INSTRUCTOR’S RESOURCE MANUAL

to accompany

Ramage/Bean/Johnson

The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing

Third Edition,

Brief Edition,

and

Concise Edition

with

The WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition.

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Preface

The earlier editions of this instructor’s resource manual were enthusiastically received by both experienced and novice teachers, who praised the manual’s thoroughness and helpful advice. In this third edition, the strengths of the earlier editions have been retained, while the contents have been revised and updated in accordance with the changes and improvements made in the third edition of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*. Most notably, discussions are included for all new readings, material has been added to support the text’s new emphasis on analyzing visual rhetoric, all chapters are expanded in keeping with similar revisions in the textbook, and new chapters are included to accompany the text’s new chapters on analysis and synthesis and oral presentations. In addition, the manual’s chapters on teaching research have been redesigned in light of the extensive changes in Part 4 of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*. If you are familiar with the earlier edition of this instructor’s resource manual, you will also note that even in places where the textbook remained unchanged, the manual has been revised for improved clarity and direction.

The manual begins with “General Teaching Strategies,” a review of practical suggestions presented in a question-and-answer format. If you would like even more supplementary guidance of this nature, contact Allyn and Bacon for a complimentary copy of *The Allyn and Bacon Sourcebook for College Writing Teachers* by James C. McDonald (a collection of scholarship on composition theory and pedagogy), *Teaching College Writing* by Maggy Smith (practical tips especially helpful for new writing teachers), *An Introduction to Teaching Composition in an Electronic Environment* by Eric Hoffman and Carol Scheidenhelm, and *In Our Own Voice: Graduate Students Teach Writing*, by Tina Lavonne Good and Leanne B. Warshauer.

Other major sections of the manual you may want to read carefully offer advice for planning a syllabus based on *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* and using the textbook with non-native speakers and/or in an electronic classroom. The manual also contains answers to the handbook exercises found in the full edition.

The last chapter in this manual highlights the ways in which *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*’s approach offers many opportunities for students to work in each of the four domains outlined in *The Council of Writing Program Administrators Outcomes Statement*.

The remaining chapters in this manual, numbered to correspond with the chapters in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* (3rd edition), each contain these sections: “Understanding the Chapter’s Goals”; “Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles”;
“Using the ‘For Writing and Discussion’ Activities”; and “Guiding Students through the Writing Project.” Chapters 5 through 16, devoted to the writing projects, also include “Discussing the Readings.” You will find the manual most helpful if you at least skim the chapter in the textbook first. Together, the textbook and the manual will give you ample methods to engage your students in the vital study of writing.

Acknowledgments

I am greatly indebted to my colleagues at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, whose ingenuity and creativity show me new approaches to teaching writing with every hallway conversation and formal workshop or meeting. I am a better teacher and administrator because of them. Any errors or infelicities here are of my own creation.

I am also grateful to Vicki Byard of Northeastern Illinois University. She wrote the first two editions of this resource manual. Her excellent work forms the foundation of this edition.
General Teaching Strategies

Overview

In this opening section of the instructor’s manual, you will find many practical suggestions to help you accomplish your responsibilities as a writing teacher. If you are a teaching assistant or beginning instructor, you may want to read this section now and review it again as the course progresses. Even if you are a more experienced teacher, you are still likely to find ideas in this section that can enhance your expertise; scan the headings for concerns which especially interest you. The teaching concerns addressed are these:

- Preparing for the First Day of Class
- Designing Lesson Plans
- Fostering Student Participation
- Asking Questions
- Discussing Readings
- Explaining In-Class Activities
- Assigning Homework
- Facilitating Peer Review Workshops on Drafts
- Conferencing with Students
- Managing Journals and Portfolios
- Grading
- Keeping Records
- Handling Difficult Situations and Students
- Seeking Feedback to Improve Your Teaching
- Reading More about Teaching Strategies

Beneath each heading, the teaching strategies are presented in a question-answer format to help you quickly identify your concerns and find workable solutions.

Four additional texts are available from Allyn & Bacon to supplement this discussion of general teaching strategies: The Allyn & Bacon Sourcebook for College Writing Teachers by James C. McDonald, Teaching College Writing by Maggy Smith, and An Introduction to Teaching Composition in an Electronic Environment by Eric Hoffman and Carol Scheidenhelm, and In Our Own Voice: Graduate Students Teach Writing by Tina Lavonne Good and Leanne B. Warshauer. All of these texts are described in the annotated bibliography that appears at the end of this chapter. Contact your Allyn & Bacon representative if you would like complimentary copies of one or more of these texts. You may also wish to access the Allyn & Bacon CompSite Web Page for additional resources at
Preparing for the First Day of Class

What handouts should I prepare for the first class?

The most important document is the syllabus. It’s the first formal presentation of the course, and it gives students an idea of your goals and teaching style as well as key course policies. On pages 33-37 of this instructor’s manual, there are suggestions for designing syllabi for quarter-length and semester-length writing courses that use *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*. In addition to a description of the course goals, overview of major assignments, grading policies, and a review of any prerequisites, the syllabus should offer a daily or weekly schedule of requirements and activities. Even if you plan to distribute a more detailed schedule as the course moves ahead, use the initial syllabus to show students major deadlines, approximate reading and writing homework expectations, and examples of regular in-class activities. The syllabus should also provide contact information: when and where students can reach you (your office location and hours, your office phone number, fax number if you use it, and your e-mail address). The syllabus should also communicate your expectations for students’ behavior (what kinds of participation you expect, what penalties may be imposed for absence or late work, for example), as well as what students may expect from you (how quickly do you respond to essays, for example). If you have firm preferences for the format of assignments, outline those on the syllabus, even if they will be repeated on individual assignment sheets. Tell students up front whether you accept handwritten essays, require that planning work be turned in with the final version, prefer particular margin settings, or have opinions about the uses of staples, paper clips, or folders.

Another document many teachers like to distribute on the first day is a questionnaire that asks students information about themselves. You may want to know how you can contact them if necessary outside class time (address, home and work phone numbers, e-mail address), their year in school, their academic advisor, their major(s) and possible minor(s), their prior writing experience, other responsibilities at home or work that may limit the time they can devote to your course, and any special concerns they may have about this course. While some teachers ask students to write basic contact information on index cards or ask students to answer these questions on their own paper, others prefer a questionnaire so that students can complete the form at home and return it when the class next meets. Any students who miss the first day of class can simply be handed the questionnaire to complete, along with the syllabus and other course handouts they may have missed. A questionnaire also allows for a few open-ended questions that can acquaint...
you with students more quickly and can be used as a disguised (and therefore less anxiety-
provoking) diagnostic of students’ writing abilities. Some possible opening-day questions
include:
• What are your tentative educational and career goals?
• What previous writing courses have you had? What types of papers did you write in these courses?
• Do you usually like or dislike writing? Why?
• What kinds of reading and writing do you do outside of school?
• What is your opinion of your writing ability? What are your strengths? Your weaknesses?
• What do you hope to accomplish in this writing course? Are there any particular aspects of your writing ability you want more help with?

What should I try to accomplish during the first few class sessions?

Certainly it’s important that students learn the goals of the course and what work will be required of them. Using the first class period to begin working on the first writing assignment communicates to students that class time matters and will be used to help assignments move forward. Design a first-day, in-class writing assignment that functions as a lead-in to the first assignment. Collecting writing quickly from your students will allow you to begin a routine of reading and responding to student work, and it will allow you to get a feel for the writing styles in your class.

The first few class sessions are also vitally important for establishing the learning environment you want to create and building rapport with your students. Try to learn your students’ names as quickly as possible, asking them to correct your mispronunciations and to tell you if they prefer to be called by other names or shortened nicknames. It may help you to ask students to identify themselves before they speak in class for the first few sessions. Call students by name as often as possible so that students can learn each other’s names as well.

Some teachers like to use an icebreaker during the first or second class to help students become acquainted. An icebreaker makes students more comfortable with the teacher and their classmates, which can make participating in subsequent class discussions and small group activities less intimidating. Because students may be self-conscious introducing themselves, a common icebreaker is for students to interview each other in pairs and then each introduce his or her partner to the class.

Another icebreaker that works well is to give students a list of tasks and ask them to circulate among the room until they have completed every task. The tasks are structured to promote information conversation and get students learning each others’ names quickly. You can ask students, for example, to find someone who spends twice as much time as they do driving to campus, someone who has more siblings than they do, someone who has never
read their own favorite book, someone who went to a similar-sized high school, etc. This icebreaker gets students moving around the room, starting conversations that identify similarities and differences in the group.

You may also want to address during the first few class sessions your students’ attitudes about writing or school that could affect their work in your course. In small groups or as a class, ask students to discuss how their current attitudes toward writing developed. What did they like and dislike about their past writing courses, their past writing instructors, and their past writing assignments? Explaining ways this course is likely to be different from their past writing courses--such as the opportunity to write open form texts (explained in Chapter 1 of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing)--may increase their enthusiasm for the course. It is helpful for students to be aware of any attitudes they may have that may affect the way they approach working in college, and it is also helpful for students to set personal goals for the semester.

During the first few class sessions, try to use the full range of pedagogical formats you intend to use throughout the term (for example, lecture, class discussion with the chairs arranged traditionally, class discussion with the chairs arranged in a large circle, and small group work). When students are introduced to various seating arrangements and activities quite early in the term, they have more time to get used to the demands of each format.

Designing Lesson Plans

Why are lesson plans important?

While the syllabus provides the goals and schedule for the entire term, a lesson plan indicates the goals and agenda for one class session. To understand why both macroscopic and microscopic plans are important, consider the similarity between designing a writing course and designing a handmade quilt. For both, the maker needs to be concerned with the pattern of each smaller unit (each class meeting; each quilt square) as well as how the smaller units are artistically combined to contribute to the larger product (the course or quilt). Obviously, such complex planning is difficult to complete in one’s head. Writing lesson plans helps you to prepare for each class more thoroughly. Planning for each session in writing also prompts you to reflect on how to connect one class to the next.

The lesson plan has two audiences: you and your students. For teachers, lesson plans provide an organization and a structure. For students, lesson plans help them recognize the structure within each unit. Once you set goals for each class period with the lesson plan, communicate them with students. This helps students learn more effectively.
What should a good lesson plan include?

Begin designing your lesson plan by deciding on the objectives for the class session (based on the syllabus), the chapter of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* students are currently reading, and their upcoming writing project. Once you’ve articulated the goal for the day--and one main goal is plenty--decide how that objective can practically be achieved.

Think of the class session as several fifteen- or twenty-minute segments. Strive to cover just one main concept per time segment, using a variety of examples and in-class activities to illustrate the concept. According to composition scholar George Hillocks, who systematically compiled the results of over sixty research studies of different pedagogical approaches to writing courses, students best learn writing through hands-on, inductive activities that allow them to grapple with the underlying principles at stake. The in-class activity may be done individually, in pairs or small groups, or as a full class. Afterwards, the teacher facilitates a discussion of the concepts learned through the activity. Optimally, each class period will introduce a new skill or activity, allow students the chance to practice that activity with others, and will then ask students to work on their own.

Thus, when you are developing lesson plans, try to think of activities that can introduce students experientially to the concepts you wish them to understand. There are many ideas for such activities in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* textbook and this manual, but add your own as well. Rather than creating a lesson plan that focuses on the question “What will I be doing during class?,” try planning the class by asking, “What will the students be doing during class?” and “What will students be able to do after class that they couldn’t do before?” This will help you create lesson plans that keep each assignment moving according to your schedule.

In addition to in-class activities, it is helpful to plan in advance some provocative questions for class discussion (see “Asking Questions” on page 9).

You may want to begin each class session by quickly outlining for students in a corner of the chalkboard the agenda for that day’s class session. Both you and students can then keep the day’s goals in mind and be less tempted to drift from the topic. Previewing the plans with students also helps them to better understand the relationships among that day’s discussion topics. End every class by asking student volunteers to summarize the principles they learned during the period and the relationship of these principles to students’ next writing project. Also announce any homework, remind students what, if anything, they need to hand in that day, and forecast the topic of the next class meeting.

How do I decide how much to cover in each class session?
The mistake that many beginning teachers make is trying to cover too much in a class session. As you gain experience as a teacher, you will be better able to judge how much material to cover. You will also learn that, even for the same course at the same college, each group of students learns at a different rate. Thus, you will need to make adjustments as you get to know each class each term.

As a guideline for starting out, limit your lesson plan to just two or three concepts for each class session; then decide what activities you will use to teach these. Reserve time to discuss the activities afterwards. Until you become comfortable with managing class time, also plan a brief discussion topic or activity that can be done if students finish what you’ve planned much more quickly than you expected. If this additional idea isn’t needed, you may use it at the beginning of the next class session or save it for another day when the discussion ends prematurely. If you always have a standby discussion topic or activity ready, you’ll have no need to panic and dismiss students early, a detrimental precedent that can make students less attentive at the end of subsequent class sessions.

Fostering Student Participation

Why is student participation important?

Participation helps students learn better: they get to try out their ideas and, based on the response they receive from you and classmates, probe their own understandings further. Through student participation, the classroom becomes less teacher-centered. Students can learn much from each other; encourage students to directly address and respond to each other in full-class discussions, rather than using you as an intermediary.

How can I encourage more student participation?

The most important thing you can do to encourage student participation is to show students that participation matters. If you organize class activities so that students who participate in them move forward on whatever writing project is underway, students will value their participation. If participation comes to mean joining in a conversation about an essay in the book that is not clearly connected to the next writing assignment, or joining a conversation about current events without a related writing project underway, students will not see participating in class as valuable. Strive to construct activities that get students working with their drafts, developing new material or evaluating old material. If the activities you plan make a difference in the evolution of formal writing projects, students will respond well.
A good principle for encouraging participation: have homework before every class period that requires students to prepare something, even if it is an answer to a simple question, a short informal writing assignment, or some additions to a current draft. Have discussion and activities that enable students to work with others during the class period to build on that preparation, and then assign homework that allows students to practice alone what they did with others in class. This cycle will ensure that each class period follows well on the next, and it will get students into a consistent habit of participation and preparation.

Sometimes students don’t participate in discussions because they don’t feel they are an integral part of the class. If you frequently lecture for long periods, they may think their involvement is unimportant and remain passive even when you ask them for their input. Try to routinely structure class so that students have an opportunity to speak within the first ten minutes of the period. Students will then be likely to contribute to discussions more often and at more length.

The majority of the class may also be quiet if they feel that a few vocal students are willing and able to carry the class discussion. Acknowledge frequent contributors but don’t let any one student monopolize the discussion (e.g., “Thanks, David. I see your hand, but is there someone who hasn’t spoken today who’d like to answer?”). You may have a student who regularly blurts out answers to your questions, while others wait to be called upon. Often a student who speaks out of turn sits in the front of the room and does not realize that students sitting further back want to participate. Simply ask this eager student to raise his or her hand so that you can include everyone in the discussion.

To encourage your students to participate more equally, direct questions to students sitting in different areas of the room. Make sure your eye contact is with all students, but particularly those in an area of the room where few people talk. If you tend to stand or sit in the front of the classroom, move from side to side rather than regularly positioning yourself in front of the same students. If you walk around in the front of the room, walk towards the desks of the students who are most quiet or inattentive; often your physical presence alone will be enough to regain their attention and invite them to speak.

Sometimes students need a “warm-up” to discussion. If you want the class to discuss material they read for homework, first ask someone to summarize that reading, to remind the class of its contents. Then ask remaining students to add any other details they remember as important that weren’t yet mentioned. After focusing their minds on the reading in this manner, students will be better equipped to answer more challenging questions. If students are non-responsive when you ask a difficult, abstract question, give them a few minutes to first explore an answer in writing themselves or discuss their impressions with a classmate, and then ask several students to share their ideas with the
The examples you use to illustrate writing concepts also affect students’ participation. Your examples should reflect the diversity of your students’ backgrounds. For example, if some of your students are older than recent high school graduates, using activities or discussion topics that imply dependency on a parent will make these students feel they are not equal members of the class. Be alert to other possible biases in your examples too: gender; race; ethnicity; socioeconomic class; ablebodiedness; religion; etc. Use gender-neutral terms such as “significant other” or “partner” if you refer to romantic relationships to avoid assuming all students are heterosexual. If you show awareness of students’ differences and accommodate the breadth of their identities in class discussion, students who might feel they are a minority within the class will feel more comfortable participating.

Students are also more likely to talk in class when they feel comfortable with the other students. You may want to hold discussions with the class sitting in a large circle so they can see one another. If so, vary the location of your own seat each time so that you become a more integral part of the circle and no one spot becomes viewed as the position of authority. Small group activities can also help students become acquainted and feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts.

When students do talk, listen. Nothing else you can do is more powerful in soliciting further student participation. Ask follow-up questions respectfully and encouragingly. Whenever possible, validate students’ participation by using the students’ exact wording in your response and when you write their ideas on the chalkboard.

When a student gives a wrong answer, how you respond will affect not only that student’s future participation in class but also the participation of every student who considers it intimidating to talk in class. Never embarrass a student. First try to find the source of the person’s misunderstanding by asking “Why do you think that?” (ask this of students who give correct answers too) and if possible then ask questions about their explanation that will eventually lead them to the correct answer. Instead of stepping in as the “answer-giver,” give that role to the class by asking, “Does anyone disagree? Why?” Even if the first person to disagree gives the correct answer, if you think other students will have different responses, ask for their views too and lead the class to explore all the responses that are given.

Is it fair to require all students to talk in class?

Deciding whether or not to require all students to participate in class is difficult because the decision must be based on two quite significant yet disparate issues: what role you believe participation plays in the learning process, and how committed you are to respecting students’ personal (and even cultural) differences.
A colleague tells a story about encountering a former student whom she had during his first semester of college. Then on the point of graduation, the student told my colleague how much he had enjoyed her course, even though he thought she hadn’t realized that because he had never spoken in class. “In fact,” he said, with obvious regret, “I’ve never spoken in any college class I’ve taken.” He was a second-language student who feared other students might not understand his accent; the motives may differ for other silent students. This conversation illustrates that if teachers can do more to nurture into classroom discourse those students who almost never speak, particularly in first-year courses, their entire educational experience may change.

If you notice students who haven’t spoken after the first several weeks of class, you may want to call on them at particularly non-threatening times (to answer a simple question or to read a brief passage from the textbook aloud). Another strategy to help excessively quiet students feel comfortable speaking is to gently tell them after class that you’ve noticed they haven’t participated and then identify a specific question or topic you’ll ask them about during the following class period so that they will have a chance to prepare. With a few such empathetic nudges, silent students may begin to participate more regularly.

If any portion of the course grade is determined by students’ participation, clearly identify for students how you will evaluate this and at several points during the term tell them their current participation grade.

**Asking Questions**

**What kinds of questions should I ask?**

All questions are useful, but they serve different purposes. Some questions have a single correct answer and are helpful in assessing students’ comprehension. Other questions have many possible answers and require higher level thinking skills, such as synthesis, analysis, and evaluation. You may want to sequence questions so that what you ask becomes increasingly difficult as the discussion progresses. Also consider asking questions for which you don’t have an answer in mind, such as questions that ask students to speculate about hypothetical situations. Use follow-up questions liberally to urge students to elaborate on their brief or general responses.

**What are common mistakes in question-asking?**

Teachers often do not pause long enough after asking a question to allow students to formulate an answer. If students don’t answer after an extended pause, you may want to rephrase it or give them a few minutes to explore their responses in writing. Be sure that
your question is specific enough to direct their thinking (not “Does anyone have any responses to chapter three?”). Also be careful not to ask several different questions at once, which can make students unsure of which question you want answered.

**Discussing Readings**

**How should the essays in the textbook be discussed?**

You may want to devote some time to discussing the content of essays included in the text, yet the readings are primarily intended to illustrate the rhetorical principles discussed in each chapter. Using the questions provided in both *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* and this instructor’s manual, direct students to analyze the decisions the writer made in shaping the text.

You may also want to solicit students’ impressions of the readings in order to make students more aware of readers’ needs. If they complain that they disliked an essay or found it boring, can they explain why? Do they think most readers would have a similar reaction? Did their reactions to the piece change for the better or worse as they read? Why? How could the same topic be handled in a way that they would enjoy more? If they liked an essay, they should also be pressed to explain why. What from the reading is most memorable to them? Help students understand that it is not exclusively (or even primarily) the topic of the essay that determines its merit for readers. If they analyze their own responses as readers, they will discover techniques they may want to avoid or emulate.

**Explaining In-Class Activities**

**How can I give instructions so that my students begin work quickly and stay on task?**

Students often are slow to start in-class activities because they don’t know what’s expected of them. Giving them five types of information can help them work more productively:

- What process they are to follow
- What product they should produce (including its length and state of completion)
- How much time they will have in which to work
- What will be done with the finished product: will it be turned in? shared with the class? graded? if graded, based on what criteria and what percentage of the course grade is this assignment worth?
• What the relationship is between the activity and the writing principles being discussed in class and/or the students’ next major assignment.

If an in-class activity consists of several sequential tasks, explain only one at a time and let the students complete each part before you explain the next. If the activity is one that students will do in groups, have them move their chairs into groups before you explain the activity so that the groups will be ready to begin as soon as you finish giving the instructions.

What should be done after students finish an in-class activity?

Lead the class to discuss the lessons learned from each activity, particularly how those lessons apply to other writing students will do. If the activity is done in small groups, structure the discussion so that the groups report their conclusions to the class through turn-taking: ask the first group to tell one of its ideas; ask the next group to then share one different idea it generated; continue this turn-taking with no group repeating what another has said. When one group has exhausted its ideas simply pass over that group until all the ideas of every group have been voiced. This turn-taking method helps to keep the students in every group attentive throughout the discussion, rather than only when it is time for their group to speak. Turn-taking also allows all groups to receive recognition for their ideas, rather than having the last group or two speak after most possible responses have already been given. Having some product from each group activity—whether it is a report, or something turned in for participation points or a grade—keeps groups accountable for their work.

Assigning Homework

How much homework should I assign?

Many colleges have a published statement in their catalogue about the amount of time students should expect to spend on each course, usually three hours for each hour of class time (although national data suggests most students study about 4 hours a week for all their courses, making this commonly-heard estimate of 3 hours of study time for each credit hour wildly unrealistic). Students write at vastly different paces, making it hard to judge how much homework to assign. You should also consider several traits of your student body when determining how much work to require outside class: the average course load of your students; the typical work and family responsibilities of your students; and students’ skill in working independently. Based on these factors, you can judge what quantity and difficulty of homework will reasonably challenge your students. If you ask too much of them, they may feel that complete success is impossible and lose the incentive to even try.
However, asking some amount of regular homework will keep students moving on their writing projects. Homework helps students prepare for class, so keep a regular homework schedule. If you assign journals, consider having the journals turned in according to a regular pattern (every Thursday, or the first class of every month). Patterns to homework make it easier for students to do their homework.

Some brief tasks may be done during class time even more effectively than at home. If you want to discuss an essay in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* that is only a page or two long, you may want to give students a few minutes to read it during class before discussing it, particularly if what you do during the first half of class time will prepare students well for the reading. Because their recall of the reading will be stronger, the discussion of the essay may be more enlivened and thorough than if students had read the essay for homework. Similarly, you may occasionally want to give students a few minutes to freewrite during class, where you can observe their behavior and urge those who stop for prolonged breaks to push themselves to keep writing. Of course, longer readings and writing exercises that require more extensive thought should be assigned for homework.

**How should I evaluate homework?**

Deciding how to evaluate written homework assignments requires you to weigh the management of your own workload against providing an incentive for students to complete the work conscientiously. A portion of students’ course grade may be reserved for short homework and miscellaneous assignments (for example, some teachers give a grade to students’ critiques of their peers’ drafts) and if this is the case, the percentage should be identified on your syllabus. Then clearly explain to students how they can track their grade for these short assignments as the semester progresses (how much is a “check” or “check minus” worth?).

You can manage your own workload by having students receive more detailed responses to their short written assignments from the class. Use homework tasks as the basis for class discussion and call on students to share their ideas or even read what they wrote. You can also have students meet in small groups to provide each other with feedback on their assignments. When you then grade the work, your comments can be brief.

**Facilitating Peer Review Workshops on Drafts**

**Why are peer review workshops important?**

The most obvious benefit to peer review workshops is that the writers receive suggestions for revising their texts. But writers also benefit in needing to make decisions
about advice that may not be consistent among group members; such decision-making prepares them for more independent life-long development of their writing skills. Peer review workshops can positively affect the identity of students too. When they know that their texts will be read by people other than the teacher, they may no longer compose texts as students completing assignments, but instead as writers who need to win their audience’s interest.

Students also profit from critiquing others’ work. By reading others’ texts, students get to see a variety of ways that the same writing project can be approached, which in turn can increase their own creativity. When they cannot rely on the teacher to evaluate a text’s merits, they can no longer dismiss writing as others’ expertise and must try out their own critical abilities. As they listen to how other students in the group respond to the same draft, they learn what they overlooked in their own reading and become more critical readers.

**Should I assign the students to groups or let them pick their own?**

When students are given brief in-class activities, it may be easiest for them to work with students sitting near them; however, when students critique each other’s drafts, I believe it is best to assign groups. Place students so that the groups are as evenly balanced as possible in gender, age, race, and ethnicity. Also make sure the groups all have at least one extroverted person whom you think is likely to lead the group if others are withdrawn. It is also wise not to place friends in the same group: they are likely to read each other’s drafts anyway, and it can offset the balance of a group if some members are far more familiar than others. It may similarly disrupt the balance of a group if students whose native language is not English are placed in groups in which some of the students speak their native language and others don’t. A fringe benefit of assigning students who normally sit in different areas of the room to the same group is that as students get to know other members of the class better, students’ participation in class discussions often improves.

