation.

**Vague Reference** The school board voted to change the district's mascot without holding special meetings with the public. This made some community members angry. (*Are community members angry about the vote or about the lack of special meetings?*)

**Revised** The school board voted to change the district's mascot without holding special meetings with the public. Their decision to avoid public discussion before the vote made some community members angry.

**Indefinite *it, they,* or *you.*** The pronouns *it, they,* and *you* should have a definite antecedent in a sentence.

**Indefinite *it*** Crittenden explains that mothers are taken for granted and disrespected, even though our society calls it the most important job in the world.

**Revised** Crittenden explains that mothers are taken for granted and disrespected, even though our

society calls motherhood the most important job in the world.

**Indefinite *they*** Japan has considerable wealth compared to Ireland, but they have a low subjective well-being index.

**Revised** Japan has considerable wealth compared to Ireland, but Japanese citizens have a low subjective well-being index.

**Indefinite *you*** The federal government should raise the minimum wage to ensure you earn a wage you can live on.

**Revised** The federal government should raise the minimum wage to ensure workers earn a wage they can live on.

## Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

In many sentences, making a pronoun agree with its antecedent is straightforward: *My neighbors gave me the keys to their apartment.* However, pronoun-antecedent agreement gets tricky in the following circumstances.

### Agreement with Generic Nouns and Indefinite Pronouns

**Generic nouns** refer to a type of person or job someone performs, such as *athlete, child, scientist, doctor,* or *hairdresser*. **Indefinite pronouns** include words such as *anyone, each, everyone, everything, many, most,* and *none.*

All generic nouns and most indefinite pronouns are singular in meaning. Traditionally, these words took the singular pronouns *he/him/his* because English does not have a gender-neutral third-person pronoun that refers to people: *Everyone has his own opinion* or *A doctor needs to show that he cares about his patients.*

More recently, writers have been replacing *he/him/his* or *his/her* with *they/them/their* when the person's gender is unknown or unimportant or when the person has indicated a preference for non-gendered pronouns:

Everyone has their own opinion.

A doctor needs to show that they care about their patients.

These plural pronouns are increasingly accepted and intentionally used by writers, teachers, and editors. Many prominent publications and style guides indicate that the plural pronoun should replace binary or singular ones in most cases. If using a plural pronoun does not fit the situation (such as in a paragraph where the pronoun they is also used several times to indicate a group), try rewriting the sentence in either of these ways:

**Remove the pronoun.** *Everyone has an opinion.*

**Make the antecedent plural.** *People have their own opinions. Doctors need to show that they care about their patients.*

### Agreement with Collective Nouns

Collective nouns such as *audience, band, class, crowd, family, group,* or *team* can take a singular or plural pronoun depending on the context. When the group acts as a single unit, which is the most common construction, use a singular pronoun. When the group members act individually, use a plural pronoun. If using the plural sounds awkward, add the word *members* so that the plural is clear.

The band went through its complete playlist.

The band loaded their instruments on the bus. The band members loaded their instruments on the bus.

# Pronoun Case

Pronouns have three cases: subjective, objective, and possessive. Pronouns change case according to their function in a sentence.

- **Subjective case pronouns** function as subjects: *I, we, you, he/she/it, they, who/whoever*:

  Antonio and I share an apartment downtown in a neighborhood we like.

- **Objective case pronouns** function as objects: *me, us, you, him/her/it, them, whom/whomever*:

  The manager gave us a tour of the building.

- **Possessive case pronouns** show ownership: *my/mine, our/ours, your/yours, his/her/hers/its, their/theirs, whose*:

  Our friends live in the building too.

Pronoun case gets tricky in the circumstances explained below.

## Case in Compound Structures

**Compound subjects** use subjective case pronouns. **Compound objects** use objective case pronouns.

**Subjective Case** Antonio and I have occasional disagreements about the dishes.

**Objective Case** Occasional disagreements about the dishes come up between Antonio and me.

## Case After *than* or *as*

In a comparison, the case of the pronoun indicates which words have been left out:

Antonio cares more about having a clean kitchen than I [do].

Sometimes I think Antonio cares more about a clean kitchen than [he cares about] me.

## *Who* or *Whom*

Use the **subjective case** *who* in place of a subject—whether it is the subject of the sentence or the subject of a clause:

Who is going to the concert? (subject of sentence)

Give the tickets to whoever can use them. (subject of clause)

She is the person who is best qualified for the job. (subject of clause)

She is the person who I think is best qualified for the job. (subject of clause; the intervening words "I think" don't change the subject or verb of the clause)

Use the **objective case** *whom* in place of an object, whether it is the object of a verb, preposition, or clause:

I don't know whom to ask. (object of verb)

To whom should I give the extra concert tickets? (object of preposition)

Give the tickets to whomever you choose. (object of clause)

## *We* or *us* with a Noun

Use *we* with a subject. Use *us* with an object.

We citizens must vote in order to make our voices heard. (subject)

Legislators need to hear from us citizens. (object)

### Case Before or After an Infinitive

Use the objective case before and after an **infinitive** (the *to* form of a verb: *to run, to walk, to eat*):

The agent asked Antonio and me to write a review.

We agreed to give him a positive review.

### Case Before a Gerund

Generally, use the possessive case of a pronoun before a **gerund** (the *-ing* form of a verb used as a noun: *gentle snoring, elegant dining*):

He grew tired of their partying late into the night.

The rental agreement depends on your approving the lease terms.

## H 9. Punctuation

This section covers the major marks of punctuation: commas, apostrophes, semicolons, colons, periods, question marks, exclamation points, dashes, and parentheses. (For using brackets and ellipses, see Quotations.)

## Commas

Commas alert readers to brief pauses within sentences.

### Commas with Main Clauses

Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet,* or *so)* joining main clauses:

Businesses in the metropolitan area are growing**,** and unemployment is down.

Many job seekers use online sites like Indeed.com**,** but a few still send traditional cover letters and résumés through the mail.

A solution must be determined soon**,** or the problem will continue.

### Commas with Introductory Information

Use a comma after an introductory element at the start of a sentence:

After class is over**,** we should get lunch and review our notes.

Shuffling his feet nervously**,** he waited for the train.

However**,** the circumstances have not changed.

### Commas with Nonessential and Essential Information

(See Editing Focus: Commas with Nonessential and Essential Information for a related discussion of commas.)

**Nonessential information** refers to information that is usually *not* necessary to the basic meaning of a sentence. Nonessential information is set off by commas. In the following sentence, the word *original* tells readers which labs no longer meet the needs of the teachers and students. The underlined information adds information but does not change the meaning of the sentence and thus is nonessential to the basic meaning:

The original technical education labs**,** which were installed 50 years ago**,** no longer meet the needs of the teachers and students.

**Essential information**, on the other hand, is necessary to the meaning of the sentence. In following example, the word *original* is no longer part of the sentence; the underlined words convey necessary information about the labs:

The technical education labs that were installed 50 years ago no longer meet the needs of the teachers and students.

You can test whether information is nonessential by removing the information. If the meaning of the sentence is unchanged, the information is nonessential. If the meaning becomes too general or changes, the information is essential. In the sentence above, only the labs installed 50 years ago, as opposed to other labs, no longer meet the needs of teachers and students. Note, also, the use of *which* with nonessential information and *that* with essential information.

#### Commas Around Nonessential Information

Place commas around information that is not essential to the meaning of a sentence:

The entire technology department**,** which consists of nine teachers and five staff members**,** has contributed to a report on the needed updates to the technical education labs.

The technology department chair**,** who teaches welding**,** wrote the final report.

Updates to the labs will begin in June**,** when school is not in session.

#### No Commas Around Essential Information

Do not place commas around essential information:

According to the technical education teachers, the labs need equipment that students are likely to encounter in the workplace.

Faculty who teach auto mechanics have requested updates to their lab.

The teachers are concerned about the labs because students are not learning the skills they need.

The amount of lab space that needs to be updated is substantial.

The department has consulted the industry expert Stacy James.

### Serial (Oxford or Harvard) Commas

For clarity, use a comma between items in a series:

He studied all the notes**,** emails**,** memos**,** and reports related to the data breach.

Be aware, however, that certain style manuals, such as the *AP Stylebook,* do not use the serial comma, also called the Oxford or Harvard comma.

### Commas with Numbers, Dates, Titles with Names, and Addresses

The sign gave the city's population as 122**,**887.

Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison died on August 5**,** 2019.

Diana Wong**,** M.D.**,** is a practicing obstetrician.

The mailing address for the Smithsonian Institution is 600 Maryland Avenue SW**,** Washington**,** D.C.**,** 20002.

### Common Comma Errors

Misplaced commas can make sentences choppy and obscure the intended meaning.

#### No Comma after a Subject or a Verb

Anyone who was still at the party**,** left when the band stopped playing.

The party ended**,** after the band stopped playing.

#### No Comma after a Conjunction Connecting Parts of a Compound Subject, Verb, or Object

Some musicians in the band, and many of the guests danced until midnight. (compound subject)

The band stopped after two hours, and took a well-deserved break. (compound verb)

Guests enjoyed the music, and the dancing. (compound object)

#### No Comma after a Series

The band played 80s rock, punk, and new wave, all night long.

#### No Comma before an Indirect Quotation

Online reviews say, that the band is the best in the area.

## Apostrophes

An apostrophe has two functions. It indicates possession, and it forms contractions.

### Apostrophes to Show Possession

Use an apostrophe and *-s* to indicate possession with a singular noun or an indefinite pronoun:

Jack's brother is my sister's coworker.

In their family, everyone's favorite dessert is ice cream.

If the *'s* in a singular noun is pronounced, add apostrophe *-s*:

The business's inconsistent hours caused customers to go elsewhere.

Los Angeles's airport, LAX, is one of the busiest in the United States.

If the *'s* is not pronounced in a singular noun, some writers choose to add an apostrophe alone; however, MLA, APA, and Chicago use the apostrophe and s in these cases:

David Myers' book, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, was published in 1992.

David Myers'**s** book, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, was published in 1992.

When the noun is plural and ends in *-s*, place the apostrophe after the final *-s*:

American households' incomes have grown since the 1970s because more women have entered the workforce.

These families' expenses have risen too.

When the noun is plural and does not end in *-s,* add an apostrophe and *-s:*

Social media's effect on contemporary life cannot be underestimated.

During the pandemic, parents' stress grew as they helped with their children's schooling.

### Apostrophes to Form Contractions

Contractions are common in speech and in informal writing. Use an apostrophe in contractions:

When I say I can't, I mean I won't.

It's the best option under the circumstances.

"You're the best friend anyone can have," Mikayla said.

They're driving to their favorite hangout spot.

### Common Apostrophe Errors

Apostrophes are not used to form plural nouns, singular verbs, or personal or relative pronouns.

#### Not in Plural Nouns

How many hotel rooms [not *room's*] should be reserved for the wedding?

The Lewises and the Riveras [not *Lewis's* and *Rivera's* or *Lewis'* and *Riveras'*] have confirmed their reservations.

#### Not with Verbs Ending in *-s*

Nikki runs [not *run's*] every day.

Jamal walks [not *walk's*] to work.

#### Not with Possessive Personal Pronouns or Relative Pronouns

The book is yours [not *your's*].

The dog was barking and wagging its [not *it's*] tail.

Whose [not *who's*] apartment is this?

## Other Punctuation

### Semicolons

The **semicolon** joins main clauses (a clause that contains a subject and a predicate and can stand alone as a sentence). A semicolon is also used to separate items in a series that contain commas.

- Use a semicolon to join main clauses that are closely related in meaning and that are not joined by a coordinating conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet,* or *so*).

  Originally built in 1928, the school had been remodeled multiple times**;** the result was an architectural mashup.

- Use a semicolon to join main clauses that are connected by a transitional word or phrase such as *for example, however, therefore, indeed,* or *after all*:

  The governor has proposed increased funding to K-12 public schools**;** however, the legislature must approve the budget.

- Use a semicolon between items in a series that contain internal commas:

  The candidates for the award are Michael, who won the essay competition**;** Sasha, the top debater; and Giselle, who directed several student productions.

### Colons

A **colon** introduces lists, summaries, and quotations. A colon also separates titles from subtitles.

- A colon can introduce a list:

  Successful athletes have the following qualities**:** physical ability, mental toughness, commitment, and optimism.

- A colon can also introduce a summary or an explanation, which may or may not be a main clause (a clause that contains a subject and a predicate and can stand alone as a sentence):

  The team had one goal left before the end of the season**:** to win the state championship.

- Book titles often include a subtitle. A colon separates the subtitle from the title:

*Forcing the Spring*: *Inside the Fight for Marriage Equality*

### End Punctuation

A sentence ends with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.

- A **period** ends declarative (statement) and imperative (command) sentences:

  The administration canceled classes.

  Do not attempt to drive to school this morning.

- A **question mark** ends a direct question and indicates uncertainty in dates:

  Where is Times Square?

  She asked, "What time is it?"

- An **exclamation point** ends an emphatic or emotional sentence:

  "What a mess!" she blurted out.

  "Stop! That hurts!" he shouted.

### Dashes and Parentheses

Dashes and parentheses enclose nonessential information in a sentence.

- Use a **dash** or dashes to set off nonessential information, to indicate a contrast or a pause, or to mark a change of direction.

  We did not notice the rain at first—it began so softly—but soon we were soaked.

