

## ENGLISH 1101 INTRODUCTION

### RHETORIC AND RHETORICAL SITUATIONS

Kavita Surya

When the term *rhetoric* comes to mind, you may think of someone trying to persuade you to do what they want, especially in political or other governmental spaces. For example, on the news, you may often hear about politicians using rhetoric to convince you that they're the best candidates for office, or to follow a particular cause. And recently, political figures, as well as public health departments and organizations, have been accused of utilizing rhetoric to misrepresent the effectiveness of COVID-19 precautions, such as vaccines and masks.

Rhetoric, however, can be defined and applied in much broader contexts. Most commonly, rhetoric has been described by the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, as “the ability in any particular case to see [and apply] the available means of persuasion” (37). In modern-day times, rhetoric and composition scholar Andrea Lunsford considers rhetoric to be “the art, practice, and study of human communication” (79). And so, rhetoric is not just limited to persuasive arguments made by politicians, journalists, and organizations. You may cite statistics supporting your claims that coral reefs are disappearing. Advertisements (and influencers on social media) try to convince you to buy products and services. You may have written essays for acceptance into colleges or to receive scholarships. Your friend may convince you to watch a particular television show. Or you may post an update on social media about a loved one's recovery from an injury or illness. In sum, rhetoric is vital to all aspects of our lives and involves the use of various types of language (e.g., spoken, visual, written) to facilitate action by you or others.

As these definitions and examples of rhetoric suggest, communication does not happen in a vacuum of your ideas and your expression of them. All communication occurs in a *rhetorical situation* comprised of various elements. While these elements have been articulated in numerous ways,

we utilize those described by the *Purdue Online Writing Lab* (or *Purdue OWL*) in modified form below:

- ▶ *Text (an actual instance or piece of communication)* – In your first-year writing courses, a text most commonly refers to a document that is written or typed, like an essay, or this textbook. However, a text can also be any type of communication in any type of media, such as gestures, graphics, speeches, and more.
- ▶ *Author (users of communication)* – Authors can be one or multiple people (as in multiple individual authors or organizations). Authors are influenced by their own backgrounds in the communicating of texts, such as race, ethnicity, and class, as well as their beliefs and experiences.
- ▶ *Audience (recipients of communication)* – Like authors, audiences are influenced by their own backgrounds in how they receive the messaging of texts.
- ▶ *Purpose (the varied reasons both authors and audiences communicate)* – While authors may compose texts for various purposes, audiences also have various purposes underlying why and how they respond to these texts. For instance, you could turn in assignments in this course to obtain a satisfactory grade, but you might ignore a text message from a friend after an argument.
- ▶ *Setting (the time, place, and community/conversation surrounding a moment of communication)* – As an example, a social media post regarding violent acts against African-Americans and Asian-Americans both reflects and furthers larger and ongoing conversations about how people of color are treated in the United States.

You likely consider one or more of these elements every time you communicate, even if you're not aware of it, then adjust your language use accordingly. For example, you may use more formal language when emailing your professor for an extension on an assignment versus texting a friend about how your date went, or even what you missed in the same class in which you just emailed your professor for an assignment extension.

In your first-year writing courses, you will learn more about writing in various rhetorical situations to enhance your abilities to write appropriately for the situations you may encounter. For instance, in your Rhetorical Reading Responses, you may be asked to identify authors, audiences, genres (types of writing) and purposes of texts you read, while also being asked to consider some or all of these, as well as other elements, in the essays and other texts you write. And in English 1102 especially, you may discuss:

- ▶ the use of various rhetorical appeals to the credibility of yours and other authors' claims, to the logical organization of those claims, and to the emotions of one or more audiences (or more specifically, communities).
- ▶ how writing can be integrated with visual, auditory, and other modes to compose texts.

Ultimately, we hope that highlighting the importance of considering rhetoric and rhetorical situations in English 1101 and 1102 can assist you with writing and otherwise communicating academically, professionally—and in all other areas of your lives.

### REFLECTION QUESTION

Think of a piece of writing you have composed. The piece of writing does not have to be an academic one, like an essay, and can be from any part of your life, such as a text message or social media post. How have elements of the rhetorical situation (author, audience, purpose, and setting) informed your writing of this text, including your background as author, as well as the backgrounds of your intended audience(s)?

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# 3

## INTRODUCTION TO CONNECTED WRITING

The First-Year Writing program faculty are committed to supporting student writing that focuses on skills required for effective writing in a variety of contexts. The course syllabi for both English 1101 and 1102 place an emphasis on reading and writing. As students proceed through the course materials, they learn the elements of critical reading, interpretation, and evaluation of texts and can make connections in their own writing. As Andrea Lunsford, John Ruszkiewicz, and Keith Walters note in their work entitled *Everything's an Argument*, the bulk of writing that students do in college focuses on making “a clear and compelling point in a fairly formal, clear, and sometimes technical style” (405). The assignments for First-Year Writing are geared towards preparing students to write effectively across the curriculum and eventually applying these skills in the professional world. English Department Chair Dr. Mary Lamb introduces academic writing in the following essay.

### ACADEMIC READING AND WRITING

Mary R. Lamb

College writing is very different from writing you did for your high school courses. This is not to say that you didn't learn “correctly” or the “right” material in high school. Rather, the work you did in high school prepared you for the work you will do in college. In future chapters, you will learn much more about college reading and writing. For this chapter, we will discuss some of the basic requirements of your essays in English 1101 and English 1102 and how these essays are graded.

You write in all facets of your life. You write to express yourself, to accomplish tasks at work, and to communicate your ideas to others.

## Chapter 3 | Introduction to Connected Writing

College faculty expect you to take seriously your role as a writer, to think about your writing strengths and weaknesses, and to learn the resources available for helping you improve your writing. Faculty expect you to accept your responsibility to your readers, to the subject material you are reading and writing about, and to the other writers you cite when you incorporate their ideas into your own essays. Finally, you should recognize that writing is an expression of yourself and you should be responsible with the image of yourself your writing portrays.

Next, recognize that faculty members expect you to write multiple drafts and spend considerable time developing your ideas and refining your writing to express these ideas. Writing is hard work: don't expect to write one draft and be finished. Readers, especially faculty members, easily recognize sloppy, careless writing. Students, pressed for time and used to there being a "right answer" on high school tests, often forego their responsibility to develop their writing carefully. Instead, they hope the instructor, as "authority," will tell them what to write and how to write it. That responsibility lies with you, the writer. Of course your instructors will provide feedback. You, however, are ultimately responsible for using this feedback to improve your essays. Successful college writing means that you learn how to improve your own writing and how to edit your own essays.

One way to figure out what instructors want in successful essays is to be a careful reader, noting what "works" in other essays and the rhetorical strategies writers use to express their ideas. For this reason, reading is essential to first-year writing. The focus isn't just on the ideas in the essays, but rather we focus on how the essays are constructed. You can hone your writing skills by practicing the strategies and "sampling" the styles of these essays.

### **FIRST-YEAR WRITING CONNECTS TO OTHER COURSES**

English professors are not the only ones who care about the quality of your writing. In fact, all college professors expect students to write clear, organized, and developed essays. Some students are surprised when their history or psychology professor lowers their essay grade because of grammar problems. In fact, Standard Written English is expected in all courses and in all emails you send to your professors.

Good writing is expected in all college courses. For example, in a survey of Clayton State faculty members conducted 2011–2012, 46% of Arts and Sciences faculty report that they assign writing at least 2–4 times a semester. In the university as a whole, 100% of faculty require at least one writing assignment in their course. Of this writing, 82% is longer, out-of-class essays. In these required essays, 98% of faculty members require researched sources to be incorporated into the writing, and all of these sources are a blend of scholarly and non-scholarly sources. Thus, you can see that the skills you learn in first-year writing, especially how to read and cite sources, will help you well beyond these two required courses.

Professors also expect you to be aware of the appropriate style to use in your writing. By style, we mean conventions of academic writing. This style, or format, indicates how you design your essay—whether you include a title page, how big you make the margins, how you structure the headings, and how you cite your sources. The main academic style formats are Modern Language Association (MLA) and American Psychological Association (APA). At Clayton State, of the faculty responding to the survey, 43% require MLA format, 28% require APA, 15% prefer Chicago, and 7% require Scientific Style (CSE). Thus, another main goal of first-year writing courses is to help you understand how to adapt writing for various purposes and audiences, including the style format you use.

#### **LANGUAGE OF WRITING**

In the same survey, professors were asked what they looked for in successful essays. The number one reply was “effective organization,” followed by “logical reasons,” “good ideas,” and “clear writing.” Sounds good, right? But do you know what specific qualities they mean when they call an essay “organized”? Do you know strategies to use to make your essays appear organized to readers? Indeed, we all have words we use to discuss writing, such as “engaging” or “it flows well.” But in order to figure out how to improve and learn exactly what your instructors mean in their feedback, you need to learn the vocabulary they use when they discuss your writing. To help you learn that, we offer the following rubric that your professors will use to grade your essays (they may, however, use alternate point values). Study the rubric and think about what each category means. Look up the words you don’t understand, and try to match your instructor’s feedback with the components on the rubric so you know specific things you need to improve.

## WRITING RUBRIC

A rubric is a good tool for writers and evaluators, as it defines what is expected of the writer in terms of competence in writing. What follows is the Clayton State University FYW Rubric:

### RUBRIC FOR FIRST-YEAR WRITING

	<b>High Proficiency</b> <b>(20-18 points)</b>	<b>Good Proficiency</b> <b>(17-16)</b>	<b>Minimal Proficiency</b> <b>(15-14)</b>	<b>Non-proficiency</b> <b>(13-0)</b>
<p><b>Content and Purpose</b></p> <p>topic thesis (stated or implied) focus purpose audience</p>	Ideas are clear, insightful, thought-provoking, and focused; consistently support the topic, thesis, and audience for the essay.	Ideas are clear and focused to support the topic and a clearly-developed central idea, but are not consistently insightful or thought-provoking.	Ideas are clear but conventional or general and do not support the topic, thesis, and audience for the essay.	Essay does not meet sufficient aspects of the assignment direction and does not support the essay's purpose. Ideas are unclear or clichéd and demonstrate a lack of focus in support of topic/central idea (vague or missing).
<p><b>Development</b></p> <p>evidence details and examples proof or rhetorical appeals (ethos, logos, pathos) sources and proof</p>	Development is illustrative, with abundant details and examples that arouse audience interest and provide relevant, concrete, specific, and insightful evidence with effective appeals.	Development is adequate, but may lack depth, with details and examples that arouse audience interest and provide relevant, concrete, specific evidence with effective appeals.	Development is sufficient but general, providing adequate but perhaps not interesting details, examples, and evidence; few, ineffective, or fallacious logical, ethical, or emotional appeals.	Development is insufficient, providing scarce or inappropriate details, evidence, and examples that may include logical, ethical, or emotional fallacies or unsupported claims.
<p><b>Organization</b></p> <p>structure coherence unity topic sentences transitions</p>	Organization is coherent, unified, and effective in support of the essay's purpose and consistently demonstrates effective and appropriate rhetorical transitions between ideas and paragraphs.	Organization is coherent, unified, and effective in support of the essay's purpose and usually demonstrates effective and appropriate rhetorical transitions between ideas and paragraphs.	Organization is coherent and unified overall in support of the essay's purpose, but is ineffective at times and may demonstrate abrupt or weak transitions between ideas or paragraphs.	Organization is confused and fragmented in support of the essay's purpose and demonstrates a lack of structure or coherence that negatively affects readability.



## Chapter 3 | Introduction to Connected Writing

<p><b>Style and Format</b></p> <p>sentence structure word choice tone source integration verb tense purposeful punctuation MLA format and documentation style</p>	<p>Style is confident, readable, and rhetorically effective in tone, incorporating varied sentence structure and precise word choice. Sources integrated effectively. Follows MLA format and conventions of academic discourse.</p>	<p>Style is readable and rhetorically effective in tone, incorporating varied sentence structure and effective word choice. Some sources lack effective integration. Some minor mistakes in MLA format and conventions of academic discourse.</p>	<p>Style is readable, but unremarkable in tone, sometimes including a lack of sentence variety and ineffective word choice. Many sources lack effective integration. Major mistakes in MLA format and conventions of academic discourse.</p>	<p>Style is incoherent or inappropriate in tone, including a lack of sentence variety and ineffective or inappropriate word choice. Format does not support purpose. Ineffective source integration; does not follow MLA format.</p>
<p><b>Grammar and Mechanics</b></p> <p>essay format Standard Written English (commas, s-v agr., sentence boundaries, etc.) spelling</p>	<p>Grammar, spelling, and punctuation are correct; meet all assignment directions; SWE works expertly to support the essay's purpose.</p>	<p>Grammar, spelling, and punctuation are correct and meet all assignment directions; SWE works generally to support the essay's purpose.</p>	<p>Mostly SWE and meets critical aspects of assignment directions. Some distracting errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.</p>	<p>Numerous distracting errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.</p>

# 4

## ACADEMIC HONESTY, PLAGIARISM, AND WRITING FROM SOURCES

Your writing in English 1101 and 1102 should always begin with a topic that is pertinent to the assignment. We expect that you will have an inquiring mind and can write about a given topic with voice and passion. Of course, in many cases, you will need to add outside support in order to emphasize your own inquiry; you will need to include research to support the points that you are making throughout the essay. However, it is critical when including outside sources that you inform your readers that the support that you have included comes from a different source rather than your own impressions. This chapter addresses some of the ways in which you can avoid plagiarism, as well as the consequences if plagiarism occurs.

### INTRODUCTION TO ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Mary R. Lamb

Most academic writing you'll do in college is writing from sources. That is, you read, discuss, and write about a variety of sources—scholarly essays, lab reports, statistical reports, fiction, film, websites, and textbooks. In First-Year Writing courses, you'll learn many skills that will help you read multiple sources and write about and with them effectively and responsibly in essays. These complex skills aren't fully learned in one or even two semesters, but English 1101 and 1102 will offer you a basic understanding of these processes for you to build on as you progress through the upper division courses in your major.

## Chapter 4 | Academic Honesty, Plagiarism, and Writing from Sources

Anytime you write from sources, however, you run the risk of plagiarizing. Indeed, plagiarism is a serious academic (and possibly disciplinary) violation. (See the Student Code of Conduct for further information). Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty in which you present another's ideas as your own.

Why is the academic community so bothered by plagiarism? First, we are committed to educating individual students, and when you plagiarize, you thwart your own education and forego your responsibilities as a writer. Second, you violate the ethical, academic standards of the academic community. These standards include the value of research and informed argument, open and honest debate and sharing of ideas, critical thinking about evidence, the careful presentation of research, and acknowledgment of the sources of ideas. Plagiarism, then, erodes the core of our work within an academic community.

For these reasons, most instructors respond both emotionally and professionally to plagiarism. We may feel defrauded, duped, insulted, or cheated. In addition, we may feel disappointed that you are cheating yourself out of learning and refusing to authentically enter academic conversations about ideas. Indeed, we recognize that you will not succeed in the university unless you're willing to learn how to read a range of materials and write about them effectively and ethically. At the same time, English instructors are language experts, so we know that these complex skills are not easy to learn and must be learned over and over again in various contexts.

Therefore, English 1101 and 1102 instructors will devote class time to teaching you how to incorporate others' ideas honestly and effectively. Class instruction will include reading critically, annotating texts and taking notes, reading rhetorically for context and strategies, locating print and digital sources, understanding various library databases, evaluating sources, using sources in essays in various ways, citing an array of sources, practicing introducing sources in your essay, and documenting sources effectively. Your essays will also be submitted to Turnitin.com, an online plagiarism detection service, either through class registration or when you submit essays to the D2L Assignment Folder, and your instructor will explain how to use these services to improve your writing.

## UPHOLDING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Thus, as part of the Clayton State University academic community, you are also responsible for upholding academic standards and policies (including, but not limited to, avoiding plagiarism). Indeed, all Clayton State students must follow the “Student Code of Conduct” section of the online Student Handbook. Please read this to understand academic honesty, and ask your professors if you have any questions.

You can also avoid plagiarism by recognizing that writing-from-sources takes time, preparation, and time-management. You can also avoid plagiarism by considering the following:

- ▶ Developing effective reading and note-taking skills.
- ▶ Beginning assignments early and working with writing consultants and instructors on drafts.
- ▶ Learning to evaluate sources effectively.
- ▶ Attending every class and completing the assignments so you learn how to document correctly.
- ▶ Reading and studying *EasyWriter* chapters on “Conducting Research,” “Evaluating Sources and Taking Notes,” and “Integrating Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism,” and “MLA Style.”
- ▶ Asking your instructor for help when you’re confused.

## EXPECTATIONS IN WRITING FROM SOURCES

Students who fail to cite and/or document ethically and effectively in English 1101 and 1102 essays will not receive satisfactory grades. Successful essays, though, include careful citing, accurate documentation, reasonable coherence, and effective synthesis of various sources.

## PLAGIARISM POLICY FOR FIRST-YEAR WRITING

### INACCURATE CITATION: MECHANICS AND FORMAT

Students are expected to cite both written (print and electronic), oral, and visual sources consulted in essays and presentations. All borrowed ideas—both direct quotations and paraphrasing from another’s work—require accurate citation and direct quotations require quotation marks. Students

should learn and use correct format for block quotes, quotations, and in-text parenthetical documentation. Source material should be introduced fully, and all borrowed ideas should be cited; Works Cited pages should be formatted correctly. **Drafts** of essays with inaccurate citation, mechanical citation problems, and/or minor Works Cited inaccuracies will require mandatory revisions; **final essays** with these problems will receive a letter grade deduction.

### **INSUFFICIENT CITATION: PATCHWRITING AND DERIVATIVE ESSAYS**

Students should fully introduce and cite borrowed material. Cutting and pasting passages from your source into your own essay without citation and turning in the essay as your own is plagiarism, as is directly quoting without using quotation marks. Undocumented paraphrasing is plagiarism: fully cite the source of your ideas. In addition, students are expected to paraphrase and summarize using their own stylistic features, not the source's, to avoid patchwriting (also called stylistic plagiarism). If your summary is too close to the original in a draft, keep working to synthesize it fully. In addition, students are expected to develop their own framework for their essays rather than borrowing their source's argument wholesale (even if acknowledged). **Drafts** with several examples of insufficient citation, essays that fail to develop original arguments, essays lacking a Works Cited page, or essays that exhibit patchwriting will earn a lowered grade and will require mandatory revision. **Final essays** will receive a 0 for the assignment for failure to meet the minimum requirements of essays in English 1101 or 1102, and students will face disciplinary action as per the CSU Office of Student Affairs and [Community Standards](#).

### **FALSE SUBMISSIONS, GHOSTWRITING, OR FRAUD**

Students are expected to write their own original essays for each assignment, from development of ideas and research to revision. Plagiarized essays include essays written by someone else (i.e. acquired or bought through the Internet, an organization, friends, family members, or another student); essays in which much of the material is cut-and-pasted from sources without correct documentation; and essays submitted by the student for another course/assignment. If such an essay is submitted for a **rough draft**, the student will receive a 0 for the draft and will be required to do a mandatory revision and/or new rough draft before submitting a final essay. If students turn in such essays as final essays, the student will

receive an F for the course and face disciplinary action as per the CSU Office of Student Affairs and [Community Standards](#).

**Please note:** Your essay submission, either face-to-face or online, is the version that counts, and you are responsible for making sure this is the **correct version**. Review your electronic and hard copies carefully.

If you have any doubt about whether or not you are plagiarizing, talk with your professor **before** submitting your essay.

## PROCESS FOR HANDLING ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

- ▶ If you believe another student has cheated (including plagiarism), inform your instructor immediately.
- ▶ If your instructor believes you have cheated (including plagiarism), the instructor will research the matter further, gather evidence, and contact you to discuss the issue.
- ▶ The instructor will meet with you to explain the penalty for plagiarizing. If both parties wish, this discussion may include either Dr. Parrott, Director of First-Year Writing, or Dr. Lamb, English Department Chair, who will act as a facilitator.
- ▶ During the meeting, the instructor will provide you with:
  - Specification of Charges Form
  - Students' Rights and Responsibilities Form
  - Student Code of Conduct Chart
  - Evidence of your plagiarism
- ▶ If you **agree** to the charges and for the instructor to adjudicate the charge, you sign the form, "Academic Misconduct: Request for Instructor to Adjudicate." The instructor completes the form, assigns the penalty, and submits copies of the form (along with the "Specification of Charges Form") to you. The instructor then submits copies of all the forms, along with copies of the evidence, to the Office of Student Conduct, 250 University Center, and keeps a copy. Even if the instructor wishes to adjudicate, he or she will contact Student Affairs to see if this is the student's first offense.

## Chapter 4 | Academic Honesty, Plagiarism, and Writing from Sources

- ▶ If you **do not agree** to allow the instructor to adjudicate and/or if you **deny the allegation** and no agreement can be reached, then the instructor refers the case to the Office of Student Affairs/ Student Conduct, 250 University Center.

Academic Misconduct forms are available from Student Conduct and the First-Year Writing websites.

# 5

## WRITING PROCESSES

Part of becoming an effective writer includes understanding one's own writing process. Susan Miller Cohran, Roy Stamper, and Stacey Cohran see the writing process as “all the steps you use when writing.” Common steps in any writer's process includes “brainstorming, freewriting, collecting evidence, drafting, outlining, revising, and receiving and applying feedback from others” (20). Process becomes a strategy of writing, as you settle into the patterns that work best for you in developing your drafts.

The following faculty essays provide you with information about Clayton State University services that support your writing process, as well as strategies that you can implement that will enhance your writing. Additional essays provide ways that authentic writing enhances our voice.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH TECHNOLOGY: STRATEGIES FOR USING EMAIL IN AN ACADEMIC SETTING** Jennifer Parrott

#### **EMAILING PROFESSORS**

Email is an important medium for communication between professors and students at Clayton State. While professors maintain weekly office hours where you can speak to them in person, it's appropriate to communicate via email when it comes to asking and answering relatively quick, course-related questions. Email is also helpful because it provides a written record of your communication.

Most professors require you to check your CSU email account regularly and will only communicate with you through your CSU email account



(rather than through Gmail, Yahoo! or other accounts). Therefore, it's important that you use your CSU account to communicate with your professors and check it daily. Often, students fail to use and check their CSU email, so consider installing it on your phone, where using it will be easy and efficient. You can find instructions for setting up CSU email on your phone on the HUB's website: <https://www.clayton.edu/hub/index>.

Your CSU email account should be your academic account, and you should represent yourself professionally when using it. It is worth taking a few minutes to set up a professional email signature. An email signature usually contains your full name, professional credentials, and alternative contact information. As a first-year college student, it is appropriate to include any of the following:

- ▶ Major or departmental affiliation
- ▶ Name of university and year of graduation
- ▶ Titles of leadership positions that you hold
- ▶ Contact information: phone number/email/website or other social networking information that you are comfortable sharing in a professional context

Additional Considerations:

- ▶ Avoid including quotes from movies, songs, or religious sources; these are fine for your personal email account but inappropriate for a professional account
- ▶ Include social networks only if they are professional profiles
- ▶ Avoid special fonts and graphics; keep it clean and professional

### **WHEN IS EMAIL APPROPRIATE?**

Before you begin, take a minute to determine whether your question is appropriate for email. Can you find the answer you seek by reviewing the assignment sheet, syllabus, textbook or notes? Ensure you have taken all possible steps to answer the question yourself. Then, ask yourself if the content is appropriate for an email—if your question will require a lengthy explanation or you would like your professor to go over your

work with you in detail, it may be best to set up an appointment to or stop by during office hours. If you are emailing to set up an appointment, let your instructor know what you want to discuss so they can be prepared to address your question or concern.

If you are contacting a professor with a complaint, consider waiting 24 hours if you are upset or angry because angry, accusatory emails rarely help anyone. Then, consider phrasing your complaint as a question or request: “I’m not sure that I understand all of your comments on my essay. Can I schedule an appointment with you to discuss it?” Or, “I think there’s a discrepancy between the grade on my essay and the grade that was entered into the grade book in D2L.” Politely asking for clarification is always appropriate and helps avoid awkward situations.

### GETTING STARTED

Once you have established that email is the appropriate way to communicate, provide as much specific information as possible to help your professor get you the answers you seek quickly and efficiently, starting with the subject line. Rather than replying to a previous, unrelated email or just using “question,” in the subject line, use a specific phrase such as, “word count on personal essay,” or whatever phrase will clearly indicate the content of the message. Doing so gives your instructors a preview of what is inside and can help them prioritize responses. A specific subject line also helps you locate the information you need when you are searching your inbox for the answer at a later time.

Always use a greeting or salutation. You can address your instructor by name and title. For example, “Dear Professor Smith,” or “Greetings Professor Smith,” is better than opening with “Hey” or “Hi.” Addressing your instructor using the appropriate title is important for two reasons: it is a sign of respect for the instructor’s professional accomplishments, and it demonstrates that you understand the rules of communication in this particular rhetorical situation. If you are unsure of how to address your instructor, you can always use “professor.” Also, you can check the syllabus or your instructor’s email signature for more information. Instructors that include “Ph.D.” after their names can be referred to as “Dr.” Finally, you can always ask instructors how they prefer to be addressed; they will be happy to clarify for you.

## **PROVIDE INFORMATION (LOTS OF IT)**

Before asking your question, you need to provide your instructor with some information, beginning with who you are. If the name associated with your email is different from what you go by in class, be sure to use the name your instructor will recognize. Also, identify the class you are in by the course number and section; for example, ENGL1101-26. If it's a seated class, you might include the meeting days/times. Often, instructors teach multiple sections of the same course, so just saying "I'm in your 1101 course" or "I am in your online course" is not helpful. Even if you feel like it's overkill, your instructor will always appreciate more information rather than less. Remember, the more time it takes them to figure out who you are and which assignment you are referring to, the longer it takes for you to get the answers that you need.

Next, demonstrate that you have tried to find the answer yourself, and if you need clarification on instructions or a comment or anything else, include the item in question in the email or attach it to the email. Make it convenient for your instructor to respond quickly.

If you do not understand something about an assignment, avoid saying, "I don't understand this assignment." The instructor will need to ask you specifically what is confusing you, and you will end up in a time-consuming email exchange that may prevent you from submitting work on time. Instead, quote the instructions that are confusing you or the feedback that you need clarification on, or the passage in the textbook that is giving you trouble. In doing so, you demonstrate that you've read the material, and you help the instructor provide a quick, accurate response.

You also want to pay attention to detail. Although you are not being graded on the emails that you send, make sure to use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation in your emails. Avoid emoticons and abbreviations used in texting. Remember that your emails represent you as a student, and you always want to showcase yourself in the most professional manner.

Finally, allow time for the professor to respond; though students tend to work late at night and on the weekends, not all professors maintain such a schedule. Make sure to ask questions more than twenty-four hours prior to deadlines to allow professors sufficient time to respond. Many professors

will note in their syllabi when they answer email; for example, Monday–Friday 9am – 5pm. Some will respond to emails within twenty-four hours, except on the weekends, etc. If you have not received a response in several days, send a polite follow-up email.

### PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

While this may seem like a lot of rules for writing an email, getting in the habit of writing these types of emails will serve you well throughout college and in the professional world. Emails that are respectful, specific, and thorough will usually yield faster, more helpful responses in any situation. Also, one of the benefits of attending Clayton State is that our faculty are focused on teaching, and they want to help you succeed. By following these guidelines, you will demonstrate to them that you are taking charge of your own learning experience and seeking the answers or clarification that you need.