You must also decide how students’ levels of writing skills will affect how you group students. Some teachers like to diversify the skill levels in each group, on the premise that there will be at least one student in each group who can give quality feedback and the papers submitted for grades will thus be stronger. My own preference is to group students of equal abilities together. This way, the students with better skills receive helpful peer comments as well, rather than serving merely as tutors. Also, the students who are weaker writers are not tempted to simply let a peer “fix” their work. Of course, it is impossible to fully honor all of these criteria when forming groups—demographic diversity, outspokenness, native language, and writing ability—but do so as much as possible.

The size of peer groups should be based on how much time students will have to
discuss the papers. Whenever possible, assign at least three students to each group to allow
the chance for reviewers to disagree. When a group needs to resolve differences of opinion
about a draft, all members of the group learn. Having more than five students makes a
group unwieldy; the group members rarely participate equally. If the number of students in
your class don’t divide evenly, put the better students in a smaller group because they will
still use the allotted time well. Also, if there are students who are regularly absent, assign
them to larger groups or distribute them among all groups so that on the day of workshops,
absences aren’t likely to make any group too small.

The first time you assign groups, as you read off names and tell students which area of
the room to convene in, locate the groups that you expect to have more difficulty in the
front of the room, where you’ll be able to eavesdrop more easily and can intervene if
necessary. Groups with the strongest students can be positioned in more remote corners of
the room.

Teachers differ on whether or not to change the assignment of groups throughout the
term. Some teachers think it helps students to see how a wide range of students are
completing the assignments. I prefer to keep the groups’ membership consistent
throughout the term for several reasons. First, if groups are assigned thoughtfully, as just
described, it may be difficult for other arrangements to work as well. Second, the public
exposure of one’s work to a group of peers can at times be more intimidating than giving an
assignment to the teacher. If students stay in the same group all term, they become more at
ease with the other people in their group. However, you may want to rotate pairings for
other kinds of activities to ensure that the whole class dynamic stays productive. If every
group activity takes place in the same groups all semester long, cliques can form and
sometimes disrupt whole class functioning.

The most helpful reason to keep the peer review groups consistent, I believe, is that
students can then have the opportunity to observe and discuss the development of each
other’s writing abilities throughout the term, not just individual papers. A student who
worked particularly hard on an assignment is more likely to be enthusiastically praised if his
or her group members have read the student’s prior assignments and notice the
improvement. If a student’s paper is noticeably weaker than earlier assignments, the group
can recognize that too and help the student better diagnose the difficulty. Of course, if a
group doesn’t work well together, some substitutions should be made before the groups
meet again. I recommend keeping the group membership the same, though, after any
necessary adjustments early in the term.

What process will help students conduct peer reviews most
effectively?

The three most common models of peer review workshops are described in Chapter 18
Choose whichever of these models is likely to work best for your class. Students who work well independently can give more thoughtful responses if they prepare in advance, whereas less skilled students may need to interact with peers to thoroughly analyze a draft.

However you set up your groups, it is very helpful to have students prepare a writer’s statement in advance of peer review. A writer’s statement is a type of single reflection (see Chapter 27 in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*) which organizes the writer’s thoughts about the work completed. At the start of the semester, give detailed instructions about the writer’s statement; you may ask students to identify key portions of the assignment (where is the summary, where is the strong response, where is the thesis, for example), and you may ask students to report on the process they used to develop the draft. This gives the peer group valuable information about what has led up to the current draft. Perhaps the most important part of a writer’s statement, however, is questions for reviewers. You will need to train students to ask good questions which will help reviewers target their attention. Questions like “how can I make this draft better?” “What grade do you think this will get?” and “what did you think?” are not helpful, as they are vague and don’t reflect anything about the writer’s own thoughts. Questions like “Am I getting off topic in the introduction when I talk about walking my sister to the corner on her first day of school?” or “Does my tone on page 3 seem harsh? I’m trying to be fair to the people who disagree with the decision I’m describing” help readers understand the writer’s purpose and will set up good conversations.

Whether the draft is initially critiqued at home or in class, the writer should provide a copy of the text for each member of the group so that others can refer to specific areas of the texts in their comments and can respond to concerns of organization and paragraphing more readily. If the group first encounters the draft in class, require the writer to read the draft aloud while their group members follow along on their own copies. Practically, this allows all readers to finish reading simultaneously and prevents the writer from waiting, nervous and unoccupied, while others read. The writer has a chance to correct errors or confusing details that may have gone unnoticed while proofreading, and the other group members may get a better sense of the writer’s investment in the draft by his or her vocal expression, which can help shape how they present their responses. Because all the groups will be reading and/or talking, only the members of the writer’s small group are likely to hear the contents of the paper. After the writer finishes reading, group members should be given a minute to look back through the text and gather their thoughts before speaking.

Whether students read the drafts in advance at home or are read the draft in class, the discussion should always begin with the writer’s request for help with one specific skill or section of the paper. This can be based in the writer’s statement. In this way, the writer’s chief concern is addressed and group members are cast in the positive role of aides, not
judges, making both the writer and readers more likely to participate in the critique process comfortably.

After the group members address the writer’s primary concern, they can share other ideas they have for revising the paper and identify what they view as the paper’s strengths. While they may respond to the paper’s subject matter—conveying content is, after all, why people write—they should spend the majority of their time discussing the paper’s rhetorical strategies. To help students use their time productively, require them to use the “Guidelines for Peer Reviewers” at the end of each chapter in Part II of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*. Direct students to spend most of their discussion time for each draft on difficulties that span more than one paragraph: if the thesis of the paper is unclear, the draft may need to be revised so extensively that the sentences now containing minor errors will no longer be included in the revision.

Instruct groups to discuss each draft collaboratively, rather than having each student provide individual feedback in turn. When groups are interactive, they challenge or confirm each others’ opinions and reach consensus about a draft better. As students work, watch their interactions and intervene if they are not talking with each other.

**What are common problems with peer review workshops and how can I minimize them?**

One obstacle to small group work, whether responding to drafts or any other in-class activity, is that students are more accustomed to class sessions that focus on the teacher. Thus they may feel awkward or nervous when the traditional classroom format is altered. When you ask them to move into small groups, they may not fully face each other. Someone may sit a bit outside the group or, if no one in the group assumes responsibility for initiating the activity, they may begin completing the assignment individually. You can correct such reticence to group work simply by noticing it, walking over to the group, and asking for the change you’d like (e.g., “Could you scoot your chairs so there’s room for John to move into the group more?” or “I’d like you all to discuss each draft together, not just pass them around and write comments. Which paper do you want to discuss first?”).

Often students who are asked to critique another student’s draft will distrust their ability to do so. They may purposely undermine their comments by admitting that they have not done well in past writing courses, or they may state that only the teacher’s opinion matters because that is the person assigning grades. Some students overemphasize proofreading as a way to resist critiquing others’ work, confident only when they can offer objective corrections and convinced that any other suggestion they might make would be arbitrary.

You can increase students’ confidence in their judgment by critiquing a sample draft...
with the class for each writing project. Role-play the writer of the draft and have the class role-play members of your small group. If they offer you general advice, such as “Add more examples,” model how a writer should ask for more specific guidance: “Where?” If students disagree in their advice, don’t succumb to their requests that you supply the answer, but ask them to resolve the conflict themselves as they would need to do in groups, when the teacher is not present. I have also found it helpful to ask, “So, if I make all the revisions you’ve told me, what grade do you think the teacher will give me on the paper?” In my experience, classes are quite skilled at assigning letter grades on anonymously authored drafts. Asking them to explain their reasons for assigning that grade can help students to summarize the critique and remind them to devote their greatest attention to large concerns, not minor errors.

Even when group members willingly share specific suggestions, sometimes writers become defensive and monopolize the workshop time with justifications of their writing decisions. You can reduce this tendency by reminding students before the workshops begin that each writer has final authority in deciding what revisions to make in his or her text. Tell students that because there is limited time to discuss each paper, writers should restrict their own explanations of the paper and seek to discover how the writing is perceived by readers. If one person has a response they disagree with, they may want to disregard that suggestion, but if most of the group suggests a revision they dislike, it may be an indication that their text is coming across quite differently than they realize.

You may have groups that finish responding to the drafts well before the class session is finished and ask if they may leave early. Allowing early dismissal sets a detrimental precedent. If other groups see some students leaving, they may rush through the drafts they haven’t yet discussed. Also, if students learn they can leave class when they finish their group work, they may not be as thorough in future class sessions when they participate in peer review workshops. The best remedy for this problem is prevention: before students meet in groups for the first time, tell them that they must stay for the entire class session so they should pace their discussion of the drafts equally.

Peer review activities need not take up a whole class period, and if you find that groups are consistently finishing early, you may want to rethink your timing. Particularly early in the semester, it is more effective to start with shorter review assignments that help students learn how review groups function. With tight time constraints students may stay on task better, and they will gradually move into spending longer on reviews. Structuring reviews so that the tasks get more complicated over the course of the semester is a good way to help students learn how to be effective peer reviewers. Responding to writing is difficult work, as any writing teacher knows, and students will need support and instruction in order to improve their own skills in this area.
You can help in this pacing by periodically announcing the time and saying how far along the groups should be (how many drafts done, how many to go). If a group still finishes early, you can prompt them to be more thorough by asking each member of the group what suggestions he or she received for revising the paper. If, for example, the student says, “They told me to include more examples,” ask the student to tell you what places in the paper need additional examples and what those examples could be. If the student cannot be specific, you can then direct the group to help that writer further. In a group that finishes early, there is almost always at least one student who doesn’t know how to apply the group’s suggestions specifically, so redirecting the group in this way gives them more to work on. If all in the group are convinced they have nothing else to discuss, direct them to use the remaining class time to begin revising.

**What should I be doing while my students are working?**

If you join a group, students will view you as the authority and be less likely to assert their own opinions about a draft. Instead, be available as a resource person if any group has a question that no member of the group can answer. Even then, it is helpful not to sit down with the group, which could prompt you to stay longer. Rather, model your behavior after a Chinese juggler, who keeps several plates swirling on top of poles, returning to quickly spin whichever is beginning to wobble, but staying only long enough to give it the momentum it needs to keep moving.

When no group needs your help, watch the dynamics of the groups carefully from the front of the room. If any group is especially quiet, approach them and ask what’s causing their difficulty. You can also use your time to check that each student has his or her draft completed and, if it does not excessively interfere with a group’s progress, you might call a student who has been doing poorly in the class to confer with you in the front of the room about his or her work. Avoid interrupting groups that seem to be working productively without your assistance.
Conferencing with Students

Why is conferencing with students important?

Conferences are the safety net that ensures each student receives individual attention, that comments you make on papers are reinforced, and that students’ needs get voiced. Some teachers use conferences to respond to every paper a student writes, while other teachers schedule only periodic conferences with students throughout the term or perhaps just a mid-term conference to assess with each student his or her progress.

However frequently they are held, conferences allow you to individualize your instruction, much like mini-tutorials. You may want to use conference time to help each student identify the consistent strengths and weaknesses of his or her previous assignments and then set goals for their future work. Conferences also give you the chance to discuss problematic behavior with students, such as frequent absences, tardiness, or missed tutorial appointments.

How can I manage conferences most effectively?

Prepare a sign-up sheet to take to class so that students will have a precise time to see you. Impress upon students the importance of arriving on time or calling your office if an emergency requires that they reschedule the conference. Then explain to the class the format you will use when you meet with them each individually.

If you are using the conference to respond to the draft of a writing project or to grade its revision, you may either read it with the student during the conference or in advance. In either case, remember that the chief asset of conferencing with students is the teacher-student dialogue conferences permit, so be careful not to monopolize the discussion. Ask the student his or her own reactions to the paper and together devise a plan of action for revising the paper or, if this is a final graded version, applying what has been learned from this paper to the next writing project.

In my own experience, periodic conferences work best when students are told they will direct the discussion and are given an assignment to help them prepare. For example, you might tell students to look at your comments on their last several papers and list what writing skills they most need to improve. They can prepare to discuss with you their plans for improving this skill and how they intend to address it in their next writing project. In the conference, you can then confirm or redirect their plans. You might also assign students to come to the conference with one or two questions they have about what has been discussed in class or what they have been reading in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing.*
Managing Journals and Portfolios

Why and how might I assign journals?

Teachers have different objectives for assigning journals in writing courses. Some present journals as storehouses for writing ideas. Others want students to increase their self-awareness and self-expression through journal writing. Still others want students to write often, simply to improve their stylistic fluidity and gain a more individualized written voice. If you require students to keep journals, examine your own motives so that you can shape the requirement accordingly.

You will need to decide whether you will occasionally assign students certain subjects to write about in their journals or always let them write about whatever they wish. To encourage students to use their journal for personal reflection, many teachers give students the option of folding over and stapling shut any pages they don’t wish the teacher to read. In my experience, however, journals work most effectively when they are clearly connected to other work. Make sure students understand why you are assigning journals, and what function you ascribe to them. Simply writing more will not make students write better. Be explicit about what role you hope journals will play. Also tell students how often you will collect journals. If you wait until the end of the term, some students undermine the purpose of the journal by writing a lot at the last minute as if it were written earlier. You might prevent students’ procrastination by collecting journals periodically (to manage your own time, you might even divide the class into half or thirds and collect the journals from different groups at different times) or by asking them to bring their journals to scheduled conferences so that you can quickly browse their work.

Additionally, tell students how you will evaluate their journals. Some teachers use quantity as the only criterion for journal grades. If you require extensive journals, it may not be feasible for you to comment on them in detail; writing summative comments on a separate sheet of paper can help preserve the student’s sense of ownership regarding the journal. Another possible approach to journals is to not require them of all students, but to make them a necessity for anyone wanting an “A” in the course.

Why and how might I assign portfolios?

The portfolio method entails grading each student’s work cumulatively, rather than grading the writing projects individually. The chief benefit of portfolios is that they allow students more opportunity to revise their papers and to apply lessons learned at the end of the course to papers drafted early in the course. In this way, portfolios allow a teacher to more easily assess students’ growth in writing skills, rather than evaluating students’
papers as discrete texts.

Portfolios can vary greatly in their design. Some teachers require students to include all of their writing assignments in their portfolios with substantial revisions. Other teachers let students select which writing projects they revise to include in their portfolios, arguing that even professional writers do not submit every piece they write for evaluation. Whichever of these common approaches you prefer, make sure students understand the number of documents and revisions you expect their portfolios to include. If you do permit students to choose which texts to include, you may wish to still set some general parameters; for example, when you are using *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* you might require students to include at least one open-form document.

Some teachers also assign students to include an analysis of their work in the course as a part of the portfolio. In this analysis, students might discuss the following: why they chose to include particular documents in the portfolio (if they are not required to include every assignment); a self-assessment of their strengths as a writer, with particular references to texts in the portfolio that can support their claims; an analysis of the ways in which their writing skills still need improvement; and a plan for their continued development as a writer after the completion of this course.

Most teachers grade portfolios holistically, assigning one summative grade for all the work contained in the portfolio. Thus, portfolio evaluation changes not just *when* papers are grades but also *how* they are graded. Do all you can to demystify portfolio grading. Provide clear, written criteria for how you will evaluate portfolios. If your program has grading rubrics, show them to students early in the semester, and note on your assignment sheet how each individual assignment is connected to your course goals and grading rubrics. Explain as specifically as possible the extent to which including a single text in the portfolio that is particularly strong or particularly weak will impact the grade of the entire portfolio. If possible, several weeks before portfolios are due, provide students with a sample portfolio that you can use to demonstrate how you will read and evaluate their work. You may want students to read the sample portfolio for homework, then discuss the portfolio in small groups until each group arrives at a consensus for the grade it would assign the portfolio. The groups can then explain their reasons for assigning that grade to the class until the entire class, along with you, comes to a consensus about the grade the portfolio should receive. This exercise can help students better understand your expectations for their own portfolios.

You can also lessen students’ anxieties about grades by giving them a tentative course grade at midterm and/or discussing their progress with them in detail during conferences. In some portfolio systems, midterm portfolios are graded, which can be a nice compromise between students’ desire for clear direction about grades and teachers’ desire for students to
have time to revise.
**Grading**

**What should my comments on papers include?**

Your comments on students’ writing projects should accomplish three goals: they should develop students’ sense of an audience by reacting to the paper’s content; they should explain and justify the grade or other evaluation; and they should provide guidance for students on how they can improve their future writing. Terminal (end-of-paper) comments are best if they adhere to this sequence.

In evaluating writing projects, direct your greatest concern to major rhetorical principles. Make sure the project has a thesis or focus, that the ideas are well developed and are suitable for the intended readership, and that the paper is well organized. Most writing specialists agree that deficiencies in sentence style, grammar, punctuation, and spelling are of secondary concern, unless they are so pervasive that they affect the intelligibility of the text. Early in the semester, you may want to focus on identifying repeated patterns of error rather than marking every mistake. This will help students set reasonable personal goals for editing the mechanics of their writing. It also helps students understand that their grade is primarily the result of rhetorical issues, that every error has not necessarily lowered their grade.

Including positive comments can be as important as making corrective remarks, even (perhaps especially) when the paper receives a low grade. If there are few strengths in the paper, marginal comments that praise a single sentence or paragraph—“Great description here!” or “Good insight!”—can motivate the student to continue improving.

It is important to help students see specific places in their work where they have achieved strengths. Simply telling a student “wonderful analysis here” may not help the student understand where that analysis was achieved. Similarly, help students see where the specific weaknesses in their text are located. Your comments should help students see their essay in a new light, and that will only happen if your comments are specific.

**How should grades be communicated?**

Students have a right to grades on their papers in a timely manner, always before they are assigned to draft the next essay so that they can apply your advice from their previous work. If it is possible to have a schedule for returning papers, such as one week after they are submitted, announce that in class so that students will know what they can regularly expect.

As you grade, some minor alterations in your practice can help to make students feel
less alienated from their own work. After years of having their schoolwork graded by teachers who use red pens, many students associate this ink color with authoritarian instruction and their own errors. Simply changing writing implements—for example, to a green fine-point marker, which stands out well from type and students’ own ink colors—can affect students’ reception of your comments. Make comments personable by beginning the terminal comments with the student’s name. Also, marginal comments and some terminal comments can be stated quite effectively as questions: “How could you divide this long paragraph?” or “What about the counter argument that . . . ?” Using a question format prompts students to consider other possibilities without becoming overly defensive.

Don’t use unfamiliar grammatical terms or obscure abbreviations. You may want to try using a highlighting pen to identify students’ errors, without labeling or correcting them, and then assign students to turn in corrections. When you return essays, you can organize students into groups to compare highlighted errors and try to correct them. Any errors that stump the group can be turned over to the whole class for discussion. When you think the student needs a fuller explanation, list the page numbers that the student should read in the handbook portion of the textbook.

If a grade was lowered as a penalty for lateness or some other policy, clearly indicate that on the paper, or return the paper with a copy of the relevant portion of the syllabus attached and the policy highlighted.

At key points during the semester—certainly at midterm and just prior to students’ final writing project—tell each student his or her current grade in the course.

What additional techniques can make the grading process more educational for students?

Different students will react differently to the quantity of your comments. Some students will study every comment carefully and attempt to learn from each. Other students will have difficulty distinguishing between major and minor comments and may feel so overwhelmed by extensive comments that they are not able to concentrate on any of them. If you view comments as a teaching tool, not just a means of evaluation, it is important to adapt the quantity of comments to students’ individual learning styles. I do this by asking students to tell me how extensive they want me to be in my comments: whether they want me to identify just the most major concerns; whether they’d like me to comment on every concern I notice; whether they want me to mark only the grammar and punctuation mistakes that become a repeated pattern or whether they want every error identified. Asking students to tell me how they interpret teachers’ comments improves their learning and saves me time from writing comments students won’t use. Students can best judge their own learning process. If you use writer’s statements, as suggested above, students can communicate these sorts of preferences there.
One way to understand how students are using your comments is to ask them to write back to you after each essay. If you ask students to summarize your comments, and then to react to those comments, you will quickly learn where interpretive differences arise. It will enable you to negotiate styles of responding that are appropriate for each individual. With this technique, students can raise questions about a comment or marking you’ve made they don’t understand, an emotional reaction to their grade, an explanation of their intentions in writing something you found problematic. When you require students to respond briefly in writing to your assessment of their assignments, you are assured that students have read your remarks thoroughly, and you enable those who would be reticent to discuss their concerns with you to take that initiative.

The first time students write these responses, you can convey your appreciation by writing short notes in return to all students. Thereafter, you need only to thank students for their responses and write your own responses just to students who ask you questions. Such exchanges diffuse the authoritarian nature of the grading process. They bring students’ voices into the evaluation process, the last bastion of the teacher-centered classroom. Without student-written responses, I would not have learned that one of my students thought clichés were desirable when used as transitions. I would not have known that, even though I had written a personal response to a student who wrote about the death of several family members in a car accident, the feedback she most wanted was to know whether reading her paper had made me cry. This told me she was successful in seeing me as an authentic audience, not a teacher reading her work out of compulsion.

To get students’ most honest responses, give them a few minutes to write them in class after you’ve returned assignments. Immediate response has the added benefit of letting students express any strong emotional responses (delight or anger/frustration). It is often better to return work towards the end of a class period, so that responding to your comments can be the last activity of the day. If students respond to your work earlier in the class period, they may be distracted from the work of the day.

An alternative to writing comments is to provide audio taped comments. Students can turn in a blank cassette tape with their paper, allowing you to discuss the paper more extensively than may be feasible in writing. I have done this by identifying the paper on tape before I begin reading it, then pausing the tape as I read but recording again whenever I have a comment or response. This technique works well with both weak and strong writers. Weaker writers respond better to the conversational tone of a tape than the commanding tone they imagine lurks in succinct, written comments. Strong writers appreciate the more thorough feedback that speech makes possible. You can often convey both praise and encouragement more enthusiastically on tape because the student hears your voice. When conferences may be unrealistic for every assignment because of schedule
constraints on you and your students, audiotapes allow a similarly conversational response. Conferences give students the chance to participate in the discussion, but tapes have the advantage of greater permanency. A student may listen again to your comments before writing the next paper or may save the tape if the paper is one he or she especially likes. On the paper itself you need write only the grade and a brief sentence or two summarizing your taped remarks, to satisfy students’ curiosity until they have an opportunity to hear the tape.

How can I feel less frustrated by the sheer volume of grading I must do?

Many teachers consider grading their least enjoyable duty. Certainly it is time-consuming and often its chief reward is just that one finishes it. While grading may always be labor-intensive, it may be less frustrating if you perceive it as not merely evaluative. Try viewing grading as integral to your instruction in the course. While during the class session you are able to address your students as a group, when you grade you are able to teach each student individually. Grading gives you the opportunity to know your students better and personalize your instruction through your comments.

Keeping track of the time you spend on each essay is important. Less experienced teachers often agonize over grading, and end up spending much more time on each essay than might be necessary. Grading can easily expand to fill the time available, and you can use an egg timer to help limit your own time. Set a reasonable standard (say, 15 minutes per draft) and see what it would take for you to stick to that time. Even if you adjust the amount of time you spend per draft upward, you will become more conscious of what you are doing at what pace.

The techniques described above for making grading more educational for students can also make grading papers a more satisfying experience for teachers. If you use the technique of audio taped comments, the greater variety of grading methods can make it less tedious and keep you engaged. Also, when students respond to your comments on their papers, you won’t feel the disappointment that can come from hours of writing careful comments only to see students quickly shove their papers into backpacks and never look at them again (at least not in your presence). Their feedback can show you that your work is making a difference.

Keeping Records

What information should I record about each student and each completed assignment?
Obviously you need to keep a record of students’ assignment grades. If you have an attendance policy, record absences. If participation in discussion is part of students’ course grade, periodically assess and record that evaluation. You may want to note the dates of students’ visits to your office hours or tutorial sessions in the writing center so that if a student’s course grade is borderline, you can use such indications of extra effort to decide between grades. Record any lateness of students’ work or failure to have completed drafts for small group critiques.

In addition to the grades on writing projects, you may want to note for your own reference the topic of each student’s paper so that you can remember the paper more easily if you or the student refers to it later. This record of topics is also helpful if any students in future terms cannot think of topics for their papers. Also briefly jot, for your eyes only, your impressions of each paper, especially its major weaknesses and the suggestions you gave the writer for improving the next paper. You can then more easily track patterns in each writer’s difficulties and improvements as the semester progresses.

What alternatives exist to grade books for keeping records?

One alternative to the traditional grade book is to keep all your records on large index cards. Use one card per student and on the front side, record all information with the exception of written work. This might include attendance and, if you’d like, reasons students give you for absences; reminders about excessive tardiness (so that you can speak to a student if this becomes a recurring problem); and dates of office hour visits and writing center tutorials. Reserve the back of the card for grades and notations about students’ written assignments. Jot here too any reminders that drafts or papers were late so that you will see that note as you assign the grade.

Index cards allow more room for notes than grade books so you are able to guide students’ progress better, rather than responding to each assignment in isolation. They are also less messy: rather than marking students absent and then needing to cross those marks out when students enter the room late, simply set to one side of your desk the cards of the students who are not there when you check attendance and as they come in, move their cards to the stack of those who are present. At the end of the period, record the absences on the remaining cards.

You may also wish to explore any of several electronic programs for keeping records. If you still prefer using a grade book, wait until the class enrollment stabilizes (at least the second week of classes) before recording students’ names in the book. To minimize errors, skip lines between names and between vertical entries.
Handling Difficult Situations and Students

How should I handle student absences and tardiness?

Stating an attendance policy on your syllabus and consistently enforcing it clarifies your expectations for students and tells them what behavior will allow them to succeed in the course.

An attendance policy also benefits you. You don’t need to repeat lessons for those who have missed class. If students have attended class regularly, they will know the strategies specific to each assignment and your grading is likely to be quicker. Regular attendance also helps the students in the class to be better acquainted, which improves the dynamics of class discussion and small group work.