  Nothing is as exciting as seeing a snowy owl in a winter farm field—except maybe seeing two snowy owls.

- Use **parentheses** to enclose nonessential information such as explanations, asides, examples, and dates.

  He graduated with high honors (*magna cum laude*) and found a job immediately.

  The city of Madison (home of the University of Wisconsin) is the state capital of Wisconsin.

## H 10. Mechanics

### Capital Letters

Use capital letters in the following situations.

- **Capitalize the first word of a sentence:** The weather is rainy today.
- **Capitalize proper nouns and proper adjectives:** Monday, New Orleans, Mexico, Florida, Halloween, United States Constitution, Department of Education, University of Texas, Native American, Islam, Italian, Freudian.
- **Capitalize titles that precede a person's name:** Dr. Atul Gawande, Senator Tammy Baldwin. [But: Atul Gawande, a doctor; Tammy Baldwin, a senator]

Many online resources, such as this one (https://openstax.org/r/this-one), list words that should be capitalized. You can also consult a dictionary, such as Merriam-Webster (https://openstax.org/r/Merriam-Webster), to determine whether to capitalize a word.

### Titles of Works

Titles of books, articles, stories, plays, poems, films, and other works are handled differently depending on the documentation style you are using. The guidelines here follow MLA style.

### Capitalization in Titles and Subtitles

Capitalize the first and last words in a title and subtitle and other important words. Do not capitalize **articles** (*a, an, the*), coordinating conjunctions (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet,* or *so*), or prepositions (*above, with, of, in, through, beyond, under*) unless they are the first or last words in the title or subtitle.

*Forcing the Spring: Inside the Fight for Marriage Equality* (book)
*Judas and the Black Messiah* (film)
"American Military Performance in Vietnam: Background and Analysis" (article)

### Italics for Titles of Long Works

Use italics for long works that are published, produced, or released separately from other works. These include books, long poems, plays, movies, videos, published speeches, periodicals (newspapers, magazines, and academic and professional journals), websites, long musical works, works of visual art, computer software, TV or radio programs and series, and pamphlets.

*Four Fish: The Future of the Last Wild Food* (book)
*The New Yorker* (periodical)
*The Los Angeles Times* (newspaper)
*American Idiot* (album)
*Parasite* (film)
*Saturday Night Live* (TV program)

### Quotation Marks for Titles of Shorter Works

Put quotation marks around the titles and subtitles of individual shorter works or those that are published or released within larger works. These include articles in periodicals (newspapers, magazines, and academic and professional journals), pages or works on a website, short stories, short poems, essays, songs, episodes of TV or radio programs and series, book chapters, and unpublished speeches.

"Living with a Visionary" (article in a magazine)
"A World of Fields and Fences" (work on a website)
"New York Day Women" (short story)
"Corson's Inlet" (short poem)
"Return from ISIS" (TV episode)

# H 11. Quotations

A **quotation** reproduces the exact written or spoken words of a person or an author, which may include a group. (See Editing Focus: Quotations for a related discussion of direct quotations and Editing Focus: Integrating Sources and Quotations for help with integrating quotations from sources.)

## Quotations from Written or Spoken Sources

Put quotation marks around quotations from a written or spoken source.

### Quoting a Source

When quoting the words of a source, introduce quoted material with a signal phrase so that readers know the source and purpose of the quotation. Place the quotation inside double quotation marks. When using parenthetical citations, note that the sentence period comes *after* the parentheses. If you include the author's name in your signal phrase, give only the page number in parentheses (first example). If you do not give the author's name in your signal phrase, give the name in parentheses (second example):

In *Walden*, Thoreau sets forth one individual's antidote against the "lives of quiet desperation" led by the working class in mid-nineteenth-century America (5).

*Walden* sets forth one individual's antidote against the "lives of quiet desperation" led by the working class in mid-nineteenth-century America (Thoreau 5).

Abraham Lincoln wrote "that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth" in his Gettysburg Address.

## Quoting or Writing Dialogue

When quoting or writing dialogue between speakers, including characters in a fictional work, place their words in double quotation marks, and start a new paragraph for each speaker:

"It's good to see you—I guess," Brayden said, as Christopher walked up to the door. "I thought you were gone for good."

"I missed you too much," Christopher said, looking down at his feet.

## Single and Double Quotation Marks

Put single quotation marks around a quotation within a quotation, using double quotation marks around the full quotation:

Kennedy writes that after a year of teambuilding work, including improvements in communication, evaluation, and small-group quarterly meetings, morale among staff members "improved from 'average' to 'excellent'" (17).

## Long Quotations

Introduce a long quotation (four typed lines in MLA style; 40 or more words in APA style) with a signal phrase that names the author and ends with a colon. Indent this entire block quotation one-half inch. If you quote more than one paragraph, indent the first line of each subsequent paragraph one-half inch. Do not use quotation marks. Note that the sentence period comes *before* the parenthetical citation:

In her memoir, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, reformer Jane Addams recounts vivid stories of child labor:

> The visits we made in the neighborhood constantly discovered women sewing upon sweatshop work, and often they were assisted by incredibly small children. I remember a little girl of four who pulled out basting threads hour after hour, sitting on a stool at the feet of her Bohemian mother, a little bunch of human misery. For even for that there was no legal redress, for the only child labor law in Illinois, with any provision for enforcement, had been secured by the coal miners' unions, and was confined to the children employed in the mines. (199)

## Poetry Quotations

When you quote one, two, or three lines from a poem, use the following format, putting quotation marks around the line or group of lines and separating the lines with a slash:

The 17th-century writer Aphra Behn (1640–1689) wrote humorous poems about love and heartbreak, including "Love's Power," which opens with "Love when he Shoots abroad his Darts / Regards not where they light" (1-2).

When you quote more than three lines from a poem, set them off from your text. Indent the quotation one-half inch, and do not use quotation marks. Note that the sentence period comes *before* the parenthetical citation.

In the poem "The Character," Aphra Behn (1640–1689) uses the familiar alternate rhyme scheme, also known as ABAB:

Such Charms of Youth, such Ravishment

Through all her Form appear'd,

> As if in her Creation Nature meant,
>
> She shou'd a-lone be ador'd and fear'd. (1-4)

## Altering Quotations

When you alter a quotation to fit into your sentence, you must indicate the change you made.

### Ellipses

An **ellipsis** [. . .] indicates that you have omitted words from a quotation. In the example below, the writer omitted words from the middle of the sentence.

> In her memoir, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, reformer Jane Addams explains that there were no enforceable laws against small children helping their mothers with sweatshop sewing work, and that "the only child labor law in Illinois **. . .** had been secured by the coal miners' unions, and was confined to the children employed in the mines" (199).

If you omit the end of a sentence or a complete sentence, include the sentence period:

> The author explains as follows: "Damage to the Broca's area of the brain can affect a person's ability to comprehend spoken language**. . . .** A person may understand speech relatively well when the sentence grammar is simple and the content familiar but may struggle when the grammar and content are more complex" (Hollar-Zwick 45).

### Brackets

Use brackets [ ] to indicate a change you have made to a quotation:

> Abruzzi cited the study, noting that "**[**t**]**he results provide hope to patients **[**with muscular dystrophy**]**."

## Punctuating Quotations

### Periods

Place the period inside quotation marks if no source is cited:

> The meteorologist said, **"**Today's weather will be sunny and mild**."**

If you are citing a source in parentheses, place the quotation marks at the end of the quotation, followed by the citation and the sentence period:

> In *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, Jane Addams recalls vivid images of child labor: **"**I remember a little girl of four who pulled out basting threads hour after hour, sitting on a stool at the feet of her Bohemian mother, a little bunch of human misery**"** (199)**.**

(See **Long Quotations** and **Poetry Quotations** above for exceptions to this rule.)

### Commas

Commas go *inside* quotation marks:

> **"**Tomorrow's weather will be cool and rainy**,"** the meteorologist said.

### Colons and Semicolons

Colons and semicolons go *outside* quotation marks:

> The sign read **"**Closed**":** No more films would be shown at the theater. (Note: Use a capital letter if a complete sentence follows the colon.)

### Question Marks and Exclamation Points

Question marks and exclamation points go *inside* quotation marks if they are part of the quotation:

> **“**Would you like a sandwich**?”** asked Adelaide.

Question marks and exclamation points go *outside* quotation marks if they are not part of the quotation:

> “I can’t believe you haven’t read **“**The Lottery**”!**

## H 12. Index and Guide to Documentation

Although formal differences exist among the conventions for documenting sources, the underlying principle of all documentation systems is the same: When borrowing words, facts, or ideas from someone else, writers must indicate that the material is borrowed. They do this by providing a citation in the text of their paper that points readers to detailed publication information about the source of the material, usually at the end of the paper but sometimes in footnotes. The following examples are in MLA style:

**Citation in the Text**

Describing Martin Luther King, Jr.’s visit to India, Isabel Wilkerson notes that King was taken aback by the suggestion that Black Americans were the equivalent of the Dalits in the Indian caste system (22).

**Works-Cited Entry**

Wilkerson, Isabel. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents.* Penguin, 2020.

### Documentation Styles by Discipline

Each discipline has its own authority or authorities that provide rules about issues such as spelling of technical terms, preferred punctuation, and editing mechanics, as well as documentation style. In addition, if you write for publication in a magazine, professional journal, book, or website, the publisher will have a “house” style, which may vary in some details from the conventions listed in the authoritative guidelines for the discipline in which you are writing. Below are the sources of style manuals for various disciplines. Always check with your instructor about which style to use in a class.

| Discipline | Documentation Style |
|---|---|
| languages, literature, philosophy, and some arts | Modern Language Association (MLA) |
| social sciences, education, and some other sciences | American Psychological Association (APA) |
| history, religion, fine arts, and business | Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) |
| life sciences | Council of Science Editors (CSE) |
| chemistry | American Chemical Society (ACS) |
| physics | American Institute of Physics (AIP) |
| journalism | Associated Press (AP) |
| medicine | American Medical Association (AMA) |
| law | Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation |

**TABLE H6**

# Index to MLA Documentation Models

The models, listed numerically, provide examples of in-text citations and works-cited entries (MLA). The models themselves are located in Handbook Section 13 (H13).

## In-Text Citation Models


1. One author
2. Two or more works by the same author
3. Two authors
4. Three or more authors
5. Authors with the same last name
6. Organization, government, corporation, or association as author
7. Unknown author
8. Work in more than one volume
9. Work with no page or other reference numbers
10. One-page or entire work
11. Source quoted in another source (indirect quotation)
12. Literary works
    - Poetry and verse plays
    - Fiction and prose plays
13. Two or more works in the same citation
14. Sacred text


## Endnotes and Footnotes (MLA)

## Format of the List of Works Cited (MLA)

### Authors and Contributors (MLA)


15. Book: one author
16. Book: two authors
17. Book: three or more authors
18. Book: two or more works by the same author
19. Author and editor
20. Author and translator
21. Author and illustrator
22. Work by an organization, a government, a corporation, or an association
23. Unknown author


### Articles in Journals, Magazines, and Newspapers (MLA)


24. Basic format for a journal article in a database
25. Article in an academic journal
    - Database
    - Print
    - Online
26. Article in a weekly or biweekly magazine
    - Database
    - Print
    - Online
27. Article in a monthly or bimonthly magazine
    - Database

- Print
- Online

28. Article in a newspaper
    - Database
    - Print
    - Online
29. Editorial or letter to the editor
30. Review

### Books and Parts of Books (MLA)

31. Basic entry for a book
32. Print book
33. E-book
34. Book, anthology, or collection with an editor
35. Work in an anthology or chapter in an edited collection
36. Two or more works in an anthology or edited collection
37. Revised or later edition
38. Multivolume work
39. One volume of a multivolume work
40. Book in a series
41. Republished work
42. Sacred text
43. Introduction, preface, foreword, or afterword
44. Published letter
45. Conference paper

### Websites and Parts of Websites (MLA)

46. Basic format for a short work or page on a website
47. Short work or page on a website
48. Blog post
49. Entire website
50. Wiki

### Social Media (MLA)

51. Basic format for a social media post
52. Social media post
53. Online forum post
54. Online comment

### Personal Communication (MLA)

55. Email
56. Text message
57. Personal letter

### Video, Audio, and Other Media Sources (MLA)

58. Film
59. Online video
60. Television programs
    - TV series

- TV episode

61. Advertisement
    - Print
    - Online
62. Cartoon or comic
    - Print
    - Online
63. Painting or other visual artwork
    - Original work
    - Reproduction
    - Online
64. Map, chart, or diagram
    - Print
    - Online
65. Sound recording
    - Album
    - Song
    - Online
66. Radio
67. Podcast
68. Interview
    - Broadcast
    - Online
    - Personal interview
69. Video game, software, or app

### Other Sources (MLA)

70. Live lecture, speech, address, or reading
71. Live performance
72. Letter in an archive
73. Dissertation
74. Pamphlet

## Index to APA Documentation Models

The models, listed numerically, provide examples of in-text citations and reference entries (APA). The models themselves are located in Handbook Section 14 (H14).