As the world becomes more digital and email becomes more important, always remember that not all issues can or should be resolved through an email, and that class time and office hours may be more appropriate for addressing longer, complex problems. Furthermore, personal interaction with your professor helps them get to know you and gives you experience talking with professionals face-to-face. The most important thing to remember is that, if you need help, you should always ask for it. College is a time of learning and your professors are here to help you learn. But they won't know that you need help unless you reach out and ask for it.

### FURTHER READING

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## PLANNING AND DRAFTING YOUR WRITING

### Kavita Surya

Writing is an act unique to each individual. For some, it seems as if words flow effortlessly across a page. For others, writing each word takes strenuous effort. And according to the famed writer Ernest Hemingway, one person can experience both levels of difficulty. As he states: “There is no rule on how to write. Sometimes it can come easily and perfectly; sometimes it’s like drilling rock and then blasting it out with charges [explosives]” (qtd. in Hemingway and Phillips 18).

If there are no rules to writing and how we write is unique to each of us, why take a class like this one focused on writing instruction? And why is the first outcome for this course to learn about engaging in writing as a process?

The answer originates in the reality that even the most experienced and acclaimed writers can find the process intimidating. As acclaimed horror writer Stephen King once said, “the scariest moment [of writing] is always just before you start” (269). This sense of intimidation often stems from the pressure to immediately produce “perfect” writing, or writing that is flawlessly aligned with your and your audience’s expectations, which can shut down our efforts to write. And some of us may wait for a burst of inspiration, which may not arrive, or at least not in time to meet our deadlines. Therefore, the results of our writing may not be what we want, which we can then explain away by stating that we are “bad writers.”

Yet renowned poet Nikki Giovanni argues that “You must be unintimidated by your own thoughts” (186). But how can you reduce, or even remove such intimidation? A step-by-step writing process can help break up writing into manageable tasks. What we offer in this chapter is the beginning of such a process through the steps of pre-writing and drafting.

Please keep in mind that you will likely move back and forth between steps as needed. For example, you may start drafting a piece of writing, then revise what you have written so far, and then continue writing. We hope that our discussion of writing process in this chapter and others can

help you find or finetune a process that works for your needs – but be prepared to adjust as necessary!

## **PRE-WRITING, OR PLANNING TO WRITE YOUR DRAFT**

You might begin your writing assignment by opening a blank document or taking out a piece of essay, then beginning to draft your writing assignment or other type of writing. But a little planning can go a long way in avoiding the frustration of staring at a blank page, or again, not having the finished piece of writing turn out the way you and your audiences would prefer. **So your pre-writing process should begin as soon as you receive your writing assignment or any other writing task you pursue outside of this course.**

In this section, we focus on the following Pre-Writing strategies:

- ▶ Reading and Understanding Assignment Instructions
- ▶ Thinking About Rhetorical Situations Informing Your Writing
- ▶ Brainstorming and Organizing Ideas for Your Writing

### ***Reading and Understanding Assignment Instructions:***

In all academic writing, begin by *carefully reading and making sure you understand assignment instructions*. You should complete this step as soon as you receive your assignment. In a world where skimming the massive amount of information at our fingertips is the norm, taking the time to closely read and make sense of instructions before beginning your writing assignment may seem time-consuming. But you should ensure you start off your planning in accordance with your instructor’s expectations, which is easier to do at the beginning of your writing process, rather than having to backtrack to address issues. You can also review your instructions with a Writers’ Studio consultant, or if your first-year writing class has one or more of them, a Peer Academic Mentor (PAM). If you have questions after thoroughly reading the instructions, be sure to ask your instructor.

### ***Thinking About Rhetorical Situations Informing Your Writing:***

Previously, we discussed how an awareness of rhetorical situations can enhance your abilities to compose written texts in ways that meet both your and audience expectations. Therefore, you may want to note answers to the following questions related to elements of rhetorical situations:

- ▶ **Text:** What genre (type) of text are you writing? Examples of text genres in first-year writing could include, but are not limited to essays, rhetorical reading responses, and discussion posts. What are the general expectations for the text genre in terms of content and formatting? While your instructor's specific expectations may guide your responses to both of these questions, also consider any previous experience with researching, reading, or writing with the genre in other classes, as well as in non-classroom settings, like websites, books, and other spaces.
- ▶ **Author:** As the author, how could your background influence your writing of this text?
- ▶ **Audience:** Who is/are the intended audience(s) of this text? (While your instructor, and perhaps your classmates, are intended audiences, consider others as well.) Based upon your understanding of their backgrounds, how might they receive the ideas that you're trying to express in your written text, including how these ideas are organized and formatted? (Again, you could use your assignment instructions and other experience to help you answer this question.)
- ▶ **Purpose:** What is your purpose in expressing your ideas in this written assignment (besides completing the assignment)? How would you like your audience to respond to this text (besides receiving an assignment grade you find satisfactory)?
- ▶ **Setting:** How does your written text respond to time and place, as well as broader communities and conversations pertaining to the topic?

### ***Brainstorming and Organizing Ideas for Your Writing:***

Now that you understand the instructions and overall aspects of the rhetorical situation surrounding your assignment, the following strategies can help you generate and organize ideas. While we present these strategies in a suggested order, you do not have to use them all, and they can be completed in an order that works for you.

- ▶ **Free Writing:** Free writing can be especially helpful for alleviating anxiety about writing tasks and also for allowing ideas to emerge that might not otherwise do so in a more structured writing environment. Suggested freewriting steps include the following:

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- Set a timer for 10-15 minutes.
  - Once your allotted time begins, start writing and don't stop until time is up.
  - Try to focus on one or more topics related to your writing assignment. But if that isn't possible, keep writing, even "I don't know what to write" repeatedly. Just the act of writing can help ideas emerge.
  - Try your best to use complete sentences, and even multiple paragraphs if you can, to help you locate ideas for further development in your writing assignment. But don't be too concerned about grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
  - Once time is up, carefully review what you've written. If applicable, mark any ideas relevant to a topic for your writing assignment.
  - Repeat free writing sessions as needed, and if you do, consider taking breaks between sessions.
- ▶ **Bubble Mapping:** Bubble mapping can help you locate main and supporting ideas for the topic of your writing assignment. This process can be especially helpful to organize potential ideas you identified through free writing on your topic. To map your idea bubbles:
- You can simply use a piece of paper, software like Word or PowerPoint, or even online applications with bubble mapping templates that can store maps in the cloud, although they may require signing up for an account to save your maps for later access. The applications in particular can be helpful for bubble maps extending beyond one printed or typed page.
  - Start by noting the main idea of your writing assignment in the center of the page. For example, if your topic is "college," your main idea might be: "What it takes to be academically successful in college."
  - Draw a circle around your main idea.
  - Now think about what it takes to be academically successful in college.
  - Write these ideas (supporting ideas) around your main idea. Draw circles around each of these ideas and lines between

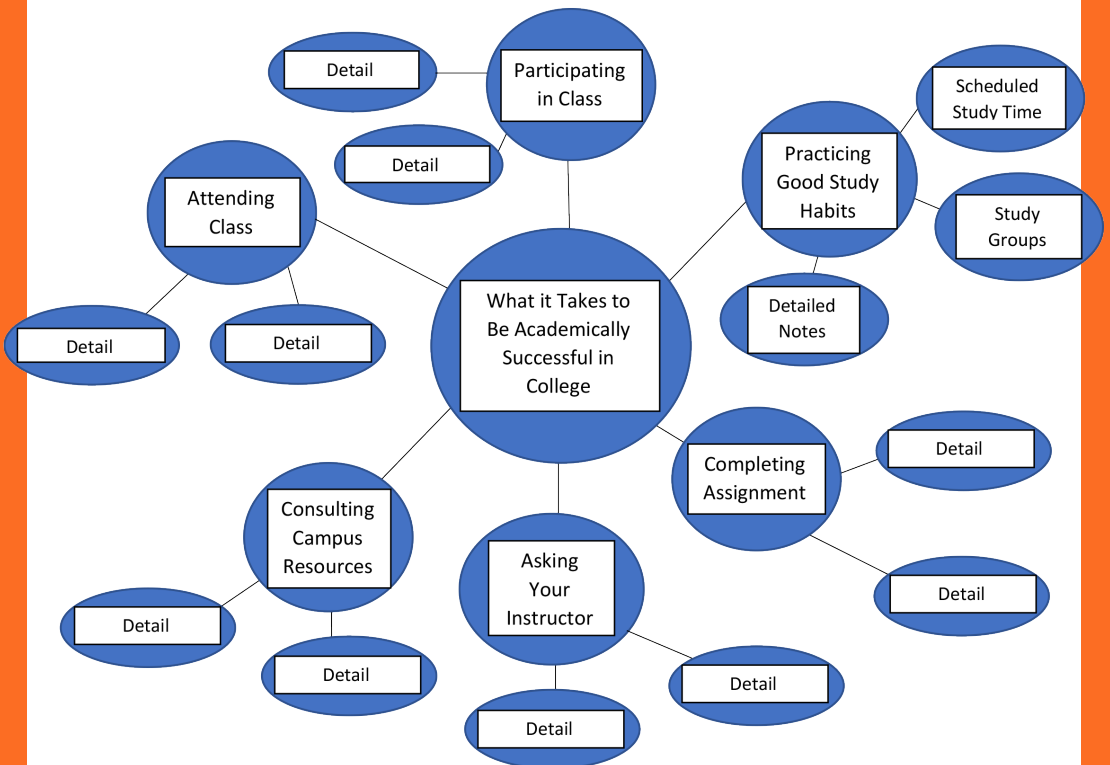


## Chapter 5 | Writing Processes

each circle and the circle containing your main idea. Examples of supporting ideas might include: attending class, participating in class, practicing good study habits, completing assignments, asking your instructors questions, and consulting campus resources.

- Consider additional details you might want to add for each supporting idea.
- Write down the supporting details near the circle with the supporting idea bubble to which they correspond. Circle these ideas and draw lines connecting them to the corresponding supporting idea bubble. For example, practicing good study habits might involve taking and reviewing detailed notes, forming study groups, and scheduling individual study time, ideally in a location where you can concentrate best.

Consider the following Bubble Map example based on the topic, main idea, supporting ideas, and additional details discussed in this section:



- **Outlining:** Now that you've figured out the topic, main idea, supporting ideas, and other details for your writing assignment, you can use your bubble map to begin to place them in an outline to guide you as you research and write your draft.
- The first part of your outline is the introductory paragraph discussing your topic and main idea, then ending with a preview of the essay's example to give readers an idea of what to expect in the essay.
  - The next part of the outline will be the body paragraphs, where you list your supporting ideas. You will then include additional details from your bubble map under each supporting idea.
  - For the last part, your concluding paragraph will summarize what you discussed, connecting back to the main idea. Please see the following example illustrating the transferring of your bubble map to your outline:

**I. Introductory Paragraph**

- i. Introduces the topic of academic success in college
- ii. Explains that this essay will be discussing [list supporting ideas here] as ways to academically succeed in college

**II. Supporting Idea #1: Attending Class**

- i. Detail 1
- ii. Detail 2

**III. Supporting Idea #2: Participating in Class**

- i. Detail 1
- ii. Detail 2

**IV. Supporting Idea #3: Consistently Practicing Good Study Habits**

- i. Detail 1: Taking and Reviewing Detailed Notes
- ii. Detail 2: Forming Study Groups
- iii. Detail 3: Scheduling Study Time (ideally in a location where you can concentrate best)

**V. Supporting Idea #4: Completing Assignments**

- i. Detail 1
- ii. Detail 2

**VI. Supporting Idea #5: Consult Campus Resources**

- i. Detail 1
- ii. Detail 2

**VII. Concluding Paragraph: Summarizing What's Been Discussed in this Essay, Referring Back to Main Idea of How to Succeed Academically in College**

- ▶ **Researching:** Now that you have a preliminary outline, you can begin/continue your research into your topic, as well as your main idea, supporting ideas, and additional details if you need to do so for your writing assignment. Add links, MLA-formatted citations, and relevant tidbits from your research that you would like to use into your outline as needed.
  - Alternatively, you can complete an annotated bibliography, which often includes (1) a citation of the source (likely in MLA format for ENGL 1101 and 1102), (2) a summary of what the source discusses, (3) strengths and weaknesses of this discussion, and (4) how this source fits into the text you're writing. Then you can reference this bibliography with your outline when writing your draft, or insert portions into the appropriate sections of the outline. You can also see annotated bibliography samples in your handbook or on the [Purdue OWL website](#).
  - When it comes to research, there are two types: *Primary* and *Secondary*. *Primary* research involves research you conduct yourself, such as recounting your own experiences, as well as interviews, surveys, and experiments. *Secondary* research entails finding research from other sources.
  - For secondary research, try to ensure that your research is credible. Again, your handbook or the [Purdue OWL](#) contains valuable guidelines for assessing the credibility of your sources. But considering how common and numerous online sources are, I would also like to highlight a few points concerning them:

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1. Prioritize sources with website addresses ending in: .edu, .gov, .org, or .mil.
  2. Use the following types of sites with caution, and only as starting points for your research:
    - » Wikipedia or other crowd-sourced informational sites (e.g. Quora, WikiHow) only as starting points for your research, considering that anyone can contribute to these sites
    - » Articles, white papers, or other texts from websites selling products and services
- A reliable way to ensure you're incorporating credible sources is to use databases and other resources from the Clayton State University Library. Please see the [CSU English 1101 Library Guide](#) for more information.
  - By following these prewriting strategies, you are now ready to begin drafting your writing assignment.

### WRITING YOUR DRAFT

Now is the time to start writing your first draft based on your outline and assignment instructions. You may also want to consult other work from your free writing, if applicable.

During this drafting stage, like your free writing, you should not be too worried about polished writing. Just focus on getting your ideas on the page. You can always go back and edit later. However, this draft should be more structured than free writing, given the other work you may have already put into brainstorming, researching, and organizing your ideas.

As you write, you should also consider the following:

- ▶ Make sure you use your own words as much as possible, saving direct quotations for interesting wording in the text you're referencing that could lose impact if placed in your own words.
- ▶ Include in-text citations or note places in the draft where in-text citations should be incorporated.

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- ▶ Try your best to guide readers through your ideas by doing the following:
  - Focusing on one idea, with the rest of the paragraph consisting of details to support this idea. For example, according to the sample outline in this chapter, paragraph two focuses on attending class and details supporting that idea, while paragraph three concentrates on participating in class and details corresponding to that idea.
  - Providing examples (those from other sources, and perhaps, your own research and personal experience) to support your claims.
  - Using transition words and phrases to establish relationships between the ideas in each paragraph, helping you and readers stay on track. You can find excellent examples of transitions in your handbook or on the [Purdue OWL website](#).
  - Avoiding the use of words like “this” and “it” by themselves. Doing so makes readers work harder to figure out what you’re referring to, especially if you use these words after discussing multiple ideas. So, for instance, instead of “This indicates that the author used credible sources,” use wording like: “The author’s incorporation of studies from the neuroscience field to support his claims on teenage brain development demonstrates his use of credible sources.”

Ultimately, we hope that these pre-writing and drafting strategies will help your writing process become less stressful and more fruitful, resulting in writing that engages you and your audience(s).

### REFLECTION QUESTION

How would you describe your pre-writing and drafting practices? Explain how you will incorporate one or more strategies from this chapter into these practices for your next writing assignment.

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## PARTICIPATING IN PEER REVIEW

### BETTER THROUGH COLLABORATION

Sean William Dever

*The first draft is always the most difficult.* I remind myself of this while pouring another glass of water. It's 2:30 am, and I find myself once again in my dimly-lit kitchen, a candle on my left, dried apricots, my snack of choice, on the right. There's mahogany teakwood in the air, and my fingers continue to glide over my keyboard, swiftly striking these squares. I'm both in my mind and on the page.

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After another hour of moving line three to line five and line five to line seven and removing four altogether, I arrive at what I believe is the strongest first draft that I can muster before my eyes close. With a sigh of relief, I reach for my nearby pen and scratch out “Send poem to Daniel” on the corner of an empty journal page.

Morning cracks through my blinds and invites me to continue my work. I reach my desk, notice the note to myself, and fire off an email titled “READ ASAP – GIVE ANY AND ALL OPINIONS.” In the body of the email, I add a “please” for the sake of civility. The scarce sunlight offered upon my balcony is welcomed, and the coffee sings the back of my throat, ever so slightly. From inside, I hear my phone ring. “Daniel,” it reads, and I hastily pick up.

\*\*\*

We’re taught at a young age that despite our inclination and drive to work alone, that collaboration and team effort birth success. My high school hockey coach always boomed, “Without each other, you are one person. With each other, you are better, stronger, more talented; you are a team.” Perhaps it’s the artist in me, but I find meaning in almost everything.

Therefore, I carry those words like the tattoos on my skin, always with me and close to my heart. We are nothing without the help of our family, friends, and peers. Writing is a deeply intimate art form. It cannot breathe and grow without the aid of others. Similar to how my coach said a team needs each member, a writer needs peer reviewers to improve their drafts.

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“There’s substance here, something uniquely human about the narrator. I love it, but...” Daniel’s voice trails off briefly as he gathers his thoughts. “Line six. It feels a bit too early for the speaker to transition into their mind. Introspection would fit better at, let’s say, line ten.”

I pause and think back to my mindset the night before and how I played around with this poem, toying with the placement of each line. “That’s interesting. I honestly had not considered that. I hoped to show the seamlessness between reality and imagination, but maybe it does come too soon. Maybe some of the magic is lost there.” He’s right. I circle line six,

draw an arrow down to ten, and make a note to format this later. “What are your thoughts on line five?”

\*\*\*

When we think of peer reviews, it’s integral to understand the necessity of this craft. Writers often seek multiple readers for each of their works as a necessary step to allowing their voice to resonate as clearly as possible. In the world of writing, we seek peer reviews from friends, family, colleagues, and members of our writing circles. With the inherent intimacy demanded of the writing process, we want our words to land with their intended precision and accuracy.

Professional authors, poets, and novelists rely on the feedback of peers to progress their drafts into the polished versions that we’re lucky enough to read today. I mean, even the (arguably) greatest horror novelist in modern history, Stephen King, noted the importance of feedback and revision in his book *On Writing: A Memoir on the Craft*. And could you imagine what the first draft of *Harry Potter* looked like, or what could have happened to the series without the critical input from others?

\*\*\*

Peer reviews come in all forms. In writing, they range from the casual: sharing a few lines of writing with a close friend to the more structured approaches; following a set of questions to improve your classmate’s rough draft of an Argumentative Essay. However, all peer reviews contain the same end goal. We review to find the heart of the writing, determine areas of strength and instances of weaknesses, and advance the draft. Your professor can employ any number of approaches, but the peer review is a collaborative process.

A peer review is a dance where the original author asks the peer reviewer for their hand. From there, the peer reviewer takes the lead, guiding the author through familiar moves, improving their footsteps throughout the process. A peer review is inviting your friend over for lunch, cooking them a meal, while your friend offers a family recipe, a unique spin, to improve your dish. When we write, we begin with a direction, with a specific motive and thesis. We collaborate to uncover our unique genius.



\*\*\*

As the sun peaks in the mid-day sky, my cell phone logs the conversation currently at 1:37:55. There are various highlighted verses, circled lines, and little red “x’s” on the page, a constellation of comments and critiques. “Once again, there’s heart here; I just think that reorganizing the poem will present it clearer.” Daniel’s words, precise and calculated, exactly what you want from a peer.

“And you believe that the amount of internal commentary is sufficient?” I ask.

“I think that with any more, it would be a monologue,” Daniel chuckles, and I too laugh, partially because internal monologues are consistent with my own daily routines.

“Once again, thank you, Daniel.”

“What are friends for?”

“I’ll give you a call next weekend. Perhaps I’ll send over an updated draft before then!” I chime.

“And I’ll be waiting.” We both hang up and the almost-visible fog around my draft becomes clearer. The words are luminescent upon the page, and I can’t help but smile.

\*\*\*

Before I was a writer, I was a writer. Now, let me make that clearer – before I *saw* myself as a writer, I **was** a writer. In English 1101 and 1102, you’re tasked with writing essays, responses, and reviews. Whether you’ve come to terms with it or not, you are a writer. You’ve taken an important step into the world of writing; you’ve signed up, and let me tell you, this is a lifetime membership!

Occasionally, we struggle with seeing ourselves as a member of a community. Perhaps, it’s because we’ve never thought of ourselves in that particular light or because we feel as if we are not talented enough. If you

feel that way about the writing community, let me be the first to say, when your pen hits the page the first day of English Composition 1, you are a part of this community. You are a writer. Now, take that mentality with you when you craft your peer review as you strive to better your abilities and further hone the timeless craft of writing.

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## PEER REVIEW PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

### Kavita Surya

#### INTRODUCTION

In both English 1101 and 1102, you are expected to review and provide feedback on your classmates' writing. This expectation is discussed in English 1101, Outcome 2: "Collaboration," where "students will engage in the collaborative, social aspects of writing," [in part by] "respond[ing] constructively to peers' papers" (Lamb and Smith 5).

Sean William Dever's preceding essay, "Better Through Collaboration," discusses the importance of peer feedback in creative writing spaces, and how such feedback also relates to the idea of teamwork beyond written texts, such as participating on a sports team. Ultimately, the essay underscores the idea that we are all part of a writing community in First-Year Writing. To add, not only can you improve upon your writing by receiving feedback from others, but reading others' writing can introduce you to new ideas and ways of expressing them.

And as you may also be aware, providing and receiving respectful, helpful feedback on others' writing extends far beyond college. Importantly, responding to your peers' (and even your supervisors') writing is a fundamental part of communicating in workplace environments. For example, you may ask, or be asked, to review and provide feedback on texts such as emails, instructions, reports, and proposals before sending them to someone outside or higher up within your workplace for further review.

If you feel concerned about your ability to provide helpful feedback, don't be! All you need is to be an attentive reader. Your instructor will provide

## Chapter 5 | Writing Processes

detailed instructions on how to review your classmates' work. Some of these methods might include, but are not limited to the following:

- ▶ answering a set of questions verbally and/or in writing
- ▶ writing comments in the draft
- ▶ making edits in the draft

You may engage in these peer review activities in multiple ways:

- ▶ text document, for example, in your peer's draft or another document
- ▶ in person
- ▶ email
- ▶ video
- ▶ online discussions
- ▶ online platforms like Peermark

We will first discuss general principles and strategies for reviewing your peers' work to assist you, in combination with directions provided by your instructor. You will also have an opportunity to further reflect on the purposes of peer review and your peer review practices by answering questions at the end of this chapter to guide your reflections.

This section has been organized in the following parts:

- ▶ Submitting Your Draft for Review
- ▶ Reviewing Your Peer's Draft
  - Reading Your Peer's Draft
  - Communicating Your Feedback
- ▶ Sharing Written Feedback with Your Peer (Technological Considerations)
  - Filenames
  - Working with Web-Shared Documents (e.g. Google Docs, Microsoft OneDrive, Dropbox)
- ▶ Reflecting On Your Peer Review Practices

## SUBMITTING YOUR DRAFT FOR REVIEW

Make sure that you follow the instructions given by your instructor for preparing and submitting your draft closely.

If you're able to do so, you might want to include a few sentences thanking reviewers for looking over your draft, as well as any items you would like them to address in their feedback. Doing so can help reviewers focus on areas where you know need assistance, and can also prevent them from pointing out issues you are already aware of. For instance, you could ask the reviewer if a particular section of your draft should stay where it is or be moved somewhere else, or if a sentence's meaning seems unclear.

## REVIEWING YOUR PEER'S DRAFT

Before writing your review, make sure you read your peer's draft carefully – and more than once! Again, while your instructor may provide specific guidance, it may still be helpful to focus on the following each time you read the draft.

The first time you read, make note of the following, broader issues:

- ▶ Did the draft follow assignment instructions? Why and/or why not?
  - Examples of drafts not following assignment instructions might include
    - » submitting a reading response instead of an essay;
    - » writing a more argumentative-focused essay on whether capital punishment is right or wrong, rather than an informative (expository) essay about capital punishment laws in the United States; or
    - » missing one or more assignment requirements, like a concluding paragraph, or discussion of rhetorical appeals.
- ▶ How well is the draft organized and developed?
  - Are ideas sufficiently explained? Why and/or why not?
  - Are there other ideas or evidence that could strengthen your peer's claims?

## Chapter 5 | Writing Processes

- Are sections of the draft where they should be? If not, how can they be rearranged?
- Are there effective transitions between sections? Which transitions work well, and which do not?

Now that you've noted these broader issues, read the draft again, paying attention to the following:

- ▶ Are any sentences choppy or unclear? Which ones?
- ▶ Are the sentences structured in various ways for more engaging reading, or do they start similarly? An example might be several sentences (especially in a row) starting with: "The author. . ."
- ▶ Do you see one or more examples of incorrect or imprecise word choice? Which words? Examples of imprecise word choice could include words like "good," "bad," or "amazing."
- ▶ Are quotations integrated smoothly into the essay using correct MLA format? Which ones are, and which ones are not?

Now pay attention to grammar, punctuation, and spelling:

- ▶ If you notice a type of error occurring throughout the draft, such as run-on sentences, make note of it, but also write down an example of the error to help you explain the issue to your peer, which we'll discuss more in the next section, "Communicating Your Feedback."
- ▶ You may also have opportunities to mark such errors in the draft itself.

Finally, pay attention to formatting, as specified by your instructor:

- ▶ Is the draft double-spaced?
- ▶ Is your peer's name, name of course, instructor's name, and date in the left-hand corner of the first page per MLA format?
- ▶ Is your peer's last name and page number located on the upper-right-hand corner of each page?
- ▶ If applicable, is there a Works Cited section? If so, is it formatted correctly? Is each source cited in the Works Cited section cited in the essay using correct MLA format – and vice versa?

Now that you've read your peer's draft carefully, you're ready to write your feedback.

### COMMUNICATING YOUR FEEDBACK

As discussed earlier in this chapter, you may be asked to communicate your feedback through various methods, such as answering questions, writing comments, and inserting edits in the draft, as well as communicating this feedback with your peer via email, video, chat, in person, or through online discussions or other platforms. However, this section outlines general principles for providing feedback that can be useful regardless of format – and the notes you took while reading your peer's draft (as outlined in the previous section, “Reviewing Your Peer's Draft”) will be quite helpful in sharing your feedback!

When communicating your feedback, it may be tempting to focus on what you believe needs work in the draft. On the other hand, you may also not contribute enough constructive feedback. As every piece of writing can be improved in one way or another, it is vital to provide both positive and constructive feedback to help your peer know what to continue doing for future writing efforts, as well as what to work on.

Providing useful feedback also involves including one or more examples of the issues you've located. For example, it is not specific enough to state that a draft needs “better organization” or “clearer sentences” because your peer will not know how to improve the organization of the draft, or why and where the draft needs clearer sentences.

Below are examples of both specific and nonspecific feedback:

**Nonspecific:** “The essay needs better organization here.”

**More Specific:** “I would suggest switching these two paragraphs. By doing so, you can now introduce the author, then provide information on the author's purpose in writing the essay. Making these changes will help you transition nicely into a discussion of the author's main arguments in the essay, and how those arguments were supported.”