The attendance policy you set should be based on your college policy (if one exists), any special characteristics of your student body that could affect attendance (such as a high enrollment of students with children and full-time jobs), and the number of times per week the course meets. Also decide if you will distinguish between excused and unexcused absences and adjust the number of permitted absences accordingly. Finally, word the policy so that the penalty is clearly understood. If the penalty is a drop in the course grade for three unexcused absences, how great is the grade reduction? Does the grade change take effect on the third absence or the fourth? Will the reduction occur for every three absences or only the first three, no matter how many absences follow?

If you have an attendance policy, make sure students see you recording absences even after you have learned their names and no longer need to call roll. Otherwise, they may think you won’t enforce absence penalties.

If you have a policy that involves distinguishing excused and unexcused absences, be clear to students about how you will make those distinctions and what information you will need to make the determination. If you require documentation, explain that on your syllabus.

The key element to successful attendance policies is keeping an emphasis on the positive value of class activities and student participation. Assure students that class time matters, and make your daily lesson plans reflect your belief that students can get things done in class that advance their writing projects. If class time is used well, students will be more inclined to come to class. Even if students miss class, a healthy emphasis on well-chosen activities enables you to have conversations with students about how they are planning to make up the work they missed, rather than conversations about the reasons behind their absences. Keep your focus on the work you want students to do, and
attendance issues will not be a burden.

**How should I respond to students who are disruptive or inattentive?**

It can be difficult to concentrate on your lesson when you notice a student who is talking, eating, or even sleeping. Because students may simultaneously be enrolled in large lecture classes where such behavior goes unnoticed, don’t assume that students are knowingly being disrespectful. A student may be talking to her neighbor because she is asking a question about the discussion topic, or a student’s eyes may unintentionally drift closed because he was awake all night studying for an exam or has arrived at a morning class after working a night shift. Rather than interpreting such behavior as a deliberate offense and becoming angry, a brief comment such as “Karen, I need your attention” is usually sufficient. Often students are naive about the effect their behavior has on you and their classmates.

If a problem persists, discuss it with a student after class, stating firmly but calmly what behavior must be changed. Only if the inappropriate behavior still continues should you address the student more stridently during class: “Brian, I’ve discussed with you now several times how disruptive it is when your beeper goes off during every class. You *must* turn it off before class starts.”

In all situations, it is both cruel and counterproductive to humiliate students. Remember that your response to one student may affect your rapport with the entire class.

**How should I handle student complaints?**

If a student comes to you with a complaint—whether it be about a course policy, their small group, or a grade—listen open-mindedly. Try to resolve any difficulty with the student as fairly as you can. If you are unsure whether to grant the student’s requested change, tell the student that you will reconsider the matter and let him or her know your decision the next time class meets. Don’t feel pressured into making a quick decision simply because a student has a complaint; your only obligation at the time is to listen respectfully. Whenever you do not fully grant the student’s request, inform him or her of the college’s grievance procedure so that the student can decide whether to pursue the matter further. Such information ensures that students’ rights are not violated and can also diffuse a student’s anger.

If a student becomes confrontational, begin keeping a detailed log of your encounters with that student to defend yourself from any charges the student may eventually make. Immediately after each troublesome incident with the student, record in detail what was said by both you and the student and, if there were any witnesses, their names. Date each
entry. If you anticipate the student making a formal complaint, don’t wait until that happens to discuss the situation with your program coordinator or department chair. If you are ever physically or verbally threatened by a student, alert campus security immediately.

**How should I respond to students’ personal problems?**

The first year of college is an emotionally difficult time for many students. Students may write about personal difficulties they are currently facing in their journals or writing projects, or they may come to your office to ask for advice directly. Your best course of action is to express appreciation for the students’ trust and then inform them of campus resources where staff are professionally trained to help them. If you sense a student is in grave danger—perhaps suicidal or at risk of being physically harmed by someone else—request permission to call the proper support services while the student is there in your office. On the phone, you can discreetly indicate that you have a student in your office who needs to speak to a counselor on an emergency basis. If possible, then walk the student to that office and wait together until the counselor is available.

**Seeking Feedback to Improve Your Teaching**

**What techniques might I use to personally reflect on ways to improve my teaching ability?**

In addition to using outside resources to improve your teaching—students, colleagues, and publications, all discussed in more detail below—you can regularly evaluate your own teaching performance. After each class meeting, make notes on your lesson plans about which activities, questions, and discussion topics worked well and which didn’t. Although a different group of students might not respond identically, over time this type of analysis will help you develop a larger repertoire of teaching ideas and better judge the effectiveness of new techniques.

Keeping a journal solely devoted to your teaching is also a way to improve your teaching ability. Explore your goals for your classroom persona, your relationship with students, what your mission is in teaching writing, and how you see your identity developing as a teacher. Whenever an observation or experience that affects you outside school seems relevant to your teaching, jot it in your teaching journal. If anything disturbing happens in class—for instance, if a student makes a prejudiced remark—write about how you handled the situation, how you felt about that action, and how you might want to respond the next time a similar incident occurs. Use the journal to record insights about teaching you have gained from particular students or from interactions that have taken place in class.
How can I learn from students to improve my teaching ability?

Typically, students’ anonymous evaluations are solicited at the end of the course. If your college or department uses standardized forms with closed-ended (multiple choice) prompts, you may want to supplement the required evaluation with your own form to obtain a more thorough assessment from your students. Some helpful questions to consider are:

- What do you think are the strengths of the course material?
- What suggestions do you have for improving the course material?
- What do you think are my strengths as a teacher?
- What suggestions do you have for improving my teaching ability?
- What is your overall evaluation of this course?

If you ask about the course and your instruction so generally, without prompting students to discuss specific components of the course (such as small group critiques of drafts), you will learn what components of the course students found most significant.

Final course evaluations help you improve your teaching in future academic terms. To make improvements for your present students, you may want to also have students complete midterm evaluations of the course. This is particularly helpful if you sense the course is not going well but are not sure why. At midterm, it can be helpful to ask students four questions:

- What should I continue to do in order to make this class successful for the rest of the semester?
- What could I change from this point forward in order to make this class more successful for the rest of the semester?
- What should you continue to do in order to make this class successful for the rest of the semester?
- What could you change from this point forward in order to make this class more successful for the rest of the semester?

These questions encourage students to reflect on their own role in the successes and failures of each class period, and they usually result in quite practical suggestions for manageable changes (for example, students sometimes ask me to adjust the schedule by which I post information to our course website). To increase students’ assurance that their evaluations will not affect their grades, you could require anonymous, typed evaluations as a homework assignment. If you cannot grant students’ requests for change, explain why. The student-teacher discussion generated by midterm evaluations can correct misunderstandings of both parties.
Another strategy for midterm evaluations is for you to leave the room while students arrive at a consensus about their evaluation of the course. To do this, students first meet in small groups and generate a list of what everyone in the group agrees are strengths of the course and areas that need improvement. The only ideas that should be recorded on the group’s list are those agreed upon by every group member. A spokesperson for each group then reads the list and if most other students agree, the idea gets recorded by a student volunteer on one master evaluation that will be given to you. Once the master list is generated, the class should discuss specific ways you might implement the suggested improvements. These recommended actions should also be included on the evaluation. It is useful to allot the second half of a class meeting for this activity and have one student deliver the evaluation to your office or mailbox at the end of class. That way, you have time to carefully consider their evaluations before responding. On some campuses, facilitators are available who can come into your class and conduct such conversations with students, which can help manage high feelings.

Apart from explicit evaluations, students reveal your effectiveness through their course work and comments. If most are having a similar difficulty, you may not have caused it (it may be a weakness typical of first-year writers), but it can indicate how you can better help your students. When students ask questions or make comments in class that show misunderstandings, thoughtfully consider whether you have unintentionally caused that confusion. By not becoming defensive, you are able to learn from your students how you can best teach them.

**How can I learn from colleagues to improve my teaching ability?**

If you are fortunate, you have colleagues who would also like to discuss teaching and improve their instructional skills. You might urge the department to announce a regular meeting time for teachers interested in exchanging instructional ideas, perhaps over lunch in the campus cafeteria. Or, you can discuss your courses with a few colleagues to identify who is eager for such interaction and then form a professional support group. In addition to discussing together what you have done in class and what you plan to try, you might also observe one another teach.

Many campuses also provide services to enhance teachers’ instruction. Check to see if your college offers workshops or employs teaching consultants. Most colleges have services for videotaping the teacher for a class session, which is an invaluable means for you to assess your delivery style.

**Reading More about Teaching Strategies**
Where might I find more ideas about teaching techniques?

This selected annotated bibliography lists especially helpful books which discuss techniques for teaching college-level writing courses. The books themselves include more extensive bibliographies.


This text--designed for use by teaching assistants, new faculty members, and adjunct instructors--offers practical advice on many components of writing pedagogy: creating assignments; using readings; responding to student writing; teaching grammar; managing class discussion, conferences, and small groups; and designing courses. Each chapter includes scenarios and “ideas for discussion” to facilitate novice teachers’ comprehension of the topics discussed.


Seven of the twenty-three essays in this collection discuss how to use portfolios in writing courses, including their use in secondary classrooms, a basic writing course, first-year composition courses, a writing across the curriculum course, and training programs for new college writing teachers. The text also includes essays discussing the use of portfolios for proficiency testing and for program assessment, essays addressing the political ramifications of portfolios, and a selected bibliography.


This text offers a variety of views from graduate student teachers of writing, some new, some more experienced. It offers a balance of theory and practice, offering practical support for new teachers while encouraging them to problematize and theorize their teaching situations. The collection is arranged thematically.


After providing a rationale for writing conferences, the author discusses how to
organize conferences, reviews possible conference activities, explains the role of diagnosis in conferences, and recommends strategies for teaching grammar. The book ends with a bibliography and appendices of conference excerpts and practice activities.


This text provides detailed guidance for both experienced and inexperienced teachers who wish to make creative use of technology in a composition environment. Topics covered include the use of word processing, e-mail, and the Web in composition classrooms; course preparation and lesson plans for teaching a computer-assisted writing course; strategies for finding and evaluating resources electronically; netiquette; sample web pages; a troubleshooting guide; and a glossary. This text is available as a complimentary supplement for adopters of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*.


This volume offers a scholarly introduction to the teaching of writing, including concise synopses of related fields: the history of rhetorical theory, linguistics, and cognition. The text provides advice for instruction about words, sentences, and paragraphs, as well as prewriting, drafting, and rewriting. Suggestions for designing courses, developing assignments, and responding to student writing are also included.

In this collection of previously-published essays, leading rhetoricians offer essential discussions of composition theory and pedagogy. The issues treated most thoroughly are composing processes, organization, style, critical thinking, argumentation, and evaluation. Selected bibliographies are also included. This text is available as a complimentary supplement for adopters of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing.*


Most of this text is devoted to an explanation of how to teach expository writing, particularly its structure and style. Specific guidance is offered for teaching the research paper and the rhetorical analysis, as well as narrative writing and poetry writing. Additional chapters discuss the roles of students and teachers.


This book is the result of the author’s weekly interviews with five graduate students who were second-year teachers of writing. Through extensive interview excerpts, the author explores the formation of teachers’ professional identities. Some of the issues discussed include some new teachers’ resistance to theory, the impact of past teachers on new teachers’ performance, the relationships of new teachers with their students, and the difficulties some new teachers face in considering themselves teachers.


Designed for new teachers of writing, this text collects a range of practical advice on everything from designing a syllabus to preparing a teaching portfolio. The book’s fourteen sections each contain examples of experienced teachers’ practice, plus excellent advice on how to reflect on and develop additional materials.


This text is written for first-time college writing teachers. It explains how to prepare
for the course before it begins (including designing a syllabus) and how to teach the first four class sessions of the term. The largest section of the book discusses techniques teachers can present to help students with their prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading. The final chapter offers advice about grading. This text is available as a complimentary supplement for adopters of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*.


The first half of this book develops a theoretical framework for the teaching of writing, including but not restricted to college-level courses. In part two, concise, practical advice is given for facilitating classroom instruction, teaching “nonmainstream” students, designing writing assignments, and grading. The author uses the findings of empirical studies to support his recommendations.
Suggested Syllabi for
The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing

A major asset of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing is its adaptability for widely divergent course objectives and schedules. The text offers a cornucopia of writing projects, enough to allow instructors to vary their assignment selections when they teach the same course and to make the text useful for consecutive courses. As you become more familiar with The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing, and more excited about its opportunities for instruction, your most difficult decision will be what chapters to exclude.

Most teachers allot one to two weeks for each major writing project, although a researched project may require up to three weeks for the development of a first draft. Many teachers allot additional time for revising workshops, particularly in a portfolio context. Possible adjustments to this schedule include the following: spending only a short time on the brief projects in the first four chapters; spending more time on longer papers that involve research; teaching chapters in Parts Three and Four of the textbook simultaneously with related chapters in Parts One and Two; and sequencing some of the writing projects in Part Two so that students can write on the same topic, making possible a quicker succession of assignments.

The discussion that follows can help you design a syllabus that is most appropriate for the objectives and length of your course. Rather than delineating a weekly syllabus, this advice allows you to decide the number and pace of writing projects your students will complete, and which additional chapters you would like to assign. The recommendations are divided into what you might want to cover during general time periods of the course (beginning, middle, and end), what chapters are best for courses with different emphases (sampling of genres; informative writing and research paper; computer-assisted writing), and what adjustments to make for courses that are shorter or longer than a semester (in a quarter system or two-semester system).

Beginning of the Course

The first four chapters of the textbook lay the foundation for students’ understanding of writing as a process that involves problematizing and rhetorical assessments. Chapter 18, “Writing as a Problem-Solving Process,” supplements this discussion by explaining writing as a process. The information presented in these chapters is crucial to students’ successful understanding of writing, so try to include all five chapters in your syllabus. The writing projects they assign are brief, often completed in less than an hour (and Chapter 17
has no writing assignment). If you like, you may even assign the chapters for reading without requiring that students complete all of these short projects.

The class can also begin to read and work with Chapter 18 early in the course, although this chapter is so comprehensive that it is best to divide the chapter into each of its nine lessons on composing and revising closed-form prose and teach just one or two at the time, while working with other chapters (most likely, Chapters 5, 6, or 9; Chapters 7 and 8 are more open-form). Also, the first part of Chapter 25, “Oral Communication: Working in Groups and Giving Speeches,” will prepare students for the peer review of drafts recommended for each of the major writing projects. Simply get students started on a writing project from Part Two of the text and, when they are well underway, incorporate these chapters.

Chapters 5 and 6, grouped under the heading “Writing to Learn,” are not within the traditional repertoire of composition textbook assignments, yet they should not be overlooked. These chapters teach students that what they see and read is constructed, not fixed truths, and therefore open to interpretation and critique. The chapters can dramatically improve students’ critical thinking abilities. Ideally, cover both, but if you don’t have time, Chapter 6, “Reading Rhetorically: The Writer as Strong Reader,” will be most applicable to the research-based projects students might be assigned in this course or other courses they will take.

**Middle of the Course**

Select from among the writing projects in Part Two to decide which chapters you would like to teach. The section below titled “Well-Paired Chapters” offers advice about which chapters work particularly well together. There are also suggestions below for courses that aim to introduce students to a wide range of genres, that emphasize informative and research writing, and that emphasize computer-assisted writing. Chapter 19, “Composing and Revising Closed-Form Prose,” can be divided into its different lessons and taught throughout the middle section of the course, to help students improve in basic skills while they simultaneously work with other chapters devoted to major writing projects.

At midterm, you may want to schedule conferences with students (if you haven’t held them already) to confer with them individually about their progress in the course and goals for the remaining weeks (see pages 17-18 in this manual for additional advice regarding conferences). Consider having students write a reflective self-evaluation of their writing midterm (based on Chapter 27) to both assess what they have learned and plan goals for improving their skills in the remainder of the course. You may also want to have students review Chapter 25 so they can reassess and improve the dynamics of their group activities and peer reviews.
If your course will include a research paper, it need not be the last assignment. Students are often overburdened with work at the end of a term, so scheduling a research paper earlier can enable them to devote more time to it. Chapters 21, 22, 23 and 24 can be combined with one or more assignment chapters to guide students throughout the process.

End of the Course

If you would like to include in your syllabus Chapter 12, “Analyzing a Short Story” or Chapter 26, “Essay Examinations: Writing Well Under Pressure,” these are good selections to reserve for the end of the term. Both address academic genres quite different from the other writing projects in the textbook. Their novelty can help keep students engaged as the course ends, and their relevance to other college courses can serve as a transition into the next academic term. If you’d like, you could even assign an essay exam as the final for your course, asking students to respond to questions about key concepts you have taught, e.g., methods of exploratory writing and talking; the writing process; or the continuum of closed-form to open-form prose. The comprehensive reflection described in Chapter 27, when assigned at the end of the course, helps students synthesize what they have learned.

Well-Paired Chapters

Many of the chapters in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* complement each other well. Often the chapters that don’t assign writing projects can be taught simultaneously with related chapters that do, enabling you to fit more instruction into the course. Another way to accommodate more chapters into the course is to have students pursue a similar topic through sequential assignments. What follows are suggestions for links you may want to make as you plan your syllabus.

- Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 18 can be taught in quick succession during the first few weeks of class (see “Beginning of the Course” above).

- Chapters 19 and parts of Chapter 25, on groups, can be begun as students are working on their first closed-form writing project (see “Beginning of the Course” above).

- Chapter 19 can also be taught along with Chapters 3 and 4.

- Chapters 5, 6, 10, and 11 can serve as a powerful sequence of assignments. They expand students’ notions of what constitutes “text”; help them see these texts as constructed, not fixed truths; and encourage students to interpret and critique in ways they may never have before.
Chapters 7 and 20 can be taught simultaneously.

Chapter 8 can be taught with Chapters 13, 21, 22, 23, and 24.

Chapter 9 can be taught with Chapter 19.

A wide array of chapters can be linked in a research sequence (see “Course Emphasizing Informative Writing and the Research Paper” below).

Chapters 14 and 17 can be taught sequentially, with students directed to work with the same topic for both projects. To include research, these chapters can also be linked with Chapters 21, 22, 23, and 24.

Chapters 15, 16, and 17 can be taught as a persuasive sequence.

**Course Emphasizing Range of Genres**

If you want your course to introduce students to a wide spectrum of types of writing, you could, for instance, have them work with Chapters 1 through 4 to gain a basic understanding of the premises of college writing, then assign writing projects based on Chapters 7, 9, either 10 or 12, 15, and 26. You can coordinate these chapters with the chapters in Parts Three and Four of the textbook as suggested above.

**Course Emphasizing Informative Writing and the Research Paper**

If you want to devote a large portion of your course to informative writing supported by research, there are many chapters you can link to help students build their skills cumulatively. You might begin this section of the course with Chapter 6 to teach students to be critical readers. Chapters 8 and 13 taught together could then help them plan and initiate a research project they will carry out over the term. While students continue their research, teach Chapter 11 to help them analyze the numerical data they uncover, and Chapters 21, 22, and 23 to help them find more sources. Then teach Chapter 9 as the basis of the research report, simultaneously covering Chapter 18 on composing and revising closed-form prose, and returning to Chapter 23 for support in using and citing sources.

An alternative to basing the research paper on Chapter 9 is to require that it be a proposal and to base it on Chapters 14, 15, and 17. In either case, this chapter sequence need not be adopted in its entirety. You can decide how much time you have to devote to this project and how much you think it would profit students.

If you link multiple chapters, it is imperative that students choose a topic they will remain interested in for several projects. The benefit of sequencing assignments so that
they can be done on the same topic is that students will not need to continually exert effort over new content, but can instead devote their energies to reading about new writing strategies and applying them to familiar material.

**Course Emphasizing Computer-Assisted Writing**

In a course emphasizing computer-assisted writing, teach Chapter 22 much earlier in the term than you otherwise might and focus attention on the evaluation of electronic sources. You might begin with this chapter, or teach it in conjunction with Chapter 2, which teaches non-electronic exploration. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 all have sections emphasizing document design, and the graphics that appear at the start of each Part of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* can help you introduce additional attention to visual literacy. Introducing computers as simply another tool for exploration might ease the minds of students who have little experience with computers.

Read “Using *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* in an Electronic Classroom” at the end of this instructor’s manual for more advice. Also, ask your Allyn and Bacon representative for a copy of *An Introduction to Teaching Composition in an Electronic Environment* by Eric Hoffman and Carol Scheidenhelm, a complementary supplement published by Allyn and Bacon in 2000.

**Quarter-System Course**

Despite its length, *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* is ideal for use in colleges that operate on a quarter system. The brief writing projects in Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4 allow you to collect a number of assignments quickly in the term. The potential for linking assignments also enables you to use much of the textbook (see “Well-Paired Chapters” and “Course Emphasizing Informative Writing and the Research Paper” above). You can also vary your syllabus from one quarter to the next to give students a representative range, but gain more exposure yourself to chapters that especially interest you: you may alternate Chapters 5 and 6, Chapters 10 and 11, and Chapters 16 and 17.

**Two-Semester Course**

*The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* contains ample material for a two-semester course. Rather than making difficult decisions about which chapters to exclude and which to overlap, you can teach all the chapters. One possible plan would be to teach Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 12 in the first semester. This plan would require students to complete the four very brief writing projects and five major writing projects. Chapters 18, 18, 19, and 25 could also be integrated where appropriate, as suggested above.
The second semester could then be devoted to informative and research writing, in keeping with the chapters suggested above for this course emphasis. Chapter 13 makes an excellent start for a course encouraging an extended research project. Critical chapters like 18, 19, and 25 could be repeated. Chapter 26 could also be included.
Chapter 1
Posing Problems:
The Demands of College Writing

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter invites students to reconsider many assumptions they bring to the course about the identity of writers, the nature of the writing act, and the variety of acceptable forms for school-generated texts. Not only do these new understandings of writing build an important foundation for the work students will do later in the course, but they also help students begin the course with a refreshed attitude toward writing. This chapter will help students think about their previous school writing experiences as they form expectations about the semester or quarter to come.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

The Rewards of Taking a Writing Course

For students to take their writing seriously, it is important for them to see themselves as writers. To motivate them to want to learn all they can about writing, emphasize that writing is a skill that can help them in all areas of their lives: in school, in the workplace, and always in their personal lives. This chapter emphasizes writing as a habit of mind that will help them explore the complexities of issues that matter. You will find that working with this principle helps set a tone of exploration and intellectual adventure. Some of the following activities can be used as icebreakers at the start of the term; they can set a friendly tone in your classroom, help students get to know others in the class, and provide incentive for working hard in the course.

If your students consider writing to be an activity that has little impact on their lives, you may want to ask them to list the types of writing they’ve done in the past few months or even in recent years—everything from grocery shopping lists, voter registration forms and birthday cards for friends to college applications. Alternatively, you may want to ask students to keep a running log until the next time your class meets of all the writing they do, indicating its page length or time commitment, audience, purpose, and genre. These activities should help students realize that they are already writers, that “writers” are not only those who publish. Ask students to discuss the lists in small groups, and then ask a spokesperson from each group to report to the class about the ways in which the group’s
lists were both similar and diverse. Similar conversations and records about the kinds of reading students do (signs, maps, directions, newspapers, billboards, magazines, etc.) can start conversations about the audience, purpose, and genre of what they have read.

To help students understand the role of writing in college, ask them to bring to class the syllabi they have been given for other courses they are taking this term. Create a cumulative list on the board of all the types of writing assignments students in your class will complete in just the next few months. If the syllabi specify page lengths for the assignments, you can ask students to add up the page lengths of all the assignments in all their courses. Then, simply because large numbers may add impressive credence to your claims about the importance of writing in college, you might even want to bring a calculator to class and take a minute to add together the total page requirements of all the students’ papers in your class.

Although this activity will help students better understand the quantity of writing they’ll be expected to do in college--and point out to them that upper-level courses usually require far more writing than the freshman courses they are currently taking--it does not yet help them to understand the role that writing quality plays in college grades. For this purpose, ask students to look again at the syllabi for all courses they are currently taking and to determine the percentage of the course grade that is based on writing assignments. If, for example, 85% of a course grade is based on written assignments, certainly a significant portion of that assessment will be based on their knowledge of the subject matter. But point out that their ability to convey that knowledge through exams and papers will affect their grade just as much. You may also want to note that whatever assignments students think do not pertain to writing--such as class participation and oral presentations--usually do require writing in order to be completed effectively. It is easier for a student to participate in class if he or she takes careful notes while reading and even jots down questions about the readings. Good oral presentations require careful note taking, outlining on paper or note cards, perhaps a fully scripted (and then memorized) introduction and conclusion, and even a handout for the audience.

To reinforce the importance of the role that writing plays in college, you may want to describe the tangible evidence of your college's institutional commitment to writing: writing courses required of all students; writing-intensive courses or WAC curricula; college-funded writing labs or tutoring centers; a writing exit exam for graduates. Finally, whereas most students in your course are probably in their first year, you may have a few who have already completed a year or two. If so, ask them to share with the class the types and amounts of writing they have done while in college, as well as how important they believe writing skills are to the work required of students.

You may want to ask students to conduct their own informal research on the
importance of writing in the workplace. For a homework assignment, they could interview employers, coworkers, teachers, relatives, or friends about the amount and types of writing they do for their jobs. Students should also ask these professionals about the importance of writing skills and whether they would value an opportunity to improve their writing skills. You could then either ask students to briefly summarize their findings in writing, and then grade this as a miscellaneous homework assignment, or ask a few volunteers to share their findings orally with the class. As an alternative activity, you could invite a few of your own colleagues and friends from various professions to speak to your class about the importance of good writing skills in their respective fields.