### In-Text Citation Models (APA)

75. One author
76. Two authors
77. Three or more authors
78. Authors with the same last name
79. Organization, government, corporation, or association as author
80. Unknown author
81. Two or more works in the same citation
82. Work with no page numbers
83. Source quoted in another source (indirect quotation)

84. Entire work
85. Personal communication

## Format of the References List (APA)

### Authors (APA)

86. One author
87. Two authors
88. Three to twenty authors
89. Work by an organization, a government, a corporation, or an association
90. Unknown author
91. Two or more works by the same author

### Articles in Journals, Magazines, and Newspapers (APA)

92. Basic format for an article in an academic journal
93. Article in an academic journal
    - With DOI
    - With URL
    - Without DOI or URL
94. Article in a magazine
    - Database
    - Print
    - Online
95. Article in a newspaper
    - Database or print
    - Online
96. Blog post
97. Published interview
98. Editorial or letter to the editor
99. Review

### Books and Parts of Books (APA)

100. Basic entry for a book
101. Print book or e-book
102. Book, anthology, or collection with an editor
103. Article in an edited book, anthology, or collection
104. Translated or reprinted book
105. Revised edition
106. One volume of a multivolume work
107. Report or publication by a government agency or other organization
108. Conference paper

### Web Sources (APA)

109. Basic format for a page or work on a website
110. Page or work on a website
111. Wiki

### Social Media (APA)

112. Social media post

113. Online forum post

### Video, Audio, and Other Media Sources (APA)

114. Film
115. Online video
116. Television programs
    - TV series
    - TV episode
117. Music recording
118. Radio
119. Podcast
120. Painting or other visual artwork
121. Map, photograph, or other visual
122. Video game, software, or app

# H 13. MLA Documentation and Format

MLA style is the preferred form for documenting research sources in English and other humanities disciplines. The following are general features of MLA style:

- All material borrowed from sources is cited in the text of a paper by the author's name and page number (if available).
- A works-cited list at the end of a paper provides full publication data for each source cited in the text of the paper.
- Additional explanatory information provided by the writer (but not from external sources) goes in either footnotes or endnotes. These notes are optional.

The instruction in this section follows the *MLA Handbook*, 8th edition (2016). For more information on MLA style, see this site (https://openstax.org/r/this-site). For examples of student papers in the textbook using MLA documentation style, see Section 4 in Chapters 5, 7, 9, 12, and 16.

## MLA In-Text Citations

In-text citations feature author names, page numbers, and sometimes titles, depending on what information is available. The Index located in H12 provides a listing of the models that are included below.

### 1. One author

When you quote, paraphrase, or summarize a source, include the last name of the source's author, if known, in a signal phrase or in parentheses at the end of your sentence. Provide the page or pages on which the original material appeared. Do not include the word *page* or the abbreviations *p.* or *pp.* Use a hyphen [-] to indicate a number range (See Spotlight on ... Citation for more on quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing sources):

> Becker points out that Joe Biden's views on same-sex marriage changed during a personal visit to a family while he was vice president (285-86).

> While he was vice president, Joe Biden's views on same-sex marriage changed during a personal visit with a family (Becker 285-86).

### 2. Two or more works by the same author

If you cite two or more works by the same author in your paper, give the title of the specific work in your sentence or a short version of the title in parentheses:

> According to Lewis Thomas in *Lives of a Cell*, many bacteria become dangerous only if they manufacture exotoxins (76).

According to Lewis Thomas, many bacteria become dangerous only if they manufacture exotoxins (*Lives* 76).

Many bacteria become dangerous only if they manufacture exotoxins (Thomas, *Lives* 76).

See Model 18 for how to cite two works by the same author in the works-cited list.

### 3. Two authors

If you cite a work with two authors, include both authors' names in a signal phrase or in parentheses:

In the preface to *Half the Sky*, Kristof and WuDunn explain their focus on the issues of sex trafficking and sex work, violence against women, and maternal mortality (xxi).

In the preface to *Half the Sky*, the authors explain their focus on the issues of sex trafficking and sex work, violence against women, and maternal mortality (Kristof and WuDunn xxi).

### 4. Three or more authors

For works with more than two authors, give the last name of the first author followed by "et al.":

Of the survey respondents, twenty-two percent described themselves as concerned about future job prospects (Pronkowski et al. 9).

### 5. Authors with the same last name

When authors of different sources have the same last name, include their initials:

Since the legalization of marijuana for recreational use, frequent use among adults has risen (J. T. Greene 21; M. Greene 30).

### 6. Organization, government, corporation, or association as author

When no author is given for a work published by a corporation, a government, an organization, or an association, indicate the group's name in a signal phrase or in parentheses:

The United States Forest Service describes its mission as "sustain[ing] the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations" (8).

### 7. Unknown author

When the author of a work is unknown, use the work's title in a signal phrase or a shortened version of the title in parentheses and a page number if available. Put quotation marks around article titles, and put book or journal titles in italics:

In a pointed 2020 editorial, "Don't Let the Games Begin," *The New York Times* argued that college athletic departments should support public health by canceling sports seasons until athletes and the public were vaccinated.

In a pointed 2020 editorial, *The New York Times* argued that college athletic departments should support public health by canceling sports seasons until athletes and the public were vaccinated ("Don't Let").

### 8. Work in more than one volume

If you cite only one volume of a multivolume work, give the page number in parentheses. If you cite more than one volume of a multivolume work, give the volume number for each citation before the page number, and follow it with a colon and one space:

Hill notes that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventure of the Dancing Men* was first published in the

*Strand Magazine* and later in *Collier's Weekly* (1: 332).

### 9. Work with no page or other reference numbers

When the work has no page numbers, give the author's name in a signal phrase or in parentheses. If the source has paragraph, chapter, or section numbers, use them with the abbreviations *par., ch.,* or *sec.*:

> Chen reports that the number of Americans seeking help with mental health rose during the pandemic that began in 2020. (ch. 2)
>
> The number of Americans seeking help with mental health rose during the pandemic that began in 2020 (Chen, ch. 2).

For an audio or a video recording, give the start and stop times for the segment you are citing shown on the player in hours (if available), minutes, and seconds:

> It is well known that maternity leave is available in countries around the world, including Norway, which popularized its policy in a comic *YouTube* video showing a pregnant woman on skis announcing the start of her one-year paid leave (01:48-02:07).

### 10. One-page work or entire work

When you cite a work that is one page long or an entire work, such as a book, website, single-page article, tweet, video, or film, you do not need to cite a page or give a reference number:

> In *Da 5 Bloods,* director Spike Lee connects the Civil Rights movement to the war in Vietnam through the music, montages of the era, and characters' stories.

### 11. Source quoted in another source (indirect quotation)

When a quotation or any information in your source is originally from another source, try to track down the original source. If you cannot find it, use the abbreviation "qtd. in":

> The group, which has researched global health including access to food, sounded the alarm about a potential "worldwide food crisis" in the early 2000s (qtd. in Sing 32).

### 12. Literary works

- Poetry and verse plays

  For poems, provide line numbers for reference, and include *line* or *lines* in the first reference:

  In "The Character," Aphra Behn describes a lovely young woman, starting with her eyes: "Her Eyes all sweet, and languishingly move" (line 4).

  Cite verse plays using act, scene, and line numbers, separated by periods: (*Hamlet* 4.4.31-39)

- Fiction and prose plays

  When citing a prose literary work available in various editions, provide additional information after the page number, such as the chapter, act, or scene number, for readers who may be consulting a different edition. Use a semicolon to separate the page number from this additional information: (331; ch. 5) or (78; act 2).

### 13. Two or more works in the same citation

When you cite more than one work in parentheses, use a semicolon between them:

> Americans who resisted or ignored civil defense are often portrayed as heroic people who chose not to build fallout shelters or as marginalized people who could not afford them (Garrison 57; Mechling and Mechling 109).

#### 14. Sacred text

When you cite passages from the Bible or another sacred text such as the Qur'an, give the title of the edition you are consulting the first time you refer to it. Then give the book (abbreviate the title if it is longer than four letters), chapter, and verse, separated by periods:

> Several times in the New Testament of the Bible, Jesus comments on wealth, telling his disciples, "And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (*King James Version,* Matt. 19.24).

### Endnotes and Footnotes

Writers use notes to offer comments, explanations, or additional information that cannot easily be integrated into the rest of a paper. Use notes to cite several sources within a single context if a series of in-text citations will detract from the readability of the text.

#### Text with Superscript

The standard ingredients for guacamole include avocados, lemon juice, onion, tomatoes, coriander, salt, and pepper.[1] Hurtado's poem, however, gives this traditional dish a whole new twist.

#### Note

1. For variations see Beard 314, Egerton 197, Eckhardt 92, and Kafka 26. Beard's version, which includes olives and green peppers, is the most unusual.

A note may be placed as a footnote at the bottom of the page on which the in-text citation appears or on a separate page of endnotes at the end of the paper. This should be titled "Notes" or "Endnotes" and appear between the last page of the paper and the works-cited list. Include all sources given in notes in the works-cited list.

## MLA Works Cited

Each source cited in the text of your paper refers readers to the list of works cited, a complete list of all the sources you quoted, paraphrased, or summarized. Every source cited in the text of your paper must be included in the works-cited list, and every source in the works-cited list must be cited in the text of your paper.

### Format of the List of Works Cited (MLA)

After the last page of the paper, start a new page with the centered title "Works Cited" at the top. Create an entry for each source using the following guidelines and examples:

- Begin each entry at the left margin, and indent subsequent lines one-half inch. (In Microsoft Word, you can also highlight the entire page when you are finished and select "Hanging" from the Special options on the Indentation section of the Paragraph menu.)
- Alphabetize the entries according to authors' last names. If two or more authors have the same last name, alphabetize by first name or initial. Alphabetize sources with unknown authors by the first word of the title, excluding *a, an,* or *the.*
- Double-space the entire page.

### Core Elements (MLA)

Each entry in the list of works cited consists of core elements:

- **Author.** *Who is responsible for the work?*
- **Title.** *What is the work called?*
- **Publication information.** *Where can the work be found so that others can consult it?* Publication information includes the date of publication and any larger work, which MLA calls a "container," in which a shorter work is published, such as a journal, magazine, newspaper, database, streaming service, and so

on.

**A note on access dates.** Although access dates for online sources are not required, MLA acknowledges that an access date can indicate the version of a source you consulted. If you add an access date, place it at the end of the works-cited entry in this format: "Accessed 4 Apr. 2020." Ask your instructors whether they require access dates.

## Authors and Contributors for Books and Articles (MLA)

- **Authors.** Give the author's last name, a comma, the author's first name and any middle name or middle initial, and then a period. For works with more than one author, an organization as an author, or an unknown author, see the models below.
- **Contributors.** People who contributed to the work in addition to the author are called contributors. Refer to them by their role in a phrase such as "adapted by," "directed by," "edited by," "illustrated by," "introduction by," "narrated by," "performance by," and "translated by." (See Models 19, 20, 21, 30, and 58 for examples.)

### 15. Book: one author

Sotomayor, Sonia. *My Beloved World.* Vintage Books, 2013.

### 16. Book: two authors

Kristoff, Nicholas D., and Sheryl WuDunn. *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide.* Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

### 17. Book: three or more authors

Barlow, David H., et al. *Abnormal Psychology: An Integrative Approach.* 8th ed., Cengage Learning, 2017.

### 18. Book: two or more works by the same author

When you cite two works by the same author, use three hyphens in place of the author's name, and alphabetize the works by title:

Trethewey, Natasha. *Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir.* Ecco, 2020.

---. *Native Guard: Poems.* Mariner Books, 2007.

### 19. Book author and editor

Add the editor's name after the title:

Hemingway, Ernest. *Conversations with Ernest Hemingway*, edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli, UP of Mississippi, 1986.

### 20. Book author and translator

Add the translator's name after the title:

Ferrante, Elena. *My Brilliant Friend.* Translated by Ann Goldstein, Europa Editions, 2012.

If you are citing the work of the translator, place the translator's name in the author position:

Goldstein, Ann, translator. *My Brilliant Friend.* By Elena Ferrante, Europa Editions, 2012.

### 21. Book author and illustrator

Add the illustrator's name after the title. If you are citing the work of the illustrator, place the illustrator's name in the author position, as shown in the preceding example:

Fasler, Joe. *Light in the Dark: Writers on Creativity, Inspiration, and the Artistic Process.* Illustrated by Doug

McLean, Penguin Books, 2017.

### 22. Work by an organization, a government, a corporation, or an association

If the author and publisher are *not* the same, start with the author:

United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration. *Healthy Living Resource Guide.* Government Printing Office, 2020.

If the author and the publisher *are* the same, give the title of the work in place of the author, and list the organization as the publisher:

*MLA Handbook*. 8th ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2016.

"This Is Who We Are." *U.S. Forest Service,* United States Department of Agriculture, Mar. 2019, www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/This-is-Who-We-Are.pdf.

### 23. Unknown author

If no author is given, start with the title.

"The Most Beautiful Battalion in the Army." *Grunt Magazine*, 1968, pp. 12-15.

## Articles in Journals, Magazines, and Newspapers (MLA)

Articles, reviews, editorials, and other short works are published in journals, newspapers, and magazines. They appear in print, on databases, and on websites (though often through a paywall). As a student, you are likely to access many articles and other short research sources primarily through databases available through your library.