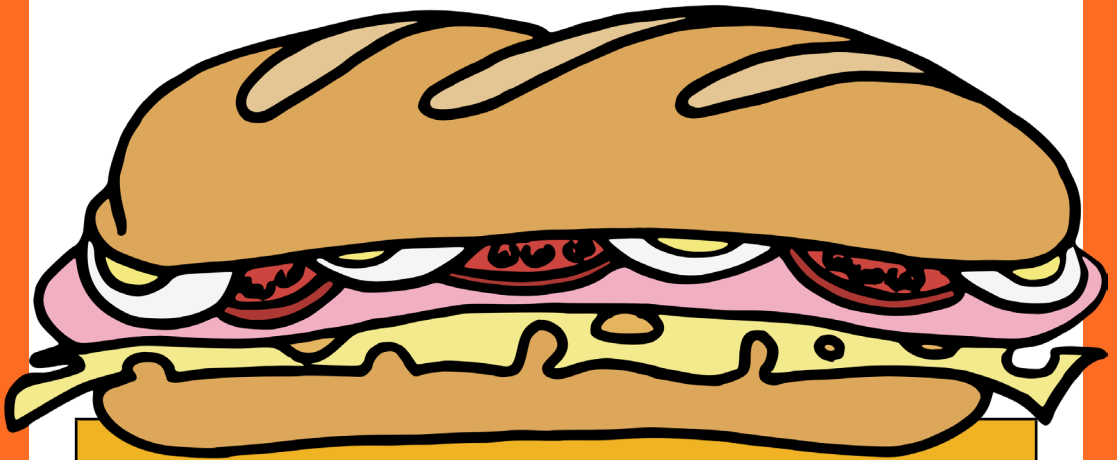
**Nonspecific:** “This sentence is unclear.”

**More Specific:** “In this sentence, ‘This was his struggle,’ please clarify what “this” is referring to, and explain what the struggle was.”

**Nonspecific:** “Good work!”

**More Specific:** “Good work on summarizing the author’s arguments and how those arguments were supported using personal experience and research studies!”

The “Sandwich Approach” can help you balance both positive and constructive feedback. This approach involves building “a sandwich” including layers of both kinds of feedback.



### POSITIVE FEEDBACK

**Example:** “I think you’re off to a really nice start with this draft. I especially liked how you cited examples directly from the essay you read to support your arguments.”

### CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

**Example:** “I did notice that even though you analyzed a film, you focused on the characters’ dialogue as examples of the film’s themes you identified. It would have also been helpful to discuss how other aspects like cinematography and the soundtrack helped emphasize these themes.”

### SUMMARY OF POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

**Example:** “Your essay is already in good shape in terms of stating your claims and including examples in a way that’s easy to follow. By: (1) adding analysis on how the film’s cinematography and soundtrack emphasize the film’s themes, and (2) making sure you cite all sources in your Works Cited list in the essay using MLA format (and vice versa), you’ll definitely have a great essay!”

## SHARING WRITTEN FEEDBACK WITH YOUR PEER (TECHNOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, you can share written feedback in various ways depending on your instructor’s guidance. In this section, we offer some quick tips for sharing documents if you’re required to do so by your instructor. We hope these tips can be helpful, regardless of the operating system or software/web-sharing platform version you’re using:

- ▶ **Filenames** – To help you keep track of specific documents and drafts, try to include descriptive information in your document filenames.
  - So when you’re submitting a draft, try to name your file in a way that includes the following information, perhaps with characters (like underscores, which are generally accessible by pressing SHIFT + your hyphen key):
    1. Your first and last name (or first name initial and last name)
    2. The name of the assignment (perhaps with “Rough Draft”) after the assignment name
    3. The date of submission
    4. So, for example: *KavitaSurya\_Expository Essay Rough Draft\_020121*
  - If you’re naming a peer’s document in software like Word or Adobe PDF to send back to them, try to keep their document name while adding information to help you and peer distinguish from the original version.
  - So for example, if your peer’s draft was originally titled, *Document72*, then you could rename the document as: *Document72\_KavitaSuryaFeedback\_020721*.
- ▶ **Working with Web-Shared Documents (e.g., Google Docs, Microsoft OneDrive, Dropbox)** – When sharing your documents through these platforms, make sure that the person reviewing your document has access to view, and ideally, add comments or even make edits to the document.



## Chapter 5 | Writing Processes

- Once you receive the feedback on your shared document, you may want to make sure you have access to the original document in case you need it. While you can access previous document versions in shared document platforms, the version you want can sometimes be difficult to find.

We hope that these tips, along with your instructor’s guidance, will assist you in providing valuable feedback that will help you and your peer in First-Year Writing – and beyond!

### REFLECTING ON YOUR PEER REVIEW PRACTICES

1. In what ways do you hope to improve your writing through the peer review process?
2. How can seeing yourself as a writer within the First-Year Writing Community positively impact your confidence and abilities?
3. Why is it important to provide feedback that is specific, positive, and constructive?
4. How would you make the following feedback more specific? “Some sentences don’t use commas correctly.”
5. Write your feedback for a peer’s essay, or rewrite previous feedback you’ve given to a peer using the “Sandwich Approach.” After you’ve written your feedback, describe how this technique did and/or didn’t help you write feedback for your peer.
6. How do you see yourself giving and receiving feedback on yours’ and others’ writing in academic and professional settings? (You can also describe examples where you have had to share your writing and provide feedback on others’ writing in these settings.)

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## I HAVE THE MUNCHIES FOR REVISION

Tyrell Collins

“Put a comma there.”

“No, you missed a period.”

“I don’t think that sounds right.”

“You should write it like this.”

These are some of the countless phrases I tell my friends while crunching on a small bag of chips in class during any peer review session. I am good at pointing out other people’s mistakes, but clam up seeing my own. I clench my teeth at the slightest small errors. *Why did I not put a comma there? How did I miss putting a period here? Should I rephrase this sentence?* For someone who did okay in high school, First Year College Writing is proving to be more stressful than I would like.

This is my first semester. I think I’m an okay writer. I am no poet, but I think I have a good grasp on writing, especially the five-paragraph essay. It is what a majority of everyone that I meet is accustomed to. It is also why when my professor hands out our first major essay assignment, my palms are already sweaty. No more five paragraph essays. I just need to reaffirm myself *I can do this, I can do this, I can do this*. After a week, my professor is pacing, handing back drafts. This has to be at least a “B.” My essay drops to the desk and so do some of my grapes into my lap. Apparently, *I cannot do this*. I am staring at a “D.”

I check the name at the top left corner. It is me, alright. Each page is inked in black, blue, and red, all different markings. Just staring at it is a headache. Naturally, I want to know what my friends made. From the shaking of their heads, I guess not too well. We are told we have a week to revise our essays. To get my mojo going, I get some of the new *Cheez-It Snaps*. New snack, new thoughts.

Clean up time. I fix some small grammar issues and change some words for the better. After all, *revising is about fixing mistakes—right?* The “D” slapped on the top of the page just keeps flashing like a yellow traffic light. As a pragmatic thinker when it comes to organization, I revise every underlined mark, every circled word, and every grammatical error in order. It has already been an hour. I am on page two but this calls for a snack break. I have all the variety packs of munchies. The four major “C” groups: chips, chocolate, cookies, and crackers. Stress eating seems to be “a thing” among my friends and me. After a couple more hours of typing and backspacing, I am done, or so I think.

Something about this newly revised essay does not look right. Something about it does not feel right. I mean it’s typed; no more grammatical mistakes. Every circled word, underlined mark and marginal comment has been addressed. After a few head scratches, I know something is missing. I just do not know what. I take my doubts to my professor.

“Nothing’s changed,” she says.

*What did she mean nothing’s changed?* I fixed everything. She asks me to skim my draft for a few minutes. After, she tells me to put the draft face down on her desk and asks me to repeat five to seven sentences from the essay.

“SAY WHAT!!” Well, that is what I yelled in my head. In reality, I just sat there with this blank expression on my face saying “Umm, umm” every few seconds.

She explains that if I cannot repeat back even one of my sentences, then I must not think much about my own writing. She tells me to take pride in my work and that starts with recall. What I remember is what will I recall the most, like being a kid again addicted to those *Scooby Doo* Fruit Snacks. Most likely, what I recall the most is what a reader will recall the most, maybe a catchy hook or introduction, an example, or some form of evidence. She says “recall” is an exercise for any writing assignment. So I write a list to remember.

- ▶ Step 1: Skim through my essay from beginning to end. Take pride in what I write.

## Chapter 5 | Writing Processes

- ▶ Step 2: If I have a hardcopy of my draft, turn it over, face down, on my desk or somewhere beside me, so I am not in view of my words. If it is an electronic copy, close my device.
- ▶ Step 3: Rewrite at least five to seven sentences I can remember from my essay. It does not need to be verbatim, but get as close as possible.
- ▶ Step 4: Look back at my essay and know what I am remembering is telling me about the overall quality of the essay.

My professor tells me not to strain myself, to try and remember. If I have loose ideas that need to be tied together more, then I need to write a more comprehensive outline, a reverse outline. Doing a reverse outline strips away my supporting sentences and focuses on the main/key ideas in my paragraphs. My professor hands me sticky pads and note cards. She says it does not matter which ones I use though; like my *Extra Refreshers* gum, spearmint, polar ice, both get the job done. I number each paragraph. I write the key idea or main point of each paragraph. One or two paragraphs highlight examples, but she says that is okay. Once done, I look for any patterns that emerge which give me insight into the direction of my essay. *How well does this list hold together? How does one idea transition and connect to the next? Are the transitions between ideas made clear in my writing?*

I know if I have a hard time summarizing my content and main points, someone else will. So perhaps I have too many ideas in play. Maybe some ideas are not elaborated enough on the page. Some points may need to be broken up or consolidated; others need to be maximized more than zeroed in like a bullseye on a dartboard. I look for repetitious ideas which are in a few places. It is not that I do not have anything else to say, I just need to figure out a way to present it differently. My professor says this will require me to do some “questioning,” like my regret at trying *Pumpkin Spice Pringles*. I select a paragraph from my essay and explain to my professor how the concepts and ideas fit together. I question how my statements show support for my topic, main idea or even my thesis. Doing this helps me explain my reasoning and point out where any gaps may occur throughout my information. I do this for the next paragraph and so on until I approach the end and realize these reasons, in turn, lead to my conclusion.

I ask, “Well, what about editing?”

My fear of repetition sets in again. She tells me to put all the first sentences in my essay in a list to make sure they reflect the main idea and each one relates to the next. Finally, to trim some fat from the essay, she advises I delete at least three unnecessary words from one sentence in each paragraph that does not change the meaning of the sentence. She says this method can be flexed depending on the writing.

She asks, “Now, what do you think?”

For the first time, I am not chewing anything. This looks like a whole new essay, same topic, just more full, concise ideas, and grammatically sound. My professor tells me to practice these techniques and that I may use all or some of them for my major assignments. They are most certainly a case by case or assignment by assignment basis, mostly, how her comments are more suggestions than anything. If I apply these or other techniques to see my work differently, that is what my revision process will be. WAIT. That is it. Revision means to “re-see.”

I thank my professor tremendously and leave with a newfound sense of pride. I rethought about my work. I reimagined concepts, paragraph structures, sentences and so much more. I had to take this essay apart, examine what elements were working and not working, then put the essay back together. I understand now that what makes revision important is that writing is a process of discovery, and know that I will always produce my best work on a first draft. So revision is a chance for me to look critically at what I have written to see if,

- ▶ It is worth saying.
- ▶ If it says what I want it to say.
- ▶ If a reader will understand what I am saying.

I wonder what other revision techniques will I find. Until then, these are great and I have extra sticky pads and notecards to challenge my friends to do these exercises with their essays. With all this revising, I am hungry again. I just hope there are enough snacks to go around.

## TOP 10 GRAMMATICAL MISTAKES OF MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS

Cantice Greene

Learning another language isn't easy, especially if you're learning it strictly in or for academic environments. For many students, using academic language—writing using third person pronouns, keeping a distance from the reader by not using “you” and “I,” using abstract subjects and abstract nouns or nominalization, and incorporating sources is difficult even in their native language (Khote 19). I agree that attempting to write using academic English can be challenging. But in our diverse city, many students are rising to the challenge. Based on my experience as a Writers' Studio consultant and as an ESL instructor, I've collected a group of grammar tips that can be quick reminders and helpful hints when editing your own writing.

### GRAMMAR TIPS

#### 1. SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

A sentence is not a sentence without a subject and a verb. Maybe you've heard that subjects and verbs must “agree,” but you're wondering what that means. Subjects and verbs agree when the number and person of the noun agrees with the number and person of the verb. Look at the following example.

- ▶ Ex. A minority of teenage boys want to be considered **masculinity**.
- ▶ Correction: A majority of teenage boys age 16–18 want to be considered masculine.
- ▶ A word form error occurs when the wrong form of a word is used.

#### 2. VERB TENSE

Verb tenses tell a reader whether an action or event occurs in the present, past, or future. Verbs also have simple, perfect, and progressive tenses to tell a reader whether an action is ongoing, completed, or occurring in relation to another action. Applying the right verb tense is probably most challenging when attempting to show one action in relation to another.

Unnecessary tense shifts can make the writer's intention confusing to a reader as in the sentence below.

- ▶ Ex. When I was still in high school, I **intend** to go college immediately after graduation.
- ▶ Correction: When I was still in high school, I intended to go college immediately after graduation.

Writing and grammar handbooks often provide tips for helping writers keep their verbs in the right tense. The Past Tense Tip below is offered in *A Commonsense Guide to Grammar and Usage*: "Use the past tense when telling a story about something that was completed in the past" (Beason and Lester 71).

### 3. WORD CHOICE

Sometimes in haste to get an essay finished, a writer won't take the time to look up the definition of a word that she is not sure about. A word choice error can occur as a result. Other times, modifiers that fit well with one word don't make sense grammatically with others. This type of error is seen in the following example.

- ▶ Ex. When people get older, one of the **most** concerns for them is having enough money to retire.
- ▶ Correction: When people get older, one of the greatest concerns for them is having enough money to retire.

### 4. ARTICLE USAGE (WITH NOUNS)

In grammar, articles are little words that can cause a lot of problems. Articles, the most common of which are *a*, *an*, and *the*, are used to specify nouns. However, since not all languages have articles, they present significant problems to some nonnative English speaking students. Most handbooks go through a sequence of decisions a writer must consider before choosing the right article. *A Commonsense Guide to Grammar and Usage* presents the following sequence of considerations for nouns to help.

1. Generalization – if so, no article
2. Known or new – if known consider the definite article (the), if new choose between a, an, or some

## Chapter 5 | Writing Processes

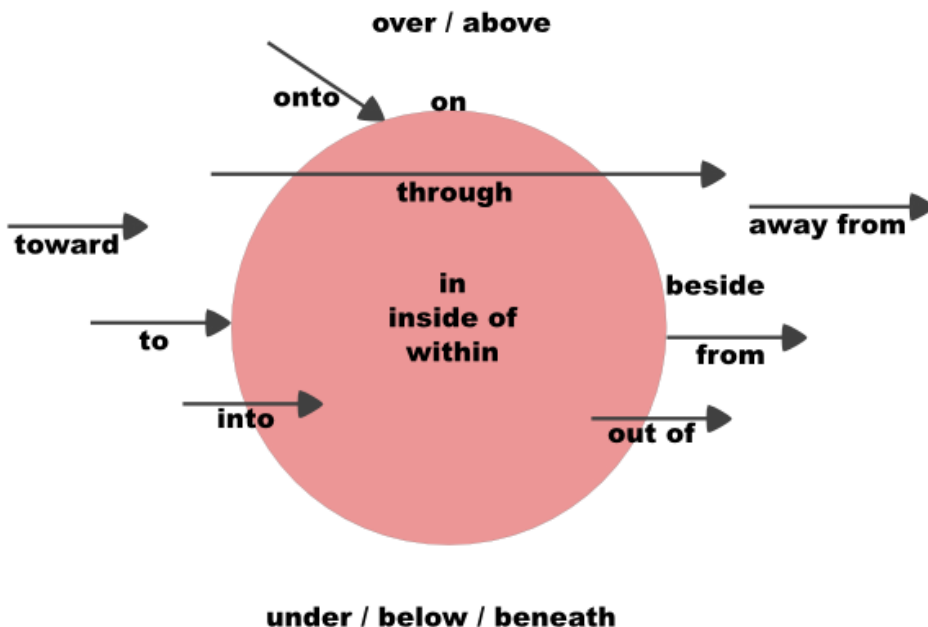
3. Plural or Singular – if the new noun is plural use some, if it's singular decide if it is count or noncount
4. Count or Noncount – if the singular noun is a count noun then use a or an, if the singular noun is a noncount noun, use some

To test your grasp of when and how to use articles, use your hand or a piece of essay to cover the correction below. Then use the tips above to correct the following sentence.

- ▶ Ex. President Obama proposed tax increases on **upper class**.
- ▶ Correction: President Obama proposed tax increases on the upper class.

### 5. PREPOSITIONS

Just like the problems associated with articles, the problems associated with prepositions occur because not all languages use preposition in the same ways. Review the examples and corrections provided to see if you would have used the same or different prepositions. On the internet, you can find graphics and games that practice using prepositions in English. The graphic below is from the blog Mister Sanity.





- ▶ Ex. Putting children **to** college without getting a student loan is difficult.
- ▶ Correction: Putting children through college without getting a student loan is difficult.
  
- ▶ Ex. 2 Remember to put the original ticket back **to** your envelopes.
- ▶ Correction: Remember to put the original ticket back into your envelopes.

## 6. WORD ORDER

All languages order words in ways that make sense grammatically to native users. When writing questions, especially indirect questions, or using questions words such as *will* and *what*, nonnative speakers may need to be reminded to order words appropriately. In the example below, the question word presented a problem for the writer.

- ▶ Ex. They know how long **will it** take for you to drive there.
- ▶ Correction: They know how long it will take for you to drive there.

## 7. SENTENCE BOUNDARIES

Choosing appropriate sentence boundaries is challenging for both monolingual and multilingual writers. Sentence boundaries are a high level writing concern because when sentences don't have appropriate endings, the meaning of the sentence can easily be misunderstood. Consider the following example.

- ▶ Ex. Gary agreed to pay his costly parking ticket his anger showed in the color of his face.
- ▶ Correction 1: Gary agreed to pay his parking ticket, but his anger showed in the color of his face.
- ▶ Correction 2: Although Gary agreed to pay his parking ticket, his anger showed in the color of his face.

## 8. INFINITIVES (AND GERUNDS)

In some languages the –ing form (gerund) follows a verb, and in others the infinitive (to + base form) follows a verb. If you have trouble knowing when to use a gerund or infinitive, consult your writing handbook’s verb or verbal section.

- ▶ Ex. She refused **criticizing** her boss.
- ▶ Correction: She refused to criticize her boss.

## 9. MODALS

The future tense and conditional aspect can be confusing to native speakers and nonnative speakers of English. Use the helping verb *would* to show a case of probability, something that is not real or true. You’ll find examples of when to use would, will, should, shall, could, can, and might in the verb or modal section of your writing handbook. See the example error and the correction below.

- ▶ Ex. If the patient came to me with those symptoms, I **will** suggest that he see a specialist.
- ▶ Correction: If the patient came to me with those symptoms, I would suggest that he see a specialist.

To address any of the writing issues above, the first place to turn to is your writing handbook. Contemporary writing handbooks normally have a section that addresses writing across languages. All of the categories listed above are addressed in the handbook by Andrea A. Lunsford. The sections titled “For Multilingual Writers” address each language featured described above.

It may also be helpful to turn to [dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com) for help with language related challenges of writing. At [dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com), you will find more than just the meaning of words. The site also shows the word used in a sentence, lists the part of speech and related forms of the word, and lists its synonyms. [Dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com) also has a feature that plays a clip of the pronunciation of the word. More interested language users and those interested in linguistics will find a word’s origin and history and its IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) symbols.

## Chapter 5 | Writing Processes

Another great resource for students is the Writers' Studio at Clayton State. The Studio offers one-on-one sessions with trained consultants normally for thirty minutes. The Studio consultants receive ongoing training, including training to help students address second language English writing difficulties.

An invaluable resource is your English Composition instructor. These professors have been trained to address a variety of writing problems. Chances are that your professor will be able to help you isolate and correct your second language writing concern or he or she will be able to point you to a resource in your book or at our school that can appropriately address the issue.

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# 6

## CONNECTING COLLEGE READING AND WRITING: RHETORICAL READING RESPONSES

Reading and writing are elements of critical thinking. Both readers and writers think critically, as they “implement cognitive strategies that are fundamental to the construction of meaning” (Olson 9). You make meaning when you read and write, always storing away information to be retrieved at other times when you need to rely on your understanding of passages in reading or when you are developing a writing task. This tapping of prior knowledge is what theorist Gail Tompkins calls *schemata*, or “mental file cabinets [where] new information is organized with prior knowledge” (12). Researchers note that “reading and writing taught together engage students in a greater use and variety of cognitive strategies than do reading and writing taught separately (Tierney and Shanahan 272).

As you move through English 1101, your instructor will support you in becoming a more experienced reader and writer by modeling cognitive strategies that “underlie reading and writing in meaningful contexts (Olson 16). Your instructor will also offer “enough sustained, guided practice that you internalize these strategies” to effectively perform reading and writing tasks in this course, in courses across the content areas, and into the professional world (Olson 16). The focus of this chapter is on the Rhetorical Reading Response, a reading-writing assignment that implements the use of cognitive strategies. The following faculty essays support this assignment.

## CONNECTING COLLEGE READING AND WRITING

### Mary Lamb

Academic writing begins with reading.

This reading, however, is a specialized type of reading. Consider, for example, the reading you do when you skim a website for movie listings, read a text message from a friend, or study a menu at a restaurant. In these cases, you are reading quickly for information alone. You pay little attention to the layout, the rhetorical strategies, the writing style, and the word choice, unless these are so sloppy they interfere with your reading. You merely find the information you want and stop reading. College reading is different. In college, you read for information, but you don't stop there. You consider the writer's motives, the reason for writing, and you evaluate the validity of the information. This is because college aims to educate you to become a critical thinker, someone who does not just accept things at face value but rather thinks critically, evaluates information and ideas, and comes to reasonable conclusions about them. Successful academic readers adjust their reading to various purposes—skimming (fast reading), reading for information (fast to moderate reading), reading for analysis (slow reading), and reading as evidence (note-taking). To teach you these reading/thinking skills, your first-year writing instructors will teach you to read to understand how the text was constructed, and you will use this information to form evaluations of the material—how well it's written, whether or not to believe it, how you might use it to bolster a claim, etc.

### CONNECTING IDEAS THROUGH READING

We read to learn about ideas through careful, sustained, analytical reading. Academic writing is a special type of writing that focuses on thinking through problems and creating new knowledge. This knowledge always grows out of current ideas and responds to these ideas, so in a sense, academic writing is an ongoing conversation. The analogy of “conversation,” developed by twentieth-century rhetorician Kenneth Burke, is that ideas are always a response, or rejoinder, to other ideas. In terms of academic writing, this means that much of what we do and

write is a thoughtful exploration and analysis of others' ideas. John Bean explains that effective academic writers begin with a "perception of a problem" (30). He notes that: "Expert writers feel an uncertainty, doubt a theory, note a piece of unexplained data, puzzle over an observation, confront a view that seems mistaken, or otherwise articulate a question or problem" (30). Writers usually note this problem after a series of observations or, most often, a series of readings. They explore the problem, which often means reading more, researching in the library, or "probing a memory," and then drafting these developing ideas (30). This write-revise-write continues until the writer expresses a resolution of the problem. At this point, the writing moves from writer-based prose, in which the writer makes sense of information, to reader-based prose, in which the writer works carefully to make the essay readable and effective. In first-year writing, you will learn to connect with the readings and write about this in your essays.

Another way we read in college is as a writer to learn how texts are constructed. We read examples of the type of writing we're expected to do. Have you ever asked a teacher for an example when she presented you with an essay assignment? If so, you know that we often read examples of the type of writing we're expected to do in order to understand the features, qualities, and strategies of that genre. For practice, think about how to explain to someone how to text. What qualities would you include? What type of short-hand would you explain (i.e. LOL, BF8, K, BTW, FYI)? Another way to think about the question of strategies or characteristics is to ask yourself what makes you keep reading and what causes you difficulty. Educators sometimes classify texts according to "readability," and there are a number of scales used to evaluate texts, such as number of words per sentence, sentences per paragraph, average length of sentences, type of sentences (active or passive voice), etc. Others, especially technical and web writers, consider "navigational strategies" as part of what makes texts "readable." For example, the font size, layout, headings, sub-headings, and visuals all contribute to ease of reading. In English 1101 and 1102, you will learn to notice the differences in texts you read: popular magazine articles vs. academic scholarly essays, for example. You will learn to ask yourself: What strategies do the writers use to keep readers interested? What strategies do they have in common? How do they differ? Reading *as writers* means you notice these qualities in everything you read, from blogs and recipes to scholarly articles and textbooks.

## CONNECTING TO GENRE THROUGH READING

Each semester, college freshmen in my classes refer to the nonfiction essays they read as “stories,” as in “this story is about how annoying cell phones are.” I’m always struck by their fictionalization of all writing, especially since many people complain that students no longer read literature. To become a successful college student (and effective reader and writer), you need to learn to distinguish among various types of writing, often referred to as “genres.” Genre means type, such as editorial, short story, essay, proposal, white paper, business report, science fiction, or poem. Genres exist because there was a social need for that type of writing, and general audience expectations coalesced into that genre. To understand genre, ask yourself what the text is trying to accomplish or “do” to its readers. Note these categories—*fiction* and *nonfiction*.

Next, working in groups, divide the following genres into fiction and nonfiction:

- ▶ textbook
- ▶ editorial
- ▶ blog
- ▶ CDC informational website about how to control mosquitoes in your yard
- ▶ memo explaining a new system for requesting vacation leave
- ▶ instructional brochure for installing a light fixture
- ▶ novel
- ▶ personal essay describing frustration over people texting while walking
- ▶ short story
- ▶ poem
- ▶ movie review
- ▶ book review on Amazon.com
- ▶ article written by medical researchers announcing the results of a recent medical trial for a new cancer treatment

In both English 1101 and 1102, you will read from all of these genres but primarily from nonfiction expository and argumentative essays. These readings are designed to help you connect with issues in contemporary society as well as offer examples of effectively-written essays that contain useful rhetorical strategies that you can use in your own writing. Indeed, in college, most of your writing will be expository and argumentative essays, business writing, academic arguments that offer interpretations of texts, and other types of nonfiction reports, proposals, summaries, and presentations.

### **CONNECTING TO WRITING THROUGH RHETORICAL READING**

Reading in order to write is a special type of reading that simultaneously focuses your attention on the author’s purpose, the construction of the text, and its meaning. Rhetorical reading, as described by Christina Haas and Linda Flower, John C. Bean, and others, focuses on the context of the material and the aims of the writer (Haas “Beyond,” Haas and Flower “Rhetorical,” and Bean et. al. *Reading*). Most importantly, it focuses not just on *what* the author is saying but also on *how* the author is saying it. When readers read rhetorically, notes Haas, they “use or infer situational information—about the author, about the texts’ historical and cultural context, about the motives and desires of the writer—to aid in understanding the text and to judge the quality and believability of the argument put forth in it” (24). Haas contrasts rhetorical reading with the strategies students bring to college, strategies that read texts as “bodies of information or collections of facts, rather than as complex social and rhetorical acts” (24). Rhetorical reading, on the other hand, requires interpretation about “the author’s identity and ‘agenda,’ the response of others to the argument, [and] other texts with similar or diverse perspectives” (24). This type of reading is useful for academic writing because 1) most academic writing is writing-from-sources; 2) good writing requires that we read, revise, and adjust our ideas to our developing sense of meaning, to anticipate our audience’s needs, beliefs, and values; and 3) good writing requires that we make substantive contributions to an ongoing cultural conversation.