Although good writing skills will serve students well in college and on their jobs, it is also important for students to realize that writing is highly valuable apart from reasons imposed by others. Through self-initiated writing, they can gain deep satisfaction by expressing themselves more fully, forging more meaningful relationships with others, and even handling practical difficulties more efficiently. For example, they could use writing to advocate for themselves to a company or appeals committee. You may want to share with your class the role that writing has played in your own life: how you became particularly interested in writing yourself; what texts you’ve written that hold special meaning for you; your own views about how writing empowers an active citizenship in a democratic society.

Writing as Problem Posing

Students often begin a composition course wrongly believing that writing entails merely recording what one already knows, one’s own expertise. It is no wonder, then, that many students dislike writing courses: they may view writing as drudgery, a time-consuming exercise for scribes in which little new knowledge is gained (other than how to please an idiosyncratic teacher). Chapter 1 challenges this misperception by emphasizing writing as a means of learning. It helps students to understand that writers are not expected to be subject matter experts, but rather experts at question-posing and problem-posing. As a teacher, you can best support this goal by your own attitude toward questions and difficulties that surface throughout the course. Never dismiss your students’ questions, even superficial ones such as when you’ll be returning their graded assignments. When a problem presents itself about the course schedule or course material, offer it to your students as a chance for collective problem-solving. You do not need to be the sole provider of answers for the class. Even when you know an answer, your students will often learn much more about problem-posing when you act as a guide for their process of clarifying, investigating, and answering the question for themselves.

You might remind them of the natural curiosity of young children, who perpetually insist on knowing “why.” Much has been written about the educational system’s responsibility for stunting children's curiosity, as they are taught to avoid errors at all costs,
so be patient if students seem unskilled at problematizing or distrust your request that they not offer readily available answers. Look for opportunities throughout the course to affix your belief in problem-posing. It doesn't hurt, either, to share with your students relevant examples of your own problematizing and problem-solving processes as they arise during the term, particularly when writing is one of the tools you use to learn from or manage a given situation.

It can be helpful to return to the class’ analysis of students’ syllabi and examine the ways in which other course assignments invite students to examine shared problems. If students have a sense of the ways principles from their writing courses are active in other courses, they can more easily see the rhetorical principles at work. Class discussion can emphasize the ways in which writing assignments provide opportunities for students to learn more about ongoing problems in other fields. Similarly, you can ask students to interview one of their other professors about shared problems in their other classes, or to interview other students about the ways in which their courses have addressed inquiry and problematizing.

Closed Versus Open Forms

The distinction between closed- and open-form texts is one of the ways in which *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* is most innovative as a freshman rhetoric. Many texts devote only one chapter or assignment, if any at all, to distinctively “open-form” texts. *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* is progressive in placing the textual forms on a continuum between closed and open, a rhetorical choice writers make in shaping their texts. You and your students may slip into referring to open- and closed-forms as a binary opposition, and it is important to remember that the relationship between closed- and open-forms is always one of degree (as the figure on page 16 makes clear).

Be sure to spend at least one class session working with the concepts of “closed” and “open” forms because this distinction will be referred to often throughout the textbook. You will find that these terms are so important throughout the text that you will return to them repeatedly. The “For Writing and Discussion” activity following the sample passages by David Rockwood and Thomas Merton are very useful for helping students articulate their own understandings of these forms, but if they have never tried to intentionally create a metaphor before, you can guide them through this task using the suggestions in the next section of this manual, “Using the ‘For Writing and Discussion’ Activities.”

If your students are adept at creating metaphors and you want to probe their understanding further, you might bring to class other brief passages of text that are at less extreme ends of the open-closed continuum and ask students to decide where on the continuum those texts fall. You could either read the passages you bring aloud to the class
and then facilitate their discussion, or pass out copies of the passages to small groups, have
the groups discuss the texts’ placement on the continuum, and then compare as a class the
decisions of different small groups. You could also ask students to bring in short selections
themselves for the class to analyze. If your students have a firm enough grasp of the
continuum that some ambiguity would not unduly frustrate them, you could even ask them
to bring to class a short passage that they would have trouble placing on the continuum.
Such passages could provoke lively discussion in small groups. These activities can be
repeated throughout the semester as students work with new writing projects. Whatever
activity you choose, at whatever point in the course, make sure you ask students to
support their analysis with evidence from the passage itself. Again, encourage students to
view their disagreements as an opportunity for problematizing. Urge them to convince each
other of their opinions, rather than appealing to you for the answer. As they discuss the
passages, ask questions that help them consider textual practices more carefully, such as
“How far into the text did you read before identifying its form? What were your earliest
clues?” and “In what kinds of publications are we more likely to find open-form texts?”

Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities

The “For Writing and Discussion” activity on page 11 is a relatively simple exercise
that gets students to practice using the terminology of the chapter. It is usually easy for
groups to generate lists of questions, and this activity can be done sitting at desks or using
computers or the blackboard. If students start lists of questions either on the board or at a
computer terminal, other students can tour the room, adding on to others’ lists. This is an
easy way to generate many ideas. You may find that students have a harder time evaluating
questions in the second part of the activity. You can guide the discussion so that evaluation
criteria become clear, and you can return to the principles the class articulates as students
work on their later projects.

The activity on page 15 is designed to introduce students inductively to the concepts
of closed and open forms, before they read the subsequent explanation. There are several
ways you can preserve this activity as an inductive exercise: distribute Rockwood's and
Pratt's pieces on handouts on the first day of class if students are not likely to have
purchased their books yet; have students do this activity on the first day that they have
their books but before you assign any reading; or ask students to read only to the middle of
page 15 for their first reading assignment. The activity also works well, though, if students
have already read the explanation of closed and open forms that follows the directions for
the “For Writing and Discussion” activity.

Students are likely to need your guidance to complete this activity. First, ask the class
if anyone can define the terms “metaphor,” “simile,” and “analogy.” Even though the
distinctions among them are insignificant for the purposes of this exercise, students may be
distracted during this exercise if they do not know these terms. They may also be confused if they hear the teacher or other students in the class using them synonymously but they were taught differently in high school or in an introductory literature course they may now be taking. It’s worth a moment’s time to explain that a metaphor is a comparison drawn between two or more seemingly unlike things without using the terms “like” or “as,” that a simile makes the comparison with the help of these terms, and that an analogy is usually more complex, needing an explanation before the comparison can be understood. You may want to come to class prepared with an example of each for a topic like “writing” or “college” so that they can better understand what the activity is asking them to create. Tell them it is not important whether they choose to do a metaphor, simile, or analogy. It is only important that the similarity be made to something that is not another text; that is what will distinguish their idea as more than a literal comparison, and therefore, in some way metaphorical.

Metaphors, similes, and analogies are often the result of spontaneous insight. With luck, during the class discussion or in each small group, many students will experience this insight. Yet students do not need to wait for the muses to alight. If they are stuck, tell them to make a list of three to five adjectives that describe one of the passages. Once they’ve generated that list, they should then not think about the passage at all for the moment, look only at the adjectives, and try to think of something else that is fittingly described by all or most of the adjectives they’ve listed. They can then express the connection between the passage and the second artifact they’ve identified as a metaphor, simile, or analogy, without necessarily referring to the adjectives that helped them make this connection.

Metaphors, similes, and analogies are useful learning strategies because they reveal students’ subjective reactions as well as their intellectual understandings. As you listen to your students’ responses, pay attention to the underlying emotional reactions. Do their metaphors imply that closed-form texts are boring or lifeless? Do they indicate that open-form texts are less important, less mature, perhaps exclusively “feminine”? Do they assume that open-form texts must involve stories or that any narrative must be open-form? Some students’ metaphors may communicate negative attitudes about writing more honestly than the student would be willing to do directly. When students interpret their metaphors during the second part of this activity, ask them to consider how the attitudes their metaphors convey may help or hinder them in their future writing. Most teachers who use this textbook will want students to gain experience writing both closed and open-form essays, so if students’ metaphors are far more positive for one form of writing than another, this would be an ideal time to explore the reasons why.

As you respond to students, be aware that this is a difficult activity. Moreover, at this early stage in the course, before their first work is graded, they may be just as invested
in impressing you and learning how you respond to students as they are in learning the
rhetorical concepts of closed and open forms. Strive to include as many students in the
discussion as possible, to correct misunderstandings quickly and with encouragement, and
to let students see your excitement when they are inventive. The most common problems
students might encounter, which can be minimized if you address them briefly when
students are assigned this activity, are as follows: they may offer a response that describes
the form but does not create a metaphor, simile, or analogy (e.g., “The open form is
friendly”); they may give a response that is a literal comparison, not metaphorical (e.g.,
“The open form is like a short story”); or they may provide a response that bases its
metaphor on the subject matter of these passages, not their form (e.g., “Rockwood writes
about obstacles to the use of wind power, something that is as unlikely to happen in the
United States as pigs flying.”).

**Guiding Students through the Writing Project**

The writing project for this chapter asks students to compose a one-page essay that
poses a genuinely puzzling, significant question without answering it. Ramage and Bean
suggest that students all write on the topic of animals or music. They provide numerous
examples of questions about both subjects in the “For Writing and Discussion” activity on
pages 12, and there are additional examples of questions in the discussion of the writing
project itself:

- How can I train my dog not to dig holes in the yard?
- Why do male rock bands outnumber female rock bands?
- Is it ethical for me to burn my own CDs from downloaded music?
- What is the social function of mosh pits at concerts?
- What odors trigger insect mating?
- Why are middle-class white teenagers attracted to hip-hop?

To help students generate other possible questions about animals and music, lead the
class to brainstorm about the variety of ways in which humans experience animals and
music. Humans observe and study animals, hunt animals, capture and contain animals, eat
animals, wear animals, domesticate animals, train animals, feed animals (including wild
ones), rescue and protect animals, love and fear animals, mythologize animals (often
differently in different cultures), and intentionally and unintentionally obliterate entire
species of animals. Once the class has brainstormed an extensive list of how humans relate
to animals and are responsible for their treatment of animals, students can individually
pursue more narrow questions that stem from this list and focus on specific animals.
Similarly, the class can consider the ways in which humans listen to and compose music,
use music at ceremonies and other public rituals, embed music in sports events or
advertising, associate music with different cultural events, and seek to promote or forbid certain types of music at particular times. The class can brainstorm a list of the ways humans use music as part of their culture, and the ways music is connected to our emotional, business, private, and public lives.

You may wish to ask students to generate questions about other issues (perhaps connected to other reading your students are doing, or connected to other classes the students may be taking). If so, it is still helpful to assign the class one shared topic. Particularly at the start of the semester, shared topics promote conversation among the class. Another promising topic that all students are likely to be able to pose questions about is education. As college students, the educational system has already shaped them greatly and will continue to do so. If you use education or any other topic besides animals, make sure students understand that the textbook’s remaining guidelines for the assignment hold true. For the topic of education, for example, it wouldn't be sufficient to ask what “study abroad” programs your institution has, if any, because even if the student doesn't currently know the answer, it can easily be obtained. If you decide not to use the topic of animals for this assignment, you may still want to discuss it in-depth so that students can better assess and revise their own work.

The most common error students are likely to make when completing this assignment is answering the question they ask. Even though the textbook stresses repeatedly that the brief essay should not answer the question--note the directions at the top of page 18 and the absence of conclusive answers in the example by the student writer--students will still have trouble resisting years of indoctrination that the purpose of school assignments is to show what they know, to answer questions correctly. Take time in class to stress to students that in this case, “what they know” is their ability to ask questions thoroughly and thoughtfully. Assure them that answering the question will not raise their grade on the assignment and may even lower it.

Another common approach students may take to this assignment is to treat the sample student essay in the textbook as a boilerplate, making only minor content substitutions for their own topic. Instructors who consider imitation a useful learning strategy may not object to such mimicry, while other instructors may penalize students for not being sufficiently original. To prevent misunderstandings on this issue, discuss with students how closely they may acceptably model the sample completed assignment.

Clearly state what criteria you will use to judge students’ brief problem-posing essays when you initially announce the assignment. You may choose not to grade the assignment, and use it as a lead-in to a longer assignment. Or you may use it simply as an exercise in creativity and invention (if so, it is best completed very quickly). If you will grade the piece separately, be clear about your criteria. For example, when grading, will you consider
the originality of the question or only the thoroughness of its discussion? You may wish to require that the question be narrow, not monumental queries like “Why are people so cruel to animals?” You may also want to direct students to word their questions without bias; for example, “Is it ethical to keep animals in a zoo?” rather than “How can people be so selfish as to keep animals in a zoo?”

A brief writing project assignment is used to conclude each of the first four chapters of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*. Your syllabus should indicate how heavily you will weigh these shorter assignments, but you may need to explain to your students now whether you will be using letter grades, a check system, or perhaps even comments without an accompanying grade. To further convey to students your own criteria for the assignment, you might discuss how you would grade the sample student assignment at the end of the chapter, or invite students to participate in grading, evaluating, or discussing the sample.

Because this is likely to be the first writing that students submit to you, you may also want to use it for diagnostic purposes. If a student turns in work that has severe and major weaknesses, make a note (to yourself and to the student) that to do well in the course he or she should conference with you about the problem and perhaps work regularly with a tutor.
Chapter 2
Pursuing Problems:
Exploratory Writing and Talking

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter builds on Chapter 1 by continuing to emphasize the importance of problematizing. In this chapter, students are taught how to pursue their questions and intellectual problems with persistent diligence. Rather than reaching quick conclusions, students can use writing and talking to explore their ideas more thoroughly. The chapter introduces students to numerous specific techniques that can help them reach new understandings about their subject matter. Writing is thus presented as a means of learning, which underscores its academic value and builds on the lessons of the previous chapter.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

William Perry’s Stages of Intellectual Development

Perry’s research on the stages of intellectual development has important implications for writing teachers of first-year college students. According to Perry’s findings, most first-year students are dualists, readily accepting what they are taught and doubting the validity of opposing views, if they recognize alternative positions at all. For a dualist, issues are black or white, right or wrong. A composition student who is a dualist, then, may not understand the importance of providing adequate evidence in a paper because to the student, the point may be self-evident. Also, a student who is a dualist thinks more rigidly and thus is likely to take fewer intellectual risks when writing. Such students will be challenged by the opening part of the chapter on ill-structured problems.

Understanding Perry’s scheme can help you know what cognitive obstacles students encounter when writing and can help you develop realistic expectations for their work. Encouraging students to use the exploratory techniques in this chapter can prompt their intellectual development; yet Perry explains that cognitive development occurs slowly. It is unreasonable to expect that students will change drastically in just one term. In fact, Perry found that some individuals may not achieve the highest stages of development until long after college, if ever. Nevertheless, the strategies for exploratory writing and talking presented in this chapter are instrumental in creating doubt for a student at the dualist stage and prompting the student’s intellectual development.
Perry’s developmental scheme may also help you respond to the work of older students more appropriately. Intellectual development occurs through life experience, not just college courses, so it is likely that older students in your course will be at a more advanced stage of intellectual maturity. If they write significantly better papers, one major reason may be this difference in their intellectual maturity. Your responsibility as a teacher is to prompt their development too. Try to identify where they fall on Perry’s scheme and provide appropriate challenges. You might, for example, assign them to one of the more difficult roles in this chapter’s simulation activity (see “Using the ‘For Writing and Discussing’ Activities” below).

Freewriting

Freewriting is the technique of exploratory writing that is used most often throughout The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing. For students who have never engaged in freewriting before, writing without stopping might seem silly or futile. The best way for students to understand the usefulness of freewriting is to give them an opportunity to do some freewriting during class when the technique is first introduced.

Before they begin, explain that you won't be collecting their freewriting so that students won't be overly concerned with matters of correctness, which defeats the purpose of exploratory writing. Announce a common topic about which students can freewrite. You could ask them to write about a campus issue or, in keeping with the topic of this chapter, you could ask them to answer the question, “What hinders you from regularly pursuing problems?” Then remind students that the benefit of freewriting is the ideas that surface in nonstop writing. Warn them that as they freewrite, you will watch them all carefully and remind those who stop moving their pen or pencil to keep writing (“Doris, keep writing.” “Luis, I don't see your pen moving.”). If they run out of ideas, they can simply write a statement like “I don't know what to write next” or can recopy the final few words of their previous sentence until a new thought comes. Time them for ten minutes. You may find that bringing an egg timer to class helps keep track of time.

Afterwards, discuss their reactions to freewriting. Begin by asking for students to raise their hands if they had to write at least one sentence for the sole purpose of keeping their writing implement moving. Then ask these students how many thought of new ideas faster than they would have expected to if they had stopped writing when stuck. Ask the entire class if anyone discovered ideas through freewriting that had never occurred to them before. Invite students to share any insights gained about their topic as they freewrote (bearing in mind your original statement that this writing need not be made public if the students don’t want it to).

The chapter also describes focused freewriting, which other textbooks may call
looping. To use this technique, a writer first freewrites for ten or fifteen minutes. Then the writer reads the freewriting and underlines the brief portion that seems the most promising for further exploration. On page 32-33, Ramage, Bean and Johnson refer to these places as “hot spots, centers of interest, centers of gravity, or simply nuggets or seeds.” The writer then recopies this brief selection and uses it to begin a second freewriting session. This sequence can be repeated indefinitely, with the writer always underlining the most critical insight and then freewriting to explore it in more detail. Subsequent freewriting sessions may be shorter than the initial one, but the writer should set a prescribed time in advance. Otherwise, the writer may be tempted to stop solely because the ideas seem exhausted. If the pre-determined time has not lapsed, the writer can instead use text-fillers (“I don’t know what to write”) and possibly generate more ideas. Focused freewriting is highlighted in later chapters as a way to organize reflection in sustained writing projects.

Freewriting can form a nice ritual beginning to a class period. You might invite students to freewrite for a specified period of time at the start of each class period, using similar questions each time (such as “what was difficult for you as you prepared for today’s class period?”). Alternatively, you can shape questions based on the current writing project, or even ask students to suggest a focus for freewriting. Doing some writing in class every day is a good way to prepare for the activities which will follow.

Idea Mapping

Another name sometimes given to this exploratory technique is clustering. Using the idea map on page 34 of the textbook as an example, point out to your students that the ideas in the center of the map are the broadest, and that the ideas become more specific as they move to the perimeter of the idea map. Talking through this sample idea map with your students can help them understand how to construct their own. The most common mistake students make when writing idea maps is that they tend to expand the branches of the diagram vertically but not horizontally. That is, they track one thought with increasing specificity but are less likely to consider a wide range of possible alternatives. Thus, their idea maps appear more like lists than clusters. Stress to students that they can benefit from idea maps most if they develop them both vertically (adding branches to become increasingly more specific) and horizontally (writing many branches with equal specificity). It can be helpful to ask students to work in pairs on an idea map in order to take advantage of the quick flow of ideas that can emerge in conversation.

The idea map on page 34 can be useful as the subject for a class discussion of grading and responding to writing, in addition to its utility as a representation of a heuristic. At the start of a writing class, students are often concerned about grading (especially if you are using a portfolio grading system or some other arrangement which defers grading until after
a specified period of revision). Working with this idea map can be a way to get students’ attitudes about grading on the table, which will improve the class atmosphere and offer additional opportunities for problem-posing.

Explain to students that rarely do all ideas in an idea map get included in a finished text. A writer generates an idea map to thoroughly explore a problem, but once the writer decides on a thesis, whole branches of the idea map may be omitted from the draft as irrelevant. An idea map can be quite helpful in developing support, though, because the writer can look at the map to determine if all the branches coming from the center that will be included in the paper have been developed to an adequate level of specificity. The ideas that are most important to the thesis often follow the branch that extends farthest away from the center of the map.

Encourage students to develop a wide repertoire of exploration strategies. Consider assigning students to write an idea map for the same topic they used when learning to freewrite. They may find one technique more helpful than the other now; however, for a different topic, the other strategy may work better. Students can also regularly use multiple techniques (including the others explained in this chapter) to pursue problems for writing. One way to combine freewriting and idea mapping is for writers to create an idea map first in order to identify various aspects of their topic, then freewrite about one branch.

Some composition theorists have speculated about the relationship between exploratory writing techniques (often called “heuristics”) and cognitive styles. One speculation is that people who are more skilled at cognitive activities performed by the left hemisphere of the brain find linear forms of written exploration, such as brainstorming and freewriting, especially useful. Writers who are right-brain dominant seem to find more spatial, associational means of exploration—such as idea mapping—of greater assistance. Although such speculations are not conclusive, certainly students learn differently and thus should be offered a range of techniques for written exploration.

**Additional Exploration Techniques**

The remaining exploration techniques presented in the chapter should each be discussed at least briefly. Ask students which of these techniques they’ve used before, for what purposes, and with what degrees of success. Share your own experiences with these techniques as well. You may want to draw students’ attention to the features of dialectic discussion as they unfold in your own classroom. It can be helpful to ask students to pay attention to who speaks and how often; this is a way to encourage students to respond to each other rather than expecting you to respond to each person who speaks.

Exploration techniques differ in method, yet they share some common traits. They all
treat the pursuit of problems as a deliberately active endeavor. Students cannot explore a topic thoroughly by simply sitting and pondering. Meditation may help somewhat, but only those with highly disciplined minds can maintain the degree of concentration necessary for an exploration without participating in more interactive behavior. That interaction may take place with blank paper, texts, or people (directly or with the help of technology). Emphasizing to students that pursuing problems is interactive can dispel any notions they have of writers as isolated, asocial beings, staring at blank pages until the muses alight. This is good news: because there are strategies, writing can be learned; writers need not be naturally-gifted geniuses. And because the strategies are interactive, students are not alone in the business of writing. These activities can form the basis of many engaging in-class exercises that lead students to the production of longer and increasingly polished texts.

Another trait common to the exploration techniques is that they teach reflectiveness. Explain to students that even when they are not preparing for a writing project, adopting these techniques as habits can make them more observant people, which can improve not only later writing they may do, but also their intellect, their relationships, and their overall quality of life. Being observant and reflective can enable them to live more consciously, more purposefully.

Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities

The simulated public hearing activity is structured so that students must postpone their final decision about an issue until it has been extensively explored from multiple viewpoints. In addition to the procedure for the activity, explained on pages 35-36, ask students to consider how they might incorporate other techniques of exploration explained in this chapter. Some students may opt to write an idea map rather than, or in addition to, freewriting. Ask students how helpful it would be to research the success of similar ordinances in other cities, if they had the time. How might they find such information? What else might students research to inform them on this issue? What kinds of preparation for the hearing would each participant be likely to do? How does preparation involve the exploratory techniques explained in the chapter?

The objective of this activity is for students to experience the process of discovery that can occur when problems are pursued at length. For some students, it may be one of their first experiences of consenting to “wallow in complexity.” Do all you can to keep the class members from arguing antagonistically so students learn that pursuing problems does not need to be a divisive activity. You may even want to explain to the class the procedures that many committees use to conduct business (a simplified version of Roberts’ Rules of Order) and then have the class elect a student as chair of the city council, who can recognize council members who wish to address the committee. Let students address the issue
without your guidance, but as the teacher, interrupt and redirect their efforts when the activity starts to become counterproductive. If this activity is a positive experience for students in learning to listen to other views open-mindedly, they will be more likely to listen open-mindedly in the future.

After the activity is completed and the vote has been taken, discuss with students how their opinions have changed since their initial freewrite responding to the ordinance. Some students may have voted the opposite of what they would have voted at the beginning of the activity (you might want to conduct a secret ballot as soon as students read the ordinance, before their initial freewrite, withhold announcing the results, and then compare these results to the vote at the end of the simulation activity). Other students may not have reversed their opinion on the ordinance, but still may have changed their thinking. For example, after hearing other students’ views, someone may draw the same conclusions about the ordinance but for different reasons. It is also possible that a student will hold the same beliefs but with deeper conviction. Any change at all proves the usefulness of exploring problems thoroughly, even when one feels confident in his or her opinion. You may want to ask students to freewrite about how their opinion of the ordinance changed during the course of this simulation activity. Emphasize to students that the purpose of exploratory thinking is really to enhance understanding, not necessarily to change positions dramatically. Students may find that they now understand opposing positions better than they did before the hearing, and that is a valuable outcome.

Another aspect of this activity you may want to discuss with your class after the vote is how vital it was that the discussion was dialectical, with all views having a fair shot at being represented and with the participants listening sincerely to one another. You can then speculate about how this scenario may have changed if it were not a controlled simulation. Would a homeless person have received an equal “voice”? Would most homeless people even be aware that such an ordinance was under discussion? How did the presence of a homeless person contribute to the dialectic in ways that were unique from the contributions of the volunteer in a homeless shelter? If there are no students in your class who have been homeless (or willingly admit so), ask the class how they think the class simulation may have changed if someone who had truly been homeless had participated. From this discussion, draw conclusions as a class about the importance of having discussions that are dialectical, of finding ways to let those who are marginalized in our society speak for themselves. This need underscores the importance of thorough explorations, of pursuing and learning from perspectives different from one’s own.

**Guiding Students through the Writing Project**

This brief writing project gives students practice in resisting definitive conclusions. The believing and doubting game can lead students toward a more relativist stance, a
recognition that few arguments have clear, easy answers. The writing project is named a “game,” in keeping with Peter Elbow’s wording, to encourage students to playfully explore far-reaching possibilities, yet it is a game they should undertake honestly. Point out to students that they are not being asked to write the pros and cons of an argument. Instead, the directive to “believe” asks them to imagine holding arguments that they may not, in fact, believe, and the directive to “doubt” asks them to reject views they might in fact value. Thus, unlike a listing of pros and cons, this assignment prompts students to more rigorously question their personal commitment to their beliefs. Hopefully, through such role playing, they can convince themselves of the validity of other positions in an argument.

If you devoted significant class time to the simulation activity on the homelessness ordinance in this chapter, you can use that to illustrate the doubting portion of this assignment. Because students were assigned roles to play for that activity, there are likely to be students who represented viewpoints quite different from their own personal views on the ordinance. Ask students to discuss their experiences articulating views they disagreed with for this activity. Did any students begin to convince themselves as they argued? If you did spend lots of time on the simulation activity, you may want to prohibit students from choosing option four for this assignment so that they do not merely summarize what has already been said in class. You may also want to set up additional assertions in keeping with local issues or other reading your students have completed.