### 24. Basic format for a journal article in a database

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal*, volume number, issue number, Date of Publication, page numbers. *Title of Database*, DOI or URL.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, the first name, and any middle name or initial. Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD.* End with a period.
- **Title of the article.** Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a colon. Capitalize all significant words in the title. Put the title of the article in quotation marks. End with a period inside the closing quotation mark.
- **Title of the journal.** Put the title of the journal in italics. Capitalize all significant words in the title. End the title with a comma.
- **Volume and issue numbers.** Use the abbreviations *vol.* and *no.* followed by the number and a comma.
- **Publication date.** Give the month or season and the year of publication, if available. Use the following abbreviations for months: *Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.,* and *Dec.* Do not abbreviate May, June, or July.
- **Page numbers.** Give *p.* (singular) or *pp.* (plural) and the page number or numbers of the article, followed by a period.
- **Title of the database.** Put the database title in italics, followed by a comma.
- **Location.** Give a DOI if available, and end with a period. If there is no DOI, give a URL, preferably a permalink, without http://.

### 25. Article in an academic journal

- Database

  Daddis, Gregory A. "Out of Balance: Evaluating American Strategy in Vietnam, 1968–72." *War & Society,* vol. 32, no. 3, Oct. 2013, pp. 252-70. *EBSCOhost,* doi:10.1179/0729247313Z.00000000026.

- Print

  Daddis, Gregory A. "Out of Balance: Evaluating American Strategy in Vietnam, 1968–72." *War & Society,* vol. 32, no. 3, Oct. 2013, pp. 252-70.

- Online

  Squires, Scot. "Do Generations Differ When It Comes to Green Values and Products?" *Electronic Green Journal,* no. 42, 2019, escholarship.org/uc/item/6f91213q.

  The journal in the example numbers issues only, so no volume number is given.

### 26. Article in a weekly or biweekly magazine

To cite an article in a weekly or biweekly magazine, give the author, title of the article, title of the magazine, publication date (day, month, year), and page numbers. If you found the article through a database, add the title of the database and a DOI or URL. If you found the article online, add the URL.

- Database

  Sanneh, Kelefa. "The Color of Money." *The New Yorker,* 8 Feb. 2021, pp. 26-31. *EBSCOhost,* search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=aph&AN=148411685&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

- Print

  Sanneh, Kelefa. "The Color of Money." *The New Yorker,* 8 Feb. 2021, pp. 26-31.

- Online

  Ferrer, Ada. "My Brother's Keeper." *The New Yorker,* 22 Feb. 2021, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/03/01/my-brothers-keeper.

### 27. Article in a monthly or bimonthly magazine

To cite an article in a monthly or bimonthly magazine, give the author, title of the article, title of the magazine, publication month and year, and page numbers. If you found the article through a database, add the title of the database and a DOI or URL. If you found the article online, add the URL.

- Database

  Sneed, Annie. "Giant Shape-Shifters." *Scientific American,* Sept. 2017, pp. 20-22. *EBSCOhost, doi:10.1038/scientificamerican1017-20.*

- Print

  Sneed, Annie. "Giant Shape-Shifters." *Scientific American,* Sept. 2017, pp. 20-22.

- Online

  Stewart, Jamila. "A Look Inside the Black Designers of Canada Initiative." *Essence,* July 2020, www.essence.com/fashion/black-designers-of-canada-digital-index/.

To cite a comment on an article, see Model 54.

### 28. Article in a newspaper

To cite an article in a newspaper, give the author, title of the article, title of the newspaper, publication date (day, month, year), and the page numbers. If you found the article through a database, add the title of the database and a DOI or a URL. If you found the article online, add the URL.

- Database

Krueger, Alyson. "When Mom Knows Best, on Instagram." *The New York Times,* 27 Nov. 2019, pp. B1-B4. *EBSCOhost,* search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=aph&AN=139891108&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

- Print

  Krueger, Alyson. "When Mom Knows Best, on Instagram." *The New York Times,* 27 Nov. 2019, pp. B1-B4.

- Online

  Smith, Doug. "They're Building Affordable Housing for the Homeless—Without Government Help." *Los Angeles Times,* 10 Feb. 2021, www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-02-10/theyre-building-affordable-housing-for-the-homeless-without-government-help.

  To cite a comment on an article, see Model 54.

### 29. Editorial or letter to the editor

An editorial may or may not have an author's name attached to it. If it does, give the author's name first. If it does not, start with the title. In both situations, add the designation *Editorial* or *Letter to the Editor* after the title.

"For Better Elections, Copy the Neighbors." Editorial. *The Wall Street Journal,* 16 Feb. 2021, www.wsj.com/articles/for-better-elections-copy-the-neighbors-11613518448.

### 30. Review

To cite a review of a book, film, television show, or other work, give the name of the reviewer and title of the review, add *Review of* before the title of work being reviewed, and give the name of the work's author, director, or creator after the title.

Girish, Devika. "Refocusing the Lens on Race and Gender." Review of *Test Pattern,* directed by Shatara Michelle Ford. *The New York Times,* 18 Feb. 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/02/18/movies/test-pattern-review.html.

## Books and Parts of Books (MLA)

Use the following guidelines for books and parts of books, such as a selection from an anthology, an article in a collection, a published letter, and so on.

### 31. Basic entry for a book

Author's Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book.* Publisher, Year of Publication.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, the first name, and any middle name or initial. Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD.* End with a period.
- **Title of the book.** Put the book's title in italics. Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a colon. Capitalize all significant words in the title, even if the book's cover does not use conventional capitalization. End the title with a period.
- **Publisher.** List the publisher's name without words such as "Inc." or "Company." Shorten "University Press" to "UP." End with a comma.
- **Year of publication.** Provide the publication date, and end with a period.

### 32. Print book

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration.* Vintage Books, 2010.

### 33. E-book formatted for a specific reader device or service

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration.* Kindle ed., Vintage

Books, 2010.

### 34. Book, anthology, or collection with an editor

Add the abbreviation *ed.* or *eds.* (if more than one) after the editor's first name:

Lunsford, Andrea, ed. *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. U of Pittsburgh P, 1995.

### 35. Work in an anthology or chapter in an edited collection

After the author and title of the work, give the title of the anthology or edited collection, name of the editor, publication information, and page numbers of the work:

Royster, Jacqueline Jones. "To Call a Thing by Its True Name: The Rhetoric of Ida B. Wells." *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition,* edited by Andrea Lunsford, U of Pittsburgh P, 1995, pp. 167-84.

### 36. Two or more works in an anthology or edited collection

When you cite two or more selections from the same anthology or edited collection, list the anthology separately under the editor's name. In the entries for the selections you cite, include the editor's name and the page numbers on which the selections appear:

Lipscomb, Drema R. "Sojourner Truth: A Practical Public Discourse." Lunsford, pp. 227-46.

Lunsford, Andrea, ed. *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. U of Pittsburgh P, 1995.

Royster, Jacqueline Jones. "To Call a Thing by Its True Name: The Rhetoric of Ida B. Wells." Lunsford, pp. 167-84.

### 37. Revised or later edition

For a book published in an edition other than the first, give the edition number after the title:

Strunk, William, Jr., and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style,* 4th ed., Pearson, 2019.

### 38. Multivolume work

For a book published in more than one volume, give the total number of volumes after the title:

Klinger, Leslie S. *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes.* 2 vols., W. W. Norton, 2005.

### 39. One volume of a multivolume work

Klinger, Leslie S. *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes.* Vol. 2, W. W. Norton, 2005.

When each volume of a multivolume set has an individual title, list the volume's full publication information first, followed by series information (number of volumes, dates). When separate volumes were published in different years, give inclusive dates:

Churchill, Winston S. *Triumph and Tragedy.* Houghton Mifflin, 1953. Vol. 6 of *The Second World War.* 6 vols. 1948-53.

However, if the volume you are using has its own title, you may cite the book without referring to the other volumes as if it were an independent publication.

### 40. Book in a series

Add the title of the series at the end of the entry:

Thaiss, Christopher. *Language across the Curriculum in the Elementary Grades.* WAC Clearinghouse, 2011, wac.colostate.edu/books/landmarks/thaiss/. Landmark Publications in Writing Studies.

### 41. Republished book

Give the original publication date after the title and the date the book was republished after the publisher:

Evans, Elizabeth E. G. *The Abuse of Maternity.* 1875. Arno, 1974.

### 42. Sacred text

Give the complete title of the version you consulted followed by the name of the editor and/or translator, the edition, the publisher, and the publication date:

*The Bible.* Authorized King James Version. Edited by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, Oxford UP, 2008.

*The Koran.* Translated by N. J. Dawood, rev. ed., Penguin Books, 2015.

### 43. Introduction, preface, foreword, or afterword

Start with the author of the introduction, preface, foreword, or afterword, followed by a description of the work you are citing, such as "Foreword." Give the author of the work after the title:

Offill, Jenny. Foreword. *Mrs. Dalloway,* by Virginia Woolf, Penguin Classics, 2021, pp. vii-xiv.

### 44. Published letter

Roosevelt, Theodore. Letter to Upton Sinclair. 15 Mar. 1906. *Theodore Roosevelt: Letters and Speeches,* edited by Louis Auchincloss, 2004, pp. 310-11.

### 45. Conference paper

Killi, Stainer, and Andrew Morrison. "Could the Food Market Pull 3D Printing Appetites Further?" *Industry 4.0—Shaping the Future of the Digital World: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Sustainable & Smart Manufacturing,* edited by Paulo Bartolo et al., CRC Press, 2021, pp. 197-203.

## Websites and Parts of Websites (MLA)

Use the following guidelines for works that are published *only* online and do not have an overarching publication, such as a journal, newspaper, magazine, or database.

### 46. Basic format for a short work or page on a website

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Short Work." *Title of Website,* Publisher, Publication Date, URL.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, the first name, and any middle name or initial. Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD.* End with a period.
- **Title of the short work.** Put the title in quotation marks. Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a colon. Capitalize all significant words in the title. End with a period inside the closing quotation mark.
- **Title of the website.** Put the title of the website in italics. Capitalize all significant words in the title. End the title with a comma.
- **Publisher.** If the publisher of the website is different from the title of the website (as shown in Model 48), give it next, followed by a comma. If they are the same (as shown in Model 47), give only the title of the website.
- **Publication date.** Give the day, month, and year the work was posted, if available. Use the following abbreviations for months: *Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec.* Do not abbreviate May, June, and July.
- **URL.** Give the URL, without "http://."

### 47. Short work or page on a website

Shetterly, Margot Lee. "Katherine Johnson Biography." *NASA*, 24 Feb. 2020, www.nasa.gov/content/katherine-

johnson-biography.

If the source you are citing has no author listed, start with the title. If the page has no title, give the name of the site and a descriptive label, such as "Home page" or "Blog post."

#### 48. Blog post

Blazich, Frank A. "The Cold Morning of the Day After." *Smithsonian Voices*, Smithsonian Magazine, 5 Feb. 2021, www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-history/2021/02/05/cold-morning-day-after/.

#### 49. Entire website

*Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.* Yale U, 2021, beinecke.library.yale.edu/.

If the website lists an editor, give the person's name as you would an author, followed by a comma and *ed.*

#### 50. Wiki

"Coronavirus." *Wikipedia.* Wikimedia Foundation, 22 Feb. 2021, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronavirus.

### Social Media (MLA)

Social media include posts made to various platforms and forums, comments made by individuals to posts, and online articles.

#### 51. Basic format for a social media post

Author. "Text of untitled post" or "Title of post" or Descriptive label. *Title of Site*, Date of Post, Time of Post, URL.

- **Author.** Give the author's handle and name. End with a period.
- **Text, title, or description of post.** Match the capitalization exactly, add quotation marks, and end with a period inside the closing quotation mark.
- **Title of the social media site.** Put the title of the site in italics, ending with a comma.
- **Publication date and time.** Give the day, month, year, and time of the post. Use the following abbreviations for months: *Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.,* and *Dec.* Do not abbreviate May, June, and July.
- **URL.** Give the URL, without "http://."

#### 52. Social media post

@Holleratcha (James Holler). "People go out and vote tomorrow!" *Twitter,* 2 Nov. 2020, 2:08 p.m., twitter.com/holleratcha/status/1270432672544784384.

Death Valley National Park. "What does it mean to protect something you love?" *Facebook,* 23 Feb. 2021, 5:01 p.m., www.facebook.com/DeathValleyNPS/posts/4108808255810092.

See Model 54 for how to cite a comment.

#### 53. Online forum post

@Duckpond318. "Turkeys in the arboretum." *Reddit,* 15 Mar. 2021, 11:22 a.m., www.reddit.com/r/Wildlife/comments/lqlbo3/turkeys_in_the_arboretum/. Accessed 4 Feb. 2021.

#### 54. Online comment

AKJersey. Comment on "Can We Stop Fighting about Charter Schools?" *The New York Times,* 22 Feb. 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/02/22/opinion/charter-schools-democrats.html#commentsContainer.

### Personal Communication (MLA)

Use the following guidelines to cite email, text messages, and letters that you sent or received.

### 55. Email

Roberts, Jeffrey. "Study results." Received by Kenneth Berg, 21 Oct. 2020.

### 56. Text message

Igoe, Beverlee. Text message. Received by Alison McGrath, 2 Apr. 2020.

### 57. Personal letter

Atwood, Margaret. Letter to the author. 11 Mar. 2007.

## Video, Audio, and Other Media Sources (MLA)

Use the following guidelines to cite various media sources.

### 58. Film

Begin with the title, followed by the director, the studio, and the year released.