When engaged in rhetorical reading, we go beyond just the content of the material, though comprehension of content is a necessary first step. Instead, you should analyze the material for how it works. As you read, think about how the writer is accomplishing his task. Doug Brent explains that “the process of reading, then, is not just the interpretation of a text



but the interpretation of another person’s worldview as presented by a text” (28). To learn to read with these two aims in mind, both content and strategy, you must learn to modulate your reading strategies according to the essay’s genre and context so you can assess the writer’s “worldview” in the text.

### READING CRITICALLY

To read critically, look beyond just the information in the text as the truth about reality; rather, read it as one truth presented by one writer. Give the writer a fair chance and summarize the essay carefully. After

“I will *try* to publish nothing about any book or article until I have *understood* it, which is to say, until I have reason to think that I can give an account of it that the author will recognize as just.” Wayne C. Booth, *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism*, 1979

comprehending the text, you are ready to separate what it says from how it is written. Bean, Chappell, and Gillam discuss a useful “descriptive outline,” helpful for in-depth understanding of an essay. Borrowing from Kenneth

Bruffee’s *A Short Course in Writing*, they suggest creating “does” and “says” statements for each paragraph or section. They explain that “the *does* statement identifies a paragraph’s or section’s function or purpose, while the *says* statement summarizes the content of the same stretch of text” (58). Note that the *does* statement comments on the purpose of the paragraph, such as “offers an anecdote to illustrate the point” or “summarizes the previous section” (58). As you read the essays in this book, try it by dividing your essay into two columns, one for *says* and one for *does*. For each paragraph, write a brief summary for *says* and then describe the paragraph’s purpose in the essay for *does*.

Another very useful way to respond to a text is by writing a summary. There are numerous ways to summarize, but the idea is to capture the text’s meaning as accurately as possible. You may find it useful to compare your summaries with your classmates. Summaries help us remember what we read, but they also provide evidence for essays. They also help you notice what you don’t understand. For example, if you read a text, close the book, and summarize, you’ll notice that you probably omit some of the information. This omission is likely due to your lack of understanding. Return to the section that you can’t remember and study it more fully.

## RHETORICAL READING RESPONSES

In both English 1101 and 1102, you may be assigned Rhetorical Reading Responses, and your best one of these could go in your ePortfolio. You may also write various other assigned responses, and you could write at least one of these each semester. A Rhetorical Reading Response has three parts: 1) a *précis* (summary), 2) a personal response, and an 3) analytical paragraph. The summary is a four-sentence *précis*, which was developed by Margaret K. Woodworth, and described in Bean, Chappell, and Gillam as “listening as you reread” (120). These tightly-structured summaries require of students an analytical type of reading, and the genre provides practice in the type of reading and writing you’ll include in longer position essays, literature reviews, researched position essays, and other nonfiction genres because it helps you learn to summarize, introduce borrowed material fully, and evaluate the material. Woodworth explains this response as a way to “learn to read and listen to what others have to say with great comprehension, to question and evaluate what [we] read and hear, and then write and speak with control and conviction” (156).

## CHALLENGES WRITING THESE RESPONSES

**Form** – For those of you who enjoy free-writing, these responses may feel inhibiting because of the form. If you like “open” assignments, try reading and note-taking first and structuring your response later. You may also enjoy seeing how many variations are possible within the format. Woodworth suggests: “once students have mastered the form, they are heartily encouraged to create other, less rigid forms to accommodate the information” (157).

**Re-reading and Re-writing** – Although the assignment is short, usually no more than one page long, the responses are not “one-draft” essays. Instead, plan enough time to read the essay, draft, re-read, and revise several times. This focused attention to the text is, precisely, one main benefit of the assignment for students.

**Purpose vs. Content** – Another challenge is that while writing a *précis* might seem easy because it’s short, it nonetheless requires you to grasp the overall purpose and genre of the work, instead of reading for literal information to answer a comprehension question. Indeed, you are probably used to reading for the answers to assigned questions rather than reading

for purpose and rhetorical strategies. For example, students often write in the first sentence, “the author talks about cell phone technology,” which indicates a tenuous understanding of the purposes of various nonfiction essays and does little more than name the topic of the essay (which often can be gleaned from simply reading the essay’s title). The “rhetorically active verb” that describes the purpose, even though it’s just one word, indicates a deep level understanding about the whole essay. Examples of these signal verbs, which indicate the essay’s purpose, include

- ▶ argues,
- ▶ claims,
- ▶ asserts,
- ▶ discusses,
- ▶ describes,
- ▶ interprets,
- ▶ speculates,
- ▶ compares,
- ▶ implies,
- ▶ contemplates,
- ▶ wonders, and
- ▶ explains, etc.

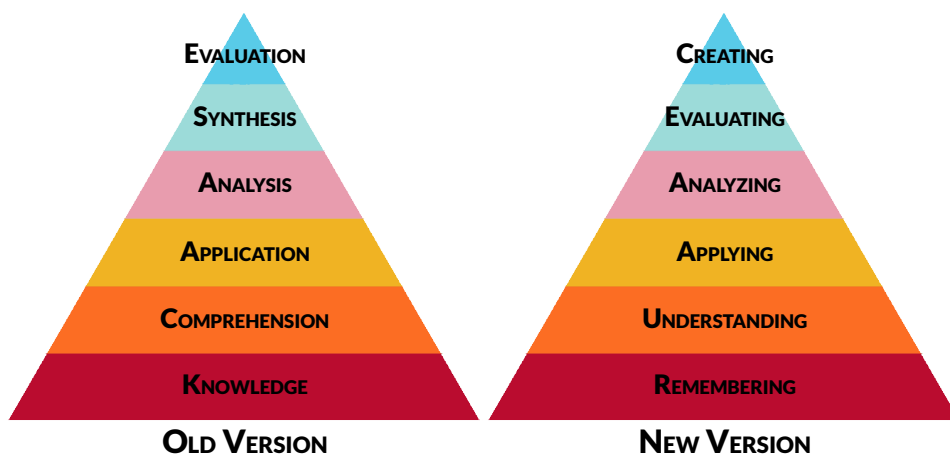
Note that writing this sentence will help you practice introducing borrowed material into your other assigned essays. Use some of your study time to define a few of these verbs at a time, and as you read the essays, think about what the writers are doing in their essays.

## **ANALYSIS**

Before explaining the third, analytical paragraph, let’s think about what you have learned by writing the first two paragraphs. First, you have learned to accurately summarize material. We often leap to conclusions about what we’re reading because a certain passage or detail intrigues us or is familiar to us. These responses are useful, and it’s important to pay attention to your responses to texts. But rhetorical reading asks us to suspend our rush to judge for a moment to make sure we fully understand

what the essay means first. One way to think of this type reading is through “Bloom’s Taxonomy.” This work, named after Benjamin Bloom, describes patterns of thinking in terms of a hierarchy of objectives. This work has been updated, as explained by University of Georgia professor Mary Forehand. She explains the following:

Basically, Bloom’s six major categories were changed from noun to verb forms. Additionally, the lowest level of the original, knowledge was renamed and became remembering. Finally, comprehension and synthesis were retitled to understanding and evaluating. In an effort to minimize the confusion, comparison images appear below.



The new terms are defined as follows:

- ▶ **Remembering:** Retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory.
- ▶ **Understanding:** Constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining.
- ▶ **Applying:** Carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing.
- ▶ **Analyzing:** Breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing.

- ▶ **Evaluating:** Making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing.
- ▶ **Creating:** Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing (Anderson and Krathwohl 67–68).

When you write the first part of these reading responses, you are thinking about the material and “remembering” and “understanding” what you’ve read. When you respond, you are “applying” what you’ve read to your own life and your own experience.

The third, analytical paragraph requires a different type of critical thinking, and it can be difficult at first to write. Although it’s just one paragraph, you will state a claim (the topic sentence), support it with textual evidence, and cite correctly. One reason this is difficult is that you have to pose a question in addition to answering it. Note how Anderson and Krathwohl (cited in Forehand above) define “analyzing”: “Breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing.” In this paragraph, pick out a curious sentence, strategy, or word choice and explain how it fits into the whole essay and why the author used this strategy. Beware not to re-summarize the essay, as in the following “claims” about an essay on dating via the Internet:

- ▶ TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, and other social networking apps a big part of connecting with younger generations.
- ▶ A different side of the technology that has become the norm in this day and time are blogs and chatting over the internet.
- ▶ The technology of cell phones has made dating and relationships less personal.

All of these summarize the essay-writer’s claim, which IS NOT analysis. Rather, you should make your own claim about how the essay is written. Your claim should be something that is arguable; that is, reasonable people who read the essay might have different interpretations of it.

In addition, avoid stating a claim about your opinion of the topic, rather than a claim about the way the essay is written. If you are stating your opinion about the topic in paragraph three, you run the risk of not fully considering the ideas first. Note the following example of a claim that states an opinion about the topic, not the essay: “I haven’t spent much time thinking about technology, but I agree that some of it makes our relationships less personal.” This claim is about the topic of the essay, but doesn’t make a claim about how the essay is written.

Elizabeth A. Flynn explains reading as “a confrontation between self and ‘other’ (267). She writes: “Text and reader are necessarily foreign to each other in some ways, and so the exchange between them involves an imbalance (267–68). She notices that: “The reader can resist the alien thought or subject and so remain essentially unchanged by the reading experience. In this case, the reader dominates the text” (268). She describes “dominant” reading:

The reader imposes a previously established structure on the text and in so doing silences it. . . . Readers who dominate texts become complacent or bored because the possibility for learning has been greatly reduced. Judgment is based on previously established norms rather than on empathetic engagement with and critical evaluation of the new material. (268)

Writing this Rhetorical Reading Response interrupts this “detachment” from the text (or jumping to conclusions) and requires you to enter, for a moment, into another’s world. Once you fully understand the text and understand how it is written, then you can make an educated value judgment about the writer’s claims. This rhetorical reading creates a dialogue between you and the text rather than a one-way proclamation. In Flynn’s words, this is when

the self and other, reader and text, interact in such a way that the reader learns from the experience without losing critical distance; reader and text interact with a degree of mutuality. Foreignness is reduced, though not eliminated. Self and other remain distinct and so create a kind of dialogue. (268)

**FURTHER ADVANTAGES**

These responses teach you to create claims and build textual cases, a skill necessary for most college and professional writing. They provide content for class discussions since these *précis* can be compared, discussed, and revised in class. Woodworth explains “summarizing significantly improves reading comprehension and recall,” so writing a *précis* is also useful as a writing-to-learn activity done in class (156). *Précis* also provide teachers with an accurate way to gauge both whether students have read and precisely what they have understood, since students often leave out of a summary the material they don’t understand. By comparing a class’s set of responses, teachers can assess the points that need explaining. Most importantly, these responses require students to recognize various types of nonfiction genres and to evaluate claims and methods. In this way, they are learning, in Paulo Friere’s terms, how to read the “world and the word” (Freire qtd. in Berthoff, “Reading” 119), or put another way, to read the world through the word.

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## SAMPLE OUTLINE FOR RHETORICAL READING RESPONSE

### CONTENT:

Write the MLA citation as you would in a Works Cited entry here or at the end.

### *Paragraph 1:*

Write a rhetorical précis **in your own words** with no words borrowed directly from the text:

- ▶ **Sentence 1:** Name of author, genre, and title of work, date in parentheses; a rhetorically active verb (such as "claims," "argues," "asserts," "defines," "explores," or "suggests"); and a "that"



clause containing the major assertion, main idea, or thesis statement in the work.

- ▶ **Sentence 2:** An explanation of how the author develops and supports the thesis (i.e. evidence), usually in chronological order.
- ▶ **Sentence 3:** A statement of the author’s apparent purpose, followed by an “in order to” phrase.
- ▶ **Sentence 4:** A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.

**Paragraph 2:**

Write your **response** to the text. Are you confused? Annoyed? Delighted? Ticked? Do you agree?

**Paragraph 3:**

Write an analytical paragraph about the text in which you make an interpretive claim about the way the text is written or the meaning of the text and support it. Use plenty of examples (quotations, paraphrases), citing as appropriate. (Use a question from the book if you need an idea).

**FORMAT AND GRADING:**

**Format** – Academic, follows MLA format; be concise and analytical. Choose words carefully, and revise sentences to include the most meaning for the syntax. Type your responses; keep them under 2 pages.

**Tip** – Keep these responses on your computer or a hard copy as these will become the basis of essays. This takes time—academic writing requires you to read, ponder, and write about source texts—but rest assured, the skills and habits you form will help you in other classes.

**Grading (in addition to grammatical correctness, MLA format)** – F—off topic, incomplete; D—complete but sketchy; C—good effort but keep digging deeper; B—you’ve made important observations but develop them more fully; A—I learned something new about your thinking about the essay; thoughtful and well-developed. They’re due in class, on time. This assignment was developed by Mary R. Lamb, drawing on an assignment by Ann George; *Reading Rhetorically* by John Bean, Virginia

A. Chappell and Alice M. Gillam; and Margaret K. Woodworth, “The Rhetorical Précis,” *Rhetoric Review* 7 (1988): 156–65.

## SAMPLE RHETORICAL READING RESPONSE

Sherry Student

Dr. Lamb

English 1101

3 September 2011

This is an example response (the essay, not the Work Cited entry). Notice the MLA heading and format, which requires you to double-space the document and not add extra spaces between paragraphs. Space once after periods: don’t add extra spaces between sentences.

### The Disappointment of Cheating

In the article “Everybody Does It” (2003), written by David Callahan, which originally appeared in Callahan’s own book *The Cheating Culture*, Callahan argues that over time, cheating has become more and more prominent in today’s society. Callahan shows this by giving examples of different forms of cheating that are present in all aspects of life. Callahan highlights cheating in order to make readers think about their own guilt about doing things they may not think of as cheating. The intended audience for this article is people who may not be aware of the increase of cheating or people who may disbelieve the fact that most people will cheat when no one is looking.

Para. 1 is the summary, or précis. Sent. 1: “Article” is the genre of the essay. The genre of a work varies: chapter, blog, novel, nonfiction essay, scholarly article, short story, editorial, Facebook post, film, documentary, encyclopedia entry, etc.

Sent. 1: Notice the rhetorically active verb, “argues.” These include: claim, explain, state, explore, ponder, define, contrast, suggests, etc.

Sent. 2: “Shows this” can be re-worded—Callahn writes, supports, develops, demonstrates, etc.

I am disappointed after reading this article. I wonder if cheating is really this common, and if it's true that we only do the right thing because we think someone is watching.

Callahan's argument is weakened somewhat by his use of overgeneralization. When comparing this article to the information in

Para. 3: Make a claim about how a quotation or writing strategy works in the essay. These include: word choice, type of evidence, appeals, imagery, parallelism, repetition, allusions, etc. This writer starts off well, but doesn't illustrate the claim. The paragraph should be strengthened and developed by illustrating the overgeneralization with textual evidence and how this affects the argument.

Diana Hacker's handbook A3, I noticed this logical fallacy. He generalized that all humans cheated and may not be 100% honest (Callahan 4). This is

not a very good way of writing because it focuses on one bad thing in society which is not present with everyone. In order for this piece of work to be considered reasonable, Callahan could have touched on the fact that not all humans cheat or would cheat if presented the opportunity.

#### Work Cited

Callahan, David. "Everybody Does It." *The Cheating Culture: Why More Americans Are Doing It to Get Ahead*, Harcourt, 2004, pp. 1–27.

## WRITING AN ANALYSIS: THE THIRD PARAGRAPH OF THE RHETORICAL READING RESPONSE

Margaret W. Fletcher

In my classes, the third paragraph of the rhetorical reading response is the one that is most challenging to many of my students. The first paragraph is an introduction and summary of the author's thesis and purposes. The second paragraph is a personal reaction to the article, which I feel is an important paragraph to learn to write so that you can practice supporting your opinions; but the third paragraph, the analysis, is the one where my students' grades start to fall. Writing a good analysis is one of the most important skills for the writing you will do throughout your college career, but first you need to first understand exactly what an analysis is.

To analyze “analysis,” we start with the meaning of rhetoric. Rhetoric is basically the study of the ways in which authors and orators put words together in order to persuade or influence their audience. A rhetorical analysis is intended to interpret **how and why** a writer puts words together in a particular pattern to convince an audience of his or her ideas about a topic. This explanation is from the Writing Center at the University of Arkansas: “A rhetorical analysis assignment generally asks you to do two things: 1) figure out what the writer is trying to accomplish, and 2) identify what *writing tactics* he or she is utilizing to accomplish it” (“Rhetorical Analysis”).

The analysis is **not your opinion** of the essay; in an analysis, rather than using unsupported opinion, you present an argument that helps to explain a piece of writing based on evidence from the text. The analysis is **not a summary** of the essay, although it may need some sentences that summarize particular points. In an analysis you show how a writer uses some writing technique or strategy to get his or her ideas across. For example, in the “I Have a Dream Speech,” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. uses repetition in a type of emotional appeal to his audience. Most of you have heard or read this speech, and the words people remember are “I have a dream,” spoken in different tones with different metaphorical examples of the dream. In an analysis of this speech, you could use the idea that Dr. King uses repetition to get his message across, and you

would follow your thesis sentence with an explanation of how Dr. King uses the repetitions and why they have an emotional as well as intellectual appeal. For example, your thesis sentence might be: “In his ‘I Have a Dream’ speech, Dr. King uses repetitions to convey an emotional as well as intellectual message to his audience.” You might then give examples of several repetitions (quoting them briefly) and explain how they have emotional as well as intellectual connotations.

Note that in the analysis paragraph, the thesis sentence is usually the first and/or second sentence in the third paragraph. The thesis sentence comes first in the rhetorical reading response we are writing because this is a short paragraph of analysis, not an entire essay of analysis, where your thesis might appear later in your essay or even be implied. An *analysis* can consist of many pages; an entire book can consist largely of analysis. In longer forms of analysis, the thesis sentence or sentences may be placed at different places in your text; however, an analysis always needs a thesis to give it focus and unity.

Thus, the analysis paragraph should begin with a clear thesis. To support this thesis, you should give examples that consist of brief quotations from the text you are analyzing. You should discuss **how** the writer makes his or her argument (the strategies) and **why** this approach is or is not effective (citing examples). Some examples of rhetorical techniques and strategies include use of imagery, use of dialogue, use of metaphor, plays upon emotions, figurative language, rhetorical appeals, use of scholarly research sources, anecdotes, and many others. For example, you might also write an analysis of the author’s logic, describing how it is effective or ineffective and giving examples.

To brainstorm ideas for your rhetorical analysis, read the work you are analyzing and ask yourself the following questions:

- ▶ What is the author’s thesis and how effective is it? Does the writer appeal to your emotion or reasoning?
- ▶ What point is this writer trying to argue?
- ▶ How does the author feel about his or her topic?
- ▶ How does the writer want his or her audience to feel about the argument or appeal?

- ▶ What kind of language does the writer use to get the audience to buy into the argument?
- ▶ What does the author say that makes you believe in the argument?
- ▶ What does the author say that makes you dislike or reject the argument?
- ▶ What is the author's purpose? Is he trying to explain, persuade, motivate, entertain, or cause her audience feel a particular emotion?
- ▶ How does the author develop her ideas? Does she use compare and contrast, description, definition, analogy, cause and effect, or some other method?
- ▶ How does the author's development of his ideas and use of language affect the clarity, coherence, appeal, and the logic of his essay?
- ▶ If the author uses quotes, paraphrases, or dialogue, what is the purpose of these techniques?
- ▶ Does the author convince you of the truth or worth of her argument? Why or why not?
- ▶ Does the author use particular terms, metaphors, or images that are striking? What is his or her purpose for this?

Answers to these questions will provide you with clues about the specific techniques/strategies the writer is using to convince his or her audience.

**Please note** that these questions should not be part of the analysis; they are guides for a thinking process you use before you write the analysis. This short analysis should begin with a thesis, not a question. The questions are tools that help you come up with ideas for the paragraph.

In summary, when you are writing the rhetorical reading response, you need a paragraph of analysis. Begin that paragraph with a topic sentence that makes a claim about strategies the author uses to convince the audience. Then explain how the author uses those techniques and give examples. When you write a sentence summarizing something the author says, tell **WHY** that particular statement is important and relevant to the author's purpose. Remember to tell **HOW** the author gets his point across and **WHY** he or she uses that particular technique.

## MISTAKES TO AVOID

The biggest mistakes students usually make in the analysis are **1) summarizing too much, 2) giving personal opinion, and 3) giving personal ideas about the topic**. Some summary is necessary; however, avoid just summarizing the argument in the article. To eliminate opinion, I ask students not to write “I think” in the third paragraph. Usually this leads to personal opinion about how you feel, and that isn’t what we want in an analysis. We want you to explain how the essay is put together. You always take a position in an analysis, but you state a thesis. Then you prove that thesis with examples. Technically it is all right to say “I think”; however, you should use that term very carefully (or, best, avoid it altogether in this short paragraph.)

Mistakes with **quotations** also cause problems with an analysis. It is incorrect to quote from the work and then summarize the quotation. You should quote from the work, and then tell why that particular quotation is significant to the author’s purpose and/or argument. You should explain any quotation you use in terms of your thesis for the third paragraph. Students sometimes just summarize the author’s major points and tell something about what he or she means. This is NOT an analysis. Avoid writing “this quote means.” Don’t refer to a quotation as a quotation or quote. Instead use tag lines such as: 1) “In this line, the author refers to ...”; 2) “Lines such as this reinforce...”; 3) “This particular use of repetition ...”; 4) Again the author uses ...”. Use quotations in a manner that advances your argument, so focus on the author’s intent in the lines that you quote.

Be careful not to write a **weak conclusion**. Students sometimes conclude with what they think about the author’s essay or ideas. Sometimes students feel that they have to say something extra about the topic to add to what the author has written. These are weak (or just bad) conclusions. I always look at the last sentence (or two sentences) and compare these to the thesis. Students have sometimes been taught to restate the thesis at the end of the analysis, and they proceed to do this, restating the thesis word for word. This is incorrect. The end should return to the thesis, but in different words. When I look at the thesis and the concluding sentences together, I am looking at the conclusion for the same ideas stated in different words and for the same ideas as in the thesis with the added context of your analysis. A good analysis moves in a

kind of circle, constantly building on the ideas in the thesis and ultimately returning to the thesis, having presented a strong argument.

Another problem with the ending is that students sometimes conclude with a quotation. Technically, it is all right to begin a paragraph or end a paragraph with a quotation, but I think you should avoid this entirely unless you have very strong writing skills. I want to see my student's words in the conclusion, and my personal opinion is that a great conclusion can make up for a series of other errors or weaknesses.

Here is an example of a good analysis paragraph on the essay "Twitter as a Way for Celebrities to Communicate with Fans: Implications for the Study of Parasocial Interaction" by Gayle S. Stever and Kevin Lawson. This is written by first-year writing student **Ivan Lopez Martinez**.

Stever and Lawson utilize research techniques such as data collection and statistical analysis to support their statement that Twitter is a useful tool for studying parasocial interactions; however, they acknowledge that this is an area that has not been widely researched. The methods used throughout their experiment are carefully crafted and cover all the bases for what they are trying to prove; however, their data may not be a completely accurate representation of society because, according to the authors, "All of the celebrities in this particular sample are Caucasian" and "It will be important in subsequent research to choose a sample of ethnically diverse celebrities for comparison" (218). Another uncontrolled variable that Stever and Lawson reveal is that "it is never possible to be certain that celebrities are Tweeting for themselves" (217). In spite of the limitations, the drawbacks for their research is clearly expressed by the authors when they claim that "[this] is an area with no clear precedents" (213). One additional observation made on their part displays the necessity for this type of research: "Developmental psychologists in particular should understand the impact of social media and how it enhances PSI/PSR/PSA" (212). In spite of their work's limitations, Stever and Lawson have created a precedent for coding messages on Twitter which should allow other researchers to be able to make more in-depth analyses on social behavior and include not just celebrities in their research, but also the general public.



In this paragraph, the concluding sentence reinforces the thesis in the first sentence and takes it further by explaining that there is a need for the research techniques, including the data collection and statistical analysis that the authors use to provide information on how celebrities use Twitter.

Here is another good example of an analysis, this time on Michaela Cullington’s “Texting and Writing,” written by first-year writing student **Faith Leonard**.

Cullington demonstrates ethos when doing her research on texting and writing. She displays credibility by providing information from not only students in her own research, but also observations from high school and college professors in order to help the audience better understand student and instructor perspectives on textspeak in writing. She states, “Naomi Baron, a linguistics professor at American University...blames texting for the fact that ‘so much of American society has become sloppy and laissez faire about the mechanics of writing’” (91). On the other hand, she writes, “Most students, including those I surveyed, report that they do not use textspeak in formal writing” (94). By examining these two contradictory points of view, Cullington demonstrates that she considers the perspectives of both the teachers and the students. Although her research may be flawed due to the fact that she interviews her friends rather than a random sample, her consideration of the counterargument is a writing strategy which enhances her credibility.

Look at other examples of the third paragraph in rhetorical reading responses to see how students handle the analysis paragraph in different ways. You should constantly remind yourself of what the analysis does. According to Teresa Thonney, “Analysis involves breaking down a subject—whether a poem, a dynasty, or an internal combustion engine—to determine how the parts are related or how they combine to achieve some purpose” (137). You look at the parts in order to determine how they achieve the author’s purpose. Some students have correctly described this as going below the surface to find meanings that aren’t directly stated. You start with a thesis, you support your thesis using examples from the text, and you conclude by returning to the same ideas that are in your thesis and showing how they achieve (or don’t achieve) some goal that the author intended.

Remember that each analysis will be slightly different depending on the ideas and the guidelines stated here.

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## WRITING CONNECTIONS

By becoming adept at developing Rhetorical Reading Responses, students can transfer skills and strategies for reading and writing to other courses. This transference may include the following:

- ▶ Read critically, rhetorically, and for various purposes.
- ▶ Identify the themes in an essay or book chapter.
- ▶ Summarize responsibly and incorporate others’ positions into one’s own writing.
- ▶ Compare and contrast various genres across the curriculum.
- ▶ Distinguish types of evidence used in essays.
- ▶ Reflect upon one’s own human condition.
- ▶ Determine importance of information.
- ▶ Evaluate a text’s argument.
- ▶ Analyze the text to discover or reveal the message.
- ▶ Identify relevant logic, organization, strategies, sentences, and/or word choices of any given text.
- ▶ Explore how writer’s choices affect the meaning of text.
- ▶ Follow directions so that responses to tasks cover the important elements.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING

- ▶ Be sure to read the essay carefully before writing the Rhetorical Response. As you read the essay, circle important words or words with which you are unfamiliar so that you can discuss these in class.
- ▶ Underline main ideas of each paragraph so that you can get the overall picture of what the essay's message conveys
- ▶ Highlight what you believe to be the overall thesis and the topic sentences of each paragraph.
- ▶ Have a conversation with your peers about the overall message of the essay.