If you want to make this writing project even more challenging, you can ask students to first complete the project as it is described in the textbook, then choose one of the assertions they have examined and freewrite once more, articulating a position that is a compromise between the more extreme “believing” and “doubting” descriptions. If students have difficulty reaching a compromise, they can freewrite about why. This additional requirement can teach students that even though issues may be more complex than they realized, after careful consideration they can still draw conclusions, William Perry’s final stage of “commitment in relativism.”

This writing project is designed as a brief activity (the text recommends fifteen minutes of freewriting on believing and another fifteen on doubting). You may adapt this project for other uses at later points in the term. For example, you can use it as part of a peer response to student writing, or you can use it as part of a reflective sequence for writers to uncover more of their own assumptions. The believing and doubting game can be a good way for students to test the strength of an emerging thesis statement, to engage with a peer’s essay, to brainstorm additional ideas, or to explore the complexities of their own thinking.
Chapter 3
Thinking Rhetorically about: Question, Thesis and Support

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

Chapters 1 and 2 have instructed students to pose complex problems and pursue those problems thoroughly. In this chapter, students learn how to solve problems they have raised and explored. After intentionally “wallowing in complexity,” as writers they must shape a text to clarify its meaning for readers. This chapter teaches students how to write a thesis that relies on surprise or tension to engage readers. It introduces large principles that run through every writing project in the text. It introduces students to the task of developing support for a thesis. Equipped with these tools for managing their subject matter, students will be prepared to adapt their ideas to their purpose, audience, and genre, as discussed in the next chapter.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Inquiry

The principle of inquiry forms an important bridge between the previous chapter and this one. The chapter’s opening sections stress that even experienced writers spend a great deal of time exploring ideas, even struggling with them, making many changes in thinking before finishing a piece. The transcript of the writing center conference about an essay on imperialism will help illustrate this process of inquiry from a student’s perspective. It can also be an opportunity for you to discuss the writing center or other student support services available on your campus.

The previous chapter highlighted ways students can explore their emerging ideas. The early section of this chapter on problem-posing questions will help students see how writers set out to identify a thesis through the process of inquiry. Having a good question at the start of a writing project is essential. You can work with this section of the chapter by asking students to look at the questions on pages 42-43 and generate additional questions. They can also use small groups or whole class discussion to evaluate their own questions at the start of a writing project.
Thesis

Many of your students may already be familiar with the term “thesis” from earlier writing courses they have taken, but don’t assume that every student will have heard this term before or knows that “theses” is its plural form. You might ask students in the class to define this term in their own words and to explain the significance of a thesis in writing. Make sure they know the distinction between a topic and a thesis. You may also want to facilitate a class discussion on differences in their understandings of thesis. For example, some may have been taught in high school to write thesis statements that identify three major points they will develop, a sort of mini-outline for a five-paragraph theme. Do they think that a thesis needs to be expressed as only one sentence, like the examples in this chapter? Must a thesis statement be placed in a particular location of a text (the introduction? the last sentence of the introduction)? Is it ever acceptable to not state the thesis explicitly, and if so, when? These latter questions point to major differences between closed and open-form texts and will be discussed repeatedly throughout the text. Raising such questions now, however, can help students probe their understanding of thesis.

Formulating a thesis is often the first step a writer takes in consciously considering audience. As writers pose and pursue problems, they are often attentive only to their own inquiry. When writers produce texts with this mindset, they generate what writing theorist Linda Flower terms “writer-based prose,” that is, prose that is presented in keeping with the writer’s sequence of thought. Flower juxtaposes writer-based prose with reader-based prose, prose that more successfully accommodates the needs readers have when processing text. Perhaps the most essential need of readers is the need to know what core idea a writer is trying to communicate. This is the need that a thesis fulfills. Although readers may disagree with the thesis, they should all be able to identify it.

The discussion of thesis in this chapter is stronger than in many other rhetoric textbooks because Ramage, Bean, and Johnson recommend that a thesis not only direct a reader, but that it also surprise the reader. The element of surprise can be what makes the text satisfying for a reader. Surprise is what interests and intrigues a reader. Surprise is what helps an audience perceive subject matter differently after reading a text than they did before. This change of perception, in turn, is what makes a text significant for readers. The term surprise can be a difficult one for both teachers and students; taken to an extreme, the need to surprise can seem silly or impossible. It’s important to connect the surprise in any given thesis with the rhetorical context: who is the audience, and what does that audience likely know or believe about the subject of the project? Handled properly, the element of surprise will help students shape their writing projects in a satisfying manner. Surprise and tension help writers and readers connect and pay attention.

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson delineate a number of forms this surprise can take.
Encourage students to try many possible forms. On page 44 of the textbook, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson provide a template sentence students can use to create tension in a thesis statement: “Before reading my essay, my readers think this way about my topic: / After reading my essay, my readers will think this different way about my topic.” On page 45, they provide another template sentence: “Whereas most people believe X, this essay asserts Y.” Similar templates can help students experiment with other types of surprise: enlarging readers’ views; clarifying readers’ views; problematizing readers’ views; entirely restructuring readers’ views. The transparency master at the end of this chapter in the manual provides additional templates for writing thesis statements that surprise. It’s important to be clear with your students whether you expect their thesis statements to use the forms of the templates or not.

In this chapter, the examples given of theses are not necessarily sentences that would appear verbatim in essays. Instead, each is an example of a controlling idea that could provide direction for a text. Teach your students that although a thesis will not appear this succinctly or explicitly in every text, it is still a useful exercise for them to try to articulate a one-sentence thesis whenever they write to clarify for themselves what they most hope the text will communicate. If they don’t know what idea they would like to use as a thesis, they can use freewriting or any of the other techniques discussed in chapter 2 to explore their ideas further. They may also want to begin drafting and see what thesis emerges, as the epigraph by Peter Elbow at the beginning of this chapter implies. If the text they are drafting is closed-form, they can then revise the draft to make the thesis more prominent earlier in the paper.

Support

Using the exploration techniques in Chapter 2 to pursue problems can help students to develop support for their papers. In this chapter, students learn that it is not just the quantity of support that is important to their writing, but also its relevance to the thesis. The particulars are what make a thesis convincing. In return, the thesis is what determines what support is needed: which points and particulars to include and which to exclude.

The idea mapping technique in Chapter 2 can help your students better understand the relationship of points and particulars. In an idea map, the topic of a text is identified in the center. The branches which come off of this topic are all points that the writer may choose to include in the text. As the writer continues to develop an idea map, moving further from the center, the writer moves from points to particulars. For example, in the idea map on page 34 in Chapter 2 of the textbook, the following “points” are identified as problems with the grading system:

- Kids turn off from school if they get bad grades.
• Kids get in fights with parents over grades.
• The grading system keeps students from attempting hard courses.
• Maybe grades get kids to study for all the wrong reasons.
• The grading system makes students compete against each other.
• Grades may not really measure what someone learned.

Ideas farthest from the center of the page, such as “math example from high school” and “her history class” are particulars. In the same fashion, an idea map illustrates a scale of abstraction: ideas at the greatest level of abstraction appear near the center of the idea map, while ideas which are most specific are at the map’s perimeter.

**Angle of Vision**

Exploratory writing and discussion should help students understand that individual approaches to issues are determined by many factors. Our political leanings, our family backgrounds, our cultures, and our experiences all shape the way we see the world. The political cartoon that appears on page 52 of the text illustrates the way individual positions affect the angle of vision regarding the current debate on stem cell research. You can spend some class time on this cartoon, and invite students to bring other cartoons to class. The visual representation of different view points makes an easy opening for discussions of this complicated principle. Students often want to rush to conclusions or make quick decisions about how to support points with particulars. Spending time exploring how their positions are affected by their social and family backgrounds will help them consider the complexities involved.

The political cartoon in this section of the chapter provides a nice lead-in for the discussion of images that begins on page 55 of the text. The ways in which visual rhetoric affect readers are treated in more detail in chapters 10 and 11, but it is useful to remind students that visual images can powerfully affect our thinking. The “For Writing and Discussion” activities are useful in helping students understand these concepts (see below).

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

The activity on page 47 is crucial for giving students practice in writing surprising theses. Doing freewriting, as the instructions direct, is one way for students to identify surprise. Another option for this activity is to choose one of these topics and assign small groups to “stretch” or “twist” the topics in any three of the ways specified in the bulleted list on the bottom of page 45 of the textbook. Yet another option is to ask students to choose one of these topics, then write three surprising theses based on the templates given on the transparency master at the end of this chapter in the manual. And yet another is to
ask small groups to rotate through a series of focused freewriting activities that shape a series of sample thesis statements. Because writing surprising theses is a fundamental skill students will need for every writing project, you may want to devote class time to more than one of these options. For each thesis students generate, briefly discuss as a class its potential to surprise readers.

The activity on page 51 lets students practice writing detailed support. To manage your class time, you may want to assign this writing for homework and then in the following class session choose two or three students for each statement and ask them to read their passages aloud. Alternatively, you could use this exercise in class, and then ask students to complete the exercise again at home, using different points, or a point that is central to a project they are developing. Forms of this activity can be useful at various points in the semester. The sentences in this exercise can also be used to review the scale of abstraction. As a separate exercise from developing detailed support for each statement, you could ask students to choose one of these sentences and write a paragraph in which each successive sentence is increasingly more specific. As an example, here is how sentence two might be treated:

I was shocked by the messiness of Bill's dorm room. Every flat surface was hidden by towering piles of paper, books, and clothes. From the floor alone I learned the highlights of his past week. Like an archeologist studying artifacts, I deduced that his mom had sent him a care package to get him through midterms; his history report had cost him a night's sleep; and he would soon be hitting me up again for laundry money. This time, he'd probably need a whole roll of quarters!

The activity on pages 54-55 challenges students to explore the ways different texts on the same subject are affected by angle of vision. This exercise works best if students have carefully read the texts in advance. Students may have difficulty identifying the point of texts where the thesis is implied; remind students that task number 1 gives them a solution to this problem. You may want to spend class time visually representing the different positions and views on the board. It is useful to ask students to consider how the whole set of texts represents issues surrounding mental health; the whole set of texts provides a fuller representation of the issues than any single letter. You can follow this exercise by inviting students to consider letters to the editor in your local or campus newsletter, identifying which positions or constituencies are included (or not included). Connect this activity to the earlier work on voices that may be unheard in public debates.

The activity on pages 57-58 invites students to work with the images
presented in the chapter. Depending on your students’ level of recall of issues about the 2000 Presidential election, you may want to use the exercise as is, or you may want to use other images in the textbook for analysis. It can be useful to ask students to work in groups to consider alternative formats for images.
Guiding Students through the Writing Project

This brief writing project can be successfully done in class as a way to emphasize the choices that writers make in reasoning through a difficult situation. It also emphasizes angle of vision, in that whatever thesis the students choose to organize the letter of reference around will determine which details should be included or left out. This activity builds on the believing and doubting game in that it asks students to draft two different letters, each of which emphasizes a different view of the former student. Each letter must be honest (in that it relies on specific details from pages 58-59).

You may need to remind students to stick to the details as they draft their letters. Students may be tempted to write a second letter which takes a different conclusion than the first, and simply directly contradicts the first, using details the opposite of those included in the first letter. You may need to remind students about the ways in which conclusions about student performance are not always easy. Although the textbook suggests that the letters be written as homework, this exercise could also be used in-class, particularly if the letters are drafted in pairs. If the letters are drafted in class, you can ask students to analyze texts individually for homework and use the following class discussion period to complete the discussion.

A good warm-up activity for this writing project is to ask students to recall experiences they have had where a person (such as a former teacher, coach, or advisor) or event (a dinner at a particular restaurant, or a family vacation) was regarded with mixed reactions. As students explain what elements of the experience lead different people to draw different conclusions, they will begin to identify different details of the experience which support those different conclusions. This also functions as a good ice-breaker early in the semester.
Thesis Statements That Surprise

Whereas most people believe X, this essay asserts Y.

Although many people know X, they do not know Y.

If you are uncertain about X, what you need to understand is Y.

You may feel certain about X, but as I explain Y in this essay, you will understand that X is far more complicated.

You may believe X, but this essay will convince you that X is improbable/impossible.

You may disagree with X, but this essay will convince you that X is correct/true.
Chapter 4
Solving Rhetorical Problems:
Purpose, Audience, and Genre

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

If your students’ past writing instruction has been traditional, concerned primarily with organization and correctness, the rhetorical emphasis of this chapter can revolutionize their understanding of writing. In this chapter, students learn that effective writing entails managing not only the subject matter (discussed in Chapter 3), but also the purpose as it is defined by the writer and situation, the audience, and the genre. These rhetorical elements shape a text. Further, they make writing more than an assignment undertaken for purely academic reasons. This chapter can function as a touchstone throughout the semester. The general principles that it introduces are explored in specific ways with each writing project, and you may wish to return to this chapter as a quick summary of key assumptions in the text. In addition, you may wish to return to this chapter as students reflect on their learning for an assignment or the quarter or semester.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Purpose

First-year writing textbooks generally distinguish types of writing using two systems of classification. One system of classification is written texts’ modes of organization. Textbooks using this system might have a chapter explaining how to write comparison-contrast essays, another explaining definition essays, and another on classification essays. These rhetoric textbooks teach students how to structure and organize a piece of writing but give little attention to rhetorical concerns, most notably purpose and audience.

*The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* uses the other common system for classifying discourse types: by their purpose. Except in a writing course, students will rarely encounter writing tasks that ask them to generate texts in particular organizational modes (the chief exception may be essay exam questions in other courses; for example, questions that ask students to compare and contrast two discipline-specific concepts). In non-academic writing tasks—and many academic ones too—students must instead decide how to develop their text by discerning what they hope to accomplish by writing. Thus, classifying discourse types by purpose reflects more accurately the hierarchy of decisions writers usually make when approaching a writing task. This classification serves students
well long after they have completed their education. Whenever they write, they can decide their purpose and, based on the chapters in Part Two of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*, know how to begin, even if the text’s genre is one they haven't attempted before.

This chapter challenges students to consider purpose from multiple perspectives: the rhetorical context (what Ramage, Bean and Johnson call the “motivating occasion”), the connection to the reader (how the writer wants to affect readers), and the rhetorical aim. Although the rhetorical basis for writing forms the bulk of the chapter, it’s important to consider the other elements of purpose as you work with your students. Students frequently consider only the motivating occasion for writing (“I’m writing because I have to”) and it’s important to consider ways in which you can move them towards a more rhetorical view. It’s equally important to help students see how thinking rhetorically can help them achieve their motivational goals.

The classification of discourse types by rhetorical purpose is explained in more detail in James Kinneavy’s *A Theory of Discourse*. Kinneavy explains that four elements are present in every act of communication, whether written or oral: the person initiating the communication (writer or speaker); the audience who receives the communication (reader or listener; the audience can also be simply oneself); the subject matter that is being communicated; and the language that is used to convey the message. Although all four elements are present in every communication, determining which element is most important in shaping the text determines its rhetorical purpose. If it is the writer that most defines the text, Kinneavy terms that discourse expressive. If the subject matter is of greatest importance, the text is referential. Persuasive texts stress audience and literary texts stress language, especially its aesthetic qualities.

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson’s delineation of purposes is consistent with Kinneavy’s schema. Their identification of the expressive purpose, persuasive purpose, and literary purpose align with Kinneavy’s terms precisely. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson’s identification of the exploratory purpose, informative purpose, and analytical purpose mirrors Kinneavy’s subdivisions of the referential aim; all emphasize subject matter more than writer, audience, or language. You may want to discuss with your students as well that the purposes of writing often overlap. For example, an essay may be primarily informative yet have a persuasive conclusion. Or an informative essay may be developed through rich autobiographical details, giving it undertones of an expressive essay.

The purpose of a piece of writing is more abstract than its thesis. The purpose is what the writer hopes the text will accomplish, whereas the thesis states the writer’s conclusions about the text’s subject matter. Clarify this distinction for students by discussing with them the purpose statements on page 62 in the textbook. For each statement, ask them to identify which of the six writing purposes the statement illustrates.
Then ask students to invent a possible thesis for that purpose and topic. For example, students should identify the first statement as being expressive in purpose. A possible thesis would be, “Through my struggle with Graves’ disease, I learned that the human spirit is more powerful than human frailties.”

**Audience**

If students write papers expecting them to be read only by the teacher, they may become adept only at writing papers that please teachers. The ability to adapt a text to its intended audience is a difficult skill; therefore, it is important for students to gain experience writing to audiences besides the teacher. Students still need to turn in work that meets the criteria for acceptable college-level writing (choosing an audience with low literacy is no excuse for them to make errors), but as the teacher you can serve as their secondary reader, evaluating their success in adapting the text for another audience.

As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson suggest in their discussion of audience, you may want to specify an audience for students’ writing projects. Alternatively, you can ask students to choose an audience themselves, based on the topic and purpose of the paper. They might, for example, write an informative essay for high school seniors explaining how to survive the first semester of college life, then give it to an academic advisor at the high school they attended. They might want to persuade a friend not to make an important decision hastily and use the persuasive writing assignment to present their arguments as a letter to this friend.

Although some students may decide to actually give their papers to these audiences, it is not necessary that all do. Yet they should all use the list of questions on page 67 of the textbook to think about how their audience will affect the content, form, and style of their text. You may want to ask students to turn in written responses to these questions prior to or along with each major writing project. Students could also use these questions to explore the impact of their audience and then write a brief paragraph as a cover-sheet for each assignment, explaining who the audience is and how as writers they have met the needs of such readers.

**Genre**

Usually when students write the genre is assigned. Writers, however, are frequently able to choose which genre best suits the purpose and audience of their desired communication. Therefore, in addition to letting students choose the audience for their writing projects, you may want to experiment with letting students choose the genre. For some purposes, audiences, and theses, letters are a more effective genre than essays. Decide
any limits you might set on their selection. Would you accept a diary entry for the expressive paper? Could they develop a brochure for the informative assignment?

The material on pages 70-72 involves students in making decisions about genre and style. The checklists can help students evaluate their options early in the writing process, and they can also assist students in retrospective reflection on work accomplished.

**Style and Document Design**

This chapter includes attention to document design as an element of style or genre. It’s important to be clear about your own expectations for document design, and to invite students to experiment with design as appropriate for your assignments. This chapter devotes attention to fonts, space, and color and offers several examples for students to consider. Especially if your class has access to a computer classroom, you can invite students to change their document layouts and consider the effect this has on readers’ reactions.

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

The “For Writing and Discussion” exercise on page 65 is helpful for teaching students that it is not the topic, but the writer’s presentation of the topic that determines the purpose for writing. This exercise is also a useful way to test students’ ability to distinguish between the six purposes clearly. After you have given students time to write their scenarios, you could ask students to read theirs without identifying the purpose and see if the class can discern which purpose each student is trying to convey. This exercise can be useful to encourage brainstorming about appropriate topics; it can also be useful later in the writing process when students are refining their approach to an essay.

The activity on page 67 usually opens up a lively discussion of audience. Most students quickly grasp the ways in which party descriptions are affected by shifts in audience, and they can be enthusiastic in inventing details to include in one version or the other. It can be useful to follow this discussion with additional scenarios that invite students to consider how changes in audience affect the content of descriptions or arguments. For example, invite students to consider how they might change their description of a familiar building on campus depending on whether they were trying to persuade a student from their high school to attend their university, or whether they were trying to persuade the university to upgrade technology facilities in that building. Moving through multiple scenarios illustrates the range of concerns audiences may have with various topics, and helps introduce the ways that audience experience and assumptions affect
argument.

The activity on pages 68-69 focuses attention on genre most explicitly, although as the topics for analysis indicate, periodicals can also be analyzed for their audience and purpose. All three will affect the texts published in a magazine. You might first have students complete this exercise by studying quite different magazines. To increase the difficulty of the exercise, then ask students to compare and contrast the characteristics of related magazines: *Good Housekeeping* and *Better Homes & Gardens*; *Time* and *Newsweek*; *Harper’s* and *The Atlantic Monthly*; any two fitness magazines; two hot rod magazines. These differences will now be much more subtle so it is best if students can bring in two related magazines they read with some regularity. Such an exercise can be helpful early in the semester, since it introduces basic rhetorical principles in a way that helps students highlight their own interests. When students compare the magazines they bring, they often find areas of mutual interest. This is good for developing classroom morale, and it also leads into a discussion of document design (which appears later in the chapter).

The activity on pages 73-74 focuses students’ attention on writing style. The sequence of questions will move students into a detailed analysis of the effects of style. Many students will quickly identify a few prominent style differences (the difference in vocabulary and the presence of first-person stories in one piece, for example); the question sequence should prompt more detailed examination of the samples in the text. If you have asked students to bring in magazines to follow up on the previous activity, you can continue this style analysis on the texts they provide.

The activity on page 80 works particularly well as a group activity, since the elements of document design are so plentiful that group discussion is easily stimulated. While the questions focus attention on layout, you can emphasize the ways in which other rhetorical principles are at work here. For example, the differences in font use in women’s and men’s magazines are connected to assumptions about purpose and audience.

**Guiding Students through the Writing Project**

This assignment asks students to condense and adapt a passage from *The New England Journal of Medicine* for readers of *Reader’s Digest*. In the instructions for the assignment, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson write, “Although the style of the medical article may seem daunting at first, a little work with a good dictionary will help you decipher the whole passage.” If your students are not skilled users of dictionaries, they may need more assistance than this advice.

Begin by asking students to bring their own dictionaries to class on the day you will
assign this project for homework. If your class meets in a computer classroom, you will find online dictionaries a useful resource. You might want to borrow a few hardback college dictionaries from colleagues for the class period in case most of your students own only paperback editions, or in case some students don’t own a dictionary or forget to bring one. Ask students to work in groups to note the differences in their dictionaries. You might ask them to look up any word in every dictionary and see how the definitions differ in their degree of detail. Then ask students to list the next fifteen words defined in each dictionary to see if the dictionaries differ in which words they define. Finally, ask students to look at any special sections in the front or back of the dictionaries to see how they differ in their other features. Many first-year college students don't realize there are major differences between dictionaries and without this activity may not know what Ramage, Bean, and Johnson mean by a “good dictionary.” Tell students that most bookstores—including the one on campus—sell several different college dictionaries and if they own only a paperback one, buying a better dictionary now is an investment that will benefit them throughout college and long after.

Because the mini-article students will write for this assignment is quite short—the sample is only three sentences—students may be tempted to skip over whatever parts of Patrono’s article they don't understand. Emphasize to students that they need to understand, at least generally, everything Patrono writes in order to translate this article for other readers accurately. As their first step in understanding this passage, they can rewrite it in less scientific language, without yet condensing or adapting it for a Reader’s Digest audience. Sometimes a word they are familiar with may be used differently in this passage, such the word “load” in “a single loading dose of 200-300 mg.” Students may then need to use a dictionary to find alternate definitions of words they know. If no dictionary definition seems suitable, perhaps they can deduce the meaning of the word from its context: “a single loading dose of 200-300 mg followed by a daily dose of 75-100 mg” suggests that “loading” is the initial dose of what will become a regular regimen.

Also tell students that if they can’t find a medical term in the dictionary, they may be able to determine its meaning by breaking the word into its syllables and then looking up each. This will be true, for example, for the words “pathophysiologic” and “antithrombotic” in the introduction. Other medical terms, such as “platelet,” have no ready synonym. Students must then decide when they define the word whether to also retain the original word along with its explanation, at least for their initial paraphrase of the passage. They may even want to check their medicine cabinet to give a more familiar interpretation to the doses cited: how many aspirin tablets would someone probably take to get 200-300 mg or 75-100 mg?

Once students have paraphrased the passage for their own interpretation, they can then decide how to present these findings for a Reader’s Digest mini-article. They will need
to decide what is most important in the excerpted portions of Patrono’s article so they know what to include and what may be left out. Students need not restrict their mini-article to three sentences, the length of the example, but it should still be quite brief. By rereading Ramage, Bean, and Johnson’s advice on pages 66-67 of the textbook, students should realize that the best structure for this mini-article is closed form: it should communicate efficiently and clearly to readers who want to access information quickly.

Students also need to make decisions about style in adapting this medical article for a Reader’s Digest audience. They can use the four broad aspects of style identified on page 68 of the textbook to analyze the style of the sample Reader’s Digest mini-article. Assuming that John Hargreaves also reported his study findings in a medical journal, it is unlikely that the study used language like “a piece of hard cheese the size of a sugar cube” or even “a healthy, cavity-free smile” (“teeth,” perhaps, but probably not “smile”). The writer of this mini-article has made such stylistic decisions to make her text friendly in tone. In the third sentence, she explains the scientific phenomenon explained in the medical study in lay terms, keeping the mini-article educational. Urge students to similarly consider how they might make their mini-article stylistically entertaining as well as informative.

Even the titles of these sample texts are very different in style. The mini-article is titled “For Teeth, Say Cheese,” whereas the medical study is titled “Aspirin as an Antiplatelet Drug.” Ask students to write a title for their mini-article that would interest Reader’s Digest readers. Encourage students to test the success of their mini-articles before turning them in by asking several people not enrolled in this course to read them. If possible, students should ask people who are familiar with or regularly read Reader’s Digest. Students can then ask these readers if the mini-article is both clear and enjoyable to read.
Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

Chapters 5 and 6 have related goals. Together, these chapters instruct students that using language necessarily entails interpretation. Thus, whenever students write or read they should be aware of how the text represents “reality.” They must also consider what the implications are for a given interpretation rather than other possible interpretations. As students learn to write (Chapter 5) and read (Chapter 6) with greater awareness of how language shapes understanding, they will become more critical thinkers. In particular, chapter 5 builds on the notion of angle of vision to help students become more conscious of the ways their perspectives affect what they observe. It also builds on notions of exploratory writing in order to demonstrate how writing is a mode of learning.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Angle of Vision

Discussing rhetorical observation teaches students that even the most factual accounts are necessarily slanted by what they include and exclude and by what they emphasize. The term “angle of vision” adds to this understanding by explaining why a text may be slanted in one direction rather than another. At times, the writer may consciously assume an angle of vision that is consistent with his or her political interests, and the opening portion of the chapter richly illustrates this connection between perspective and content.