*Casablanca.* Directed by Michael Curtiz, Warner Brothers, 1942.

You may also cite other contributors and their roles after the title (as illustrated below). If your paper is concerned with a particular person's work on a film, such as the director, an actor, or someone else, begin with that person's name and arrange all other information accordingly. For a film you stream, add the title of the streaming service and the URL:

*Moonlight.* Directed by Barry Jenkins, performances by Mahershala Ali, Naomie Harris, and Trevante Rhodes. A24, 2016. *Netflix,* www.netflix.com/watch/80121348?trackId=13752289&tctx=8%2C.

### 59. Online video

NASA. "Apollo 11 Moonwalk – Original NASA EVA Mission Video." 20 July 1969. *YouTube,* 17 July 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9HdPi9Ikhk.

### 60. Television series or episode

- TV Series

  *The Good Place.* Michael Schur, creator. NBC, 2016-20.

- Streamed TV episode

  "Jason Mendoza." *The Good Place,* season 1, episode 4, NBC, 2016. *Netflix,* www.netflix.com/watch/80191852?trackId=13752289&tctx=%2C%2C.

### 61. Advertisement

- Print

  XOFLUZA. Flu medication advertisement. *The New Yorker,* 8. Feb. 2021, pp. 5-6.

- Online

  General Motors. "Will Ferrell Super Bowl Ad." *YouTube,* 3 Feb. 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdsPvbSpB2Y&t=24s.

### 62. Cartoon or comic

- Print

  Davis, Jim. "Garfield." Cartoon. *Courier* [Findlay, OH], 17 May 1996, p. 18.

  If the source you cite appears in a local newspaper, as it does here, give the city and state in brackets after the name of the newspaper if the city is not part of the newspaper's name.

- Online

  Gauld, Tom. "Waiting for Godot to Join the Zoom Meeting." *You're All Just Jealous of My Jetpack,* 31 Jan. 2021, myjetpack.tumblr.com/.

### 63. Painting or other visual artwork

- Original work

  Rivera, Diego. *Detroit Industry Murals.* 1932-33. Detroit Institute of Art.

  If the city is not part of the name of the museum, add it after museum. For example, if the work you viewed was at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, you would end the entry as follows: Museum of Modern Art, New York.

- Reproduction

  Neel, Alice. *Elenka.* 1936. *Alice Neel: People Come First,* by Kelly Baum and Randall Griffey, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2021, p. 142.

- Online

  Basquiat, Jean-Michel. *Untitled.* 1983. *Museum of Modern Art,* www.moma.org/collection/works/63997?artist_id=370&page=1&sov_referrer=artist. Accessed 24 Sept. 2020.

### 64. Map, chart, or diagram

- Print

  *Everglades National Park.* National Geographic Society Maps, 2019.

- Online

  "Map: Expedition of Lewis and Clark." *National Park Service,* 2 Jan. 2018, nps.gov/subjects/travellewisandclark/map.htm.

### 65. Sound recording

Sound recordings include songs, albums, and spoken word. If you stream a sound recording or watch a performance online, add the name of the streaming service, such as Spotify, Apple Music, or Amazon Music, after the date. If you access the recording online, add the name of the website and the URL after the date.

- Album

  Prince. *Purple Rain.* Warner Brothers, 1984.

- Song

  The Supremes. "Baby Love." *Where Did Our Love Go,* Motown, 1964. Spotify.

- Online

  Gorman, Amanda. "The Hill We Climb." 20 Jan. 2021, *YouTube,* www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ055ilIiN4.

### 66. Radio

*The Road to Higher Ground.* Hosted by Jonathan Overby. WPR, 9 Jan. 2021.

If you listened to the radio program online, add the URL after the date.

### 67. Podcast

McEvers, Kelly, host. "This Is Not a Joke." *Embedded,* season 9, episode 2, NPR, 7 Nov. 2019, Apple Podcasts.

If you listened to the podcast on the web, add the URL instead of the podcast service.

### 68. Interview

- Broadcast

  Wilkerson, Isabel. Interview. *Fresh Air,* NPR, 4 Aug. 2020.

- Online

  Sowell, Thomas. Interview. *Hoover Institution*, 3 Jan. 2015, www.wsj.com/video/uncommon-knowledge-thomas-sowell-basic-economics/51837CB6-9FF2-305AE55D179A.html.

- Personal interview

  Wong, Diana. Personal interview. 12 Sept. 2020.

### 69. Video game, software, or app

Houser, Dan, et al., writers. *Grand Theft Auto V.* Rockstar Games, 2013. Xbox 360.

## Other Sources (MLA)

### 70. Live lecture, speech, address, or reading

Diaz, Shanna. "Your Dazzling Brain: The Symphony of Sleep." Community Lecture Series, University of New Mexico Health Science and the City of Albuquerque, 13 Mar. 2018, Albuquerque Academy.

### 71. Live performance

*Hamilton.* By Lin-Manuel Miranda, directed by Thomas Kail, 11 Mar. 2018, CIBC Theater, Chicago.

If you watch a video of a performance online, cite it as you would cite an online video.

### 72. Letter in an archive

Mucklestone, Ada. Letter to Maj. Gen. Ralph J. Olson. 6 Nov. 1958. Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Alphabetical Subject File, 1950-66, 1715, Box 13.

### 73. Dissertation

- Database

  Park, Eun Jung. *Korean American Artists and the 1992 Los Angeles Riots.* 2013. U of California, San Diego, PhD dissertation. *ProQuest,* www.proquest.com/doc-view/1425303659.

- Print

  Boothby, Daniel W. *The Determinants of Earnings and Occupation for Young Women.* 1978. U of California, Berkeley, PhD dissertation.

### 74. Pamphlet

"Facts about Fallout." Civil Defense Administration, 1961.

## MLA Paper Format

Follow your instructor's formatting guidelines or those indicated here. For sample papers with MLA format and works-cited pages, visit this site (https://openstax.org/r/this-site1).

- **Margins.** Use one-inch margins on all sides.
- **Spacing.** Double-space throughout the paper, including the works-cited page.
- **Paragraph format.** Indent paragraphs one-half inch.
- **Page numbers.** Start numbering on the first page of your paper and continue to the end of the works-cited page. Place page numbers in the upper-right corner, and add your last name before the page number: "Coleman 3."

- **Identifying information.** Put your name, your instructor's name, the course title, and the date in the left corner of the first page of the body of the paper, not in the header. Double-space this information.
- **Title.** Center the title on the first page. Do not use italics, boldface, all capitals, or quotation marks. Do not add extra space below the title.
- **Long quotations and quotations from poetry.** See Quotations for how to cite long quotations and poetry quotations.

# H 14. APA Documentation and Format

Disciplines in the social sciences—psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, social work, and often education—use the APA name-and-date system of documentation. APA style highlights authors and dates of publication because timeliness of published material is of primary importance in these disciplines. The following are general features of APA style:

- All material borrowed from sources is cited in the text of a paper by the author's name, date of publication, and page numbers (if available).
- A list of references at the end of a paper provides full publication data for each source cited in the text of the paper.

The instruction in this section follows the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association,* 7th edition (2020). For more information on APA style, visit this site (https://openstax.org/r/link). For examples of student papers in the textbook using APA documentation style, see Section 4 in Chapters 6, 8, and 15.

## In-Text Citation Models (APA)

In-text citations feature author names, dates of publication, and page numbers, depending on what information is available. The Index located in H12 provides a listing of the models that are included below.

### 75. One author

When you quote, paraphrase, or summarize a source, include the last name of the source's author, if known, in a signal phrase or in parentheses at the end of your sentence. Give the publication date after the author's name. Provide the page or pages on which the original material appeared preceded by *p.* or *pp.* See Spotlight on ... Citation.

> According to Thomas (1974), many bacteria become dangerous only if they manufacture exotoxins (p. 76).
>
> Many bacteria become dangerous only if they manufacture exotoxins (Thomas, 1974, p. 76).

If you cite two or more works by the same author, published in the same year, use letters after the year to distinguish them: (Gallivan, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c).

### 76. Two authors

> Smith and Hawkins (1990) confirmed that bacteria producing exotoxins are harmful to humans (p. 17).
>
> The study confirmed that bacteria producing exotoxins are harmful to humans (Smith & Hawkins, 1990, p. 17).

### 77. Three or more authors

For works with more than two authors, give the last name of the first author followed by "et al.":

> The results indicate that alcohol use rose during the period of the study (Dominic et al., 2021, p. 16).

### 78. Authors with the same last name

> When authors of different sources have the same last name, include their initials:

> Since the legalization of marijuana for recreational use, frequent use among adults has risen (J. T. Greene, 2019, p. 21; M. Greene, 2020, p. 30).

When authors of the same source have the same name, do not include their initials: (Kim & Kim, 2018, p. 47).

### 79. Organization, government, corporation, or association as author

When citing a well-known organization, government agency, corporation, or association, introduce an abbreviation of the name in the first reference and use it in subsequent references:

> On multiple occasions, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA, 2018) reported that formal efforts to reintegrate combat veterans into civilian life were beneficial.

### 80. Unknown author

When the author of a work is unknown, use the work's title in a signal phrase, or put the title in parentheses. Put quotation marks around article titles, and put book or journal titles in italics:

> In a pointed editorial, *The New York Times* argued that college athletic departments should support public health by canceling sports seasons until athletes and the public were vaccinated ("Don't Let the Games Begin," 2020).

> In its pointed editorial, "Don't Let the Games Begin" (2020), *The New York Times* argued that college athletic departments should support public health by canceling sports seasons until athletes and the public were vaccinated.

### 81. Two or more works in the same citation

When you cite more than one work in parentheses, put the works in the same order that they appear in your list of references, and use a semicolon between them:

> Americans who resisted or ignored civil defense were later cast as heroic people who chose not to build fallout shelters or as marginalized people who could not afford them (Garrison, 2006; Mechling & Mechling, 1991).

### 82. Work with no page numbers

If the work you are citing has no page numbers, help readers find the quotation by providing a heading, a section name, and/or a paragraph number (using the abbreviation *para.* or *paras.*):

> According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, 2019), research on PTSD includes gene research and brain imaging technologies (Next Steps for PTSD Research section, para. 6).

For audio or visual works, give the time stamp of the beginning of the source: (Wong, 2020, 34:16).

### 83. Source quoted in another source (indirect quotation)

When a quotation or any information in your source is originally from another source, try to track down the original source. If you cannot find the original, use the words "as cited in":

> The research collective, which has studied global health including access to food, sounded the alarm about a potential "worldwide food crisis" in the early 2000s (as cited in Sing, 2018, p. 32).

### 84. Entire work

When you cite an entire work, you do not need to give a page number. See Models 79 and 80. When you mention an entire website, link to the website directly or give the URL. You do not need to include the website in the references list:

> The Department of Veterans Affairs maintains a website for PTSD, which contains resources and help for families and healthcare providers as well as veterans (https://www.ptsd.va.gov/).

### 85. Personal communication

Because personal communications such as emails, letters, personal interviews, and the like cannot be found by other researchers, cite them in the text only:

> During our interview, Morales explained that she had quit her job to help her children with their schooling (personal communication, January 4, 2021).

## APA References

Each source cited in the text of your paper refers readers to the list of references, a complete list of all the sources you quoted, paraphrased, or summarized. Every source cited in the text of your paper must be included in the references list, and every source in the references list must be cited in the text of your paper.

### Format of the References List (APA)

After the last page of your paper, start a new page with the centered, boldfaced title **References** at the top. Create an entry for each source using the following guidelines and examples.

- Begin each entry at the left margin, and indent subsequent lines one-half inch. (In Microsoft Word, you can also highlight the entire page when you are finished and select "Hanging" from the Special options on the Indentation section of the Paragraph menu.)
- Alphabetize the entries according to authors' last names. If two or more authors have the same last name, alphabetize by the initials of their first and middle names. Alphabetize sources with unknown authors by the first word of the title, excluding *a, an,* or *the.*
- Double-space the entire page.

### Core Elements (APA)

Each entry in the list of references consists of core elements:

- **Author.** *Who is responsible for the work?*
- **Date of publication.** *When was the work published?*
- **Title.** *What is the work called?*
- **Publication information.** *Where can the work be found so that others can consult it?*

Sometimes core elements are unknown or missing. In such cases, the entry in the reference list entry must be adapted:

- **No author?** If the source has no known author, cite it by the title. See Models 90 and 98.
- **No date of publication?** If the source has no publication date, write *n.d.* instead of the publication date. See Model 110.
- **No title?** If the work has no title, put a brief description in square brackets.
- **No publication information?** If the source is a personal communication that only you have a record of, cite the source in your text, not in the references, because it cannot be retrieved by other readers. See "Personal communication" above.

A note on retrieval dates: APA recommends adding a retrieval date for sources that are not archived or are likely to change over time, such as a developing news story. If you add a retrieval date, place it at the end of the references entry in this format: "Retrieved April 4, 2020, from https://www.nytimes.com." Ask your instructors if they require retrieval dates.

### Authors (APA)

Give the author's last name, comma, and first and middle initials if available. For works with more than one author, put a comma and an ampersand (&) before the final author's name, even when there are two authors.

### 86. One author

Milanovic, B. (2016). *Global inequality: A new approach for the age of globalization.* Harvard UP.