## DRAFTING AND REVISING

- ▶ Read the directions for writing the Rhetorical Reading Response, as well as review the student essays and your notes about Rhetorical Reading Responses.
- ▶ Begin drafting by developing a way to plan out your thinking. Develop a mind map or an outline or any other brainstorming strategy that you have learned in class.
- ▶ Start with your first Rhetorical Reading Response precis' paragraph. Remember that the first paragraph is about records the essential elements of what the essay is all about. You will identify the main assertion or thesis of the essay; provide an explanation of how the author develops and/or supports the thesis; determine a statement of the author's purpose; and, describe the intended audience of the essay. Write a draft.
- ▶ As you move to the second paragraph of the Rhetorical Reading Response, think about your initial reactions to the article when you first began marking and highlighted elements of the essay. What passage(s) sparked a connection with your own feelings or impressions? Make that connection and draft your initial reactions so that those who read your Rhetorical Reading Response can make that connection with you. Write a draft.
- ▶ Go back and reread the essay. Then take the essay apart, as you try to feel the overall meaning of the essay. What individual points

about the essay cause you to think about the message? What is it about how the author wrote the message that is impactful? Isolate the element that you want to analyze. Write a draft.

- ▶ Once you have written a draft of each paragraph, be prepared to work in pairs or small groups to share your essay with your peers.
- ▶ Revise your essay, based on new knowledge that may have been offered by your peers.
- ▶ Edit carefully before submitting your essay to your instructor.

## REFLECTING ON WRITING

- ▶ After reading the assignment directions, do you have all elements of the first paragraph precis? If not, make changes where applicable.
- ▶ In paragraph two, do you make a reader response connection with the writer's essay? Do you make it clear the connection of specific lines in the essay that triggered your personal response? Have you included a pertinent direct quote to support your points, cited per MLA? If you can't answer YES to any of the questions above, make changes where applicable.
- ▶ In paragraph three, have you isolated an element to analyze? Have you brought in specific points from the essay that support your analysis? Are they cited per MLA? If you can't answer YES to any of the questions above, make changes where applicable.

## FOCUS ON EPORTFOLIO

In English 1101 (and also in English 1102), you might be assigned at least one Rhetorical Reading Response that is directly related to topical readings in *Connections*. If you do write a strong Rhetorical Reading Response that best reflects your ability to read and write about what other people have to say, consider using it as entry reflecting your Best Reading Artifact. Note: Do not use the same RRR for both English 1101 and 1102.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ANALYZING RESPONSES

Consider these questions as you read the student models of Rhetorical Reading Responses:

- ▶ What does the writer identify as the thesis statement of the original essay?
- ▶ What does the writer identify as the author’s purpose and intended audience of the original essay?
- ▶ How does the writer make connections to his/her own life experiences in the second paragraph?
- ▶ How does the writer identify rhetorical strategies in the third paragraph that convey what the original author intended?
- ▶ What is the interpretive claim that the writer makes when analyzing the original work?
- ▶ How does the writer support this interpretive claim?
- ▶ Are accurate summaries, paraphrases, and quotations included effectively to enhance the writer’s analysis?

## STUDENT EXAMPLES: RHETORICAL READING RESPONSE

The following student essays are solid examples of Rhetorical Reading Responses. However, please use them as only a guide, or model, as you develop your own Rhetorical Reading Responses.

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Mary Agrusa

Professor Richardson

English 1101

17 September 2016

Rhetorical Reading Response “Mother Tongue”

In her memoir “Mother Tongue” (1990), Amy Tan explores the familiar clash between parents and teenagers, exacerbated by

communication breakdowns. Here a lack of language proficiency on her mother's part produced a parent/child role reversal. Tan hones in on the different "Englishes" (Tan 121) she's experienced throughout life, specifically her mother's version, which contributed to increased tension between the two. She does so in order to provide those outside an immigrant's world a glimpse into the difficult role children of parents whose primary language isn't English may find themselves in. The piece gives great insight into the challenges immigrant parents and their children face to the general public, and to those working with them.

I readily relate to Tan's story. I was once a teenage girl who believed her parents were out of touch, and a perpetual embarrassment. In addition, I've raised a teenage daughter. Although we speak the same language, at times, I may as well have conversed in Greek, and she, Swahili. The piece reminds me of a quote attributed to Mark Twain: "When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years." This sums up teenage angst over perceived parental stupidity and its eventual resolution. I was disappointed not to learn what leverage the author gained from this role reversal, and how she exploited it.

Through flashbacks Tan depicts how her mother's struggle to effectively communicate impacted her personally. In repeated motifs, the author compares her teenage view of her mother as contrasted with her

opinion of her now. The mother's "limited English" (122) that caused Tan shame has now become the "language of intimacy" (121) between the author and her husband. Acting as her mother's surrogate voice in the phone call to a stockbroker, the author masterfully allows us to feel the frustration and aggravation of having to pretend to be her mother, while the real Mrs. Tan "was standing in the back whispering loudly" (122). She takes what as a teen was a distressing situation, and through the eyes of maturity, and skillful writing, turns it into a comedy sketch. Now, when her mother's "best English, no mistakes" (123) failed to produce a CAT scan report, Tan willingly placed a call which delivered not only the needed medical information, but also a much deserved apology. From the author's "empirical evidence" (122) of her mother's diminished personhood in the eyes of business and retail people, which skewered her perceptions, Tan has come full circle. She adopted her mother as the target audience for her writing. The author successfully relinquished the bi-modal role of child forced to function as a parent, to that of mature adult comfortable being a daughter. Tan's experience on its own isn't sufficient data for determining the impact of the parent/child role reversal which may occur in immigrant families. It does shed interesting insights into their possible family dynamics. How to help children who straddle these two worlds learn to define the boundaries of each and know how to appropriately act in either situation deserves further study.

Work Cited

Tan, Amy. "Mother Tongue." *Connections: Guide to First Year Writing at Clayton State University*. Ed. Mary Lamb. Sixth Edition. Southlake TX, Fountainhead Press, 2016. 121-125 Print.

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Christopher Delgado

Dr. Fletcher

ENGL 1102

11 February 2015

Twitter Fandoms and Celebrity Interactions

In Gayle S. Stever and Kevin Lawson's essay, "Twitter as a Way for Celebrities to Communicate with Fans: Implications for the Study of Parasocial Interaction," they explore the idea that the social media website Twitter is a good way to promote parasocial interaction between celebrities and fans. They support their argument by citing researched information on parasocial interaction, as well as discussing the results of their own study. They do this in order to gauge what kind of effect Twitter is having on the interactions between celebrities and their fans. The writing is most likely intended for people interested in the relationship between celebrities and their fans.

I think this essay is interesting. I use Twitter myself, and I can say that one of its many selling points is that fact that so many celebrities personally use it themselves. It gives ordinary people the ability to get more details about them than they would be able to if Twitter did not exist. On the



other side, it also gives the celebrities themselves the ability to connect more closely with their fans. I have found this to be true of the celebrities that I follow, and I can see why. Twitter is short and concise, and messages have to be within a specific character limit. Because of this, people are able to read several tweets at one time: fans can read many tweets celebrities post, and celebrities can read many tweets that fans send to them.

Stever and Lawson effectively and logically support their statement of achieving parasocial interaction through Twitter by citing research and doing their own study. The first thing they do is describe what parasocial interaction is. They say, “(Parasocial Interaction) examines the relationship between celebrities, who are well known to their fans, and fans, who are known very little, if at all, by celebrities” (Stever 212). This is important because it explains the key concept that the paper is about, which the reader may not know. Shortly after providing the definition, they say, “Twitter appears to be a new forum for PSI that allows for the possibility that fans, both individually and as a group, might become better known to the celebrities whom they follow” (Stever 212). This is important because it relates the broad definition given to the smaller topic they are writing about. The researchers also conducted their own study. They decided to code different celebrities’ tweets based on keywords in them that revealed what they were about (Stever 213). The celebrities that were used in the research were chosen because of the researchers’ familiarity with them (Stever 217). This could represent problems with the study, as it doesn’t offer a

very diverse range of subjects. Nevertheless, they found that parasocial interaction was occurring on Twitter, as they state in their conclusion, “Celebrities who dialogue with fans, and who read ‘Tweets’ and reply to at least some of them, have engaged in a new form of discourse that is unique to fan/celebrity interactions... the dialogue is serious, meaningful, and has impact for the participants” (Stever 225). It is in this way that their study supports their idea that parasocial interaction is happening on Twitter.

#### Work Cited

Stever, Gayle S. and Kevin Lawson. “Twitter as a Way for Celebrities to Communicate with Fans: Implications for the Study of Parasocial Interaction.” *Connections: Guide to First-Year Writing @ Clayton State University*. Ed. Mary R. Lamb. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Southlake, TX: Fountainhead Press, 2014. 210-228. Print.

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Michael P. McPherson

Dr. Parrott

ENGL 1101-21

12 September 2014

#### Tragedies of False Imprisonment

“How It Feels to Be Falsely Accused” (2014), an article by Josh Greene, embodies the first hand emotion that Clarence Harrison feels, now that he has served 17 years in prison, after being falsely accused. Green

initiates the article with background information on Harrison’s case, then goes into Harrison’s personal narrative. Green implies those personal statements in order to force the reader to see the after effects of prison, and how this was a direct cause of false accusations (pathos). Green is known for his blogs but this article was published in the *Atlanta Magazine*—Atlanta is where the events take place—and targets the Atlanta community.

I remember the day I watched the news and saw this story, and I felt such a catharsis and realization of how fragile life can be, both then, on the television, and now, reading Green’s article. Green does a phenomenal job by taking the accused personal accounts into the equation. The part where Harrison questions the judge’s sense of freedom struck me (195). It makes you question what freedom really is. Green also denotes Harrison’s unbreakable connection to the prison institution, “After four or five years, you realize that you’re no better off than when you were in there. I don’t know whether it’s being institutionalized or what. That’s how you cope with society—reflecting back in there. You’re out here physically, but mentally you’re still in prison” (Green 195). This broadened my perspective on how deep prison mentality is. It inclines me to stay out of trouble too, even though in this case it wasn’t even Harrison’s wrong doings that landed him in jail.

The background information in the beginning of the article and the personal narrative suggests Green tries to establish an emotional appeal to the audience. Green includes that, he was struck by a van, knocked off a bridge, and severely injured: “Holed up in the hospital, he lost a Laundromat in which

he'd invested thousands" (194). That just puts the cherry on top of a sad story, after reading the tragedy that was instituted to him by a huge hole in justice. Then later in the personal narrative Greene establishes a family connection by quoting Harrison stating, "The jury found me guilty. . . . Then I look back and see my mama. She felt the hurt before I did, because I didn't accept it. She had lost her son" (194). Every mother, or parent for the matter, can only relate to the sorrow of witnessing their child being sentenced to prison, or losing their child forever. Green then finishes with Harrison's optimistic view to the entire situation emphasizing, "Through all the financial problems and everything else, I'm free. So I take it day by day, and just thank God" (195).

#### Work Cited

Greene, Josh. "How It Feels To Be Falsely Accused." *Connections: Guide to First Year Writing @ Clayton State University*. Ed. Mary Lamb. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. South Lake: 2014. 194-5. Print.

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# 7

## CONNECTING TO YOUR EXPERIENCE: WRITING A PERSONAL ESSAY

Writing connects us to others, but it also connects us to our own experience and shares this experience with others. Channell and Crusius define an experience as “something that stands out in memory, *a departure from routine*” (65). Through writing about our experiences, we give meaning to these experiences, through a form of self-exploration.

As we begin to explore writing personal essays, we invite you to consider how the writers in the following essays reflect on and interpret important experiences in their lives. We read about how language shapes the writers’ identities and experiences. Through rich description and detail, we see how the writers learned to read and write, and how this literacy connects or disconnects them from communities, family, and professions.

As you read the essays in this chapter, think about how the writer constructed the essay. Which details from experience do they choose to share and why? Why are their experiences important? What rhetorical strategies do they use to develop their ideas? What insight do you gain from reading these? Think about experiences you’d like to share in a personal essay.

Finally, as you begin thinking about writing your own personal essays, consider events, experiences, people, or objects that are *important* to you. We should always consider our audience, and in this particular case, you are sharing part of your life with the reader. We want to make sure that what we are sharing can have some value to the reader. We call this

a sense of “consequence.” This does not mean that your personal essay needs to be sad or even serious; humor can certainly have consequence, but we want to try write about things that matter.

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## WRITING CONNECTIONS

The personal narrative writing mode is often written in courses that require an element of self- knowledge and deep reflection into one’s inner being. Courses that often require such a deep understanding of oneself or an introspective element of exploration are in the fields of education, psychology, philosophy, religion, and art, among others. Narrative writing often takes the form of a blog, memoir, personal essay, literacy narrative, or creative non-fiction essay. Writers primarily draw on stories, anecdotes, examples, and personal experience to develop these essays, but they may also use other sources. The aim is to reflect on an experience and offer readers insight into some facet of human experience. Students can transfer skills and strategies for reading about and writing personal experiences to other courses. These tasks may include learning the following:

- ▶ To determine an author’s purpose in any writing.
- ▶ To understand conflict and how to resolve it in writing.
- ▶ To understand the purpose of theme when developing writing.
- ▶ Use effective descriptive detail in writing.
- ▶ To use transitions in moving ideas along.
- ▶ To write with a beginning, middle, and ending structure.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING

- ▶ Write about a personal experience. Tell your readers a story. You don’t need any sources, just your memory. If you don’t know what to write about, try one of these: the time you were most scared or sad, a story of when you did something you are proud of or regret, a person who had a profound effect on you.
- ▶ Write about something that is a commonplace experience, but that has a twist that makes it an uncommon experience. We all have

those experiences that we think will turn out one way and actually becomes a bizarre experience that was totally unpredicted.

- ▶ Write about a *slice of life* that focuses on a small amount of time so that you can give specific descriptions and actions, rather than generalized thoughts. You can create belief in the action if you stick with a limited time frame.
- ▶ Be honest in your writing so that the reader believes that what happened really did happen. Choose details appropriately so that your action appears real to the reader. Include rich details that gives the reader inside knowledge of what you see or are doing. Include action that is believable; use authentic language; and describe emotions as though the reader is sitting there beside you, seeing you experience the moment.

## DRAFTING AND REVISING

Wendy Bishop, in *Acts of Revision*, suggests the following activity for revision, but you can also try this to generate ideas:

- ▶ *Call on the world.* Collect five media images—ads, family photos, sound bites, and so on—that illuminate your text in some way. Freewrite in response to each of these (and in relationship to your text). Insert written (perhaps even visual) material from this exercise into your text. (Bishop 22)

If you haven't drafted yet, you can use this to generate your draft: simply select from family photos, songs from your playlist, memorabilia from childhood, or sentimental possession. Freewrite about the item.

Many writers—first-year students and professional writers alike—resist revision. Writing is hard work, and we are often reluctant to listen to feedback if we think it means more work. However, revising is already part of writing (as you delete and re-write, for example), and you can learn to improve your revising. Bishop shares two helpful revision strategies to use after you have a first draft or to brainstorm ideas for a first draft. Try this:

## Chapter 7 | Connecting to Your Experience: Writing a Personal Essay

- ▶ Write a fat draft. Double your text. Toss out your internal critic because this writing doesn't have to be impressive, it simply has to be there. Measure roughly by pages or precisely by word count.
- ▶ Write a memory draft by rereading your text carefully, preferably aloud. As you do, pay intense attention to your topic and ideas. Put that draft out of sight, open a new file on your computer, and compose the piece again. Make this version at least as long or longer than the original. Do not at any time consult the original draft. (16)

Notice that “fat drafting” is helpful for adding details and development to your draft. “Memory drafting,” on the other hand, “encourages writers to abandon the fluff, filler, and fussy details that pad any draft” (17). These two strategies should be used together, Bishop explains, to both “develop and refine” (17).

### REFLECTING ON WRITING

Reflect on your assignment and what you learned, which will be useful when you create your ePortfolio later in the semester. Bishop offers this exercise to prompt revision, but it will also help you reflect on what you did in your essay: “Write a letter from your ideal reader telling you, in detail, and by quoting from the text, what he likes about your draft” (25).

### FOCUS ON EPORTFOLIO

Your Personal Essay may be one that you wish to include as your Best Writing Artifact in the ePortfolio. If you choose your Personal Essay to include in the ePortfolio, you are to revise it so that it is fully developed, with rich description.

As always, back up your material in the cloud so that if you experience computer issues, you can retrieve your materials at the time of posting your ePortfolio.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ANALYZING PERSONAL ESSAYS AND CREATIVE NONFICTION

As you read the essays, consider the following questions:

- ▶ Find another example of this genre in a magazine or on the Web, and discuss the similarities and differences.
- ▶ What is the writer’s purpose? What strategies does the writer use to develop his or her purpose? Is this essay a response to another essay, a political event, etc.? Explain.
- ▶ What type of introduction (or lead) does the writer use?
- ▶ How is the essay developed? What type of evidence is used?
- ▶ Describe the “consequence” each essay expresses.

## PUBLISHED ESSAYS: PERSONAL ESSAY AND CREATIVE NONFICTION

All of the essays listed below can be accessed via the library’s [English 1101 Course Reserves](#). Alternatively, click on an individual item for a direct link to the essay. Citation information is available on each essay’s listing page.

- ▶ Dorothy Allison, [“Context”](#)
- ▶ Gloria Anzaldúa, [“How to Tame a Wild Tongue”](#)
- ▶ Frederick Douglass, [“Learning to Read and Write”](#)
- ▶ Mona Maisami, [“Born in Amrika”](#)
- ▶ Amy Tan, [“Mother Tongue”](#)

## STUDENT EXAMPLES: PERSONAL ESSAY AND CREATIVE NONFICTION

2021 CYGNET AWARD WINNER – CREATIVE NONFICTION

### Magical Ghungroos

Priyam Kadakia

I tenderly wrapped the red cotton fabric around my ankle, listening to the sweet tunes of the bells over my friends' chatter. As the curtain fell, the audience's applause died out, and the lights followed. We quietly shuffled towards the yellow Xs. I took several deep breaths as I placed my hands behind my back, leaned forward, and smiled. Everyone held their breath as the rhythmic beats of the melody drifted into the auditorium from our own feet.

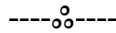
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I peeked out from under my blanket for the third time on the ride. My dad was urgently exclaiming my name in order to wake me up. I let him continue to call as I pretended to sleep; the more I could delay waking up, the later I would reach dance class. I finally gave into the pressure with a *hmp!*

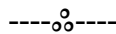
"You didn't have to wake me so early. We are still two minutes away from the building. It takes me less than 30 seconds to put my ankle supports and knee pads on," I lied. Dance class seemed a lot like jail to me. Except instead of orange, we wore all black. It was crowded with

other brooding students who did not want to go to dance class any more than I did. The star-like lights pounded on our heads and taunted our inability to see the sunlight every Saturday afternoon.

“Okay, *beta*,” my dad comforted, “But today is exciting because you get your ghungroos in Bharatanatyam.” His tone was like fake leather, unconvincing and rough. I knew that he had no tolerance for any more of my nonsense, especially on an important day like today.



I have been trained in Bharatnatyam, a classical Indian dance style that originated from South India. In Bharatnatyam, we learn Aadhavs which are like the letters of an alphabet. These letters are then put together to create Jaaties, or words. The dance is very demanding for a young body, requiring a lot of flexibility and precision. Receiving our ghungroos, anklets covered in bells, is the first step in our Bharatanatyam journey. When I was younger, I hated attending classes, that is until I got my ghungroos. Each year, we earn a new pair; we are required to keep each pair in top condition since they create a connection between God, the earth, dance, and ourselves.



Unfortunately, I reached class right on time. We danced for the first thirty minutes until my feet ached and my body was close to snapping like a twig. Despite the fast fan, my mouth was drier than the Sahara Desert. The music seemed to continue pounding as we moved our muscles to a point of exhaustion.

## Chapter 7 | Connecting to Your Experience: Writing a Personal Essay

Suddenly, our parents proudly strutted in and our guru had us sit. My weak knees slightly bent before I collapsed on the floor, leaning against my mother for support. One by one, the girls left the room to receive their ghungroos.

When it was my turn, I slowly got up and felt the cool breeze of the fans swirl above me. I walked out of my classroom into the middle lobby. I felt gravitated toward the shining idol of God; the golden accents on it were angelic. My guru patiently waited with a breathtaking scarlet pair of anklets. There was one single row down the middle with seven evenly spaced round bells. They were bronze with indented symbols and carved designs almost like ancient writing and diagrams scrawled on the walls of a cave.

My guru motioned for me to come forward which caused the bells to ring as if a fairy were symbolizing their joy. Each one carried a sweet tune clearer—no, sharper—than glass breaking. The melody was as soft as a lullaby but as confident as the rattle of a snake.

The red velvety fabric reminded me of dark red Kool-aid. Red strawberries. Red velvet cake. With golden sprinkles. If I could taste it, I know it would have melted in my mouth like sweet ice cream.

I ran my fingers across the soft, blanket-like fabric that felt like my dog's fur. The bells were rough against the gentle fabric, creating a beautiful contrast, symbolizing the power and strength of the modest anklet.

## Chapter 7 | Connecting to Your Experience: Writing a Personal Essay

I distinctly remember the thick scent of plastic mixed with turmeric emitting from the soft fabric. It was different than what I expected, but it was sharp and hard. It cut through my nostrils and led to a coughing fit. Little did I know that years later it would emit the same strong smell, but with a hint of makeup and sweat.

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The next week, my parents were surprised to see my beaming face, excited to go to dance. I had practiced in my new anklets all week; they were my new prized possession after all. The beauty of the anklets made me feel powerful on the outside and confident on the inside. They worked well enough to be considered magic.

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Mary Agrusa

Professor Richardson

English 1101

Oct 7, 2016

### We Didn't Know

Along the boundaries of Arlington National Cemetery there seems to be a shield. Surrounding this small portion of General Lee's former estate is the cacophony and gridlock of the Beltway traffic, Washington politics, and everyday drama of several hundred thousand residents and tourists. Penetrate this invisible barrier and silence reigns. This is the home of the dead. Histories are entombed here; men and women of the military, some whose lives were

prematurely foreclosed on. Regardless of feelings about this country and its armed forces, when you enter their house you show respect.

My husband handed the young soldier at the gate our pass. He snapped a brisk salute. From this slip of paper, he knew that we weren't tourists; we had official business. At the bereavement center a chaplain greeted us, and addressed my sister and me both by name. "On behalf of the United States and the Army I extend to you our condolences on your father's passing and our appreciation for his service to his country." After describing the day's itinerary, we were led to the waiting car. Up to thirty veterans are interred here daily. Arlington runs like a well-oiled funeral factory; the schedule is precise but never feels rushed.

The short ride to the columbarium wound past manicured lawns. Simple white marble tombstones like silent sentinels stood at attention in close order formation blanketing the rolling hills. Few people venture here. Family members, military honor guards, caretakers and wild geese roam these grounds. The cost of a burial here is astronomical, but money can't purchase a plot. The price my father paid was D-Day.

We didn't know much about Dad's wartime experiences. He was older than most G.I.'s, in his late thirties. His only brother already enlisted, and his mother a widow, Dad could have applied for a deferment, but he didn't. Color blindness prevented him from being a pilot. He trained in radio communications, and lent the impression to his children that he was far out of harm's way transmitting and decoding messages.

## Chapter 7 | Connecting to Your Experience: Writing a Personal Essay

We discovered my father's involvement with D-Day by accident. Visiting the VA for a photo I.D., my sister overheard the discussion between my dad and the clerk assisting him. "Mr. McCullough, your records show that you were in D-Day." "Yes, second day." My sister's interest was aroused. Once outside she probed for additional information. "I don't want to talk about," Dad quietly but firmly insisted. Case closed.

The only tangible evidence of his involvement in the European theater were: two pairs of wooden shoes, four plates, three cups and a mustard jar. As kids, the pottery pieces were stodgy old relics covered with writing we couldn't read. We didn't know who Queen Wilhelmina was and really didn't care. Mom read us the riot act. When dusted, these pieces were to be handled with *extreme care*. The mustard jar was accidentally broken, and my father mourned as if a dear friend had been lost. Glued back together, it now sits on my dining room hutch. Why were these so important to him? We didn't know.

He rarely spoke about his wartime experiences like most vets of that era, especially around children. He reminisced mostly with his friends Bill and Max. Bill was a POW in a Japanese internment camp. In later years exhibiting extreme symptoms of PTSD, Bill was committed to a psychiatric hospital for treatment. Max, a young Jewish soldier, saw the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. I don't remember my father demonstrating any unusual behavior, however, it's hard to know the total impact the war made on him. He always worked jobs that were below his abilities, a way

of keeping his head down and staying safe. Reading was his escape, and he could intelligently converse on a wide range of subjects. I realize now his admonition to us to “Not follow the herd” referred to the German’s willingness to follow Hitler, and the disastrous consequences their actions produced. Dad kept a map of his travels through Europe, and occasionally expressed a desire to retrace his steps, specifically in France. Why there, I don’t know. I suspect that he wished he’d stayed there after the war.

Our elementary school class was forced to memorize Flanders Field, written in 1915 by Lt. Col. John McCrae.

In Flanders field the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place: and in the sky  
The larks still bravely singing fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead... (1–6)

The import of these words escaped us because we didn’t understand war. Several boys adopted deep bass tones and bellowed, “We are the dead!” Everyone laughed. What we didn’t know was that in a few short years some of their voices would echo this mournful dirge from the fields of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

One Sunday after dinner my brother John, recently discharged from the Navy, shared his Vietnam story. Assigned to a supply ship off shore, he never saw direct combat. “It was so strange,” he remarked.



“The sky looked like Fourth of July firecrackers. It was beautiful until you realized that people were getting killed.” We both had friends who came home in body bags or missing limbs. Many were not the same. My father felt empathy for these young men who went from combat one day, then shortly were discharged and sent home. “We had plenty of time to decompress,” he told us. “It took months to get shipped back and processed out. We were able to talk a lot of things through. I feel sorry for these guys. It must be horrible.” That was the only time I’d ever heard him even hint that he had seen combat.

We hippies rebelled against the materialism of our parent’s generation. What we didn’t know were the reasons that fueled this. First, many vets spent their teen age and college years piloting war planes, firing at enemy planes from gunner’s seats, working on ships that were floating targets, and fighting hand-to-hand combat. Proms, football games and the like were forsaken in order to fight a war to defend their country. They wanted their children to have what they missed out on.

Second, the Vietnam war brought PTSD into the foreground. It turns out that some of the behaviors we despised were coping mechanisms against their war experiences. These were tools used to block out the memories that often haunted them decades later in nightmares and flashbacks. We just didn’t know.

Watching the televised ceremony commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day with my sister, Dad finally opened up. “It was the

worst experience of my life. I wouldn't wish it on anyone, but...I wouldn't have missed it for the world." That was the day the mystery behind the ugly pottery was revealed.

The troops passed through areas of war torn Europe on their way home. One town in the Netherlands my father encountered was famous for pottery. The Nazi invasion forced the civilians to bury their wares; pieces made to celebrate their monarch, Queen Wilhilmena. The G.I.'s shared food rations with the hungry locals. In return, the villagers retrieved the pottery and gave it to the soldiers as tokens of their appreciation. And now we knew.

It was warm that summer afternoon and even under the canopy's shade I could feel a bead of sweat slowly trickle down my back. The chaplain pronounced a short eulogy and blessing for this soldier he never knew. Across from me was the honor guard in full uniform, faces shiny with sweat, never flinching. Why would they do this? Why endure all sorts of weather: heat, cold, rain, snow, wind to participate in funerals for strangers? I think there's something they know that we don't. The military understands its mission is to serve and protect and this includes strangers. Their presence was a way of honoring my father's service to the people he didn't know.

The folded flag was presented, followed by a sharp salute. Seven guns fired thrice. The urn and mementos were placed in the burial niche. My father's life had now come to a close. There is much we don't know about him but some things are clearly defined. He loved his God, his family and his country. Although his life would be deemed ordinary at

best, when given the chance to make a difference in his world for the better, he didn't hesitate. And that much we do know.