The text offers an extended set of materials on proposed oil drilling in Alaska. The three exhibits feature images and descriptions of the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve (ANWR) produced to support or oppose oil drilling in that region. Depending on whether the authors of the texts support or oppose drilling and exploration, they highlight different themes or pieces of information. It can be instructive to work with these exhibits sequentially, asking students to first look only at figures 5.1 and 5.2 (on page 88), and then to freewrite their reactions to the pictures. Class discussion might then compare reactions of students who consider themselves somewhat familiar with the debate over ANWR and those who are not. You can then ask students to move to the next images, on pages 88 and 89, and then do another freewrite about their impressions. Similar sequences of freewriting in response to the exhibits can help students see how their own views are affected by each
Later in the chapter, the text demonstrates that the angle of vision may be unconscious and/or inescapable, derived from the position of the observer. For example, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson provide two passages by female anthropologists describing women in the !Kung tribe foraging for food (page 95). The anthropologists differ in their interpretations of how the tribe and the women themselves feel about the women’s work. Marshal’s description of the women’s relationship to their work is predominantly negative; however, Draper’s description of the same phenomenon is predominantly positive. You may want to ask the class to speculate about the causes for these different interpretations. Perhaps the anthropologists were observing the tribe during times of different food availability, and the foraging was much less productive when Marshal did her studies. Or, perhaps Marshal went away from the encampment with the women while they gathered food and observed how hard they worked, while Draper may have stayed in camp, causing her to notice the excitement of the children more than the women’s labor.

The possible angles of vision are limitless. Yet another anthropologist studying the same behavior may focus not on women’s attitudes towards their work but on whether the women work collaboratively or individually. Still another anthropologist might study whether all women work equally or whether a tribal hierarchy determines the women’s division of labor. Ask students whether they think a male anthropologist might describe the women differently, even whether a male anthropologist might be as likely as a female anthropologist to study !Kung women’s work. A non-anthropologist observing the !Kung tribe would have still a different angle of vision. This observer may pay more attention to individuals and not notice patterns of group behavior as much.

You can also discuss whether as outsiders, anthropologists may be raising questions that the !Kung do not consider themselves. Perhaps the !Kung women think only about completing the tasks necessary for their survival, without expecting fulfillment or personal satisfaction from their work. Ask students to consider whether the children are likely to perceive the women’s work differently than do the adult men in the tribe. Conclude the discussion by stressing again that multiple “truths” may exist because of different angles of vision. Yet, this does not mean that all statements are true. For example, based on the information provided by both Marshal and Draper, it would be false to assert that the food-gathering done by the women is of only minor importance to the survival of the tribe.

On pages 94-95 of the textbook, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson identify several of the factors that affect an observer’s angle of vision: the extent of the observer’s prior knowledge; the observer’s cultural understanding; the observer’s beliefs and values. In Chapter 6, when Ramage, Bean, and Johnson discuss differences in audiences, the traits they identify can equally affect a writer’s angle of vision. You will be able to build strong
links between Chapters 5 and 6 on this point. Ask students to brainstorm a list of other possible influences on a writer's angle of vision. These might include age, level of education, time in history, place of residence (e.g., rural/urban), personality (e.g., introverted/extroverted; optimistic/pessimistic), personal history (e.g., childhood experiences), physical ability, and health.

It is important for students to understand that they cannot entirely control their angle of vision, that it is intricately tied to their identity. The writing project in this chapter will allow them to see that writing always entails an angle of vision; however, you will need to reinforce that writers’ angles of vision are far more complex than what writers purposefully contrive.

Also discuss with students the implications of the concept “angle of vision.” No single angle of vision can fully depict the subject being examined; therefore, writers must strive to be aware of and responsible for their angles of vision. Because the nature of language mandates that observers select, omit, and give emphasis when writing, writers must make ethical choices to represent their subjects fairly.

It may seem like a limitation that no single vision of a subject can be complete. Yet this phenomenon also has many merits. Writers aware of their limited vision gain humility about what they write, knowing it is not the final word, and may even explore their ideas more fully in an attempt to understand other possible angles of vision. Writers can also gain tolerance for others’ views, recognizing that other angles of vision may be as valid as their own. Writers who realize that multiple angles of vision are necessary to understand a subject thoroughly will be more eager to listen empathetically and learn from others. They will be more willing collaborators. Finally, because the more angles of vision that are available the more a subject can be understood, each individual’s vision has value. Each individual’s vision adds to others’, if only in some small way, giving each person a compelling motivation to write.

Rhetorical Observation

It can be difficult for students who are educated in the empirical tradition to understand that facts can rarely, if ever, be presented completely objectively. Even when what is stated is empirically accurate, which facts are selected for presentation and which are emphasized will still bias the presentation. Such bias is a normal part of writing, not a flaw. As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson explain to students on page 96, “authors create an angle of vision through rhetorical choices they make while composing.” Stress that the writing assignments in your course require that students consider the angle of vision they create through their choices.
Ten minutes into the class period on the day that you begin this chapter, you might ask each student to briefly write a factual account of everything that has happened in the past ten minutes, using “I” to describe his or her own experience. Write a description from your perspective also. Then call on several students to read their accounts aloud; read yours too. This brief exercise can quickly show the impossibility of a fully objective record even when the event being described is fairly straightforward.

Students may have noted different conversations among classmates that took place as the class began, and some may have looked at what you were carrying when you entered the room, to see if you had assignments to return. As the class began you may have noted who was absent, who arrived late, even who was sitting in a seat different from where he or she usually sits, and you have probably already begun trying to assess the students’ energy level. Students’ accounts of the beginning of class are likely to differ from yours and also from each other’s. Discuss with students whether any of these written accounts are truer than others. Some accounts may be more complete, more detailed than others, but are any more factual? Using this exercise can help students understand that there are many simultaneous truths—each accurate from its own perspective—and that just because complete objectivity is impossible does not mean “anything goes.” False accounts of what has transpired during the first ten minutes of class could still be written.

Rhetorical Analysis

As pages 96-97 of the textbook explain, students can analyze five rhetorical features to describe how a text conveys a particular angle of vision. Advise students to read passages they wish to rhetorically analyze several times, at least once for each of the five features.

You may want to point out to your students that the second feature—“selection or omission of details”—is far easier to discern when there are two passages that students can contrast, as in the example given of the two anthropologists’ reports and this chapter’s writing project. When students do not have an easy basis of comparison, they must be more creative in imagining what details have been omitted. One strategy you might recommend to students is that they apply the journalist questions presented in Chapter 2 to determine what the writer may have excluded from the text:

- Who is involved? Include all those who are observing or who may be affected.

- What is happening? Include what is happening on the periphery of the writer’s angle of vision, what a wide angle lens would capture.

- When and where is it happening? Include the historical and cultural context.
• By what means is it happening? Include what limitations prevent other events from occurring.

• Why is it happening? Include an analysis of the expenditures and gains of those involved.

For features three and four—“choice of words” and “use of figurative language”—tell students to watch for any words that create a mental image as they read. Once they have identified words with strong connotations and figurative language, students can determine the commonalities of these images and better judge the writer’s intent.

Sentence structure, feature five, guides students to identify a text’s syntactical places of emphasis. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson identify three locations of emphasis: “at the end of a long sentence, in a short sentence surrounded by long sentences, or in a main clause rather than a subordinate clause” (97). If your students are uncertain of the definitions of “main clause” and “subordinate clause,” review this material with them in the text’s handbook section. The handbook defines and gives examples of main and subordinate clauses in Handbook 2. Students may want to refer to the list of subordinating conjunctions in Handbook 3 if they remain unsure of whether or not a clause is subordinate.

The chapter’s section on techniques for writing (pages 102-104) will also help students understand the rhetorical features for analysis. It can be helpful to teach those pages together with the presentation of the techniques for analysis to give students the greatest number of examples at the start. Looking at the discussion of generating details (page 102), for example, will help students recognize words with positive and negative connotations in the text they are analyzing.

Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities

The “For Writing and Discussion” activity on pages 98-99 of the textbook requires students to perform a rhetorical analysis of two paragraphs. This activity will help them to study closely how one student has used various techniques to convey contrasting impressions of the same scene, which will prepare them well for writing and analyzing their own paragraphs (this chapter’s writing project). Once students have had a chance to read both paragraphs, instruct them to analyze both for one rhetorical feature at a time. The analysis below is not inclusive, but does give examples for each rhetorical feature of some differences students might note between the passages.

One feature students should analyze is the writer’s overt statements of meaning. In
the first paragraph, the writer conveys positive descriptions directly through phrases such as “airy, spacious, and functional,” “splashes of spring sunshine filtering through the blinds,” and “quiet harmony of the environment.” In the second paragraph, overt statements of meaning include “cramped, uncomfortable space,” “the chalkboard is blocked from my view,” and “students…scrape their chairs on the bare linoleum floor.” Students might note that in these paragraphs, the overt statements in the first paragraph refer to general conclusions about the scene, whereas in the second paragraph there are more overt statements that refer to particular elements of the scene. Ask students whether this affects which description is more convincing. Do they think that fewer comprehensive overt statements were possible for the first paragraph because the scene being described is hard to depict? Can they add any particular details to the first paragraph that adds to the description and its effect?

Another feature students should analyze is what details the writer selects and omits in each passage. In these descriptions of a classroom, issues of space and sunlight are treated very differently in each paragraph. Students should look for details that are included in each paragraph, such as the reference to students working on their assignments and the student group at the back of the room. The first paragraph argues that the room is spacious, while the second paragraph views the room as cramped.

Students should also look for more subtle differences in what is included or omitted. Some of the differences in detail are adjectives that are included in one passage but omitted in the other. Note how the breeze and tables are described in each paragraph.

A third feature students need to analyze is the connotations of the words in each passage. The first paragraph includes many cozy words, such as “softly and intently,” “spacious,” “comfortable,” “harmony,” and “well-used.” Such words convey familiarity and comfort. In the second paragraph, the words “cramped,” “bare,” “awkward,” “crammed together,” and “baked” suggest a confined environment unsuited to academic work.

Figurative language, the fourth feature students must analyze, is less common in these paragraphs. The only clear instance in the first paragraph is the description of the room as being like “the jeans and favorite sweater you put on to go out for pizza with friends.” This simile adds to the positive impression of the scene by connecting with students’ social experiences with friends, evoking a positive atmosphere. The second paragraph does not contain an easily identifiable instance of figurative language, although the classroom is described as “baked by the sun,” which connotes an oven, an inappropriate working environment.

The last analysis students must complete of these paragraphs is of their sentence
structures. The structures of the first and last sentences of the two paragraphs are virtually identical; the descriptions start with the basic size of the room and end with a reference to the view out of the windows. In the intervening sentences, however, the writer controls the emphasis of the sentences more deliberately. In paragraph 1, the third and fourth sentences end with specific descriptions of students’ academic work. In contrast, paragraph 2 uses the ends of sentences to emphasize negative images, accenting the ways in which it is difficult to accomplish work in this environment. In both paragraphs, the writer uses the accumulation of adjectives to strengthen the intended impact.
Discussing the Readings

“Exhibits on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge” (pages 88-91)

The three text pairs here involve students in the analysis of verbal and textual rhetoric. Students can work together or alone to move through the question sequence on page 92 of the textbook.

The first question asks students to connect visual and verbal arguments. In effect, they must identify the claim or point conveyed by each picture. Students will likely develop more than one idea for each picture, and you can discuss the ways in which students’ own positions make them more or less likely to identify those ideas. In addition, you should ask students to support their claims with reference to details in each photograph. For example, a student who says that the visual argument in figure 5.1 (page 88) is that polar bears are vulnerable and need protection might stress the prominence of the bear cubs in the upper right, and the cubs’ dependence on the mother bear at left. A student who says that the photo argues that the ANWR is pristine might point out that the only thing visible in the photograph are the bears; there is nothing else to see because nothing else is there. Similarly, “Commerce threatens the caribou” or “Machines don’t belong in the wilderness” are arguably the claims made by figure 5.2. In figure 5.3, students can plausibly argue that the photograph conveys the bears’ coexistence with the pipeline, or that the pipelines are non-invasive because they lay above ground and do not disturb the land.

The second question focuses students’ attention on angle of vision. In discussion, point students to the similarities and differences in the texts, since that is one way to compare what elements are included (or not) in each text. Advocates of drilling and exploration point out the ways that the Arctic winter makes the ANWR a forbidding environment for people and animals, and they also point out the ways in which similar environments exist in other Arctic regions. They highlight the human occupants of the ANWR and the human need for jobs. Opponents of drilling focus attention on the presence of animal life and “unspoiled wilderness.” They don’t mention human needs much and focus on the animals’ experiences alone.

Questions three and four direct students’ attention to the ways in which the texts’ authors create positive associations for their own positions and negative associations for their opponents’. Advocates of exploration accuse opponents of “ignoring the pressing needs of Alaska’s Native families” and position their opponents as “against American jobs.” They highlight the ways in which the ANWR already supports human existence with roads and military installations, and they value the economic possibilities of exploration. On the other hand, opponents of exploration describe ANWR as a “pristine” wilderness
“bursting with new growth.” The descriptions of animal movement use vivid language (“caribou surged,” “polar bears hunt”) to emphasize the dynamic natural cycle they witness. Encourage students to examine the language carefully so that they can understand how the different positions of each writer affects the information presented.

“Henry Morton Stanley’s Account” (pages 99-100) and “Mojimba’s Account” (page 100)

A useful approach for discussing the first question following this pair of accounts is to design a chart on the chalkboard, listing “Stanley’s Account” and “Mojimba’s Account” vertically and listing the five strategies of a rhetorical analysis (identified in question three following the reading) as horizontal headings across the top of the chart. Then lead a class discussion prompting students to fill in the chart. The contrast between the two accounts is most striking when students can see the chief differences summarized. Although this is the third question in the set, it can be useful to start with this question, since it will help students review the basic rhetorical principles displayed in the texts before moving to other issues.

For example, Stanley’s account offers overt statements of meaning in these descriptions: “a sight that sends the blood tingling through every nerve and fibre [sic] of the body”; “Our blood is up now”; “It is a murderous world”; and “we hate the filthy vulturous ghouls.” Mojimba’s account is different in his overt descriptions of the tribe’s reactions: first excitement—“We were open-mouthed with astonishment”; then joy—“we will prepare a feast . . . and escort him into the village with rejoicing!”; and finally fear—“We were paralyzed with fright.” Mojimba’s account does not include overt statements of hatred, as does Stanley’s account.

In charting how the two accounts differ in their selection and omission of details, make sure students notice that both writers emphasize the destructiveness of the other party while minimizing the destructiveness of their own. Stanley includes the information that those in the canoe “let fly their spears” and refers to “the fight in the village streets,” inferring that the violence is reciprocal. In contrast, Mojimba omits any reference to a counter-attack, claiming that the tribal member’s actions included only retreat and surrender: “We fled into our village. . . . We fled into the forest and flung ourselves on the ground.” The most significant difference in the accounts’ information is that Stanley does not acknowledge that the explorers killed Africans and destroyed (“plundered and burned”) their village in this encounter.

The connotations of words and figurative language used by Stanley and Mojimba also differ. Whereas Stanley describes “a flotilla of gigantic canoes bearing down upon us,”
Mojimba writes of “the great canoes” used for ceremonial occasions. Stanley describes the tribe’s singing as “a swelling barbarous chorus,” while Mojimba describes it as “songs of joy.” Collectively, Stanley’s choice of words is threatening and violent in connotation: “gigantic,” “bearing down,” “barbarous,” “murderous,” “daring,” “cannibals.” His figurative language—“a monster canoe,” “vulturous ghouls”—has similarly violent connotations. Mojimba’s word choice is more harmonious early in the passage: “brothers,” “ceremonial,” “honor.” Later in the passage his words reflect the tribe’s terror—“fled,” “flung ourselves,” “fearful”—but are not as violent in their connotations as the words used by Stanley. Mojimba’s figurative language is also less aggressive: “We were paralyzed with fright.”

The final rhetorical strategy used by Stanley and Mojimba—the ordering and shaping of sentences—cannot be analyzed entirely because the accounts that are provided contain many ellipses. Nevertheless, students should notice that Stanley emphasizes “It is a murderous world” by making this statement a main clause at the beginning of a sentence. He also takes emphasis away from “sound the retreat” by placing this phrase in the middle of a long sentence.

The sentence structure of Mojimba’s account emphasizes the relentlessness of the aggressors by closely duplicating a key sentence: “We fled into our village—they came after us. We fled into the forest . . .” The sentence structure of Mojimba’s account is also especially effective when reporting the result of the explorers’ attack: “When we returned that evening our eyes beheld fearful things: our brothers, dead, dying, bleeding, our village plundered and burned, and the water full of dead bodies.” The colon in this sentence is a dramatic introduction to the gruesome detail that follows. The omission of weak verbs in this list—such as “our brothers were dead, dying, and bleeding, our village was plundered and burned, and the water was full of dead bodies”—contributes to its stark power.

The second, fourth, and fifth questions on page 100 ask students to identify a factual version of the two accounts. Some students may want to include all the information from both accounts without obvious bias. Notice, however, that the two accounts are contradictory in revealing who initiated the attack. Stanley reports that the Africans launched spears before the British explorers retaliated with musketry. Mojimba’s account, however, describes the explorers as firing first and does not describe the tribe responding with weapons at all.

The sixth question on page 100 of the textbook refers to “the believing and doubting game,” which was explained more fully in Chapter 2 (pages 37-39 of the textbook). To complete this exercise, students would first say or write “I believe it is possible to create an objective and unbiased account of the Congo phenomenon” and then generate as many reasons as possible to support this statement. When they have exhausted their ideas, students would then say or write “I doubt it is possible to create an objective and unbiased
account of the Congo phenomenon” and then generate reasons for this impossibility.

Ultimately, this question prompts students to consider the extent to which complete objectivity is possible in language. In essence, such writing would seek to nullify the effect of the textual features explained on pages 96-97 of the textbook, the five elements of a rhetorical analysis. It would contain no overt statements of meaning. It would be balanced in its detail, with no extraneous information but also no notable omissions. The word choice would be highly denotative, with as little connotative value as possible. The writing would be devoid of figurative language. Also, the sentences would be structured so that all information received equal emphasis. After students discuss the extent to which they believe such objectivity is possible, you may want to raise the question of what political interests may underlie a seemingly neutral angle of vision. What stake might someone have, for example, in discouraging the formation of judgments? Writers who encourage a seemingly neutral angle of vision may want readers to avoid assigning blame or responsibility, to instead accept information passively. This may be especially true if the writer is the person at fault.

Guiding Students through the Writing Project

Students can follow the advice on pages 102-105 of the textbook when drafting and revising this chapter’s writing project. The first half of the assignment is for students to deliberately alter their angles of vision by providing one pleasant and one unpleasant description of the identical scene. If you would like to make the assignment even more challenging, you can tell students to write two descriptions of the same scene, but rather than making one description pleasant and the other unpleasant, ask them to role-play a change in their identity while writing the two descriptions. This role-playing will allow students to “defamiliarize” their subject of study. The introduction to the assignment, which discusses different rationales for the two descriptions, is worth spending some class time on to help students understand why and how they are practicing description.

Students might, for example, give two descriptions of the college football stadium: one from the perspective of a spectator who played football in high school and the other from the perspective of someone who has little or no experience in organized sports. How is a trip down a grocery store aisle perceived differently by an adult and a child? How is a local singles bar perceived differently by a straight person and a gay person? How is a nearby park perceived differently by a groundskeeper and a person recently released from prison?

If students approach the writing project in this way, assuming the identities of different observers, they can still use the advice Ramage, Bean, and Johnson provide on pages 102-105 for composing descriptions: generate sensory descriptions for each observer;
use words that “show” rather than “tell”; use precise words with strong connotations to create a dominant impression. As in Ramage, Bean, and Johnson’s guidelines, the writer must still describe the same scene at the same time. But rather than writing one pleasant and one unpleasant description, the descriptions will vary according to the identity of the observer. Both descriptions may thus be pleasant or both may be unpleasant, yet they will differ in the details that create these impressions.

If students complete the writing project according to the directions in the textbook, writing one pleasant and one unpleasant description, you may still require them to examine how their perception is affected by their identity. As part of their rhetorical analysis, they may want to freewrite about what observations are missing from both of their descriptions. They can consider how someone else might observe the same scene in still other ways. Such inquiry may help them to reflect upon how their own perception is affected by their prior knowledge, culture, beliefs, and values. You may also want students to address in their final reflection the extent to which what they’ve learned by writing these descriptions is true for other writing they do, even when they are not deliberately altering their angle of vision. They should realize that even when they are not aware of its presence, they still write with an angle of vision.

This is the first chapter of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* that includes guidelines for peer reviewers. You may want to ask students to read pages 493-96 of the textbook before their first experience with peer reviews, which explain the peer review process. You may also want to review pages 12-17 of this instructor’s manual for advice on how to best assign students to groups. If class time allows, have students also read part or all of Chapter 25, “Oral Communication: Working in Groups and Giving Speeches.”

The complication of peer reviews when students face an identical task is that students may be tempted to incorporate each other’s ideas into their own work. For this assignment, students are likely to choose different scenes to describe, and their rhetorical analyses will obviously differ. Yet their final reflections could be interchangeable. During peer reviews, a student who had few ideas for the final reflection section of the writing project may like the ideas in another student’s paper and adapt them for his or her own. You can ask students to write an additional reflection after the peer review process is complete, to explain how the peer review process affected their own work. You may also want to have students submit drafts of their assignments. That way, if the papers of two students who worked together have very similar reflections, you can examine their drafts to see who deserves credit for those ideas, and you can begin an important conversation with students about acknowledging the influence of peer reviewers on their finished texts. You can also begin a conversation about the appropriate use of others’ ideas.

If you ask students to turn in copies of the reviews they received when they turn in
their revised writing project, occasionally the writer of the work may not be able to find the reviews, which unfairly penalizes the reviewers. Instead, you may want to require students to bring two copies of each peer review they write: one for the writer and a photocopy (or additional printout, if they write the review on a computer) for you. You can then promptly give students credit for the reviews they write.
Chapter 6
Reading Rhetorically:
The Writer as Strong Reader

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

Chapter 5 taught students how to observe rhetorically, aware of how their angle of vision affects their text. In this chapter, students learn to read rhetorically. They will learn how to vary their reading practices according to their purpose for reading, how to summarize both open and closed form texts, and how to read against the grain of a text, which allows them to write a strong response. The writing project for this chapter is for students to write a summary and strong response for a reading; the chapter supports either the use of readings in the chapter or the use of instructor-provided readings.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Reading Processes

Ramage, Bean and Johnson identify ways in which skilled readers vary their reading processes. On page 116 of the textbook, they cite a study done by Robert Sternberg, a cognitive psychologist, who studied how readers vary their reading behaviors to suit different goals. You may want to informally replicate Sternberg’s study with students in class, prior to a fuller discussion of reading practices. For this in-class activity, ask students to turn to the essay on pages 201-203 of the textbook, entitled “Not Guilty: Despite its Fearsome Image, The Tarantula is a Benign Beast.” Then provide this sequence of directions:

• Scan the essay to find the answer to this question: “How do male tarantulas defend themselves from female tarantulas?” When you know the answer, stop reading and raise your hand. [Time how long it takes for two-thirds of the class to raise their hands. When most of the class is finished this task, give the next instruction.]

• Now skim the same essay to determine its main ideas. Although you don’t need to write them down, you should be able to summarize the essay’s main points in a few sentences. When you are finished, again stop reading and raise your hand. [Time how long it takes for two-thirds of the class to raise their hands. Announce the next direction when most of the class is finished.]
• This time, read the essay to make sure you completely understand it. Raise your hand when you are finished. [Time students again, based on when two-thirds of the class is finished. Announce the last direction when most of the class is ready.]

• As your last task, read the essay closely, analyzing its details, trying to notice anything you may have missed during an earlier reading. Again raise your hand when you are finished. [Time students once more, clocking when two-thirds of the class is finished.]

Now ask students to discuss how they varied their reading for each of the given tasks. How did they find the answer quickly for the first task? Did they scan the page hoping that a critical word like “male,” “female,” or “defend” would stand out? Or did they read the first sentence of each paragraph? How did they instinctively decide what to skip? What process did they use to skim for the essay’s main ideas? Did they just read more quickly, or did they omit reading some sections of the essay? If they decided not to read the essay in its entirety, how did they decide what to overlook? For example, some students may have skipped over quotations.

Also ask questions based on the last two reading tasks. How do students distinguish their processes when skimming, reading for comprehension, and reading for detailed analysis? Based on your timing of their readings, how greatly do these processes differ? Mention to students that if they had been given a different text to read each time, the time differences between these skills would probably have been greater. By the time students were asked to work with the same text for the fourth task, the essay was quite familiar, making its analysis speedier.

After students have sufficiently discussed their variations in reading processes for this activity, ask them if they regularly vary their reading processes. If so, on what basis do they decide how they will read each text? Do they employ reading strategies other than those they have used during this activity? If so, what are they? In what circumstances do they use each? As in this exercise, do they ever read a text multiple times in order to comprehend its meaning? Again, under what circumstances?