### 87. Two authors

Kristoff, N. D., & WuDunn, S. (2009). *Half the sky: Turning oppression into opportunity for women worldwide.* Alfred A. Knopf.

### 88. Three to twenty authors

Provide last names and initials for up to and including 20 authors.

Barlow, D. H., Durand, V. M., & Hofmann, S. G. (2017). *Abnormal psychology: An integrative approach.* Cengage Learning.

For more than 20 authors, include the first 19 authors' names, insert an ellipsis, and then add the final author's name.

### 89. Work by an organization, a government, a corporation, or an association

Works published by organizations often have the same author and publisher, which is frequently the title of a website. When the author and publisher are *not* the same, give the author and the title of the website:

National Institute of Mental Health. (2020). *Post-traumatic stress disorder.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health. https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml.

When the author and the publisher or title of the website *are* the same, omit the latter:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, February 17). Variants of the virus. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/index.html.

### 90. Unknown author

If no author is given, start with the title:

The most beautiful battalion in the army. (1968). *Grunt magazine,* 12-15.

### 91. Two or more works by the same author

List two or more works by the same author (or the same author team listed in the same order) chronologically by year in the reference list, with the earliest first. Arrange works published in the same year alphabetically by title, placing lowercase letters after the publication dates:

Bandura, A. (1969). *Principles of behavior modification.* Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Bandura, A. (1977a). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84,* 191-215.

Bandura, A. (1977b). *Social learning theory.* Prentice Hall.

## Articles in Journals, Magazines, and Newspapers (APA)

Articles, reviews, editorials, and other short works are published in journals, newspapers, and magazines, and they appear in print, on databases, and on websites (though often through a paywall). As a student, you are likely to access many articles and other short research sources primarily through databases available through your library.

### 92. Basic format for an article in an academic journal

Author's Last Name, Initials. (Date of Publication). Title of article. *Title of Journal, Volume* (number), Pages. DOI

or URL.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, and the initials of the first name and middle name (if available). Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD.* End with a period.
- **Date of Publication.** In parentheses, give the year of publication, a comma, and the month or season of publication. End with a period outside the closing parentheses.
- **Title of the article.** Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a colon. For articles and book chapters, do not use quotation marks or italicize the title. Capitalize only the first word of the title and the first word of a subtitle and any proper nouns.
- **Title of the journal.** Put the journal title in italics. Capitalize all significant words in the title. End the title with a comma.
- **Volume and issue numbers.** Italicize the volume number, and follow it with the issue number in parentheses (not italicized). End with a comma.
- **Page numbers.** Give inclusive page numbers without *p.* or *pp.* End with a period.
- **DOI or URL.** Provide a DOI (if available) or a URL. Include "http://," and do not add a period at the end. The preferred format for a DOI is "https://doi.org/" followed by the number. You may encounter older formats for DOI; if so, change them to this format. If the article is online and does not have a DOI, give the URL instead.

### 93. Article in an academic journal

- **With DOI**

  Gawande, A. A. (2017, April). It's time to adopt electronic prescriptions for opioids. *Annals of Surgery, 265*(4), 693-94. https://doi.org/10.1097/SLA.0000000000002133

- **With URL**

  Squires, S. (2019). Do generations differ when it comes to green values and products? *Electronic Green Journal, 42*. http://escholarship.org/uc/item/6f91213q

  The online journal in the example numbers issues only, so no volume number or page numbers are given.

- **Without DOI or URL**

  Lowther, M. A. (1977, Winter). Career change in mid-life: Its impact on education. *Innovator, 8*(7), 9-11.

An older journal article you consult in print may not have a DOI. In that case, end with the page numbers.

### 94. Article in a magazine

For a magazine article you read on a database or online, give the DOI if the article has one; otherwise give the URL. For a magazine article you consulted in print, end the entry after the page number unless a DOI is provided.

- Database

  Sneed, A. (2017, September 19). Giant shape-shifters. *Scientific American, 317*(4), 20. https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican1017-20

- Print

  Sneed, A. (2017, September 19). Giant shape-shifters. *Scientific American, 317*(4), 20.

- Online

  Myszkowski, S. (2018, October 10). On the trail of missing American Indian women. *The Atlantic.* https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2018/10/trail-missing-american-indian-women/571657/

### 95. Article in a newspaper

For a newspaper article that you read on a database or in print, end the entry after the page numbers. For a newspaper article that you read online, give the URL instead of page numbers.

- **Database or print**

  Krueger, A. (2019, November 27). When mom knows best, on Instagram. *The New York Times,* B1-B4.

- **Online**

  Healy, J. (2021, January 12). Tribal elders are dying from the pandemic, causing a cultural crisis for American Indians. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/12/us/tribal-elders-native-americans-coronavirus.html

### 96. Blog post

Blazich, F. A. (2021, February 5). The cold morning of the day after. *Smithsonian Voices.* https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-history/2021/02/05/cold-morning-day-after/

### 97. Published interview

Beard, A. (2013, May). Life's work: An interview with Maya Angelou. *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2013/05/maya-angelou

### 98. Editorial or letter to the editor

An editorial may or may not have an author's name attached to it. If it does, give the author's name first. If it does not, start with the title. In both situations, add *Editorial* or *Letter to the Editor* in square brackets after the title.

For better elections, copy the neighbors [Editorial]. (2021, February 16). *The Wall Street Journal.* https://www.wsj.com/articles/for-better-elections-copy-the-neighbors-11613518448

### 99. Review

To cite a review of a book, film, television show, or other work, begin with the reviewer's last name, followed by the first and middle (if any) initials. In parentheses, add the year, followed by the title, month, and day of the review. Then in square brackets, add *Review of the* and the type of work being reviewed, followed by the title and the name of the author, director, or creator and their role. Then give the publication in which the review appeared, ending with a period, and the URL:

Girish, D. (2021, February 18). Refocusing the lens on race and gender [Review of the film *Test Pattern,* by S. M. Ford, Dir.]. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/18/movies/test-pattern-review.html

## Books and Parts of Books (APA)

Use the following guidelines for books and parts of books, such as a selection from an anthology, a chapter in a collection, a published conference paper, and so on.

### 100. Basic entry for a book

Author's Last Name, Initials. (Year of Publication). *Title of book.* Publisher.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, and the initials of the first name and middle name (if available). Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD.* End with a period.
- **Year of publication.** In parentheses, give the year of publication, ending with a period outside the closing parentheses.
- **Title of the book.** Put the book's title in italics. Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them with a

colon. Capitalize only the first word of the title and the first word of a subtitle and any proper nouns.

- **Publisher.** Give the publisher's name as shown on the work, omitting words such as *Inc.* or *Company.*

#### 101. Print book or e-book

Aronson, L. (2019). *Elderhood: Redefining aging, transforming medicine, reimagining life.* Bloomsbury Publishing.

Use the same format for an e-book when the content is the same. If you consult a book that has a DOI, provide it after the publisher, using the format "https://doi.org/" followed by the number. (If you encounter older formats for DOI, change them to this format.) If you read a book online, give the URL.

#### 102. Book, anthology, or collection with an editor

Schaefer, C. E., & Reid, S. E. (Eds.). (2001). *Game play: Therapeutic use of childhood games* (2nd ed.). Wiley.

#### 103. Article or chapter in an edited book, an anthology, or a collection

Burks, H. F. (2001). Using the imagine game as a projective technique. In C. E. Schaefer & S. E. Reid (Eds.), *Game play: Therapeutic use of childhood games* (2nd ed., pp. 39-66). Wiley.

#### 104. Translated or reprinted book

Freud, S. (1950). *The interpretation of dreams* (A. A. Brill, Trans.). Modern Library. (Original work published 1900)

#### 105. Revised edition

Strunk, W., Jr., & White, E. B. (2019). *The elements of style* (4th ed.). Pearson.

#### 106. One volume of a multivolume work

Waldrep, T. (Ed.). (1988). *Writers on writing* (Vol. 2). Random House.

#### 107. Report or publication by a government agency or other organization

National Institute of Mental Health. (2020). *Post-traumatic stress disorder.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, National Institutes of Health.

If you consulted the publication online, include the URL after the publisher. See Model 89.

#### 108. Conference paper

Killi, S., & Morrison, A. (2021). Could the food market pull 3D printing appetites further? In J.D. da Silva Bartolo, F. M. da Silva, S. Jaradat, & H. Bartolo (Eds.), *Industry 4.0—shaping the future of the digital world: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Sustainable & Smart Manufacturing* (pp. 197-203). CRC Press.

### Web Sources (APA)

Use the following guidelines for works published *only* online that do not have an overarching publication, such as a journal, newspaper, or magazine.

#### 109. Basic format for a page or work on a website

Author's Last Name, Initials. (Publication Date). Title of work. *Title of website.* URL.

- **Author.** Give the last name, a comma, and the initials of the first name and middle name (if available). Do not list an author's professional title, such as *Dr.* or *PhD*. End with a period.
- **Date of publication.** In parentheses, give the year of publication and a comma, followed by the month and the day. End with a period outside the closing parentheses.
- **Title of the work.** Put the title of the work in italics. Give the full title and any subtitle, separating them

with a colon. Capitalize only the first word of the title and the first word of a subtitle and any proper nouns.
- **Title of the website.** Give the title of the website and end with a period. If the author and the website title are the same, you can omit the title of the site.
- **URL.** Copy and paste the URL from your browser window.

#### 110. Page or work on a website

Shetterly, M. L. (2020, February 24). *Katherine Johnson biography.* NASA. https://www.nasa.gov/content/katherine-johnson-biography

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (n.d.). *What is PTSD?* National Center for PTSD. https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/what/index.asp

If the source you are citing has no author listed, start with the title. See Model 90.

#### 111. Wiki

Coronavirus. (2021, February 22). In *Wikipedia.* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronavirus

### Social Media (APA)

When you cite a social media post as a source, use labels in square brackets to indicate the type of post and whether images were attached to it.

#### 112. Social media post

Holler, J. [@holleratcha]. (2020, November 2). *Everyone get out and vote tomorrow!* [Tweet]. Twitter. http://twitter.com/holleratcha/status/1270432672544784384

Death Valley National Park. (2021, February 23). *What does it mean to protect something you love?* [Images attached] [Status update]. Facebook. www.facebook.com/DeathValleyNPS/posts/4108808255810092.

#### 113. Online forum post

National Aeronautics and Space Administration [NASA]. (2020, November 14). *We're engineers, astronaut trainers, and other specialists working to launch humans on commercial spacecraft from U.S. soil! Ask us anything about the NASA SpaceX Crew-1 mission!* [Online forum post]. Reddit. https://www.reddit.com/r/space/comments/jsx91g/were_engineers_astronaut_trainers_and_other/

### Video, Audio, and Other Media Sources (APA)

When you cite nonprint sources, such as visual and multimedia sources, use labels in square brackets to indicate the type of source, such as a film, a TV episode, a song, a painting, a photograph, and so on.

#### 114. Film

When you cite a film that you saw in a theater or streamed, you do not need to specify how you watched it.

Jenkins, B. (Director). (2016). *Moonlight* [Film]. A24.

#### 115. Online video

For an online video, give the name of the person or organization that uploaded it as the author:

TED. (2017, February 27). *Sue Klebold: My son was a Columbine shooter. This is my story* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXlnrFpCu0c

#### 116. Television program

- TV series

  Schur, M., Miner, D., Sackett, M., & Goddard, D. (Executive Producers). (2016-20). *The good place* [TV

series]. Fremulon; 3 Arts Entertainment; Universal Television; NBC.

- TV episode

  Mande, J. (Writer), & Benz, P. (Director). (2016, September 29). Jason Mendoza (Season 1, Episode 4) [TV series episode]. In M Schur, D. Miner, M. Sackett, & D. Goddard (Executive Producers), *The good place.* Fremulon; 3 Arts Entertainment; Universal Television; NBC.

### 117. Music recording

For an artist whose music is available only through a website, include the URL. If the artist's music is available on multiple platforms, you do not need to specify how you accessed it.

- Album

  Prince. (1984). *Purple rain* [Album]. Warner Brothers.

- Song

  The Supremes. (1964). Baby love [Song]. On *Where did our love go.* Motown.

### 118. Radio

Overby, J. (Host). (2021, January 9). *The road to higher ground: World music with African roots and more.* WPR.

### 119. Podcast

McEvers, K. (Host). (2019, November 7). This is not a joke (Season 9, Episode 9) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Embedded.* NPR.

### 120. Painting or other visual artwork

For a work of visual art, give the location of the museum or gallery. If you saw the work online, add the URL after the location:

Rivera, D. (1932-33). *Detroit industry murals* [Painting]. Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, MI, United States.

Basquiat, J-M. (1983). *Untitled* [Painting]. *Museum of Modern Art,* New York, NY, United States. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/63997?artist_id=370&page=1&sov_referrer=artist

### 121. Map, photograph, infographic, or other visual

If the work you consulted names an author, start with the author. If there is no author, start with the title and a description of the work in square brackets, such as [Map], [Photograph], [Infographic], [Diagram], or another appropriate descriptor:

Expedition of Lewis and Clark [Map]. (2018). *National Park Service.* http://nps.gov/subjects/travellewisandclark/map.htm

### 122. Video game, software, or app

Benzies, L., & Sarwar, I. (2017). *Grand theft auto V* [Video game]. Rockstar Games. https://www.rockstargames.com/games/V

## APA Paper Format

Follow your instructor's formatting guidelines or those indicated here. For sample papers showing APA paper format, see this site (https://openstax.org/r/this-site2).