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Kenyon MacDonald

Ms. Shantay Robinson

English Composition

15 March 2016

### Unemployed

February 23, 2009, the bane of my existence; the room was small with unadorned cream colored walls, with a conference table in the middle. I had never felt so claustrophobic in my life until this day. As I sat in the chair across the table from my imperiling doom, I felt like a helpless raccoon trapped in a cage with no way out. Every breath I took seemed long and drawn out; everything was in slow motion, almost still. I sat there as he spewed words of disdain from his mouth, the kind that make your blood boil and go cold at the same time. He spoke the kind of words that make every human emotion run through you all at once, where you feel as though you are on a roller coaster, but also drowning, but also wanting to pulverize something altogether at one time. My heart was pounding one thousand beats per second. After each sentence, I began to realize my fate. I was 21 years old, pig-headed, full of pride, and thought the world was mine to own. What person does not think that, being so young and stupid? But what had come that day made me feel like a receptacle overflowing

with fear, anxiety and despair. That day, I learned that not all good things last and what is so easily attained can quickly be confiscated. Losing my job was the ultimate consequence I vowed never to experience again.

I was doing very well for myself. Though I still lived with my parents, I considered myself to be on top of the world. I had just started college, pursuing my associate degree in architectural design, and on November 5, 2007, I started what I thought was a bright career path with State Farm. I was hired in the Claim Imaging Operation Services (CIOS) department at the corporate building for the southern region of the east coast. I will not say my position was the most important, but I got paid very well for what I was hired to do. The building was a massive castle-like behemoth, built in a very beautiful, affluent part of town. When you walked through the enormous double doors from the foyer, and passed through the corridors, my department was at the back of the building: a giant room, filled with 30 cubicles occupied by my new co-workers, all of whom I considered beings of curiosity as they stared when I walked in. I felt every eye on me as I was shown to my new workspace. It was like high school all over again: you are the new kid and everyone is inquisitive of you. I was full of angst and anticipation as I sat at my desk, feeling very adult-like. It was my first real full-time job with real benefits. I was so excited, and this was a joyous moment that went on for days. Fast-forward a few weeks, time had flown by, and I was still in training. I might as well have been learning Japanese with all the terms and acronyms thrown at me

like darts of death from every direction. It was too much information in such diminutive time. I thought to myself, *This is what a lion's den must feel like*. Despite being heavily overwhelmed, this was my job, and I was running with the big dogs now. So, I had to keep up or otherwise lose my job, and *that* I was determined not to do. As time progressed, so did my work ethic, and my abilities to do the job started to shine through. My managers were taking notice that my quotas were met ahead of schedule. Whatever needed to be done, I volunteered. I always made it a point to learn new things, so I took it upon myself to learn other aspects of my job.

It had been a year now, and even though I was flourishing, I couldn't help but notice that my hard work was unrewarded. I applied numerous times for opportunities in the mentor program. I went to every skill building workshop my job had to offer. All of these things I was doing in order to build my portfolio, but nothing happened. It was like trying to sign to a deaf person with no knowledge of sign language: you are communicating but nothing is computing on the other end. So, of course frustration set in. The fact that I was a bit hot-headed did not help my situation either. Letting my emotions get the better of me and feeling slighted against, I started not to care much anymore. State Farm became more of a democracy, like a political rat race of who is better than whom. More so, the job went from feeling like I was accomplishing something to feeling like I was just a statistic, planted here to push numbers for all eternity. I was even denied tuition reimbursement due to now not meeting

company goals and standards. February of 2009 was the worst month of my entire life, and it was sad to come to the realization that the job I loved became my worst nightmare.

I found myself in a vicious cycle of unanswered questions, “What happened here?” “What is with all of these negative changes?” Dealing with all the new company policies and changes, I felt like a caged monkey in a science lab just waiting for whatever experiments were coming my way. Being poked and prodded by new standard procedures, being told lies from managers so questions were not asked: I finally had just about enough and scheduled a day off. This was going to be a day to just relax, recollect my thoughts, and enjoy time to myself. I had some unfinished business to take care of that I could not get to because of work and school, *so why not take this time to do it*, so I thought. Monday, February 23, 2009, I woke up feeling relieved to know I did not have to go in to work. I showered, went downstairs, made some breakfast, and prepared for a pretty easy going day. It was beautiful and sunny with the smell of honeysuckle in the air. As I pulled away from my driveway, my windows and sunroof opened with Destiny’s Child’ “Survivor” playing on the radio, I made my way to take care of my errands. *This is what I needed*, I thought to myself: no complaining managers in my ear, no whining co-workers gossiping about other people’s problems, just me enjoying the new spring air and mellowing out. As I finished my last errand, I planned to go home, relax, and enjoy the rest of my day off.

## Chapter 7 | Connecting to Your Experience: Writing a Personal Essay

On my way home, I received a phone call but could not answer it due to driving down the highway. I got within ten minutes from my house and my phone rang again. Reluctantly, I answered. To my fear and astonishment, it was my boss calling me on my perfect day of solitude. This man had the nerve to ask me, ON MY DAY OFF, to come in for a department meeting. I pulled my car over abruptly, and said, “Are you kidding me?! I scheduled this day off for a reason, and I am nowhere near the office.” He was on the other line saying how it was very important, all employees needed to be present, and I needed to be there. As I cursed him up and down and called him every name in the book of insults, in my head of course, I grudgingly turned my car around and made my way towards my office. I spent forty-five minutes in time and fifteen dollars in gas driving my aggravated behind to work, and as I did, I was livid. The way I was feeling would have made a worldwide epidemic, apocalypse, and economic meltdown seem less scary.

As I pulled into the parking lot, almost ramming two cars, I parked my car and made my way to the door. I swiftly swiped my badge and nothing happened. I swiped again; the door remained locked. At this point, I was fuming past the point of being livid. I made my way towards the front desk to security and asked why my badge was not working. The security guard checked my name and badge number and retorted that it had been disconnected. He told me I needed to wait and he would notify my manager that I had arrived. Now, not only was I highly upset

that my day had been ruined, but now all these weird shenanigans started taking place. I saw my manager come from the massive double doors and make his way toward me. He greets me with a Cheshire cat smile and a persona unlike the norm. Immediately, I knew something was wrong. I was led away from my department and down a large corridor to which I was taken into a comparatively small and cramped room. “This is in the HR department, what is going on?” I asked furiously. I was seated across from my boss, with the secondary department manager on my right and two women deemed as “witnesses” to the left of my manager. So many emotions ran through me: I felt helpless, scared, cornered, and bewildered. *Is this really happening to me?* I thought to myself, as he slashed me with words telling me I had been laid off. I tried to find every excuse in the book to relinquish me from this terror, but I could not escape the inevitable; I was now unemployed.

Losing my job was the most embarrassing and humiliating thing I have ever experienced. The feeling of dread and self-doubt was overwhelming, and being so young in this predicament was a big blow to my confidence. I took for granted that my job would always be there. Even though it was a bitter moment, I take some sweet out of it. If this had not happened, I would not have started my acting career and would not have had the opportunity of being on numerous shows, including “The Vampire Diaries,” or movies such as “Due Date.” Even being in school now is a part of the sweet moments I would not have had the chance to make



happen for myself. I have adopted a whole new outlook on the workforce. I take my time and I do not try to over achieve; at the end of the day, all you have is what was done. I had to realize that I cannot have it all, and no matter what, always do the best I can. Life is full of consequences and losing a job is a horrible feeling. Nothing is guaranteed in this world; start appreciating the things you have because once it is gone, it is gone.

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## MANICURING THE SELF: CREATIVE WRITING IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Robert Pfeiffer

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“Write what you know.” It’s an old truism in creative writing classes, something simple we hope our students can latch on to. I remember hearing it for the first time in middle school, and, in the neo-natal stages of my desire to be a writer, I bought into it. Of course, “write what you know” is overly simplistic, and when given to a 14 year old, this advice yields a whole lot of overly-sentimental, angst-ridden dreck. It certainly did in my case. What seed, though, is then planted? If we look just a little further down the road, there are really two paths we send our young writers down. If we write what we know from our own lives, and the goal is to write interesting, insightful work, then we must either already be living interesting lives, or try to somehow start living interesting lives. The former is, unfortunately, unlikely, and the latter can be dangerous. The list of writers and aspiring writers who attempt to inspire their own work through what starts as experimentation and adventure, but ends in self-destruction is as long as it is tragic.

“That is to say, it is not necessarily the life as such, that need be interesting, but the author living it.”

So how is one to write quality creative nonfiction without

dropping out of society, travelling the world on foot, or drinking one's self into an early grave? Well, it's easier said than done, for certain. Most successful creative nonfiction writers explore their own experiences, relationships, possessions, find the nugget of importance, of consequence therein, and tease it out for the reader to observe and consume. That is to say, it is not necessarily the life as such, that need be interesting, but the author living it. A professor once told me that the poet William Blake, famous for his visions and eccentricities, once proclaimed "[B]oredom is simply a lack of creativity." And while I have never been able to verify this, he was a Blake scholar, and so I have somewhat naively and lazily just believed him. But I love this quotation, and it is apropos here. It is up to the creator to breathe life into the work, and to pull from it, and present, the value therein. This is the way it has been for as long as people have told stories, and we've been telling and writing stories for eons. However, the way we tell stories has changed. The emergence and ubiquity of social media has unquestionably altered the landscape of creative nonfiction.

For the purposes of my discussion, Facebook will be the primary social medium considered, as it is the most prevalent, with 1.15 billion users worldwide, the most comprehensive (connecting through Twitter and Instagram, while combining the written word with the image), and is also the only one I use ([expendableramblings.com](http://expendableramblings.com)). Moreover, I will be considering the genre of creative nonfiction through the lens of literary critic Barbara Lounsberry's book, *The Art of Fact*. Here, Lounsberry outlines four characteristics which make up the genre. The first characteristic is "documentable subject matter chosen from the real world as opposed to 'invented' from the writer's mind" (xiii). The second is "exhaustive research" (xiii–xiv). Here is where my students often ask, "but if it's from your life, how come you need to do research?" The answer is, "you don't always." But then I show them David Foster Wallace's brilliant and breathtaking essay "Consider the Lobster," where through his research, which is exhaustive to the point of delirium, he takes the reader from the experience of attending the Maine Lobster Festival and somehow drops them into the deepest philosophical waters of the morality and ethics of our food culture. Then they get it. The third is setting "the scene" (xiv–xv). The ability to create or re-create the scene is a hallmark of all good storytellers, and often involves making a few things up. Unless you constantly have a video camera recording your every breath and experience, you are likely to have to invent something to get the scene

right, whether it be dialogue, what someone was wearing, etc. This is also the place where I give my *James-Frey-A-Million-Little-Pieces* warning about the ethical standards of creative nonfiction.

The final characteristic, and perhaps the most difficult to achieve is what Lounsberry calls “fine writing” (xv). Perhaps it’s best not to digress too far with regards to the artistic quality of student writing at this point other than to mention a few brief, perhaps obvious comments. First, and this is a serious problem in the introductory-level creative writing classroom, many students are not as good as they think they are. Those of us who have loved writing stories and poems since childhood have been, and this is a good thing, encouraged by parents and teachers and friends to keep doing it, told that we have real talent and skill in an effort to support our artistic proclivities. It is a hard day when someone tells us we’re not as good as we think we are, but it is a totally necessary one. We must come to understand that there is so much more to learn, and that there is craft involved, rather than merely inspiration flowing through fingertips. The reality is something much more in line with Malcolm Gladwell’s notion espoused in *Outliers* that one, to master any skill, must practice for ten thousand hours. This is, needless to say, disheartening to many. Second, and on the flip side of the same coin, many students are not as bad as they think. Perhaps less a problem in creative writing courses, but rampant at the composition level, students have been indoctrinated with the belief that since they haven’t mastered the comma, or slip into passive voice too often, they are not, and cannot become, good writers. This is heartbreaking as an educator, but a place where real change can occur in the students’ lives. Finally, it needs to be made clear to students of writing, that there has never been a good writer who was not also a good reader. Critical reading leads to an understanding of good writing.

In recent years, I have noticed a preponderance of my students, from First-Year Writing, to Writing Studies, to Creative Writing, want to write a memoir. Many of them already have, or are somewhere along the path to doing so. So many of them feel they have a great story to tell, and many actually do. Some of them—not so much. I began to wonder why it was that so many felt they had, not just a best seller in them, but a “nonfiction” best seller. It seems that part of the answer here lies in the all-too obvious, yet incredibly complicated existential reality that each of us is the lead character in the only story we ever know. That is we are each at the exact

center, in every way, of every single thing we experience in our lives, and therefore, though we try in our better moments not to, we view everything that happens in the world through the solipsistic lens of how it affects us. Hence, for better or worse, our story is quite simply, the most important story in the world, *to us*. It stands to reason then, that we would want to, and indeed feel compelled, to write it. But why the recent increase in those who are actually taking steps towards writing their stories? It seems everyone used to want to write the Great American *Novel*, while we poets stayed hunched over a desk in our dark, anonymous corners. It is my contention that social media is constantly asking us to tell our stories, and in doing so stokes our natural ego-centrality, while simultaneously, it makes us acutely aware of our own deficiencies and social anxieties. That is to say, the I-self we express through these various forms of social media is not nonfiction, nor is it fiction; our Facebook–Twitter–Instagram–Tumblr–selves are, in fact, creative nonfiction versions of our real selves.

The entire apparatus that represents the Facebook behemoth is set up to turn us all into authors of creative nonfiction with varying degrees of sophistication and frivolity. When you open your Facebook page, it's right there in front of you: "Status Update." It beckons you with the words "What's on your mind?" It is practically beseeching us to type something: something about your morning commute, your children, your political frustrations. It wants you to share about yourself, and simultaneously affirms that whatever you type is okay, and worthy of posting. "What's on your mind?" It could be anything, couldn't it? And in the universe of social media, just about anything is just fine. This, as with so many things in this life, cuts both ways. On the positive side, users of social media cull their own experiences and lives, searching for stories to share. This is a mandatory, integral element to creative nonfiction. Moreover, it certainly could be argued that the prevalence of social media, and particularly its constant presence in our lives, forces users to practice the skill of being open to the possibility of stories from our own lives. Therefore, social media as a concept by itself helps foster the creative nonfiction writer within. What comes first, in any creative work, is the idea, the nugget of inspiration or possibility that leads us to pick up the pen, move to the keyboard, grab the guitar, or dip the paintbrush. Social media, when we come to it, helps us to search for, and be open to that nugget when it presents itself.

## Chapter 7 | Connecting to Your Experience: Writing a Personal Essay

Once we choose something we deem worthy of sharing, then work, which mimics the work of the creative nonfiction author, begins. Even a simple status update is, at some level, a small work of creative nonfiction. At the very least, most of us wish to have our posts be grammatically correct, unless intentionally not so. We want all the words to be properly spelled, unless intentionally not so. We also want them to be interpreted by the Facebook world as we intended them to be. Essentially, we want our posts to be “fine writing,” even if that fine writing only approximates the fine writing we demand from quality creative nonfiction.

Perhaps an example would help. In an effort to avoid any legal or personal confrontations with any of my Facebook friends, I will use example of one of my own status updates.



19 hours ago

I kept trying to write a birthday post for Layla, but they kept getting longer and longer, and started sounding like a poem... So I'm just going to write the poem and leave it at this: our sweet Layla turned two today, and she is desperately in love with life... And I want so bad for that to never change. — with Echo Pfeiffer.



[Like](#) · [Unfollow Post](#) · [Promote](#) · [Share](#) · [Tag Photo](#)

Despite the facts that I have two words improperly capitalized, and that the ellipses that precede those two capitalizations are incorrectly formatted, and that “bad” should be “badly,” I think this post can serve to illustrate many of the points I’ve been trying the flesh out. The exigence for this

“story-post” was my daughter’s second birthday. As we wandered around the aquarium that morning, I was acutely aware of the emotions running through my body and the thoughts through my head. I was searching for a poem in the day. I was also, though to a far lesser extent, thinking about how I might end up sharing the story of our day with all those people who might care via Facebook: what might be a good picture, how long of a post, how personal should it be, what tone should I strike, what would be interesting to read? In these only-semi-conscious deliberations, I was doing a fragment of what the quality writer of creative nonfiction does when planning out his or her own story. How do I take a personal experience, and mold it into something that might be enjoyable to the reader, but also maintain fidelity to the actual truth and my connection to it? Simply writing “Happy Birthday to our daughter!” would tell the most basic version of the story: our daughter turned two ... and perhaps that would suffice. However, this post tells a much more detailed, and dare I say, far better story. (Please be apprised, I am not boasting about the status update, as boasting about a status update would be ridiculous. And although the update is boasting about my child, for which I offer no apologies, I am merely trying to illustrate the work that almost thoughtlessly goes into these little stories). This post is less about the actual date, than it is about a father’s love for his child. It seems to indicate that the emotions he felt were such that a mere status update wouldn’t do, and so they must be rendered into a separate work of art. Beyond even that, the update says something about the bewilderment we all sometimes feel when we see how a child views the world—when everything was fresh, new, exciting, devoid of all the drudgeries and pain of the adult word. She is “desperately” (not a bad adjective) in love with life. What is in the subtext here, perhaps, is that the father is not anymore, and longs to be again. The final wish for her is that she remains that way, and though it is possible for someone to always be in love with life, it is not easy, or common, and the father certainly knows that.

Then there’s the business of the accompanying photograph. There were eighty six pictures taken over the birthday celebration: good ones, bad ones, blurry ones, her misbehaving, looking away, my wife holding her, me holding her, ones where my gut hung out, where strangers occupy too much of the background, ones where her eyes were closed, boring ones of her sitting and doing nothing at all. Of all of them, I chose this one. I was *able* to take every shred of photographic evidence of the day and select

the one I thought best matched the sentiment of the post. This photo tells the story of our day at the aquarium, and shows her just amazed and taking in the incredible world, almost as if frozen by how vast and beautiful it all is. The point is, this post is not nonfiction. I manicured the day, picking and choosing everything I wanted to include, and everything I wanted to leave out. This is the same freedom and power the creative nonfiction author has. Moreover, there is a subtle consideration of audience here. I tagged my wife in the photo, so all her Facebook friends who are not my Facebook friends could read it as well. She had already posted her happy birthday story earlier, with a picture, so I had to make sure we were not being redundant, and thus boring the audience. I didn't want to submit into a saturated market of Pfeiffer Family Birthday posts, and so tried to find a different angle and image. These are all real, if microcosmic, considerations that the author of creative nonfiction must consider from the first inkling of the desire to write, all the way through the tedium and pain of submission and publication. When considered, this amounts to ways that using social media contribute to create more, better writers of creative nonfiction.

On the other hand, and this is where I will do my best to avoid sounding like a snarky pseudo-luddite, social media might well be deadening our ability to decide what is important enough to share. Social media is part and parcel of a celebrity-obsessed society where powerful and influential platforms are given to people who have done nothing to earn them. We see people who have accomplished nothing of great consequence, who exhibit no discernible talent, whose sole achievement is having famous parents, or lucking into a reality show, and their tweets, updates, or other words, are given tremendous national or even international attention. Perhaps we see them and assume that because those people garner attention they don't deserve, we too should feel free to express ourselves as though what we have to say is important, when in fact, it is not. The danger for the creative nonfiction genre, is that when Facebook is constantly asking us to tell our story, whether it be something profound like our mourning a loved one's passing, something thought-provoking like our opinion about the state of our politics, or something totally banal, like how delicious our morning scone is, we feel pressure to have a story to tell. The truth is, most of the time we don't have story worth sharing with the world, and that is fine. That is why when truly important events occur, or truly important people come or go,

we feel compelled to write about it. Perhaps then, social media is making it more difficult to differentiate between those stories that really should be told, and the ones that are merely inconsequential. When we haven't refreshed our Walls for a few minutes, and that little icon pops up to inform us that there are still "More Stories" to be consumed if we just scroll up, something in us feels that we too, need to be disgorging more, when in fact, we should wait until we have something worth writing, to write.

When my twenty-year-old students come up to me and tell me they really want to write a memoir, it confounds me. Certainly we all feel like our story is worthwhile, even if it is boring, because it's the only story we really know. And certainly some of them really do have incredible lives to write about. But I can't help, when I look into their impossibly young eyes, thinking that they've been led to believe, by whatever social or cultural forces, that they should be sharing their lives, when, in fact, they should actually be living them.

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# 8

## CONNECTING VIA SHARED EXPERIENCES: WRITING TO INFORM AND EXPLAIN

A comment that we often hear is that we live in the Information Age. We collect information and make sense of it by what Channel and Crusius note as “interpreting and presenting information . . . and constructing knowledge” (118). We gather data, “or statements about a topic that are not in dispute” (118). We write to communicate that information to others by presenting reasons and explanations. Through expository writing we explain and inform. The following faculty essays provide ways in which you can develop the skill of writing to inform and explain.

### WRITING TO EXPLAIN INFORMATION Mary R. Lamb

Writing to explain information connects you to others. This type of writing appears in professional writing as well as academic scholarship, which is written by and reviewed by scholars who are specialists in their fields. In addition, mainstream publications, such as *Discover* (science), *Psychology Today*, *Smithsonian*, and *The Scientific American*, often publish articles that explain such scholarship to mainstream audiences. Summary is also useful in other types of writing, such as arguments, since you first must be able to fairly summarize issues to your audience before presenting your argument. In other words, summary is useful for you *as a reader* as a way of learning information, researching a topic you want to learn about, and/or understanding an issue. Next, the genre is important for you *as a writer* as a way of explaining information to your audience.

To understand how writers treat the same topic differently according to different audiences, compare a scholarly article (written for experts) to a mainstream article (written for general audiences). Find these in Galileo: “Stress Tolerance: New Challenges for Millennial College Students,” published in the June 2012 (46.2) issue of the *College Student Journal* and “Stress Carry-Over and College Student Health Outcomes,” published in the September 2012 (46.3) issue of the same journal. Compare it to a mainstream article that presents research findings on stress, “This is Your Brain on Meltdown.” What are the differences in articles written for these two different audiences? Discuss the evidence used in each article. For more information about the differences, see *EasyWriter*, Chapter 11 “Conducting Research” and Chapter 12 “Evaluating Sources and Taking Notes.” Compare and contrast these articles so you can learn the differences between scholarly and mainstream essays.

Another way to think about your audience is by interest, age, education, hobbies, political views, religious views, etc. Many articles written for mainstream, not scholarly, audiences are also written for specialized audiences based on interest, so they might still be challenging for non-specialists. Consider *Writer’s Digest* (for professional writers), *Developer Network Journal* (for software developers), *Contract* (for interior design professionals), and *Super Street* (for people who fix up and race cars). Browse articles in these magazines online and think about how the writers address the audience’s knowledge, assumptions, and interests.

Recognizing these differences will help you as you research your essay, which will explain a concept or information to a mainstream, but academic, audience. Thus, most of your sources will be reliable and accurate, but not necessarily scholarly.

In this chapter, you’ll read an informational essay about reflective writing and others that your instructor assigns. Note that Giles used various methods for finding the information she includes, and she uses a blend of published studies and professional experience.

### **SPOTLIGHT ON THE EXPOSITORY PURPOSE**

The expository rhetorical mode describes the conventions and purposes inherent in the type of communication that intends to inform an audience

about a concept, explain a topic or an idea, describe a process or explore when, how, and why a problem has occurred. Instructors often ask students to explain an idea or a process and there are several other ways instructors refer to essays that ask students to explain something. Instructors may refer to this mode of writing as informational, explanatory, exploratory or expository writing. Although writers use these terms interchangeably, each form has its own nuances.

In First-Year Writing, we will be referring to this type of writing as **expository writing** or writing with the purpose to inform or to explain.

### **THE RHETORICAL SITUATION AND EXPOSITORY WRITING**

Although rhetoric is often associated with someone trying to convince another person to agree with his or her idea, rhetoric is also any act involving deliberate communication between people to convey an idea or relay a topic. In expository writing, the **rhetorical situation** is the context in which your rhetorical act, wherein two or more people intend to communicate about an issue, takes place. When thinking about the rhetorical situation, consider what “situation” has informed the writer’s need to communicate and what conditions exist to facilitate discourse. The *issue* (exigence) you are presenting is the central aspect of your writing, but writers should also consider other important elements such as *purpose, setting, text, author & audience*.

For expository writing, we should consider these aspects of the rhetorical situation:

#### **Issue**

In formal rhetoric, we refer to the issue as the exigence.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose addresses the reason why the person has decided to communicate this topic or idea. Expository essays are very different from argumentative essays. Rather than writing to persuade an audience to believe as you suggest they should, your goal is to find out more about a topic and then explain it to your audience.

### **Setting**

A rhetorical situation can occur in a wide variety of settings—in class, in a business meeting, over dinner, and even on social media. Although you are writing your expository essay in your FYW class, you should also think about where else you could discuss this idea or topic. Would this idea still be relevant in a different time or place?

### **Text**

The text is the medium or form the communication takes such as a painting, advertisement, sign, letter, blog post, research essay, ballad or speech. Note: For the expository genre of writing, multiple mediums are effective, so follow your instructor’s guidelines for the appropriate medium and format to publish your content.

### **Author**

The author is formally referred to as “rhetorician.” You are the author of this particular essay, but anyone who initiates communication with an audience is the author.

### **Audience**

The audience is able to make a difference as interested, intelligent readers. Although you are writing for your instructor and peers in your FYW class, consider who else may be interested in learning more about your topic. Remember to consider the multiple identities and cultures people assume and how these concepts inform the audience’s rhetorics.

## **PREWRITING**

Once you are clear on the rhetorical situation and have chosen your topic, you want to collect more information, talk to others, and organize your thoughts. Several effective prewriting strategies can help you do just that. Free-writes, Jot-lists, Outlines, Clusters, T-graphs, Webs, Venn diagrams and a host of other graphic organizers can help you narrow down and organize your thoughts. Here are a few student examples:

### **Freewriting**

Freewriting involves just freely writing what you know about a subject without regard for organization, clarity or unity. You are just getting your ideas out on paper. See the Sebastian’s free-write about food deserts below.

I am super interested in food deserts, I really don't know much about it besides a news report I saw once. I do recall needing dairy-free coconut creamer because I can't with that other junk and not being able to find it at the corner store. There isn't a good grocery store in walking distance and the store closest to my family requires two bus transfers and it doesn't even have that milk. Come to think of it, there is no produce there. The staff is crazy rude. My mom hates that place and we always end up having to go to another store for stuff we want or need.

Although Sebastian needs to do more research about this particular phenomenon, he has some ideas about why “food deserts,” or neighborhoods without access to fresh food and produce, are an issue worth exploring further. Yes, his free-write has errors and does not follow the conventions of academic essay writing, but he is just getting his ideas out—which is the point. Sebastian's full free-write is about a page and a half of handwritten single-spaced text, and he used this, along with several body paragraphs of his resultant Cultural Critique, as his artifact to demonstrate the writing process in his portfolio. Sebastian's resulting cultural critique may incorporate some of his personal experience, but the focus of his inquiry is in defining the term “food deserts” and figuring out why they are a problem. *See Lamb's “Connecting to a Community: Writing Cultural Criticism,” for more details on this assignment.*

### **Listing**

As a college writer, for lists to be effective, students should consider the entries on their lists as responses to a series of research focused questions that may be, as of yet, unanswered. Look at Christina's jot-list model below for her essay on The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994.