Have they ever used a multidraft reading process for a text not assigned in school? For example, most cookbooks recommend that the cook read the recipe completely before beginning, then read the recipe again to follow the steps. Students may have done multidraft readings of assembly instructions for a new product they purchased. Or they may have needed to repeatedly read for comprehension difficult explanations in a computer manual or tax preparation manual. Because “multidraft reading process” refers to reading the same text more than once in rapid succession, this term would not necessarily describe students’ repeated reading of a favorite novel in consecutive years. Yet readers will still be
likely to reread a novel differently, knowing what will take place, than they read it the first time. Ask students to describe how being well acquainted with a text changes their reading practices.

In addition to varying reading processes to match reading goals and engaging in multidraft reading, skilled readers also vary their reading strategies to match the text’s genre. Ramage, Bean and Johnson cite a scientific or technical report as an example of a genre that frequently elicits an adaptation of reading processes (116). Researchers often read sections of a report out of order, claim Ramage, Bean and Johnson, and may decide not to complete their reading if the study proves irrelevant to their own purposes. Ask students to brainstorm a list of other genres that are usually not read from beginning to end. Their lists might include store catalogs; reference works such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, and telephone books; most magazines and newspapers; many literary anthologies and anthologies of critical essays; religious treatises such as the Bible and the Torah; and many legal treatises, such as the Constitution. If you’d like, you might even take a few minutes to explore with them how computer innovations such as hypertext affect people’s reading habits.

Now lead students to discuss how their reading practices differ according to the genre they are reading. For example, do they read a novel differently than they do a textbook? Can they identify any differences in how they read a newspaper from how they read a magazine? Certainly the material they would read in U.S. News and World Report differs greatly from what they would read in Entertainment Weekly; do students engage in different reading processes for different magazines? Students may also read textbooks for different disciplines differently. Ask them how they might read The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing differently than they would an algebra textbook or a history textbook.

You may even want to ask students to describe the process by which they have been reading The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing so far in the course. Do they use the headings to help them preview and review each chapter? Do they read the material under each heading carefully or skim it just enough to detect Ramage, Bean and Johnson’s main points? Do they read or skip over “For Writing and Discussion” activities or essays that you don’t assign? Do they read the chapter more than once? Assure students that you are not asking these questions to reprimand them for inadequate preparation, but to openly discuss with them how to make the best decisions about reading practices. If a topic is discussed adequately in class, it may be in their best interest to skim a section and devote the time they save to beginning their writing project.

Also discuss with students the chapter’s suggestions (on pages 115-117) for reading strategies. The chapter presents experts’ reading strategies and offers advice for students
about how those strategies can be applied in academic contexts. Ask students how many of these strategies they already use and which suggestions they think could most improve their own reading. You may particularly want to discuss the first strategy, locating rhetorical context, since many students simply plunge into reading assignments in order to get the assignment over with, rather than starting with some reflection about the nature of the text they are to read. Similarly, you may want to discuss the multidraft reading strategy with students because they may not be used to thinking of re-reading as an expert strategy; they may associate re-reading with failed first readings, rather than with informed exploration.

You may want to require students to apply some or all of the reading strategies on pages 115-117 to a particular passage as a homework assignment so that they gain experience with these skills, working with a reading from later in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* or with a piece you provide. Or, you could assign students to apply the reading strategies to a reading assignment they have received in another course (if you have a student who is not enrolled in any other courses, that student could apply the reading strategies to a section of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*, perhaps pages 118 ff. on writing a summary and response). You can assign students to turn in a brief account of how well each strategy worked.

Note that later in the chapter, on pages 130-132, there are strategies for re-reading. You can create class activities for these strategies based on the ones described here. You can require journal or in-class writings after directed uses of the re-reading strategies, and you can invite students to compare their own re-reading strategies with those described in the chapter.

**Writing a Summary**

Although students may have some initial responses to a text as they read, it is imperative that they fully understand the meaning of the text before writing a response. Ramage, Bean and Johnson recommend that students prepare to write a summary by analyzing what each paragraph of a text says (its meaning) and does (its function within the text). Ramage, Bean and Johnson provide examples of this on pages 118-119 of the textbook, and it is worth spending class time working on these examples, as students may have a difficult time separating the “gist” of a paragraph from its “function.” To give students practice with this technique, you may want to give them time individually or in groups to complete this analysis for paragraphs 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 of Martin’s essay (pages 109-111 of the textbook), the paragraphs which Ramage, Bean and Johnson did not analyze. Students will need to read the essay in its entirety to understand the function that each of these paragraphs serves, what it “does.” When students have finished, discuss as a class any differences in their analyses.

Once students have a paragraph-by-paragraph synopsis of a work, their next difficulty
is deciding what information to include and what to omit in their summary. In part, their decision will be based on the desired length of their summary. Ask students what the advantages and disadvantages are of summaries written at different lengths. In what circumstances might each be best?

Paragraph-by-paragraph analysis is less effective when summarizing open-form prose. In effect, summarizing an open-form text requires students not only to condense the length of the text, but also to reconstruct it as closed-form. They may, for example, summarize different themes or character sketches in an open-form piece.

**Strong Response Writing**

The section of the chapter that addresses strong responses is set up in the reading processes section on reading with and against the grain (pages 117-118). Students are likely to have difficulty fully comprehending the term “reading against the grain.” This concept means more than merely agreeing or disagreeing with the text. Students are probably more familiar with the phrase “to read between the lines,” a reference to looking for a text’s covert meaning. Yet “reading against the grain” is even more goal-directed. As Ramage, Bean and Johnson explain, it entails articulating and critiquing the writer’s (or editor’s) values, assumptions about the subject matter, and preconceptions of the audience. It may take some class time, and much focused discussion, in order to help students see that reading against the grain is not the same as disagreeing with the text.

Reading against the grain entails examining a text for cultural messages that may not even be the intended subject of the text. Reread with your students the examples Ramage, Bean and Johnson provide on page 133 in the first paragraph under the heading “Articulate Your Own Purpose for Reading.” Ask students if they can recall any times when they have participated in such an endeavor. Even if they have not read a text in this way before, they may have watched a movie critically, more interested in how gender roles were being presented than in the movie’s plot. Or perhaps they have noticed more about how children are presented in television commercials than they have learned about the products being advertised.

To read a text against the grain is to examine the “angle of vision” of the writer, a concept discussed in Chapter 5. Often, reading against the grain entails examining the angle of vision not only of the writer, but also of the writer’s group affiliations or society. To use the examples Ramage, Bean and Johnson cite on page 132, it may not only be the writer of the text who assumes readers will be heterosexual or Christian. Such assumptions are commonplace in contemporary American society. The predominance of such assumptions does not make a writer any less responsible for his or her predispositions; in fact, when
such assumptions are widespread, a reader’s critique may need to be stronger. Emphasize to students that when they read, even if they identify with the intended audience, they should be alert to ways that other readers might feel excluded. Defying the marginalizations of peoples is in the best interest of everyone, not just those who are excluded.

You can use the generic questions that Ramage, Bean, and Johnson provide on pages 149 (as well as those in the boxes on pages 127-129) to help students develop responses to the texts they are working with. You can use some of the questions as the focus of class discussion of essays in the textbook or other material you provide. Remember that as students pursue their readings, they can build upon skills they learned in Chapters 1 and 2 of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*. Writing a strong response requires students to pose questions and problematize what they wish to examine, strategies discussed in Chapter 1. To assist them in this process, in addition to the strategies recommended in the present chapter, students may want to use any of the techniques of exploration introduced in Chapter 2: freewriting, idea mapping, dialectic discussion, active reading and research, journals or learning logs, e-mail discussions, or focused study groups. The believing and doubting game that serves as the basis of the brief writing project in Chapter 2 can also help students generate a response.

To encourage students to use the full range of critical reading skills, you may want to use the transparency master at the end of this chapter in the instructor’s manual. The questions on this transparency incorporate the generic questions Ramage, Bean and Johnson pose that can be asked of any text (see page 127-129 of the textbook) and the additional inquiry prompts that Ramage, Bean and Johnson offer throughout their discussion of “reading against the grain.” Ask students to work through the prompts on this transparency for the essay “On Teenagers and Tattoos” on pages 109-112 of the textbook. This activity may be done individually, in small groups (with the groups then reporting their responses to the class), or as a full class discussion. In addition to the analyses in the student response on pages 124-126, what insights have these questions provided that could be useful when writing a response to “On Teenagers and Tattoos?”

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

For the activity on pages 114-115, students will be quick to identify the political references in the passage as topics for which more background knowledge is needed (and indeed, many students may feel at a loss on the political context!). Before they complete the exercise, however, they should have also identified apolitical references that would require cultural explanation for a student from Ethiopia or Indonesia, most notably the phrase “like a man agreeing to throw in the washer-dryer along with the house.” Someone from a Third World culture may not realize that the reference here is to the purchase of a
house and that appliances such as washers and dryers are often a point of negotiation. Readers—including many students in your class—would also need more information to understand the passage’s final phrase “retreat into neo-isolationism.”

The activity on page 122 asks students to practice shortening a summary. To give students practice in assessing the relative importance of textual information, you may also ask them to lengthen the sample summary on page 121-122. Tell students to imagine that the writer of the summary has asked them to select one or two more ideas or examples from the original essay to make this summary closer to 250 words in length (about 55 words longer than the current summary). What ideas and examples would they select and why? Urge the class to come to a consensus about what additions would best represent the original essay.

In the introduction to the activity on page 132, Ramage, Bean and Johnson write, “This passage often evokes heated responses from our students.” If your students also respond heatedly, ask them to explain why. Some students may share Dillard’s views and be grateful that someone has expressed them so cleverly, explaining a messy home as a morally correct choice, not a character flaw. Other students may be offended by Dillard’s comment. Ask these students whether it is Dillard’s housekeeping habits or the way she describes those habits that most disturbs them. Does the use of the word “tidy” make cleanliness seem diminutive, trivial? What is the impact of the clause “I made my own cheese balls,” especially at the end of this passage, a place of emphasis? Do students interpret this example as humorous or as mocking? Do students who do attend to housework think this passage accurately reflects their lifestyle? In what ways do they feel they are being misrepresented? They may object to Dillard’s implication that those who do housework view it as their highest priority in life and accomplish little else.

You can conclude this activity by asking students what Dillard risks and gains by her characterization of her audience. Perhaps some readers who object to Dillard’s personal habits are nevertheless amused by her examples. Other readers may keep reading simply because they enjoy the catharsis that a disagreement can bring when little is at stake, such as differences in housework. Are there students in your class who are so put off by Dillard’s remarks that they would not continue reading the text from which this passage is excerpted? Would they keep reading but only with the expectation of increasing their dislike for Dillard? Finally, you might ask students whether they think Dillard expected some tidy housekeepers to read this passage. Is she blatantly criticizing them? Perhaps the clause “I made my own cheese balls” is Dillard’s way of telling these readers, “Don’t take offense. I’m not referring to you. You’re not nearly so extreme.”
Discussing the Readings

“On Teenagers and Tattoos” is discussed thoroughly on pages 124-126, in the student example of a summary/strong response essay. The four remaining readings in this chapter are not discussed here because they are included in the chapter only as sources for the writing project. The essays need not be discussed in class.
Guiding Students through the Writing Project

You have several options for assigning students’ writing projects:

- You can choose one of the three essays at the end of the chapter for all students to use when writing a summary and response.

- You can allow students to choose any one of the three essays at the end of the chapter to use when writing a summary and response.

- You can select any other reading for students to use for this writing project.

- You can use part of a longer reading for students to use (such as one chapter or the preface of a book the class is reading).

One consideration to keep in mind is that if students all work on the same reading, when they do peer reviews, they may find it easy to help each other generate different readings of an essay. Discussion is often fostered when students have readings in common, although you may want to discuss the ethics and strategies associated with incorporating ideas from peer review into an essay. On the other hand, if students have a variety of readings from which to select, you should be able to group students so that they can review the project of a student working with a different essay. You may want to provide both options for your class so that they experience peer reviews with students who know their text, and students who don’t.

Several of the readings that Ramage, Bean and Johnson provide as options for this writing project are at least partially open in form. Remind students that when they wish to write a summary of an open-form essay, the summary itself should be closed form, making the essay’s covert meaning overt, particularly at the beginning and end of the summary. To depict the mood of the open-form piece, students can also briefly cite the most compelling examples and images the writer used.

Clarify all the requirements of the assignment. Ramage, Bean and Johnson specify that the summary should be approximately 150-250 words. Students can use the example on page 121-122 (which is 195 words) to get a sense of how detailed such a summary should be. Make clear to students whether you expect their summary to be written with attributive tags, as in the example in the textbook. Are direct quotations acceptable as a part of the summary for this assignment? If so, explain to students how much quoting you think is too much.
Ramage, Bean and Johnson do not specify any length for the response section of the assignment so you may wish to do this yourself. Also decide whether you want to limit in any way the type of response students write for this project. On page 123, Ramage, Bean and Johnson discuss the common academic forms of strong response essays (analysis or critique assignments, “your own views” assignments, and a mix thereof. If you have particular preferences about the balance of summary and response, and if you want students to focus their attention on analysis or response, you should make this clear when you explain the assignment. Whatever your preferences, you will likely find that some students veer in the other direction (they include more summary and less response than you deem appropriate, or so much response and so little summary that the text they’re responding to gets lost, for example). You can use peer response sessions to focus attention on the balance of summary and response in the text, and to highlight the students’ developing thesis statements.
Questions for Reading Against the Grain

1. What questions does the text trigger for you?

2. What places in the text are particularly thought provoking? Why?

3. What is excluded from the text that may bias its conclusions?

4. What aspects of the text’s data, evidence, and arguments are not persuasive? Why not?

5. What can you observe about the author’s perspective or “angle of vision” that the author does not directly acknowledge?

6. What is questionable about the writer’s values, beliefs, and assumptions, both stated and unstated?

7. What will you gain by accepting the writer’s view? What will you lose?

8. What assumptions does the writer make of the readers’ values?

9. Do you feel excluded from the intended audience of this text? If so, how? If not, who might and why? How do these exclusions limit the text?
Chapter 7
Writing an Autobiographical Narrative

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This is the first chapter of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing devoted to an open-form writing project. In this chapter, students are taught how to select appropriate topics for autobiographical narratives and create autobiographical tension within their texts. Chapter 7 should be read in conjunction with Chapter 20, “Composing and Revising Open-Form Prose.” Together, the two chapters teach students to manage the literary techniques of plot, character, setting, and theme. The autobiographical narrative that is assigned in this chapter is also significant because it is the first writing project in The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing that is a full-length essay (although you may have chosen to teach the project in Chapter 6 as a full-length essay).

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Topic Selection

Ramage, Bean and Johnson offer extensive prompts throughout the chapter to help students select topics for their autobiographical narratives. The numbered or bulleted lists on pages 153-154, 156, 170 and 171 suggest numerous possible topics for students who think they have few experiences worthy of narrative development. Encourage students to thoroughly consider all of these lists’ suggestions before committing themselves to a particular topic. The most dramatic topic will not necessarily be the best for this project; the autobiographical significance of an experience is often more poignant when it is not overshadowed by the extravagance of the event itself.

If students still cannot think of a topic for an autobiographical narrative, you may want to suggest that they generate a “time line” of their lives, brainstorming key people, places and events for every few years. If you want to devote class time to this activity, you can provide the prompts for this gradually. Begin by asking students to list key people in their lives from birth to age five, then key places for this time period, then key events. Before moving on, ask the class to tell some of the people they listed (parents, grandparents, siblings, babysitters, neighborhood friends, daycare attendants), then some of the places, then some of the events. When students share some of their responses aloud, the memories of other students may be piqued. Next ask students to list key people,
places, and events in their lives from ages five to ten and wait while they do this, then ten to thirteen, then thirteen to sixteen, then sixteen to nineteen, and so on in three-year increments until students’ present ages. If you have many older students in your class, you can adjust the increments to make sense for the amount of time you want to devote to this activity.

If your class is working with a particular theme, you may want to do a focused timeline to prompt ideas. For example, a work timeline can help students chart the various kinds of work they have done in their lives (starting with household chores or teenage volunteer work and moving forward to paid employment), or a literacy timeline can help students chart the evolution of literacy activities in their lives. Such focused direction can help students prompt each others’ memories as they compare experiences.

Ramage, Bean and Johnson’s lists of subjects and this “time line” activity will help students think of many possible topics for their essays; however, students also need guidance in determining which of the topics they are considering have the most potential for this writing project. Advise students to choose a topic from which they have some emotional distance. Some students in your class, for example, may have had highly traumatic experiences quite recently, such as the death of a family member in the previous month. Students may want to write about that experience as a tribute to their loved one or to facilitate their grieving process, yet unless they have had time to gain perspective on such an emotionally-charged event, it is unlikely that they will be able to present the experience clearly and meaningfully to readers.

An additional hazard when students select traumatic experiences for this writing project is that you may feel uncomfortable assigning grades to such essays. It can be difficult to convince students that you are grading their essays, not their experiences. Imagine, for example, a student who writes about having been physically abused as a child or one who writes about having been date raped. The experience the student suffered may be heartrending, whereas the student’s essay may be poorly written. A student who receives a “D” or “F” on such a paper might feel that the trauma of his or her experience has been belittled.

Early during your work with this chapter, it is best to discuss openly with students the importance of distinguishing their academic investment in this writing project from their personal investment in any topic. Certainly it is ideal for students to write about topics that they care about deeply, but for the purposes of this writing project, when most are receiving their first introduction to autobiographical narratives in an academic setting, students may have trouble judging the appropriateness of possible topics. Therefore, while students are selecting their autobiographical topics, encourage them to imagine the possible academic ramifications of each topic they consider. Is the topic one they will feel
comfortable sharing with another student for peer review? How will they feel if the essay they write on that topic receives an average or below-average grade? If a low grade on that topic would devastate them (more so than a similarly low grade on papers with other topics), they should probably select a different topic.

Another time when students sometimes confuse personal and academic agendas in autobiographical assignments is when they write about their religious conversion experiences. The common difficulties in such papers are twofold: students often don’t have the skills to describe supernatural experiences well enough for a reader who has not had similar experiences to understand; students often develop such papers in ways that begin as autobiographical narratives, but quickly move to religious instruction and/or persuasive attempts to convert readers. For these reasons, some instructors prohibit students from writing about religious conversion experiences. Another option is to permit students to write about religious experiences, but to warn them of these difficulties. Tell them that papers on this topic should focus on their own experience and should develop that experience as concretely as possible. The essay by Kris Saknussemm on pages 160-161 deals with a moment of revelation, although not a religious or spiritual one. Students who are writing about internal developments may find it a helpful model.

Yet another way in which students make poor decisions about autobiographical topics is when they choose a topic that is not sufficiently narrow for the subject of the writing project. For example, a student who is an immigrant may chronologically review his years of hardship in his homeland, the difficulty of his decision to immigrate to the United States, his attempts to gain financial security through various jobs after his immigration, his subsequent decision to attend college, and his anticipation of a more hopeful future. A student athlete who had a highly significant relationship with a coach may attempt to chronicle the evolution of that relationship over a four year period, starting with the decision to try out for a sport, the difficulties of the try-out process, and then several years of skill development stories. Certainly all of these experiences are connected and form a cohesive narrative, but only a highly skilled writer could convey the breadth of these experiences successfully in a relatively short essay. Most first-year writers would be better advised to choose a more limited time frame and develop just one segment of this autobiographical journey. Encourage students to pare down their focus in order to develop depth with their work. Some students may be reluctant to cut material out once it is written, but organize class activities to help students outline and analyze the scope of their essays.

After students use the prompts scattered throughout Chapter 7 to brainstorm possible topics for this writing project, you may want to have students write a brief paragraph describing the topic they plan to write about and why they have selected that topic. You can then steer students away from topics with the potential difficulties explained above.
You might also display for students the transparency at the end of this chapter in the manual, which provides a more extensive list of criteria to help students decide between possible topics for their autobiographical narratives. Students can answer these questions for themselves or, using these questions for guidance, can give each other feedback in small groups on their probable topics.
Autobiographical Tension

More discussion and examples of narrative tension are provided on page 551-552 of the textbook. Tension is important in autobiographical narratives because it is the source of growth, change, and insight. Transformation is what interests readers, even if their own experience is removed from that described in the narrative.

Tension is easier for students to identify when they are writing about an experience that has been upsetting than when they choose a topic that is joyful. For example, you may have students who want their narrative to describe the happiest day of their life, which might be their high school graduation, their wedding day, or the day their first child was born. These events are all pivotal turning points in people’s lives, but without any tension, the narrative is dull, a generic account that holds significance only for the writer. Your advice about choosing topics shouldn’t force students into writing about upsetting events, of course. You can help students discover tensions worth exploring in happy events as well.

Using one of these sample topics, discuss with the class how narrative tension can be found in a happy occasion. The word “tension” often has negative connotations, but it does not need to imply that there are problems, only juxtapositions. Any turning point in someone’s life, even if it is a step toward a brighter future, is simultaneously a relinquishing of the past. Whether the writer views moving to a new stage in his or her life as a relief or as bittersweet, the juxtaposition of past and present is a fertile source for narrative tension. As Ramage, Bean and Johnson explain, sometimes a student cannot identify the source of tension until he or she is in the midst of drafting. Students can question each other about their topics in small groups, however, so that writers can begin to explore what tensions are inherent in their narratives.

Elements of Literary Narrative

Ramage, Bean and Johnson identify four elements of literary narrative: plot, character, setting, and theme. You might encourage students to explore these elements by considering how they relate to the components of a story, discussed on pages Lesson 1 in Chapter 20 (pages 545-553): depiction of events; connectedness; tension or conflict; resolution, recognition, or retrospective interpretation. Whereas the elements of literary narrative identify techniques used to convey a narrative, the story components identify the prerequisites necessary for something to be defined as a narrative. To some degree, however, the terms overlap. The plot, for example, can be defined as both the events and their connectivity. The theme is conveyed through the story’s tension and resolution. Character and setting can contribute to all four elements of the minimal story: they can be the impetus of events, can enhance the connectedness of the story, can be the source of tension, and can provide the resolution.
Plot, character, setting, and theme also deserve discussion in their own right. Novice writers are likely to view plot as a given: what happened is what happened. To correct this misconception, you may want to discuss with students the relationship between plot and story, explained in Chapter 20. As explained in Chapter 20, a sequence of events does not alone constitute a plot, at least not a satisfying one. The depicted events must share a thematic connection, and include a central tension/conflict and resolution. Pacing—how much or how little any one event is developed—is also an element of plot. As you discuss the readings in this chapter, prompt students to speculate about what details the writers left out in conveying a sequence of events. Also lead students to discuss why the writers developed particular incidents in the plot as little or as much as they did. For contrast, have the students read “The Stolen Watch” on pages 547-549 of the textbook. If students were assigned to strengthen the plot of this autobiographical narrative, what would they leave out? What would they develop more? Would they alter the sequence in which the events are conveyed? If so, how and why?

In discussing characters, ask students the means by which readers learn about characters in texts. Readers judge characters on the basis of how the narrator presents them (physical descriptions of them and explicit evaluations of them), how the characters themselves behave, what the characters say, and how other characters in the text react to them. To examine these methods of characterization, you might ask students to analyze more closely the excerpt from *Black Boy* on page 157 of the textbook. As brief as this passage is, the author uses several of these techniques to characterize himself as a child and the librarian he encounters. If you have time you may want to teach students techniques for writing dialogue. The transparency master at the end of this chapter of the manual outlines some key advice.

Ramage, Bean and Johnson explain that setting is not only the place where a story occurs, but often it is also the physical embodiment of the narrative’s theme. To emphasize this point to students, remind them of the writing project they did for Chapter 5: a composition and analysis of two descriptions of the same scene, one positive and one negative. Students should remember from that project that writers can “see” the same place differently depending on what overall impression they want to convey in their narrative. Even the extent to which the setting is described in a narrative is an important decision in crafting an open-form text.

The final element of literary narrative examined by Ramage, Bean and Johnson is theme. They explain that a narrative’s theme “goes beyond the events of the story to point toward the larger significance of those events” (149). As illustrated by the examples provided of a plot summary and thematic summary, although the theme emerges from the plot, characters, and setting of a narrative, the theme can be stated in more universal terms.
In other words, thematic significance is integral to—*but not restricted to*—the specific incidents of a given story. Other stories will share the same theme, even though the characters and events of those stories will develop the theme differently. For another discussion of theme, especially as it relates to the depiction of a narrative’s events, see the discussion of the reading “Berkeley Blues” on pages 194-195 of this instructor’s manual.

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

Most of the activities in this chapter prompt students to apply specific techniques to the topic for their own writing projects. You may want to use these activities as prewriting assignments. The activity on page 156 focuses on plot; the first one on page 158 focuses on characters; the one at the top of page 159 focuses on setting; and the one on page 160 focuses on theme. Even if you don’t have sufficient time for all of these activities in class, you may want to require that students complete all of the activities before drafting the narrative.

The readings in the chapter can be used to illustrate the elements being considered in these activities. For example, the activity about plot on page 156 asks students to consider how they will begin their stories. To prepare them to answer this question, you might direct them to read and discuss the introductions of the readings in this chapter. Another question raised in this same exercise concerns the narrative’s climax. Ask students to identify the pivotal moments or scenes in the chapter’s readings. Based on these examples, what can they learn about planning the climax for their own papers? The subsequent exercises on characters, setting, and theme can also be examined using the chapter’s readings.

The activity on page 164 is less directly tied to students’ writing project, but it can be adapted as a prewriting exercise also. Assign students to read the explanation of memory-soaked words and revelatory words on pages 554-556 of the textbook (you may prefer that they read the entire Lesson 2 in Chapter 20 for a more comprehensive coverage of tailoring language for open-form prose). Then assign students to compose just the climax (pivotal moment or scene) of their narrative using such language. Students can get feedback on this work in small groups or you could ask for volunteers to read their scenes to the class. The exercise can also be used as written as a class warm-up activity.