- **Title page.** Give the title of the paper in bold, centered. Then, on separate lines and not boldfaced, give your name, academic department, name of your college or university, course number and name,

instructor's name, and the due date, all centered. Repeat only the title on the first page of the text of your paper.

- **Margins.** Use one-inch margins on all sides.
- **Spacing.** Double-space throughout the paper, including the references page.
- **Paragraph format.** Indent paragraphs one-half inch.
- **Headings.** Give headings for the major sections of your paper, such as *Method, Results* or *Findings,* and *Discussion*. Put the headings in bold and center them on the page. Put the next level of headings in bold and place them flush left.
- **Page numbers.** Start numbering on the title page of your paper and continue to the end of the references page. Place page numbers in the upper-right corner.
- **Long quotations.** See Quotations for how to cite long quotations.

## H 15. Further Reading

*MLA Handbook*, 8th ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2016.

*MLA Handbook,* 9th ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2020.

*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th ed., American Psychological Association, 2020.

## H 16. Works Cited

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Behn, Aphra. "Love's Power." *The Works of Aphra Behn.* Edited by Montague Summers, vol. 6, *Project Gutenberg,* 2014, www.gutenberg.org/files/45777/45777-h/45777-h.htm#Page_113.

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*Da 5 Bloods.* Directed by Spike Lee. Netflix, 2020.

Eisenberg, Richard. "How to Fix Social Security for Vulnerable Americans." *Forbes,* 5 July 2018, www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2018/07/05/how-to-fix-social-security-for-vulnerable-americans/.

"Environmental Impacts of Natural Gas." *Union of Concerned Scientists,* 19 June 2014, www.ucsusa.org/resources/environmental-impacts-natural-gas.

Garrison, Dee. *Bracing for Armageddon: Why Civil Defense Never Worked.* Oxford UP, 2006.

Hollar-Zwick, Carol. *Me, Hemorrhage: Recovery from a Ruptured Arteriovenous Malformation.* Amazon, 2020.

*The King James Bible. Project Gutenberg,* 1989, www.gutenberg.org/files/10/10-h/10-h.htm#The_Gospel_According_to_Saint_Matthew.

Konish, Lorie. "Some Retirees Get by on Just Social Security. Experts Disagree on How Many." *CNBC,* 10 Feb. 2020, www.cnbc.com/2020/02/10/some-retirees-live-on-social-security-experts-disagree-on-how-many.html.

Kristoff, Nicholas D., and Sheryl WuDunn. *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide.* Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

Mechling, Elizabeth Walker, and Jay Mechling. "The Campaign for Civil Defense and the Struggle to Naturalize the Bomb." *Western Journal of Speech Communication,* vol. 55, no. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 105-33.

Myers, David. "The Funds, Friends, and Faith of Happy People." *American Psychologist*, vol. 55, no. 1, Jan. 2000, pp. 56-67.

"This Is Who We Are." *U.S. Forest Service,* United States Department of Agriculture, Mar. 2019, http://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/This-is-Who-We-Are.pdf.

Thomas, Lewis. *Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher.* Penguin Books, 1978.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden. Project Gutenberg,* 1995, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/205/205-h/205-h.htm.

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# INDEX


## A

AAVE 58, 59
ableism 636
Abrams 140
Abstract 179, 248, 456
academia 106, 32
Academic article databases 460
Academic OneFile from Gale 428
Academic Search Complete 428, 429
Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences 237
Access Is Love (https://openstax.org/r/accessislove) 636
Accurate Quotation 413
Achebe 61
Acknowledgments 248
action 666
active voice 273, 693
Ad hominem 279, 286
Adams 139
adjectives 682
African American Vernacular English (AAVE) 58
Agenda 465
agents 10
Ain't I a Woman 516
*Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* 516
Alberto 509
Ali 236
allegory 369
Allusion 319
Ally 46
Almanacs 427
American Museum of Natural History 575
*American Notes for General Circulation* 53
American Psychological Association (APA) 462
American Rhetoric (https://openstax.org/r/American_Rhetoric) 650
Americans with Disabilities Act 635
Amplification 344
analogy 352, 359, 360, 360, 364, 377
Analysis 16, 198, 215, 263, 460, 465, 484, 668
analytical bibliography 476
analytical report 241
analyze 246, 552, 564
Anaphora 649
anecdotes 108, 109, 114, 142, 331
angle 139, 142
annotated bibliography 449, 450, 461, 463
Annotations 450, 465
antecedent 679, 709
Anti-racist 46
Appearance 658
Appendix 248
applied linguistics 508
argument 23, 314, 464
Aristotle 313, 330, 630, 630
arrangement 552, 564
articles 717
Articulation 656
Atlantic 108, 110, 111
Atlases 427
Auburtin 488
audience 179, 246, 249, 341, 359, 368, 390, 596, 629, 638
Audio 592
Authority 16
Avengers 212, 236

## B

Bâ 61
background 248
Background information 142, 633
Bait and switch 286
Bandwagon 279, 286, 334, 334
Bangladesh 563
Bar Charts 496
Beautiful Struggle 111
Beckett 132
Best-first order 35
*Between the World and Me* 111
bias 45, 114, 175, 179, 243, 249, 418, 463, 465
bibliography 248, 450, 465
Bicêtre Hospital 486
Biodiversity Institute of Ontario 357
Biographical dictionaries 427
BIOSCAN 357
Black Classic Press 110
Black English Vernacular 58
*Black Leopard, Red Wolf* 214
Black Lives Matter 236, 319, 552, 556
*Black Panther* 236, 280
Black Panther Party 110
BlackLivesMatter 59
Blaut 61
blogs 597, 625
Blow 314, 316, 328, 332
Body 179, 230, 249, 633, 638
Bolatagici 594
boldface 125
Boolean operators 460, 465
Borges 561
Boseman 236
Bouillaud 488
brainstorming 643
Brigham Young University 70
British Grand Slam 25
Broadway 53
Broca 485
Brooks 529, 530
Brownlee 217
Burke 61
Burns 582
Byrd 158

## C

Caesar 107
Call of the Wild 347

caption 614
Case for Reparations 111
case study 479
Catalog of U.S. Government Publications 429
*catharsis* 108
Causal fallacy 279, 286
Cause-and-effect 246, 344, 353, 359, 360, 365, 377, 645
causes and effects 264
Centre for Biodiversity Genomics 357
Chambers 139, 140
channels 593
Characters 114
Chavez 141
Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right 178
Cherokee 39
Chicago 462
Chief Joseph 649
Chopin 520, 520, 522
Chronemics 658
Chronological order 35, 142, 344, 645
*Chronos* 114
circular argument 334
Cisneros 132, 665
Citation 179, 230, 249, 319, 395, 450, 465, 638
City University of New York 111
Civil Disobedience (https://openstax.org/r/Civil-Disobedience) 533
Civil War 24, 556, 582
claim 23, 395, 606
clarification 344
clarity 679
classification 354, 358, 361, 365, 378
Clean Water Act 558
climax 113, 114
Clinton 177, 520, 521, 522
CNN 280, 635
Coates 110, 110, 111
Code-switching 58
cognitive bias 176, 243
*College Composition and Communication* 58
colon 715
colonized self 60
color 552, 564
*Columbia Encyclopedia* 428
Comey 214
comma splice 697
common knowledge 446
Community Reading Room in Melbourne, Australia 594
Compare and contrast 246, 264, 344, 354, 359, 361, 366
Comparison and Contrast 379
complex sentence 696
Composition 564
Compound objects 711
compound sentence 695
Compound subjects 711
compound-complex sentence 696
Concession or agreement 344
Conclusion 114, 179, 248, 249, 456, 633, 638, 691
conclusion statement 648
concrete nouns 692
conditions 10, 10
Confederacy 556
Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) 58
confirmation bias 176, 243
Conflict 114, 120
connotations 215, 355
consequences 353
*Contemporary Authors* 427
context 11, 16, 53, 142, 215, 390, 633, 668
contraction 504
Contrast 366
conventions 591
coordinating conjunction 695
copyright 557
Counterclaim (dissenting opinion) 319
counterclaims 180, 318, 395
*Country Music* 582
CQ Researcher 429
*Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* 222
creative nonfiction 108
credible sources 152
CripTheVote 636
criteria 212, 215
Critical race theory 46
Critical thinking 180, 249, 319, 632
criticism 214
Critics 212, 215
Cultural appropriation 47
cultural considerations 658
cultural critic 281
cultural lens 42
cultural system 42
culture 11, 16, 40, 47, 66, 109, 315, 341, 359, 390, 595, 634
*Current Biography* 427

## D

*Dance Dance Revolution: Poems* 43
dash 716
Data 456, 484
databases 425
Dawkins 15
Deakin University 594
Death of Truth: Notes on Falsehood in the Age of Trump 214
debatable issue 314, 390
decolonized self 60
deductive reasoning 333
Definition 195, 260, 331, 355, 359, 362, 368, 380
delayed-thesis 335
Demographics 634
Demonstrative pronouns 682
DeMuro 217
Demuth 565
Denotation 215, 355
Description 331, 358, 368, 450, 668
descriptive annotations 476
descriptive language 125
Desmond 287, 287
Detail 344
Devil You Know: A Black Power Manifesto 317
dialects 57, 699
dialogue 125
Dickens 53, 124
Dictionaries 427
differences 354
Digital Archive of Literacy

Narratives 94, 101
digital deserts 622
Direct quotation 230, 443
Disability Visibility Project (DVP) 635
*Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century* 636
discrimination 40
Discussion 248
Distorted Quotation 413
division 354, 358, 361, 366, 378
doubling 112, 114
Douglass 74
Drafting 188, 254
Du Bois 40
Dupree 21
Dupuytren 487, 488

## E

Ebert 237
Ebonics 58, 59
*Educated: A Memoir* 70
Effect 246, 365
Ehrenreich 245
ellipsis 719
Ellison 61
Emancipation Proclamation 24
Emotional tax 47
empathy 109, 315
Emphasis 344
Encyclopedias 427
*Endeavour* 241
English variety 164
entertain 632
Environmental Protection Agency 558, 602
epigraph 141
epistrophe 649
*Equestrian Statue of Theodore Roosevelt* 571
Essential information 268, 712
Ethnocentrism 47, 597
ethos 179, 180, 247, 249, 279, 285, 313, 314, 319, 330, 597, 601, 631, 638
Evaluation 16, 212, 215, 450, 464, 472, 668
Evidence 16, 24, 180, 195, 198, 241, 249, 263, 314, 314, 319, 390, 395, 632, 638
*Ex Libris: 100+ Books to Read and Reread* 214
Example 195, 260, 263, 331, 344
exclamation point 716
execution 30
executive summary 179, 248
exigency 156
Expert opinion 195, 260, 332
exposition 113, 114
Eye contact 657

## F

Facebook 355
facial expressions 656
Fact 195, 260, 332
Factiva 429
Facts 175, 180, 241, 242, 249, 419
*Facts on File World News Digest* 427
Factual information 142
Fallacies 334
falling action 113, 114
false consensus effect 243
Fandom 215
Farrelly 237
fear 334
Field notes 142, 149
field observations 142, 484
Field research 395, 432
fieldwork 432
Figurative language 286
film reviews 211
findings 484
*Fire Shut Up in My Bones* 317
first-person narrator 128
first-person point of view 108, 122
Flashback 114
flipbook 625
Floyd 319, 552
Fluency 656
Focused subject 214
Foreshadowing 114, 582
formal 247
Format 465
Forster 61
fragmented sentences 124
Franzen 214
Fraser 571
freewrite 22, 35, 52
Freud 446
Fuller 561

## G

Gale in Context 429
Galilei 141
Gandhi 140, 534
Garner 552
Gawande 177
Gender 679
General American English 57
general-interest database 428
Generic nouns 710
genre 10, 66, 71, 108, 189, 215, 241, 282, 314, 390, 517, 591, 630
genre elements 142
gerund 712
Gestural 593
gestures 656
Gianini 27
Giles 557
Glamour 140
Glaucon 369, 371
Goddard 27
Golden Globe Awards 237
Gomez 12
Goodall 561
Goodwin 332
Google 429
Google Scholar 429, 456
Gore 177
Grambling State University 316
Gratiolet 488
Great Lakes Institute at Windsor 357
Great Society 314, 321
*Green Book* 236
Grudge 223

## H

Hamer 140
*Hammond World Atlas* 427
happening 666
*Harper's Magazine* 108
Hart 11

Hartsell 168
Harvard Medical School 177
hasty generalization 334
Haunted Mind 129
Hawthorne 129
Hayden 144
headline 614
Hebert 356, 357
Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies, and Leadership 214
Hill 277
Historical Text Archive 451
Hollywood 236
Hollywood Foreign Press Association 237
Homer 630
Homographs 502
Homonyms 502
Homophones 502
Hong 40, 43
House of My Own: Stories from My Life 665
House on Mango Street 665
Howard University 110
Huerta 141
Hyperbole 279, 286
hypertonic 382
hypothesis 333
hypotonic 382