- ▶ Why is it important? Too many citizens are incarcerated for non-violent crimes. The country has more prisoners than most other industrialized countries (CNN 11/13/2017 “Incarceration Nation”).
- ▶ How many Americans are incarcerated? According to the US Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJ5), 2.2003 adults were incarcerated in US federal and state prisons, and county jails in 2013 – about less than 1% of adults (1 in 110) in the U.S. resident population.

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- ▶ Which group is most affected? Although the bulk of male prisoners are white. African American men are disproportionately represented (Duvernay film 13).
- ▶ Has there been an increase in the number of citizens imprisoned and why? Yes, crime dropped though? Clinton buckled under pressure and passed a law that increased the number of prisoners.
- ▶ Summary—I think I will focus on the law Clinton passed in 1994 because the prison population boomed even more after.

Christina conducted quite a bit of research and even constructed a formal outline to organize her essay. Later, she built on the Cultural Critique assignment and developed a solid argumentative essay for 1102, which is available to read later in the book.

### Research

Writers conduct research for expository writing to find out as much as they can on a topic. Below are some questions you can consider when devising a research strategy:

- ▶ What is the issue?
- ▶ Why is the issue important?
- ▶ How did the issue come about?
- ▶ How is a process done?
- ▶ Who are the decision makers and stakeholders involved in creating or resolving an issue?
- ▶ What possible solutions exist to resolve a problematic issue?

\*You do not have to argue for a solution to the issue at this point. The point of the expository essay is to ask an inquiry question and find out as much as you can to try to answer your question. Then write about your inquiry and findings.

### The Big Question

Students who write expository essays should begin with the question they want to answer and conduct research intended to respond to that question. Consider the following examples:

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- ▶ How does the legislature confirm Supreme Court justices?
- ▶ How do filmmakers secure financing for films?
- ▶ How can readers figure out what is or isn't "fake news"?
- ▶ What happened during the Atlanta Race Riots of 1906?
- ▶ What are the differences and similarities between the immigration bills introduced by Republicans and Democrats?
- ▶ How did the Great Barrier Reef Garbage Patch form?
- ▶ What were the causes and consequences of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994?

The purpose of this type of writing is to inquire about a topic, collect information, and disseminate what you found to your audience. Your response to the question you proposed can help you construct a sound thesis (main idea for your essay). Here is a sample thesis that responds to the question—*How do filmmakers secure financing for films:*

Filmmakers can use several crafty strategies to secure personal funds, crowd-sourced funds, government grants, or studio generated funds to finance their films.

Here is a sample thesis that responds to the question—*How can readers figure out what is or isn't "fake news":*

Readers looking for quality sources can figure out what is or isn't "fake news" by evaluating the quality of the information, the type of publication, who produced it, and what the outlet's explicit or implicit biases may be.

### **Notetaking**

Be sure you take notes and annotate properly. A hallmark of good academic research is being able to organize and retrieve the research effectively. There are many ways to effectively take notes. Develop a systematic way that works for you. In addition, good note taking can help you avoid. \*Citation Note: For more details on properly citing source material, refer to your handbook.

## DRAFTING: ORGANIZATION FOR EXPOSITORY ESSAYS

If you are writing a traditional academic expository essay, this structure may be useful:

### Introduction

The introduction previews the topic. You may consider briefly outlining the topic's central issues, the individuals concerned about the topic and what may have been done to address the topic or what may have transpired to cause any problems associated with your topic. Your introduction does not need to address all of those ideas. Select the main purpose of your essay and frame the discussion from there.

### Body Paragraphs

Expository essays should be *unified*, all the ideas should relate to the main idea and each other. Expository writing should also be *coherent* or understandable. You can accomplish this by following a **pattern of organization**:

- ▶ Chronological order (based on time)
- ▶ Emphatic order based on the importance of ideas (most important idea to least important or least to most important)
- ▶ Spatial order based on area and how items in a space relate to one another

You should also develop each body paragraph according to a method of development that suits the purpose of the paragraph and use proper transitions between ideas. These methods include comparison/contrast, cause and effect, narration and description. *See your handbook for more on developing paragraphs.*

### Conclusion

The conclusion should reemphasize the main idea of the essay and summarize the major points of the essay. You can predict what may happen if your audience doesn't address the topic or offer recommendations to solve any problems you've presented. Writers sum up their essay here, which is good, but the conclusion can also make your reader want to think more deeply about an issue and to explore it further.



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## WRITING CONNECTIONS

Explaining information is part of many genres of writing, from encyclopedia entries and instruction manuals to gaming instructions (i.e. surviving in Minecraft's hunger games). The articles on e-How.com are instructional, information pieces. A white paper in business is similar to an academic research essay.

Think about your topic for previous essays that you have written in this course and see if you would like to do additional research to explain a facet of it.

Find other texts that explain a concept or a process. By looking at other examples, you will broaden your understanding of how to inform or explain. For examples, review the following:

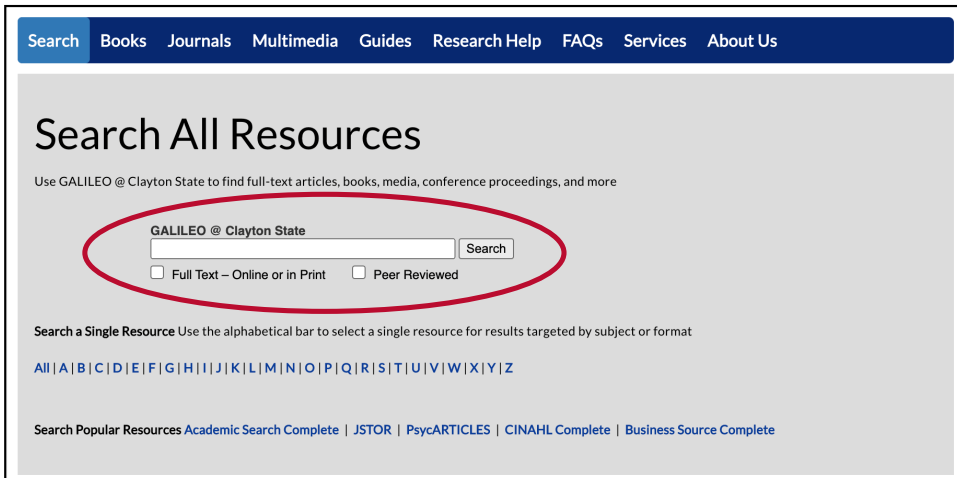
- ▶ "How to Shoot like Steph Curry: Shooting Form Blueprint," at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDMDOZW6rPs>,
- ▶ "The Difference between Western and English Riding," at <http://horses.about.com/od/horsesportsexplained/p/engwestdiff.htm>, and,
- ▶ Dana Becker, "Stress: The New Black Death?" from her book, *One Nation under Stress: The Trouble with Stress as an Idea*. Oxford UP, 2013, pp. 1–18.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING

Write about something you know. You don't have to argue or persuade, but write about what interests you. Do you know a lot about cars, the Beatles, raising goats? Do some research, cite your sources, and write about something that sparks your interest. Note that the key to this type of writing is effective summary.

## DRAFTING AND REVISING

Begin researching in the library. Find background information on your topic with Galileo. Find it through the [CSU library webpage](#). Note that the site changes often, so visit frequently. This screenshot is from 2021:



Read critically and take careful notes of the information. When you are explaining information, you need to pay careful attention to summarizing information clearly for readers. To do this, you have to be sure you understand the material you are explaining. Wendy Bishop, in *Acts of Revision*, offers the following strategy:

Two days after finishing your first full-breath, shareable, draft, copy your conclusion to a new file and write two pages, using the conclusion to begin your new draft. When working with a research paper, resist including any quotes. Now that you're more learned and expert about your subject, try to detail your points in your own words (you [must] include and attribute sources later). If you can't

do this, you have a clue that the sources in your full-breath draft may be shoring up a discussion that you don't really understand. (21)

If so, you need to reread and study your sources more carefully so you can write about them effectively.

Writing effective essays using sources requires that you take extra time on organization and transitions within the information. Bishop offers this strategy:

Insert subtitles into your text. This is as if you were inserting key headings from an outline into the text. Before and after each subtitle, develop reader-friendly transitions: consolidate what you said in the section you are ending and forecast what's coming in the next section. As you actually move past the subtitle into the next section, open by forecasting what is to come in this section and provide a bit of connection to the overarching point(s) of your whole text. In doing this, think of yourself talking to a friendly, interested listener. Later, [you'll] remove the subtitles. (20)

Finally, save time to revise your writing for what's called "synthesis" of sources. This means your essay should be a blend of sources rather than one summary after another. Your essay should be a cake, not a layer of flour, a layer of eggs, a layer of sugar, etc. Thus, try writing a "multi-colored draft." Assign your voice and each source a color (using Microsoft Word or colored pencils on a hard copy). Next, color the text from that source each time it appears in your essay. Examine the essay. Each paragraph should have your color mixed in with the sources. You should not have a red paragraph, a blue paragraph, a green paragraph, etc. If you do, sort your sources into themes and main ideas, and build your paragraphs around these.

## REFLECTING ON WRITING

Reflect on your assignment and what you learned. These reflections will be useful when you create your ePortfolio later in the semester. Questions to consider are as follows:

- ▶ What is the most surprising thing you learned about your topic?
- ▶ What did you learn about the CSU library that you didn't know before?
- ▶ What is your favorite signal phrase to introduce sources? Why?
- ▶ What MLA strategy about citing sources do you always have to look up? Which one(s) do you remember easily? Why?

### FOCUS ON EPORTFOLIO

This essay should include multiple sources, so it will demonstrate several of the learning outcomes required in your ePortfolio. This project, if assigned in class, might be a good choice as a Best Writing Artifact, so be sure to save a copy to revise if you choose it as your “best.”

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ANALYZING EXPOSITORY WRITING

As you read the essays that explain or inform, consider the following questions:

- ▶ What genre is the essay? Find another example of this genre in a magazine or on the Web, and discuss the similarities and differences.
- ▶ What is the writer's purpose? What strategies does the writer use to develop his or her purpose? Is this essay a response to another essay, a political event, etc.? Explain.
- ▶ Research in Galileo for additional essays on the topic. How do they compare/contrast? Discuss how the writers address various audiences (scholarly vs. mainstream, social sciences, humanities, etc.)
- ▶ What is the thesis of the essay? Where and how is it presented?
- ▶ What does the conclusion include? What strategies are successful?
- ▶ What type of introduction (or lede) does the writer use?
- ▶ How is the essay developed? What type of evidence is used?
- ▶ How is the essay organized? Write a descriptive outline of the essay by discussing what each paragraph **does** (its function in the essay) and what each paragraph **says** (its content).

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- ▶ How did the writer introduce and cite sources? Note the signal phrases.
- ▶ Research the essay's sources, and find the original. How well did the writer use the source?

### **PUBLISHED ESSAYS: EXPOSITORY WRITING**

All of the essays listed below can be accessed via the library's [English 1101 Course Reserves](#). Alternatively, click on an individual item for a direct link to the essay. Citation information is available on each essay's listing page.

- ▶ Kevin Davis, [“Does Going to College Mean Becoming Someone New?”](#)
- ▶ David Dodds, [“Beautiful Brains”](#)
- ▶ Elizabeth Aura McClintock, [“The Psychology of Mansplaining”](#)
  - Companion Video: [“Jimmy Kimmel Mansplains to Hillary Clinton”](#)

### **STUDENT EXAMPLES: EXPOSITORY WRITING**

#### **2021 SHARON SELLERS' FIRST-YEAR WRITING AWARD WINNER – ENGLISH 1101**

Amanda Knipper

Dr. Brigitte Byrd

ENGL 1101

19 October 2020

#### The American Football Jersey

Throughout the United States, the football jersey is a symbol of cultural pride for the most popular sport in the country. Sixteen years ago, while standing in my high school's gymnasium, I received my official

football jersey. As I enthusiastically gazed upon the uniform in my hands, I had not realized I was holding an item steeped with history that humbly started in 1896. The football jersey is a piece of history that survived societal underestimation, facets of human nature, prejudice, and restructure to become the iconic symbol of the most beloved national sport.

I fell in love with the game of football at an early age. In elementary school, at the age of six, I watched my first football game and was instantly mesmerized by the players, jerseys, and the excitement both on and off the field. Unbeknownst to my six-year-old self, I was captivated by a sport that descended from English rugby over 100 years prior and was distinctly defined from its origins by Walter Camp who is known as “the Father of American Football” (“Walter Camp”). The vibrant colors of red and white on the football jerseys that dashed across the field were extreme contrasts to the early simple uniforms of black, brown, or blue wool sweaters worn by players in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. My own football jersey differs from the ones I saw as a child. My predominately maroon mesh jersey, with a black stripe down each side and one across the top of the shoulders, is more tailored and body conforming similar to the design introduced in 1997 by the Denver Broncos which incorporated the use of spandex. “The development of nylons and polyesters, whisking away sweat without becoming heavy, now allows designers to leave little for defenders to grab, unlike the 1970s when Earl Campbell often lost pieces of his jersey” (Walker).

In the early development of the sport, most of society did not view American Football or the National Football League (NFL) as institutions that would become more than mere flight of fancy. Even the Father of American Football, Walter Camp, and the first Commissioner of the NFL, Elmer Layden, did not envision the scale and magnitude the sport, which they helped create and mold, could evolve into as it has today. However, even with the advancement of the league, social and racial prejudices have always remained prevalent in some capacity. Whether it was violence on the field and line of scrimmage or disallowing the use of the team's locker room due to race in the 1930s until after WWII or due to gender in modern times, it remains. Charles W. Follis (the first African American professional football player) "had to contend with hostile words, knees, and fists on the field, and hostile words off the field" (Crepeau). I recall the first time I told my high school's, newly appointed, Head Coach that I was interested in participating in the try-outs for a position on the team. His words of "girls don't play football, this is a man's sport. Why don't you try out for cheerleading?" made me realize that even with the progression that society and the sport have made, as a whole, there was still more than enough room for change. This was validated even more when I was knocked unconscious and unknowingly cracked my skull during practice by my steroid-using teammate. He was specifically chosen by the head coach to tackle me in an attempt to "dissuade" me from staying on the team because he didn't want a girl on "his" team. Like the players during

the modest beginnings of the sport, I persevered and earned my right to wear my football jersey. To play the sport I truly love just as Charles W. Follis, Joe Namath, Joe Montana, Lawrence Taylor, Emmitt Smith, and Jerry Rice did before me.

As the sport evolved further during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with the development of official teams, jerseys were still relatively simple and generally consisted of the main or “team” color of each particular team. “Wool and cotton were the materials of choice for years, in turtlenecks and sweaters to the more modern jerseys” (Walker). In the 1960s and 1970s, shorter sleeves began as a trend by some players rolling up their sleeves or altering them, and eventually more players adopted this style. “The 1960’s saw an explosion of color and new, bold logos. Teams adopted color schemes that would become iconic to their brand and lead to the evolution of team colors and logos that we know today” (“Original Throwback Uniforms”). As the popularity of the game progressed, jersey design evolved as well, transforming from turtlenecks to a more modern jersey style. By the 1980s, jersey sleeves were designed to be shorter and tighter. This particular style has continued in today’s modern designs. The extreme short sleeves and form-fitting design of my high school football jersey cause me to remember the exhilaration I felt, and still feel, every time I wore it, the fluorescent lights on the field, and the tackles and blocks of colliding players during a game.

The football jersey is a piece of history that survived societal underestimation, facets of human nature, prejudice, and restructure



to become the iconic symbol of the most beloved national sport. The original uniform of loose wool turtlenecks is unrecognizable compared to the modern short-sleeved jersey of form-fitting spandex and polyester. It has endured through tumultuous times of uncertain beginnings, racial discrimination, and redesign that were unimaginable to those instrumental to its success like Walter Camp and Elmer Layden. The football jersey has transitioned from dark-toned loose wool turtlenecks to vibrantly colored modern jerseys with each team's unique logo strategically placed on the uniform. The jersey has become an iconic symbol of cultural pride that is visible throughout the entire nation, which evokes a sense of camaraderie and unity within a diverse population to such a degree that was unforeseen in its fledgling beginnings in 1869.

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Jennifer Carmona

Professor Lamb

English 1101

8 November 2016

### Processed Meat: The Horror

When people order a burger, they often think about the satisfaction they will feel once their stomach is full. Like most, they do not think about where their food comes from, or how it reached their favorite grocery store or restaurant. They ignore the process of feeding, raising, and even killing the cow or pig they are about to consume. To sell more, animals are raised in terrible conditions and their diet is even worse. According to Christine Donovan, “large farms use hormones and antibiotics to make animals produce more food faster, and to prevent any illnesses that modern farming techniques may cause” (461). As much as we enjoy burgers and hotdogs, processed meat has been linked to several health issues and other critical factors.

Processed meats include “meat that has been transformed through salting, curing, fermentation, smoking or other processes to enhance flavor or improve preservation” (qtd. in Kluger 33). Americans no longer search for fresh meat, instead they consume products that can easily be obtained, such as those that are frozen or in fast food joints. To make matters worse, “health experts have warned that red and processed meats are linked to cardiovascular disease, obesity and various forms of cancer” (Kluger 33). If meat consumption continues to rise, we run the risk of having prostate, colorectal, and even pancreatic cancer. Heart attacks are also common for regular meat consumers. While pork or steak increases the risk, chicken and fish are much healthier, and as stated by Liebman “have less saturated fat than red meat . . . the omega-3 fats in fish may lower the risk of heart attacks” (4). Even though chicken is a better substitute, consumers still need to be aware of the risks between meat and cancer.

The most common cancer associated with meat is colorectal cancer. Upon first doubting if there was any connection at all, researchers have begun to relate the two which is not good news for the public. While most do not believe the chances of being diagnosed with cancer is high, findings show that “50 grams of processed meat per day—one hot dog or about six pieces of bacon—raises the risk of colorectal cancer by 18%” (Kluger 34). It may seem like a small rate of increase, but for those bacon lovers, the continuation of this habit can lead to a terrible health diagnosis. Kluger also adds, “the lifetime risk for developing colorectal cancer is just 5% for men and a little lower for women” (36). Although the risk varies

between men and women, this should not influence women to consume more meat. In fact, both men and women should consider ways to reduce the risk even more, and one way is changing the way meat is cooked.

As stated before, excess consumption of processed meat can lead to cancer. In addition, Ehrenberg explains that “the way meat is prepared may raise cancer risks, too. The high temperatures of pan frying, grilling and broiling can produce heterocyclic aromatic amines (also found in tobacco smoke), which damage DNA” (Ehrenberg 9). If change in DNA is mentioned, the consumer should automatically be concerned. According to Liebman, “they’re foreign substances that need to be expelled” (5). While many enjoy eating a fried slice of bacon, “it’s in that sizzle that the trouble starts” (Kluger 34). By simply cooking at lower temperatures, the risk is less. Liebman also states, “you can eliminate 90 percent of the HCAs if you microwave the meat, chicken, or fish . . . and pour off the juices,” roasting or even baking instead of grilling and barbequing can also be beneficial (6). Different methods of cooking meat can be used; consumers just need to find how to implement these into their cooking habits.

Overall, the consumption of processed meat is rapidly increasing. Hotdogs, beef, ham, and bacon are all enjoyed by the public, but the excess of these foods can lead to various health issues, one of them being cancer. The most commonly linked cancer is colorectal cancer, but prostate and pancreatic cancer are also a possible diagnosis. In addition, HCAs have been found in meat, and like cancer, they slowly destroy our

body. To solve this, consumers can change their cooking methods, or simply take meat out of our diet completely. Before ordering a burger, or eating a hotdog, consumers should think about the consequences and decide whether those five minutes of satisfaction are worth the risk.

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# 9

## WRITING TO CONNECT TEXTS: LITERARY ANALYSIS AND FILM ANALYSIS

Writing about literature gives you the opportunity to examine and evaluate a work of literature or an element of literature that you see within the writing. Through analyzing, you read a piece of work and try to make sense of elements that you want others to know about as you see the short story, novel, or poem.

When you analyze a short story, for example, you look at the elements that make a writing a short story and you break down these elements, looking for patterns. You ask yourself

- ▶ the *what*—what the work is saying,
- ▶ the *how*—how it gets the point across, and,
- ▶ the *why*—why this is significant.

When we analyze visual media, we approach it essentially in the same way. We observe patterns and relationships within the text and derive meaning. Sometimes our analysis shapes our perspective. As Sullivan notes, “Writing about literature is a way of sharing literature” (1). We share our perspective when we write about film as well. The following faculty essays in this chapter explore the realm of writing about literature and film.

## WRITING A LITERARY ANALYSIS

### Robert Pfeiffer

Writing a literary analysis is, in many ways, just like writing a research essay, except you don't have to go to the library or scour the Web for sources. In most cases, literary analysis only requires the use of the primary source (the poem, story, novel etc. being analyzed). Just like any other form of argumentative writing, your literary analysis should make a claim and support that claim with evidence. This time however, the evidence is the text itself.

When writing an analytical essay, it is important to remember this: an essay is about *one* thing. You should pick some aspect, theme, or device that you find interesting and fruitful, and explore that aspect as it exists within the text or texts. For example, you could analyze the theme of “love” in one poem, or in five novels, but you are still analyzing the theme of love, which is *one* thing. It is important to remember this because otherwise, you might fall into the trap of writing a “summary” and not an analysis. You should assume that your reader is familiar with the basic plot and characters of the text, and therefore not interested in having that explained to them again.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when working on a literary analysis:

- ▶ Do not confuse the author/poet with a character/speaker. These are different people and should be listed as such in your essay.
- ▶ When discussing a historical event, you should use the past tense.
  - For example: William Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* around 1600 A.D. (***The writing of the play is a historical event.***)
- ▶ When discussing a work of art, you should use the present tense.
  - For example: Prince Hamlet ponders suicide in his famous “To be or not to be” soliloquy. (***Discussion of the work of art uses present tense.***)
- ▶ You still need citations for quotes and a Works Cited page.
- ▶ When citing a poem, you use the line numbers, rather than page number.

While it may seem odd to you that your professors would ask you to write about a work of literature that has already been written about countless times, remember: it is not about uncovering something new that no one has ever thought of. It is about connecting your ideas and experience to the work and becoming part of a conversation that goes on around and about art by paying close attention to it. If the choice is yours, make sure you select a work that you are fond of, or at least find interesting. You always write better when you write about something you're interested in.

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## CULTURAL RHETORICS AND THE LITERARY ANALYSIS

### Stephanie Richardson

As citizens in this modern digital age, you'll be composing for audiences across wide ranging cultural communities. Whether you are writing emails to friends and family, posting blogs on social media, or engaging in letter writing campaigns to your local politicians, your rhetorical strategies adjust to reflect your sense of purpose, your sense of self, and your perceptions of your audience. Unfortunately, you may have occasion to feel as though your academic writing limits your sense of voice or fails to connect with diverse audiences. One strategy of helping you write for diverse purposes across multicultural communities is to employ Cultural Rhetorics, which many of you already utilize daily.

“Cultural Rhetorics” refers to rhetorical strategies implemented by various cultural groups for a variety of purposes. What distinguishes Cultural rhetoric from traditional academic discourse is the broader perception of audience, as well as the broader perception of “academic.” Historically, what students have come to value as academic discourse has predominantly been informed by principles of Classical Rhetoric, which has origins in Greek philosophy. However, scholars have examined ways in which rhetoric functions beyond traditional perceptions. Instead of conceiving of rhetoric through narrow lenses, scholars have documented rhetorical traditions prevalent across the globe that extend beyond those of Classical Rhetoric. Even within the United States, Cultural Rhetorics include the rhetorical practices associated with ethnicity, gender, social class, age, and even political parties. That is



to say that Cultural Rhetoric is expansive and dynamic; as long as the ways and spaces in which people employ language evolves, so too does Cultural Rhetorics.

Thus, you will benefit from exploring the variety of Cultural Rhetorics across America, especially if you will be communicating across diverse audiences. Furthermore, you may be surprised to learn that you may be already employing Cultural Rhetorics if you've ever participated in the practice of "code-switching," which is when you alter your rhetorical choices based on audience. As an academic endeavor, though, Cultural Rhetoric extends beyond surface level linguistic utterances. In most cases, the rhetorical practices of a culture are steeped in specific worldviews, values, and beliefs. In fact, you could argue that academic discourse itself is an example of Cultural Rhetoric, as it reflects specific principles based on a particular cultural perspective. Examining Cultural Rhetorics across America, however, will enlighten you to the variety of rich rhetorical gems that exist beyond Classical Rhetoric, and that understanding will help you become a greater writer.

As you ponder the question "How can I use my knowledge of Cultural Rhetorics in my academic writing," think about assignments that lend themselves to an exploration of one's language and culture. A perfect space for this sort of examination is the Literary Analysis. When reading a work of literature, viewing a film, or listening to a song, you are presented with a variety of elements open for interpretation from a cultural perspective. One such element is language. Begin to ask yourself questions like what does the artist's or author's use of language say about characters' social status, perceived educational background, intended audience, and/or cultural background? How does the representation of various cultural artifacts—such as one's speech, values, traditions, and world views—reinforce OR challenge dominant perceptions associated with different cultures? How does analyzing characters' dialect, code-switching, and traditions reflect specific themes, ideologies, or social commentary that the author or artist wants to convey to the audience?

As you examine ways in which Cultural Rhetorics are represented in literature, film, and music, you will broaden your understanding of the impact of language, culture, and rhetorical choices society. Not only can this exploration help you better understand various works of Literature,

film, and music, it can also strengthen your consciousness as a writer as you become more critical of the how your own rhetorical choices influence your audience's perceptions of you.

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## WRITING CONNECTIONS

Literary analysis is a form of evaluation argument; it is also similar to mainstream book reviews and movie reviews. Similar to a literary analysis, a rhetorical analysis examines nonfiction—an essay, a speech, or an advertisement—for its rhetorical devices and appeals.

Fiction writers also publish literary criticism, in which they evaluate the merits of other literature and writers (T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Langston Hughes, for example). There are ample excellent examples of literary and rhetorical criticism written by college undergraduates in *Young Scholars in Writing*, available at <https://youngscholarsinwriting.org/index.php/ysiw>.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING

Unless your instructor provides another topic, pick your favorite movie, book, TV show, or video game and argue about some aspect of it using textual evidence to support your claim. Here are two additional choices:

- ▶ the short story on the theme of context and expectations by Ron Rash, “The Trusty,” from *Nothing Gold Can Stay*, originally published in *The New Yorker*, available online.
- ▶ another short story on the theme of context and expectations by Kate Chopin, “The Story of an Hour,” available at [katechopin.org](http://katechopin.org).

Consult the Purdue OWL for ideas. Some suggestions include the following:

- ▶ A discussion of the work's characters: are they realistic, symbolic, historically-based?
- ▶ A study of the sources or historical events that occasioned a particular work

## DRAFTING AND REVISING

Your draft should have ample textual evidence to support your claim. After your first draft, examine your body paragraphs carefully. The topic sentence should be *general* enough to cover the paragraph and the support should offer *specific* examples. In turn, the examples you provide should tie clearly to the topic sentence. If you find they don't fit, don't just cut them from your draft. Instead, cut and copy them into a section you label "the cuts." Examine these later to see if they would fit into an existing paragraph or create a new one.

## REFLECTING ON WRITING

Reflect on your assignment and what you learned. These reflections will be useful when you create your ePortfolio later in the semester.

- ▶ What strategies did you learn for developing essays about literature or film that were helpful in your writing of this essay?
- ▶ Did you provide a hook that drew your reader in when talking about a work of literature or film?
- ▶ Did you avoid plot summary and choose a direction to your analysis?
- ▶ Did you write an analysis instead of just pointing out why you did or did not like the work?
- ▶ Did you gain insight about the plight of the human condition when reading/viewing and then writing about the work in an essay?