## I

*I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* 73
I Have a Dream 633
Identity 40, 66
idiolect 66
imagery 115
imperative mood 709
In Its Immensely Satisfying Season Finale, *Game of Thrones* Became the Show It Had Always Tried Not to Be. 212
inciting incident 114
indefinite pronouns 682, 710
Indiana University 635
indicative mood 708
inductive reasoning 333
Inferences 419
infinitive 712
infographic 572
inform 632
informal 247
information 550
informational text 24
intellectual property 348
Intellectual property laws 557
intention 30, 344
Interesting lead 230
internal monologue 674
International Barcode of Life 357
internment camps 168
interpret 550, 552
interpretive communities 518
intersection 40
intersectionality 40, 47
Interview 195, 260, 332, 485
*Into the Wild* (https://openstax.org/r/Into-the-Wild) 528
*Into Thin Air* 108
Introduction 180, 227, 248, 249, 319, 456, 633, 638
*Iron Man* 236
irregular 708
Isotonic 382

## J

Jackson 520, 521, 521, 522
James 214
Japan 632
Jefferson 685
Jemison 241
Jim Crow laws 53, 556
Joan of Arc 141
Joe 557
John F. Kennedy Library Foundation 139
Johnson 314, 321, 332
Journalism, behind Barbed Wire (https://openstax.org/r/barbedwire) 168
journalist's questions 257
Judgment 215
Junger 108
Juxtaposition 552, 564, 582

## K

*Kairos* 114, 279, 285, 313, 314, 320, 330
Kakutani 213
Keller 61, 85
Kennedy 138, 649
Kerlin 363
Kinesics 658
King 125, 534, 633
Kinkaid 61
*Knocked Up* 225
Krakauer 108, 528

## L

labyrinthine sentences 124
Lahiri 132
language 40
language acquisition theory 508
Language and Linguistics Student Conference (https://openstax.org/r/languageandlinguistic) 501
Language bias (https://openstax.org/r/languagebias) 418
Leborgne 485
Letter of transmittal 248
Lewis 144
Library of Congress 451
*Life on the Mississippi* 123, 128
Light 564
limited point of view 129
Line 564
Line Graphs 496
Linguistic text 592, 618
literacy 66
literacy narrative 66
literary allegory 369
literature review 484
Location 142, 344
logic 333, 352
logical fallacies 279
Logos 249, 279, 285, 313, 314, 320, 330, 597, 632, 638
London 347
Loyola University 665
Lucas 217
Ludy 560

## M

Mailer 214

main clause 695
*Make It Messy* 140
Makeba 141
*Mama's Girl* 140
Mandela 141
Martin 110, 319
Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) 236
Marvel Comics 280
Matisse 578
McClure 243
Media literacy 16
Medium 215, 227
Meme 16
memoir 108, 109
metaphors 352, 368
Methods 248, 456, 484
Microaggression 47
Microsoft Word 311
Midlands Technical College 492
Midwest American English 57
Milgram 480
Milgram Experiment (https://openstax.org/r/milgramexperiment) 480
Miller 520, 522, 522
*Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* 43
Minority Achievement Committee (MAC) 280
MIT 111
mixed sentence 698
Möbius strip 554
mockup 608
Mode 215, 607
Modern Language Association (MLA) 456, 462
modes 592
*Monthly Catalog of United States* 429
mood 114, 126, 708
Mortensen 236
*Mother Jones* 110
MSNBC 280
MTV News 280
multimodal 553, 564, 589, 668

## N

Naked Raygun 551
narration 358, 368
Narrative structure 142
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) 48
National Council on Disability 635
*National Geographic Atlas of the World* 427
National Public Radio 237
*Natural Causes: An Epidemic of Wellness, the Certainty of Dying, and Killing Ourselves to Live Longer* 245
Natural History Museum 357
Neurodiversity 47
*New Encyclopædia Britannica* 428
*New Republic* 43, 280
New York Times 213
*New York Times Magazine* 140
New Yorker 108, 138
Newsweek 140
Nez Percé 649
Ngozi-Adichie 132
*Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* 245
non-rhotic 57
Nonessential information 268, 712
nonparticipant 433
nonstandard dialects 58
Nosrat 392, 393
Numerical data 286

## O

O'Brien 8
O'Keeffe 561, 566
Obama 42, 61, 110, 308, 634, 635
Oberlin College 43
object distinction 681
object of the preposition 681
object personal pronoun 681
object personal pronouns 680
Objections 180
objective case 242, 679, 711
Objective stance 180, 249
objects 679
Observation 668
observation environment 484
omniscient 129
*On Rhetoric* 630
Opinions 175, 242
Opposing Viewpoints in Context from Gale 429
oppression 44
Organization 188, 254, 599
Oscars 236
outline 644

## P

Paine 685
Panisse 393
paperwork reduction 308
Paralanguage 658
Parallel structure 286
Parallelism 638, 649, 694
Paraphrase 17, 407, 444, 464, 465
parentheses 716
participant observer 433
participants 484
Paskin 212, 212
passive voice 273, 693
Past tense 123, 164
Pathos 279, 285, 313, 314, 320, 330, 597, 632, 638
pattern 554
Pearl Harbor 168, 632
peer review 200, 456
Peer-reviewed source 465
Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts 565
Perfect Storm 108
period 716
Persona 127
personal narrative 108, 109
personal pronouns 680
Personification 279, 286
perspective 314, 390, 565
persuade 632
persuasive arguments 552
Pie Charts 497
Pitch 656
plagiarism 179
plagiarize 348
Plain Writing Act of 2010 308, 311
planning 22, 188, 254
Plato 369, 369, 372, 372

Plot 114
point 198, 263, 368
Point of view 114, 122, 552, 565, 703
Politico 50 287
Pollution Prevention (P2) Act 602
Pop Culture Happy Hour (https://openstax.org/r/popculturehappyhour) 237
position arguments 314, 315
possessive case 680
possessive pronouns 680
predicament 355
premise 333
present tense 123, 164
preview statement 648
prewriting 22
primary data sources 391
primary research 150
primary sources 451, 465
Primary Sources 215
Princeton University 287
Problem 180, 367
Problem-and-solution 355, 359, 362, 379, 645
professional email 149
profile writing 137, 142
*Profiles in Courage* 139
Pronouns 679, 682, 709
Pronovost 177
propaganda 334
proposal 173
prototype 611
Proxemics 658
Pugh 557
Pulitzer Prize 214
purpose 10, 120, 174, 178, 180, 246, 249, 320, 341, 358, 368, 390, 606, 630, 638, 668
purpose statement 644

## Q

qualitative research 480, 484
quantitative research 480, 484
Queen's University 356
question mark 716
quick write 35
Quintanilla-Perez 12
Quotation 195, 260, 332, 717

## R

Rablin 243
Rachel Maddow Show 280
Raisin in the Sun 225
Ramachandran 482
*Random House Encyclopedia* 428
Ratargul 563
Rate of speech 656
reasoning 23, 314, 320, 395, 638
reasoning strategies 352
reasons 353
Recap 215, 226
recommendation 179, 249
Recommendations 248
Reconstruction 556
recursive 54, 78, 154, 188, 254, 320, 327, 380, 460, 612, 642, 663
Reed College 245
References 248
Reflect 472, 552, 563
reflection 464, 666
Reflective writing 666
Reflexive pronouns 681
refrain 125
*Refuge* 108
Refutation of counterclaims 633
regional dialect 58
regular 708
remedy 355
Repetition 286, 638, 649
reporters' questions 328, 333
Reporting structure 142
research 389
research behaviors 389
research log (https://openstax.org/r/reasearchlog) 433, 437
research plan 424
Research question 395, 484
*Resist: 40 Profiles of Ordinary People Who Rose Up against Tyranny and Injustice* 139
resolution 113, 114, 114
Results 248, 456, 484
revelation 114, 114
Reverse chronological order 35
Review 188, 215, 254, 456
review genre 212
revising 127, 188, 254, 341, 411
*rhetoric* 10, 17, 278, 313, 630
Rhetorical analysis 282
Rhetorical appeals 320, 638
Rhetorical devices 638
Rhetorical question 286, 320
rhetorical situation 10, 17, 69, 79, 189, 254, 282, 358, 390, 590, 632
Rhodes Scholarship 177
rhotic 57
rigorous 456, 465
Ripert 140
rising action 113, 114
Roanoke College 629
Robinson 582
Rockefeller University 245
*Rolling Stone* 108, 280
Roosevelt 572, 632
Rorick 332
Royal Shakespeare Company 363
run-on sentence 698
Rutgers University 43

## S

*Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat: Mastering the Elements of Good Cooking* 393
Samuelsson 140
Sarah Lawrence College 43
*Scandal* 629
Schindler 140
Scholarly journal articles 428
School of Art and Design, University of New South Wales 594
School of the Art Institute of Chicago 560
Schumann 509
script writing 629
*Second Life* 561
second-person narration 129
second-person point of view 129, 129
secondary research 152
secondary sources 215, 392,

453, 465
segregation 53
semicolon 715
Sensory language 279
Sentence combining 95
sentence fragment 696
sequencing 358, 368
Sequoyah 39, 52
Setting 114
sexist language 418
Shakespeare 363
Shining 599
Shirley 237
Show and tell 142
signal phrase 232, 411, 706
Signpost language 638
signposts 648
similarities 354
similes 352, 368
simple sentence 695
Siskel 237
slang 699
Slippery slope 279
Smith 280, 629
social dialect 58
social justice 321
Social media 17
Société d'Anthropologie de Paris 488
Society of Professional Journalists 281
Socrates 369, 371, 371, 630
Solution 180, 367
Sorensen 138
Souls of Black Folk 48
Southeastern Conference athletics organization 557
Spatial 592
Spatial structure 142
Specific details 230
Specific evidence 215
Specific topic 230
Spectrum 502
Speculation 668
*Sports Illustrated* 108
stage directions 658
stance 11, 390, 404
Standard dialect 58
Stanford University 177, 516, 522
statistics 175, 180, 196, 242, 249, 260, 332
storyboard 608
StoryCorps (https://openstax.org/r/storycorps) 635
Style 465
style guide 156
Subgenre 215
subject 203, 681, 682
subject personal pronouns 680, 681
subject-verb agreement 203
subjective case 679, 711
subjectivity 242
subjects 679
subjunctive mood 709
Subordinate clauses 696
Sugarhill Gang 354
Sullivan 85
Summary 17, 344, 444, 464, 465, 472
Survey 196, 260, 434, 485
Sydney University 356
symbol 552, 564
Syntax 42
Synthesis 180, 249, 437, 465
synthesize 152, 451

## T

Table of contents 248
Tables 497
Taft 139
Target 510
technical manipulations 557
TED Talks 101, 483
Teichner 112
Teigen 520, 521, 522
tense 123, 706
Tertiary sources 455, 465
Texas Chainsaw Massacre 223
textual analysis 514, 515
the personal vs. the universal 582
*The Washington Post* 213
theme 25, 108, 114, 120
Thesis 180, 196, 212, 230, 249, 320, 360, 369, 395, 465, 633, 638
thesis statement 196, 249, 261, 292, 569, 690
thesis-first organization 335
Thick description 142, 149, 151
Things They Carried 8
Third-person narration 128
third-person point of view 202
*Thirty two (32) Yolks* 140
Thomas 334
Thoreau 528, 533
Thunberg 21
*Time* 110, 213
*Times Atlas of the World* 427
Title page 248
Tone 17, 42, 142, 142, 155, 215, 557, 596, 633, 648
Topic 320, 341, 395, 638
Topic sentence 180, 263, 690
Topical structure 142
transatlantic slave trade 44
transition statements 648
Transitional words or phrases 320, 343, 695
transitions 121, 618, 633, 648
*Translating Mo'um* 43
Truman 24, 25
Trump 521
Truth 516
Turabian Style 462
Turner 522
Twain 108, 115, 120, 122, 123, 123, 125, 126, 126, 128, 128, 579
Twitter 355

## U

U.S. Army 649
U.S. Department of Transportation 639
UCLA 509
Unconscious bias 47
Underground Railroad 111
Understatement 286
Union 557
United Nations 457
*United Shades of America (https://openstax.org/r/Unitedshades)* 635
University of Alberta 502
University of California 363,

393, 482, 635
University of Cambridge 356, 482
University of Central Oklahoma 501
University of Guelph 357
University of North Carolina 510
University of Oxford 177
University of Pennsylvania 280
University of Windsor 357
USNS *Comfort* 250

## V

Vallelonga 237
Vaughan 557
verb 203
verb tenses 164
verbal fillers 656
video 625
Vietnam War 8, 582
Viewpoint 42
Visuals 196, 260, 332, 592
Vivid details 115
vlog 598
Vocabulary 42
voice 42, 115, 125
Volume 656
vulnerability 36

## W

*Walden* 528, 533
Wall Street Journal 108
Wallis 25
*Washington Monthly* 110
Water Dancer 111
Waters 393
Watkins 516
We Real Cool 529
Web of Science from Clarivate Analytics 429
Westover 70
*Who's Who in America* 427
Williams 108
Wizards of Waverly Place 12
Woman's Rights Convention 516
Wong 630, 635
Wordsworth 354
working thesis statement 327
Working topic sentence 377
Works Cited or References 456
*World Almanac and Book of Facts* 427
World Health Organization 177, 457
World War I 335, 645
World War II 25, 632, 645
Writers' Workshop 43, 665
writing process 78

## Y

Yale University 213, 480
yearbooks 427
*Yes, Chef* 140
Yousafzai 73
YouTube 656

## Z

Zapata 141