## FOCUS ON EPORTFOLIO

This essay will demonstrate several of the learning outcomes required in your ePortfolio. This project, if assigned in class, might be a good choice as a Best Writing Artifact, so be sure to save a copy to revise if you choose it as your "best."

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ANALYZING LITERATURE AND FILM

As you read the essays below, consider the following questions:

- ▶ Is there a particular passage or scene that sums up the main idea or highlights it dramatically?
- ▶ Is there a nagging question that comes to mind as you read, looking for the main idea or theme?
- ▶ Is there a striking image that makes you have that ah-ha moment where you know what the theme is?
- ▶ What thematic connections can you make that remind you of situations that exist today?
- ▶ What is the style of the work? How is it related to the theme?
- ▶ What do the main characters do in the body of the work? How do these actions relate to the theme?
- ▶ Are there any ideas or themes that are not fully developed?
- ▶ What technical devices are used to support the theme?

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## FILM REVIEW MODEL

### IS ERIK KILLMONGER OUR HERO? A FILM REVIEW OF MARVEL'S *BLACK PANTHER* (2018)

Khalilah Ali

While we celebrate Marvel's sci-fi epic *Black Panther*, swathed in our finest beauty supply store purchased knock-off Dutch wax fabric (read about the interesting history of your favorite "kente" inspired print), many moviegoers have engaged in conversations around celebrating blackness worldwide. What resonated with me when viewing director Ryan Coogler's and cutie Michael B. Jordan's interpretation of the character was—*is Erik Killmonger, the film's baddie, our hero here and not T'Challa?* (I will try my darndest to keep it spoiler free). Jordan's

character may indeed be the hero or, at least, the anti-hero of the film. However, Killmonger's heroism or lack thereof is not what makes him such a powerful character. Instead, Coogler's use of Killmonger as the metonym for black Americaness has far more relevance to the film's plot.

Killmonger's storyline in the film, not reflected in the comics, reveals a specific angst of those African descendants who were victims of European enslavement: Why did you (Africans) let them (White folks) take us, and didn't come and liberate us from captivity? The short and simple of it is they were busy fighting off colonization and the missionary zeal that reinforced it, and since Twitter didn't exist then, the news of the miserable slavocracy wasn't immediately apparent. Some historians have done a fabulous job vindicating the oppressors' misappropriation of technology for violence, and the European's savvy exploitation of long beefs between people on the African continent, who had no reason to see themselves as a racialized collective in the same way Europeans had no real concept of a white identity until pseudo-scientists came along and invented taxonomies of race that subsequently elevated Whiteness, systematized social Darwinism, and codified ideologies bound up with notions of the "white" man's burden. Before, as exemplified by the 100 Years War, Europeans also stayed set tripping. The intentional destabilization of African governments, specifically to exploit resources including African bodies, is unquestionable. The triangle trade is predated by an Arab slave trade, which is predated by a trans-African Mediterranean trade, wherein women were the prized commodity—yes, for sex, but more importantly for the African woman's ability to produce offspring that could repopulate kinship groups who were decimated by war, famine, or disease. African slaves by the time they'd hit ports to be finally sold in the European triangle slave trade had, on average, been traded seven times in the region.

This is where Killmonger's point gets somewhat messy. Who is to blame? Some African groups particularly on the former Ivory Coast and Bight of Benin in West Coastal Africa still have families who made their fortunes in the slave trade. In the same way, MANY American and European power brokers, not just plantation owners, can thank the trade, labor and general commodification of black bodies for enriching their coffers and that of their progeny. Not to absolve or romanticize Africans or their resistance, but by the 19th century, the collective nations that make up the continent of Africa had agreed to fight the trade and had actively resisted European

enslavement and colonization. A blog post is insufficient to relay the numerous examples of African leaders, including the oft-touted Queen Nzinga, who pushed back European encroachment once they figured out what had been occurring in the New World's slave system. In some of the most ravaged areas of west coastal and central Africa, enslaved folks retained their humanity despite their desparate status, in the West, not so much. Of course, the Johnny-come-lately-wokeness regarding the fate of enslaved Africans suffering in the triangle trade is a thing, but we'd be remiss to ignore the complicity of some of the greedier African traders who continue to engage in the trade even today in places such as present day Tunisia and the Sudan.

Consider—while we sit on our presentist self-righteous mud-clothed draped high horse—if a neighboring group that your clan had conflict with for millennia was caught and enslaved, you'd rejoice too. Hell, some of us are ready to kill another person from a different country, state, ward, neighborhood or zone—all drawn along lines we had no say in shaping, in a nation where black bodies were used to support the theft of land from its original inhabitants (“we” were here too btw). It's all so messy. However, I couldn't help but sympathize with African American Killmonger's plight, his angsty fineness and his argument espoused during the film's climax: when the kidnapping of indigenous Africans was discovered by the various civilizations that made up the continent's leadership, what was the response, and what is the current response? Killmonger asks this question to T'Challa and the leaders of Marvel's fictional Wakanda. Our black American antagonist Killmonger, the metonym for diasporic blackness, made a direct bloodline claim to the country's throne. Killmonger didn't only demand Wakandan citizenship, but also his birthright. The right to claim the throne and reparations from Wakandans for their failure to avenge (no pun intended) the desolation of African peoples spread throughout the diaspora. Although, I have attempted to answer Killmonger's impassioned rhetorical question, I still think the violence he inflicts on his fellow Wakandans is an outpouring of those feelings of abandonment. Not justifiable, but certainly understandable.

## PUBLISHED ESSAYS: LITERARY OR FILM ANALYSIS

All of the essays listed below can be accessed via the library's [English 1101 Course Reserves](#). Alternatively, click on an individual item for a direct link to the essay. Citation information is available on each essay's listing page.

- ▶ Kate Chopin, [“The Story of an Hour”](#)
- ▶ Alice Walker, [“The Welcome Table”](#)
- ▶ Jamaica Kincaid, [“Girl”](#)

## STUDENT EXAMPLES: LITERARY OR FILM ANALYSIS

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Michael Jones II

Dr. Sansbury

ENGL 1101

29 June 2021

### Grief as Displayed in *Wandavision*

*Wandavision* is a miniseries that aired on Disney+ from January to March of 2021. It follows Wanda Maximoff proceeding through the 5 stages of grief after losing the man she loved in an attack on Earth. The man she loved, Vision, was an android who fought alongside her, facing multiple threats against the planet and, eventually, the universe. Due to Vision's human characteristics, he and Wanda fell in love with each other. However, their romance was short-lived because he was killed in front of her during battle, which ultimately broke down Wanda to her core; following their victory against the enemy, she left her team and went to Westview, New Jersey, where she and Vision had bought a lot of land to settle down one day.

Here, she utilized her powers to create a new Vision, change the setting of the town to fit a black-and-white 1950s era sitcom, and control the minds of all the citizens to believe they are part of her fantasy.

Welcome to denial, our first stop in going through the stages of grief. In this phase, people tend to hold onto a more preferred reality, rather than the one they are faced with, and will do whatever it takes to stay in their fantasy such as with Wanda (Morrow). She has crafted a projection from her mind of her dead lover and has placed him, herself, and two fictitious twins in a *The Dick Van Dyke Show* lampoon where Wanda and Vision are married and face typical quirky conflicts found in sitcoms of that era. People from outside the town, which is encased in a magical bubble that no one can enter or leave, try to reach her via radio or imaging drones, and they are met with her leaving the bubble to confront them, threatening to kill them if they continue to intervene. It is at this point she transitions to anger.

The stage of anger is where the subject has moved on from trying to lie to themselves and, instead, becomes furious at the thought of the loss happening to them (Morrow). Once Wanda lashes out at the government agency attempting to reach out to her, she slowly fails at trying to hide her powers from the citizens of Westview yet still tries to fit into a sitcom persona of herself—at this point transitioning to a 1980s *Family Ties* spoof. Wanda's anger has been building up throughout the show so far, especially whenever someone almost breaks her delusion. Now she is not



afraid to let it out. During an argument with Vision over the illusions she's cast upon Westview and its citizens, Wanda lashes out at him, and they both activate their powers, appearing as if they are about to battle when a ring at the doorbell introduces her dead brother, Pietro, into the fold.

We now come to bargaining, where typically a subject will attempt to change something about their life or situation to avoid the cause of grief (Morrow). Now in a 1990s/2000s sitcom era reminiscent of *Malcom in the Middle*, Wanda is fully accepting of this false projection of her dead brother, ignoring the fact that she knows he is dead and has been for a few years at this point. She rationalizes what she has done to the town by saying that they must be "at peace" like she is (Schaeffer). At a point in this phase, during the night of Halloween, Vision departs in order to investigate more about the bubble that Wanda has put them in and how to free themselves of it. During his departure, Pietro tells her he will step up and act as a father figure for the kids tonight, and she is accepting of it and carries on with her plan for the night. Accepting Vision leaving is where we begin to transition into depression.

Depression is a stage that is characterized by a loss of pleasure or interest in doing things that usually brings joy (Morrow). As popularized by sitcoms like *Modern Family* and *The Office*, we now have a setting quite like 2010s era television shows where there are handheld camera shots and cutaways from the conflict to show a one-on-one interview with a specific character regarding the conflict. Wanda's depression is evident

through her refusal to get out of bed and to put on regular, presentable clothes; instead, she is okay with leaving the house wearing pajamas and a cardigan. She also begins to cut off people close to her and push them away. When her children mention where their father is, she says that it isn't important. She is also approached by her neighbor who offers to take the kids for the day, and Wanda doesn't hesitate to send them off with the neighbor. At this point it's worth noting that she begins to lose control of the setting around her: different set pieces transition in and out of certain eras of television, and she knows her façade she's created for herself is about to fail.

With the world she created falling apart around her, Wanda knows she must come to terms with what she's been avoiding this whole time, which represents the final stage of grief: acceptance (Morrow). In the final two episodes of the series, Wanda goes on a journey into her subconscious and is confronted with various traumatic experiences that she has bottled up inside. She comes to accept that the trauma she's experienced is not something she should let consume her and that she, herself, as a superhero, is not someone who will ever be able to live a life like the sitcoms she watched growing up. She releases the mystical control she had over the town and says, "goodbye," to the family that she had always dreamed of. Wanda then begins a new journey, dedicating herself fully to learning more about her powers and how to control them.

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**2018 SHARON SELLERS' FIRST-YEAR WRITING AWARD WINNER**

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18 September 2018

Fiction and Reality in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*

Authors often portray aspects of their personal lives in their works of literature, whether it be a short story or an extensive novel. This may leave the reader questioning the background of the story or the underlying meaning of a character's actions and personality. More often than not, the truth lies within the author and his or her experiences. Octavia Butler's background has a heavy influence on her novel, *Parable of the Sower*, as seen with the evidence that reveals parallels between her and the protagonist, Lauren Olamina, between Butler's hometown and the setting of the novel, and between her views on controversial topics of the world today and those in the novel.

Being a bright, mature young woman, Lauren Olamina is wise beyond her years. She enjoys writing and teaching others, as well as spreading the religion she created called Earthseed. Looking at Octavia

## Chapter 9 | Writing to Connect Texts: Literary Analysis and Film Analysis

Butler's history and personality, the connection between Lauren and Butler becomes clear. Both are African-American women born in California, and Butler, like Lauren, "was known for her . . . impressive height" ("Octavia E. Butler Biography"). Their physical appearances alone create a strong resemblance between Butler and Lauren. Another parallel between the two is that both have mental setbacks that challenged them day in and day out. Lauren suffers from severe hyper-empathy, which remains a defining characteristic of her character throughout the novel. Likewise, Butler "was dyslexic, but she didn't let this challenge deter her from developing a love of books" ("Octavia E. Butler Biography"). When Lauren is forced out on the streets following the destruction of her neighborhood and people, she makes the bold decision to pretend to be a man in order to avoid unwanted attention during her travels. This detail in the novel can be compared to Butler's high school years when she was often mistaken as a boy due to her physical appearance. This traumatizing experience ultimately may have influenced her to have Lauren pretend to be a man throughout much of the novel.

Besides their physical connections, Octavia Butler and Lauren Olamina share several hobbies. At a young age, Butler "took refuge in books" due to her reserved personality (Staples 7). Likewise, Lauren engulfed herself in books with information ranging from world religions to native plants in order to prepare for the inevitable destruction of her community. Not only do the two enjoy reading books, but they also enjoy writing. Butler, of course, took pleasure in writing science fiction, whereas

## Chapter 9 | Writing to Connect Texts: Literary Analysis and Film Analysis

Lauren writes about her thoughts, her experiences, and Earthseed in her journal. The relationship Butler creates between her personal life and Lauren Olamina's life is evident, and understanding this connection helps the reader further understand Lauren's character and role in the novel.

*Parable of the Sower* takes place in a dystopian America, focusing on regions in Southern California. Lauren Olamina lives in the walled community of Robledo which is near Los Angeles. Octavia Butler attempts to create a setting that reflects current trends she observes in the modern, urban society. For example, "Butler identifies the walling of communities as one process that is actually and already occurring in contemporary urban America" (Dubey). Growing up in Pasadena, California and "later earn[ing] an associate degree from Pasadena City College," Butler was submerged in the urban culture and setting ("Octavia E. Butler Biography"). She uses her extensive knowledge of urban California to create a setting that portrays the results of a corrupt nation. Later in the novel, Lauren attempts to travel north towards Washington and Canada after her community is destroyed in hopes to settle where there is less turmoil between citizens and in order to potentially grow Earthseed. Likewise, "Butler abandoned her native California to move north to Seattle, Washington," and since she wanted her works to be perfect, she "spent several years grappling with writer's block" ("Octavia E. Butler Biography"). Lauren's journey from one place to another closely reflects the actions that Butler took throughout her life in order to progress her writing career and eventually become one of America's greatest science fiction writers.

## Chapter 9 | Writing to Connect Texts: Literary Analysis and Film Analysis

As the plot progresses, Octavia Butler presents several details of what she believes contributes to a crippling society, the beginnings of which she saw in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when she wrote the novel. These horrifying aspects, which include “the increasing class gap, the fear of crime, the chaos of the cities spreading to the suburbs, [and] the centrifugal forces tearing our society apart,” play a key role in the development of the novel (Butler and Potts 334). However, they are not just unique to the nation in which Lauren Olamina lives, but in the nation, and world, today. Butler uses characters and their experiences in order to display these details. For example, Lauren saves two women from earthquake destruction and quickly learns that both “have suffered sexual abuse” (Agustí). Butler focuses on these crimes to society because she was distressed “that we see these things happening now in American society when they don’t have to” (Butler and Potts 334). The direct description of each of these crimes in her novel forces the reader to have a deep understanding of the detrimental effects they eventually leave on citizens and society.

Corporate slavery also prevails as a major issue in the novel as seen with the company town of Olivar, and with the experiences that several characters in the novel have of being a victim of corporate slavery. Citizens of Olivar work for the company and in return are paid extremely low salaries, forcing them into debt. Because of their debt, they inevitably are bound to the company and have no choice but to work in hopes to become debt-free. The characters of Emery and Tori Solis are prime

examples of debt slaves. Emery shares their horrifying experiences of being debt slaves to Lauren and her group. She describes the beatings they suffered, how her sons were taken away from her, and how they finally managed to escape. Butler describes the city of Olivar, as well as Emery and Tori's experiences, in order to compare it to the trends that have appeared in the past and those that continue to arise today. Specifically, it is the trend of "a few powerful people tak[ing] over with the approval of a class below them who has nothing to gain and even much to lose as a result" (Butler and Potts 334). Her novel deliberately confronts the characteristics of society which are devastating the world today by showing the direct result of them in a fictional nation.

Octavia Butler uses her novel, *Parable of the Sower*, as a platform to display not only her views on a declining nation but to provide insight on her experiences throughout her life. On the surface, one might see a completely fictional novel; however beneath the made-up characters and towns, lie very real problems and situations. She takes these complex issues in society and depicts them in a story that presents their effects on the relationship between desperate citizens and their nation. To further engage the reader and make the story realistic, she uses her own life as a foundation for the protagonist and setting. The realism of Butler's fictional but realistic world motivates readers to analyze every aspect of it in order to try to understand some of the realities of the world we live in today.

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Hannah Eubanks

English 1101

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2 October 2017

Betrayal in *Hamilton: An American Musical*

The theme of betrayal manifests itself in multiple different ways in *Hamilton: An American Musical*, written by Lin Manuel Miranda. In act one, the colonies start a revolution and break away from the King of England which leaves him feeling unwanted and angry. In act two, Alexander Hamilton is unfaithful to his wife while he and Aaron Burr go back and forth betraying one another throughout the entire act. In *Hamilton: An American Musical*, Miranda demonstrates the theme of betrayal and how it affects the characters' personal and political lives.

The king of England at the time, King George, was very vocal in expressing his thoughts about the colonies' rebellion. He was extremely pompous and boastful, and thought the colonies should have been more appreciative of him as their leader because they came from England. The king put on a brave face but he felt as if the colonies were stabbing him in the back. He trusted them to follow his reign and urged that they "have seen each other through it all," as a last ditch effort to get them to realize they needed him to continue to thrive (Miranda). He had a brief moment of vulnerability when he stated, "I'll love you till my dying days. When you're gone, I'll go mad, so don't throw away this thing

we had,” which showed how he cared for the colonies (Miranda). The king’s emotions turned to anger as he found out the colonies “cheat[ed] with the French,” who was England’s enemy, to fight against his monarchy (Miranda). Although he appeared tough on the outside, King George became quite angry as well as sentimental when the colonies betrayed him by rebelling against his rule and establishing their own country and leaders.

Alexander Hamilton blatantly and repeatedly betrayed his wife, Eliza, when she and Angelica went away for the summer and he stayed home to work. Hamilton was introduced to a woman who claimed her husband was not treating her right and Hamilton began an affair with her that became a “pastime” for him (Miranda). He showed no self-restraint because he could not say no even though he regretted the act and was aware he was cheating on his wife. He was not thinking about the repercussions it would cause until the woman’s husband threatened to tell Hamilton’s wife. Even after the affair was over, Alexander continued to destroy his relationship with his wife when he released his affair to the public in *The Reynolds Pamphlet*. He explained he “had frequent meetings with her. Most of them at [his] own house,” which showed he didn’t have the decency to have the affair somewhere besides his family’s home (Miranda). He didn’t think about Eliza and completely ignored the fact it was their home which represented family, trust, and faithfulness. Hamilton, sometimes a self-

indulgent man, destroyed his reputation and the trust of his wife while trying to save his political reputation and clear his name. He realized the truth was going to get out sooner or later, so he took matters into his own hands and provided his own justifications for what he did. Eliza responded with her feelings of utter devastation and disbelief. She thought she would be enough for Alexander and wanted him to be able to settle down with their family and not be consumed with work. Eliza was shocked and stunned at first that the affair had happened and she was “searching and scanning for answers in every line, for some kind of sign” (Miranda). She burned all the letters he wrote her because she did not want anything to do with him or remember the memories they created. She developed an animosity towards Hamilton and said “I hope that you burn,” which demonstrated her anger and near-hatred for him (Miranda). Eliza was still recovering from the affair when her son, Phillip, died. In an accusatory, demanding tone, Eliza asked “Alexander, did you know” (Miranda)? Hamilton again betrayed Eliza by putting their son in danger and allowing him to risk his life for Alexander’s own reputation, although Hamilton did not expect it to end like it did. Hamilton thought he was helping Eliza by keeping her out of Phillip’s affairs but this only added to her devastation and feelings of betrayal.

Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton began their relationship as friends, but once Burr betrayed Hamilton the first time, it was a back and forth battle, with Burr the only survivor. When Burr replaced Hamilton’s father-in-law in the senate Burr thought nothing of it, while Hamilton

felt betrayed because Burr switched parties to win. Burr simply said “I changed parties to seize the opportunity I saw” because he wanted to have a position in the government (Miranda). He was trying to be more like Hamilton and be more of a “go-getter” although he still did not want to share his views. Burr had always wanted to be more involved in politics and saw his chance so he took it. This is how he thought Hamilton achieved so much: he saw an opportunity and seized it without stopping to analyze the situation first. Hamilton again felt betrayed by Burr when he was confronted by Burr, Jefferson, and Madison about money inconsistencies. They accused him of “embezzling our government funds” and stated, “I can almost see the headline, your career is done” which made Hamilton angry because they were threatening what he had worked so hard for (Miranda). Jefferson and Madison were happy to betray Hamilton because they were not very fond of him and it meant they would have one less opponent in government proceedings. However, this was not the biggest blow to Hamilton and Burr’s relationship because Burr knew if he spread the news of the affair, Hamilton could share a rumor about Burr’s married mistress and both Hamilton and Burr’s political and social lives would be affected. This confrontation ended up greatly effecting Hamilton’s life and caused him to have resentment towards Burr, so when the presidential election occurred, Hamilton endorsed Jefferson instead of Burr. He claimed it was because “Jefferson has beliefs. Burr has none,” but he was also getting back at Burr for indirectly ruining an important aspect

of Hamilton's life, his relationship with Eliza (Miranda). This was the last straw for Burr because he looked "back on where [he] failed, and in every place [he] checked, the only common thread ha[d] been [Hamilton's] disrespect" (Miranda). He believed Hamilton was the reason he had not been as successful as he could have and began hating him for affecting his life so much. In this stage of his life, Burr was tired of always coming in second to Alexander and letting him overtake him in politics. This caused Burr to have an emotional awakening, making him want to fight instead of restraining himself like he had his entire life. Hamilton made another point to tell Burr he was not going to budge on his opinion about him because he wanted to defend his honor. This caused Burr to lose his patience with Hamilton, which he had been able to control until now, and propose a duel to settle all of the problems Burr and Hamilton had accumulated over the years. In a final act of betrayal, Aaron Burr killed Alexander Hamilton while Hamilton was going to "throw away [his] shot" (Miranda). Burr, who was full of anger, immediately realized his mistake. He stated "I was too young and blind to see. . . . I should've known the world was wide enough for both Hamilton and me" (Miranda). After the act, Burr could not believe it had come to this end and he felt as if he betrayed Hamilton because of his own jealousy toward him.

Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr were not only betrayed by each other, but by larger forces. Hamilton was betrayed by time, and

Burr by history. Throughout the play, Hamilton insisted “there’s a million things I haven’t done, but just you wait” and that he is “running out of time” which explains that he had so many thoughts and ideas he wanted the country to know, but he could not share them because he felt his time would be cut short (Miranda). Hamilton never wavered from his views, always stood his ground, and was never afraid of any backlash his ideas would create which ultimately led to his untimely death. He no longer was going to be able to do what he loved: share his opinions in an effort to create a better country, because time betrayed him. After he killed Hamilton, Burr realized that even though he “survived, [he] paid for it” because he was now the “villain in . . . history” (Miranda). When Burr’s name is mentioned, the main thing he is remembered for is killing one of the founding fathers who had so much more to accomplish. Burr’s character was “obliterate[d]” by history; he was not recognized because of his achievements, but because of his errors in life (Miranda).

Betrayal in *Hamilton: An American Musical* is one of the driving forces for certain characters and it causes them to do things they normally would not do. It leads to madness and excitement, heartbreak and forgiveness, envy and sadness. But most importantly, it makes them realize the things they need or want most, as when Eliza and Hamilton realized they needed each other to get through life, or when Burr realized, after he killed him, the country was better with Hamilton as one of its founding fathers. Acts of betrayal leave their marks on history and can

change how one examines an individual's story, as they did in this drama-filled, historical play, *Hamilton: An American Musical*.

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#### Road to Ashville

In Ron Rash's short story "The Trusty," Rash describes the encounter of a young girl and a prison trusty. Lucy, the young girl, is portrayed as naïve and simple, but with Rash's creative writing, he unfolds her character to demonstrate who she really is. To do this, Rash uses her marital issues and the arrival of the trusty, which give her a reason to escape. As the true manipulator, Lucy guides the trusty through what seems to be the road to Ashville. While in search for water, Sinkler the prison trusty arrives at a farmhouse, which happens to be Lucy's home. To describe Lucy, Rash writes, "The woman who appeared in this doorway wore her hair in a similar tight bun and draped herself in the same sort of flour-cloth dress, but she looked to be in her mid-twenties" (Rash). Rash describes Lucy this

way and hides her true persona behind her simple dress and bun. This fools Sinkler and prevents him from seeing her other side. Rash defies readers' expectations by detailing what the characters thought of each other and wanted to believe instead of what was actually happening.

As a prisoner, most readers would have expected for him to be in a cell or chained. Sinkler on the other hand, was a trusty. As a trusty, he was given the ability to be free without the need of such incarceration, thus making the interaction between both him and Lucy a lot easier. Rash writes, "For the first time since she'd gone to fetch her husband, Lucy stepped off the porch and put some distance between her and the door. The shotgun and axe, too, which meant that she was starting to trust him at least a little" (Rash). Although this for a moment gave Sinkler the illusion she would willingly surrender to his demands, Lucy proves otherwise.

To further help his characterization of Lucy as a simple, and harmless girl, Rash includes an insight of Lucy's marital issues. Lucy states, "I hate it here. He cusses me near every day and won't let me go nowhere. When he gets drunk, he'll load his shotgun and swear he's going to shoot me" (Rash). After telling Sinkler this, he believes to have a greater chance of seducing her. In reality, she has already fooled him by allowing him to think she is weak and vulnerable and will lead him to Ashville.

Rash uses their escape to reveal her character and how she manipulates him. Here it becomes clear that her characterization did not describe who she really was. The author writes, "a branch snagged Lucy's



sleeve and ripped the frayed muslin. She surprised him with her profanity as she examined the torn cloth” (Rash). Before this, Sinkler was fooled into believing she yearned for a man, not once would he have expected of such act from her. In fact, Sinkler found her to be senseless and planned to have fun with her, “a hotel room and a bottle of bootleg whiskey and they’d have them a high old time. He could sneak out early morning while she slept” (Rash). But still, Sinkler fails to see this outburst as a wakeup call, and instead he continues to follow, not knowing she is manipulating him by guiding him in the same direction. Ron writes, “Near another ridge, they crossed a creek that was little more than a spring seep. They followed the ridge awhile, and then the trail widened and they moved back downhill and up again. Each rise and fall of the land looked like what had come before” (Rash). Her plan was never to help: she just tricked him into thinking so.

Even though they were not headed to Ashville, she ultimately reveals this when Sinkler needs water. Rash writes, “The water was so shallow that he had to lean over and steady himself with one hand, cupping the other to get a dozen leaky palmfuls in his mouth. He stood and brushed the damp sand off his hand and his knees” (Rash). As he reached for water he had to steady himself, thus his hand was embedded in the sand. Later, he kneels once again for water, but here realizes something strange, Ron writes, “as he pressed his palm into the sand, he saw that a handprint was already there beside it, his handprint” (Rash). Lucy led him to believe she was helping him, when in reality, it was all fake. Sinkler

had already drunk water from that spring, but the confusion and tiredness of the travel had let him be fooled by who he thought was naïve and unintelligent. Lucy had the desire to be in control, and Sinkler happened to be the one she manipulated.

With Lucy's simple way of dress and her youth, Rash created the appearance of an innocent and naïve girl. Rash shows that she used this misconception about herself to her benefit and was able to direct Sinkler how she wanted, not how he imagined. Lucy overall was a manipulator in the fact that her true intentions were not to help Sinkler escape. In fact, she was always one step ahead and did not allow Sinkler to control her.

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