The activity on page 169 can help students decide on a topic for the writing project, but it is placed late in the chapter because of the activity’s specific references to the readings. If you want to use this activity to help students in your class decide on topics, you may want to refer to it near the beginning of your work with this chapter. Even without having read the sample narratives, students should be able to understand these questions. If your students decide on topics readily and do not need this activity for that purpose, you can still use it to analyze the chapter’s readings more fully.
Discussing the Readings

“Phantom Limb Pain” (pages 160-161)

The bulleted list on page 161-162 of the textbook identifies several features of Saknussemm’s selection you may wish to discuss with your students. The sparseness of this narrative is particularly important if, like Saknussemm, students plan to write about a topic that is almost entirely an internal experience. Although the narrative is spare, the language Saknussemm uses has great impact, and you may want to emphasize the ways in which the revelatory words in this passage (such as “mythic,” or “haunted”) connect with the concrete language (“poster of Raquel Welch,” “stump of limb,” “aquarium full of vodka”) to help emphasize Saknussemm’s internal struggles.

Ask students to reread the selection looking for ways that Saknussemm’s commentary on the narrative is set up earlier in the piece. The first paragraph contains very little detail about Miller King, but the reference to “that mythic kid we all know” allows readers to interpret and imagine Saknussemm’s neighbor. What associations does that paragraph raise for your students? In the later paragraphs, Saknussemm’s description of his physical labors (he “lumbered” through the area; he did “Marine push-ups”) highlights his assumptions about physical prowess, but in paragraph three he begins to notice his neighbor’s emotional strength (“he didn’t cry.”) In the closing paragraph, he notes that he “grew a little bigger” which raises questions about his former notions of growth and success.

Saknussemm’s passage is also helpful in illustrating how students can use the scale of abstraction (discussed in chapter 3, page 50) to support their commentary with details. Here is a scale of abstraction in paragraph two:

1. “All summer long I worked out.”
2. “I ordered a set of barbells that came with complimentary brochures….”
3. “I lumbered around our neighborhood wearing ankle weights loaded with sand.”

When students read each other’s drafts, they should watch for occasions where similar scales of abstraction can be developed. Tell students that when they make a generalization, they should both make it more specific and support it with specific examples, as Saknussemm has done.

Saknussemm’s commentary in paragraph six explains the meaning he associates with this experience. You can invite students to read the story to see whether they draw other lessons from the story, making the point that the writer’s own analysis is one reading of the story, but readers’ experiences may see other lessons (such as about the ways boys are
taught to communicate with each other or about gender-based assumptions, for example). His explicit commentary contrasts with the spareness of his narrative, and you should talk with students about the ways in which these two features are connected. Would a richer narrative support the commentary more effectively?

“No Cats in America?” (pages 162-164)

Patrick José’s narrative contrasts nicely with the preceding reading because its significance is not explicitly stated. Rather, the author contrasts two memories of a movie soundtrack to illustrate his shifting attitudes towards life in America. The first memory, in paragraph one, illustrates his idealistic view of the American dream; the second memory, in the closing paragraph, illustrates his considerably changed view of American promise as he struggles with humiliation at school.

This essay is rich is descriptive language. The descriptions of Filipino food in paragraph 2 (“lechon, adobo, pancit, sinigang, lumpia, and rice”) may not be familiar to some readers, as one of the discussion questions notes, yet they evoke particular images. The discussion question about José’s decision to include specific names of foods and party games is a good one for a class activity, for it highlights the role of audience and culture in relation to narrative. Other descriptive details, such as the lunchroom scenes (“I opened my Tupperware,” “I walked my way towards the trashcan, opened the lid, and watched as my lunch filled the trashcan”) reveal José’s actions in vivid detail. Invite your students to read the narrative, looking for ways in which the narrative reaches out to readers familiar with Filipino culture and to readers who are not.

Ask students to re-read the narrative, looking for ways in which the descriptive details help support the theme suggested by the images of “No Cats in America.” Which details suggest José’s changing attitudes? The specificity of this narrative guides readers’ interpretation of the story. A good group activity is to break the narrative up into component parts (life in the Philippines, life in America before school, the lunchroom, for example) and to ask students to describe what José’s attitudes are towards America and towards his own life at each point. Have each group list what particular associations they make with each detail they list to support their analysis. This will help students answer the second and fourth questions following the reading, about setting and details.

“Masks” (pages 165-166)

The questions on page 167 are useful for discussing several of the most important considerations for autobiographical narratives: autobiographical tension, theme or significance, and detailed support. Begin discussing this essay by asking students to identify the main contrarieties, as question one asks. You may want to direct students back
to page 153-154, where Ramage, Bean and Johnson identify the most frequent contrarieties of autobiographical narratives. “Masks” clearly articulates the second of the three listed there: “Old view of person X versus new view of person X.”

Beyond this primary tension, however, this student writer accentuates the tension in the narrative through a number of other critical comparisons and contrasts. An important source of tension in the narrative is the duration of seeming difference between the narrator and Kathy. The narrative depicts three time periods: kindergarten (paragraphs 1-6), seventh grade (paragraphs 7-9), and high school (paragraphs 10-20). Hence, at the heart of the narrative are both contrasts (the differences between the narrator and Kathy) and comparisons (the similarities in the narrator’s perception throughout all grade levels, until the last paragraph of the essay). Ask students to consider how the effectiveness of the essay would change if the writer had restricted her narrative to their high school years. It is the duration of the contrast between the writer and Kathy that makes the writer’s final realizations so weighty. The descriptions of their differences over years further emphasize the contrast between the past (the writer’s prior impressions of Kathy, consistent for at least a decade) and the present (the writer’s new realization).

Question two asks about the conclusion of the essay. Rather than providing a definitive answer to whether or not the writer should state the realization so explicitly in the final paragraph, discuss with students the effects of retaining, eliminating, or expanding this paragraph. One asset of the conclusion in its current form is that it doesn’t allow for misinterpretation. If the narrative ended with paragraph nineteen, readers might think the author was still feeling jealous or hurt. Another strength of the conclusion as it is written is that it shows that not only has the writer’s opinion about Kathy changed, but so has her opinion of herself. In fact, her perceptions of Kathy and herself have reversed: Kathy is now “alone and vulnerable”; the narrator is now “the powerful one” and “independent.” A benefit of eliminating the last paragraph would be that the significance would be conveyed more subtly. A benefit of expanding the last paragraph would be that the writer could then show the significance, rather than merely tell it, as she does now.

Before discussing question three, you may want to ask students to explore their responses in writing. Direct them to create two columns— one titled “narrator” and the other titled “Kathy”—and to record the details that serve as contrasts between the two characters for each of grade levels identified in the essay: kindergarten, seventh grade, and high school. Students should notice that several kinds of detail recur in each section, such as Kathy’s hair and clothes and boys’ responses to the characters. These patterns add continuity to the narrative. Also ask students which details best characterize the narrator and Kathy.

You may also want to discuss the effectiveness of excluding expected details. The
name of the person who is the chief subject of this narrative is not revealed until paragraph ten, halfway through the essay. Do your students think the writer delayed this information purposefully? What is the effect of postponing this detail? When Kathy’s name is revealed, it is done so in the context of her clothing, not her relationship with others. No one calls her by name throughout the narrative. How does this omission underscore the theme of the essay?

Finally, point out to students this writer’s skill in indicating the time period of each segment of her narrative. Each time she begins with a physical description of Kathy that suggests her age and only later explicitly indicates the grade level. Even then, though, the announcement of the grade is incorporated into further description. At the end of paragraph one, the writer states “She was very wise, sophisticated beyond her kindergarten years.” In paragraph eight, the grade level is incorporated into the description as follows: “My mom wouldn’t let me go out on dates until I was a sophomore in high school. We were only in seventh grade and she was always going out with guys.” In paragraph ten, the writer gives this indication of the time period: “She held her head up high, befitting one of her social standing: top of the high school food chain.” Encourage students to be similarly thoughtful in conveying essential information subtly.

“Letting Go of Bart” (pages 159-160)

Whether students have read this essay for homework or in class, you might begin discussing it with students’ books closed. Give students a few minutes to freewrite how they would describe Bart to someone who hadn’t read the essay. What is Bart’s personality like? What descriptions of him do they remember? When students have finished writing, ask volunteers to share what they have written. Does the class share a similar impression of Bart? Have they remembered many of the same details or is there a wide range in which details struck them? After this discussion, direct students to open their textbooks and quickly skim the essay again. What details had shaped their overall impression of Bart? In rereading the essay, has their impression changed at all? If so, why? What descriptions had they forgotten? What made those descriptions less memorable? This discussion can help students develop skills in judging what makes an effective “collage” of scenes in autobiographical writing.

Students can also benefit from discussing what they learn about the narrator in this selection. How would they describe the narrator’s personality? What details in the narrative support this description? How would they describe the relationship between the narrator and Bart? Again, what details in the narrative contribute to this impression? This discussion can help students realize what makes narratives autobiographical, even when the principal subject of the narrative is someone else.
Guiding Students through the Writing Project

Begin your direction of students’ projects by providing them with feedback on their topic selection, in accordance with the criteria explained in the textbook and in this manual. Students can then use the “For Writing and Discussion” activities on pages 156, 158, and 159, and 160 of the textbook to generate material for their writing projects, as well as the “Composing Your Essay” advice on pages 170-172.

After working through the activities and readings in the chapter, just before students begin to shape their plans into a draft, you may wish to allot a portion of the class session for students to convene in one of four small groups, each devoted to a narrative technique: plot, characters, setting, and theme. Students should join whichever group focuses on the narrative technique they find most difficult (at least for this assignment). In each group, students should take turns identifying their topics, sharing the ideas they already have for applying the narrative technique to their topics, and seeking further ideas from others in the group. If many students have trouble with one particular technique, discuss it more extensively as a class. Ask for a few volunteers to share their topics so that the class can discuss together how that technique can be applied to the specific narratives students are writing.

If any of your students are writing on extremely sensitive topics, you may need to give special care to facilitating peer reviews for this writing project. Make sure that the students are well-suited not only in their writing abilities and the other factors discussed above, but also in their emotional maturity. You should observe these groups especially closely during in-class reviews of these drafts. If the groups are reticent in their discussion of difficult topics, intervene just long enough to get conversation going.

If you sense that writing a narrative about a tragic experience has caused any student undue distress, make sure the student is aware of the counseling services available on your campus. If you have several students whom you suspect would benefit from professional support services, take a few moments of class time to describe your college’s counseling services. Stress that the services are confidential and, on most campuses, free. Explain how to make an appointment, as well as the counseling center’s staffing, hours, location, and phone number.
Deciding on a Topic for
Your Autobiographical Narrative

1. Have you narrowed a broad or lengthy experience so that you can
describe it adequately in this essay?

2. Did the experience happen long enough in the past that you have had
time to understand its impact?

3. If the topic is emotional, will you feel comfortable sharing the draft for
peer reviews?

4. Will you be able to be objective about your grade if you write on this
topic? Remember that the grade you will receive reflects your writing
skills on this assignment, not the merit of your experience.

5. If the experience is one that is more internal than external (a change in
self-image; a religious experience), will you be able to describe it for
readers in ways that are not too abstract?

6. If the experience or person is a topic common to many people’s
experiences (your high school graduation; your loving grandparents),
will you be able to develop it so that readers do not find it generic or
clichéd?

7. Is the topic one that will allow for autobiographical tension (opposing
values or points of view between characters or divided feelings within
the narrator)?

8. Is the topic likely to generate a theme (larger significance) that
readers will find relevant to their own lives?
Tips for Writing Dialogue

1. Begin a new paragraph each time the speaker changes.

2. Punctuate dialogue correctly by putting the necessary punctuation inside the final quotation mark.

3. Use the speaker’s words or the succession of paragraphs to clarify who is speaking. Don’t always name the speaker.

4. Avoid the monotony of “he said” and “she said” by using more descriptive verbs and adverbs to convey how the dialogue was expressed.

5. Occasionally interrupt a prolonged exchange of dialogue by having the narrator comment on what is taking place.

6. Try to make your dialogue match each character. The characters shouldn’t all sound alike.

7. Test that the dialogue sounds natural by reading it aloud.
Chapter 8
Writing an Exploratory Essay

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter focuses on the process of exploration that occurs when a writer begins with a question or problem, researches the subject, then uses the results of this research to refine the question and continue the research. The writing project in this chapter requires students to chronologically recount their exploration. This chapter can be successfully taught as a precursor to the writing project in another chapter of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*. Two of the reading selections in this chapter are examples of preparatory assignments for writing projects in later chapters: a proposal of a solution (Chapter 17) and a researched paper (Chapters 21 through 23). Any writing project involving research could also be assigned in conjunction with this chapter: an informative essay (Chapter 9); an analytical or synthetic essay (Chapter 13), a causal analysis (Chapter 14); a classical argument (Chapter 15); or an evaluation (Chapter 16). The material on research logs in Chapter 13 may be useful as you explore this chapter.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

**Exploratory Purpose**

Although the exploratory purpose is not difficult to grasp, students may experience some confusion simply because exploratory writing is not a common academic writing assignment. Most teachers hope that an exploratory process takes place whenever students undertake a project, yet rarely do teachers reward the process itself, independent of its outcome. If you explain to students how the exploratory purpose relates to what they have already studied in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*, students will be more comfortable with this chapter.

The exploratory purpose was first introduced in Chapter 4 of the textbook, on page 63. There, Ramage, Bean and Johnson describe exploratory writing as writing that “doesn’t support a thesis; it seeks a thesis”(58). To explore is to deliberately wallow in complexity, to postpone closure on an issue. Chapter 2 of the textbook, “Pursuing Problems,” discusses the desirability of wallowing in complexity more thoroughly, as well as various techniques students can use to identify complexities. More rigorous research further enhances a writer’s exploration. Chapter 22 explains how a writer can gather information
using library resources, interviews, personal correspondence, and questionnaires.

Ramage, Bean and Johnson identify two likely manifestations of the exploratory purpose: “Exploratory writing is usually unfinished, behind-the-scenes work not intended to be read by others, but it sometimes results in a formal, finished product”(63). An example of formal and finished exploratory writing that is not included in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* but that might help you and your students better understand the exploratory purpose is Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*. Throughout the text, Woolf recounts her exploration of the topic “women and fiction.” As she describes the process of her research, she emphasizes the obstacles to scholarship she encounters because of her gender and the scarcity of women’s writing. Like Tompkins, wallowing in complexity caused Woolf to change what she wanted to explore: she realized the topic “women and fiction” cannot be divorced from a consideration of women’s social conditions. She concludes that women need fixed incomes and time apart from the responsibilities of child rearing to produce art.

Exploratory writing can be a “formal, finished product” that is consciously written for an audience. Often, formal exploratory texts are written to identify assumptions and omissions that span an entire discourse community. As such, they aim to challenge a paradigm. Formal exploratory writing often shares the goals of rhetorical reading, already discussed in Chapter 6. For both, a writer aims to analyze an “angle of vision,” attentive to the assumptions and exclusions in scholarly discussions. Chapter 6 illustrates how to perform such an analysis for a single source; the present chapter illustrates how to perform a cumulative analysis for multiple sources.

The exploratory writing students are being asked to complete for this writing project is less ambitious than a “formal, finished product,” yet not quite the “unfinished, behind-the-scenes work not intended to be read by others” that Ramage, Bean and Johnson identify at the other end of the spectrum for exploratory writing. Students will write a paper that recounts their research process—the order in which they used sources and the extent to which each source aided or thwarted their efforts—then revise the draft to keep its pace lively for readers.

**Dialectic Thinking**

Ramage, Bean and Johnson identify dialectic thinking as an important component of exploratory writing. On page 178-179 of the textbook, they explain that dialectic thinking is associated with the philosopher Hegel, who posited that a thinker begins with a thesis, the thesis then incites an antithesis, and the opposition between these two leads to a synthesis. Dialectic thinking thus models the exploratory process because it considers multiple solutions, each a reaction to the previous consideration. Dialectic thinking
forestalls closure. The synthesis that is derived from dialectic thought becomes a new thesis, which in turn leads to a new antithesis, synthesis, and so on. Dialectic thinking is the prime exemplar of exploratory thought because it is potentially unending.

As Chapter 2 of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* explains, exploration is also intricately tied to the stages of intellectual development identified by William Perry. Students who are at the dualist stage may have difficulty genuinely pursuing dialectic thought because they are likely to be firmly committed to their initial thesis. They may pose an antithesis that is artificially simplistic, requiring them to make only inconsequential modifications to their thesis. By urging students to pursue dialectic thinking rigorously and sincerely, you can prompt students’ intellectual development. As students undertake the explorations of their topics, you may want to ask them to write a brief justification of their commitment to each thesis, antithesis, and synthesis they consider.

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

The activities in this chapter are on pages 179-180 of the textbook. Question one asks how the writer of Essay A on page 176 of the textbook could expand the essay by using dialectic thinking. This writer defines creativity as unique expression, unrestricted by rules and guidelines. The writer could make the dialectic process more integral to the essay by indicating how this writer may have defined creativity differently in the past. Also, the writer could revise the present definition by considering whether it is possible for someone to be creative while working within guidelines.

The essay writer states, “Sculpting, carving, building, art, and acting are just a few more areas where people can show their creativity.” Yet is creativity limited only to certain areas? Can’t people show creativity in problem-solving, whether as a parent disciplining a child, a mechanic fixing a car, or a politician planning a campaign? These examples could all expand the writer’s essay by offering an alternative view: creativity can be exercised in arenas that are not traditionally defined as artistic. In brief, the writer of Essay A could improve the essay by showing more willingness to question, reconsider, reflect, and change.

Questions two, three, and four on page 180 of the textbook present a sequential task to help students practice dialectic thinking. In addition to using these exercises as described, you may also show students that dialectic thinking is ongoing by having them repeat questions two, three, and four later in a later class session when you are still discussing exploratory writing. Ask students to complete the exercises for the same topic they first used, beginning their response for question two with the opinion they now hold after considering the alternate views they generated during their previous completion of this set.
of exercises. In other words, students should now treat the synthesis they previously generated as their initial thesis, then repeat the dialectic process by pursuing an antithesis and seeking a new thesis. Afterwards, discuss with the class how their opinions have changed by repeating this exercise and whether there could be value in repeating it yet again. You will probably not have time for a third repetition, but discussing its generative potential can help students understand the power of dialectic thinking.

**Discussing the Readings**

“An Exploration of How to Prevent Violence in Schools” (pages 180-184)

Because exploratory writing is likely to be an unfamiliar genre to many of your students, you may want to spend ample time analyzing the structure of this reading so they can become more familiar with your expectations for this assignment. The opening paragraphs reveal the writer’s motivations and commitment to exploring this topic. Christopher Leigh’s conversations with his friends in the aftermath of the Columbine shootings led him to wonder how school violence might be prevented. In paragraphs 2 and 3, he explains how he first began to formulate his questions and his initial research activities. Paragraph 2 indicates an initial focusing, and he begins to chronicle his research in paragraph 3. The opening of the essay, while brief, displays Leigh’s sincere desire to investigate a topic he knows to be complex.

Paragraphs three through five consider the first stage of Leigh’s research, his encounter with a New York Times article on profiling as a violence-prevention tactic. Paragraph 3 summarizes the article, and paragraphs 4 and 5 explain how Leigh’s thinking changed as a result of his reading. These paragraphs show how Leigh’s reading raised difficult questions; he describes his ambivalence about profiling as tactic, and paragraph 5 reveals his commitment to explore some of these questions further.

Paragraph six is important, for it mentions Leigh’s initial research difficulties, and it shows his resourcefulness in developing another angle to research. Unable to find other sources that addressed the issue of whether or not profiling is effective, he eventually realized that there were some other important aspects of profiling, such as the ways in which profiling raises questions about schools’ provision of mental health support for students. Paragraph seven continues to discuss his library research.

In paragraph eight, Leigh shows a good research move: he decided to move away from library research and to consult the FBI report on school violence. His reading of this report
led him back to library research (described in paragraph nine), and in paragraph ten he reflects again on his understanding of the questions involved.

Paragraphs eleven and twelve show the relationship between Leigh’s evolving questions and his research. He demonstrates how reading spawned new questions, which in turn led him to additional research and reflection. You should point out to students that throughout the essay, Leigh mentions specific points in his reading that led him to form conclusions (such as Lord’s article giving an impression corrected by the FBI report). His essay’s movement between questions and research shows Leigh wallowing in complexity and asking good questions about the reading he did.

Also draw attention to the different kinds of sources Leigh approaches. He uses research reports, newspaper accounts, and journal articles. You can focus students’ attention on the different kinds of information provided in each of these sources.

You can ask students to trace Leigh’s dialectic thinking process by rereading the paper to see how his opinion on the topic changes. He begins paragraph four by noting “The article really made me question how I felt about profiling…” (181). Towards the end of paragraph seven he explains that his views of the FBI’s position on school use of profiling, which reflects Leigh’s willingness to form opinions about the new information he reads. In paragraph nine, Leigh investigates something he had always felt strongly about: “the negative power of mass media” (182). By paragraph ten, Leigh writes “Despite my discovery that the frequency of school violence has been exaggerated, I believe violence is a real problem….”, demonstrating his willingness to integrate new information with his old views. In paragraph eleven, he explores alternative modes of violence prevention (metal detectors), and in his conclusion (184), he notes “I believe that this exploratory paper has helped me clarify my own thinking about school violence. I am now convinced that the media have instigated a panic about school violence…”

One of the biggest strengths of Leigh’s paper is its pairing of questions and research. Ask students to chart the moments Leigh pursues additional research. Each time Leigh explores another source, it is because he has raised another question that requires more information before a conclusion can be reached.

“Exploring Problems about Hospice” (pages 185-188)

A unique trait of this paper is that the writer, Sheridan Botts, chose a topic to which she was committed, but needed the help of an expert on the topic before she could formulate a question that could guide her exploration. From this reading, then, students can learn that they may need to do research even to articulate their initial questions. When
Sheridan Botts states in paragraph four “Here was a subject that was important, and to which I didn’t have a ready answer”(186), she takes a stance students should strive to emulate.

Another strength of Botts’s paper is that she narrows her topic enough to make her research process selective. As she writes in paragraphs five, six, and seven, she found many resources in the library on hospices, but because she was focusing on the funding of hospice care, she could save time by looking only at the sources that addressed funding. The narrowness of her question thus helped her exploration to be more efficient.

Like Leigh’s paper on the preventing school violence, Botts’s paper also includes a discussion of resources she used but found inadequate. Botts’s initiative in seeking out non-traditional sources of information is another strength of her paper. You might invite students to compare the kinds of sources Leigh and Botts consult to illustrate the range of appropriate research sources.

By the end of her essay, Botts expresses discouragement because she has found little information she can use to convince insurance companies to accept per diem billing for hospice care. She begins her final paragraph with the statement, “I think my best hope in supporting per diem billing is to talk with more staff people at Hospice of Seattle”(188). You might want to ask students whether they agree that this is Botts’s “best hope” for finding a solution. She has already spoken to the hospice director, the marketing coordinator, and a medical social worker there. Who else might she contact? Should she try to contact staff at a different hospice as well?

A useful classroom activity is to ask students to brainstorm (in small groups or as a full class) additional ways Botts might research this issue. For example, in paragraphs six and seven she states that she abandoned a computerized article search because, at that early stage of her research, she didn’t yet understand her topic well enough to know how to decipher which sources would be relevant. After talking with hospice staff for more information about the issue, she might now benefit by returning to this computerized search. Botts also states in paragraph five that she ordered information from the National Hospice Organization, and the “Works Cited” list at the end of her essay indicates that Horne’s paper was first presented at an annual symposium sponsored by this organization. Most likely, staff at the National Hospice Organization would be even more informed about hospice funding issues than the local hospice staff Botts interviewed. She might write them for information specifically about per diem funding or arrange for a phone interview.

Students might also suggest that if experts on hospice care are unable to provide Botts
with sufficient rationale to argue persuasively for per diem billing, Botts can investigate the issue from other angles. For example, perhaps she could research the goals of insurance companies to learn what might motivate them to consider a per diem payment structure. In paragraph nine, Botts writes, “Insurance companies want to minimize the cost for each patient, and get the most for their money” (187). If most hospices inflate the fees for covered services so that they can be reimbursed for the expense of non-covered services—a practice used by the Hospice of Seattle, as Botts describes in paragraph seven—perhaps a per diem billing structure would not substantially increase the payments insurance companies would need to make. In addition, perhaps if insurance companies covered the expense of chaplains, social workers, and the other services cited in paragraph seven, the emotional well-being of hospice patients would benefit enough that they would need fewer of the costly services the insurance company now covers on a fee-for-service basis. Botts could interview a representative from a health insurance company to learn the company’s position on these matters. Rodney Smith, the Director of the Hospice of Seattle, to whom she has already spoken, could recommend which of the insurance company representatives that work with his hospice are likely to be amenable to such a discussion.

Finally, Botts could continue her exploration by researching the funding of health care that is not specific to hospices, but may have analogous implications. For example, health maintenance organizations (HMOs) are designed to provide more comprehensive health care than traditional fee-for-service insurance plans. Botts might profitably ask, “What can be learned from other health care systems about the advantages of alternative billing practices?” The answer to this question might be researched in libraries, on the Internet, and through interviews. Additional sources of information are medical libraries and patient advocacy groups.

Whereas Christopher Leigh wrote her exploratory essay on mail-order brides in preparation for a longer research paper, Sheridan Botts wrote this essay in preparation for a proposal. Her proposal appears in Chapter 17 of the textbook, on pages 456-459. Because Botts was told by a hospice marketing coordinator what position to argue, her paper doesn’t express dialectic thinking as well as does Leigh’s. Botts decides on a position early in the paper and then seeks evidence to support it, rather than open-mindedly exploring the validity of that position. Her paper would be stronger if, after talking to the hospice marketing coordinator, she phrased her question with less bias, such as “Should private insurance companies bill hospices on a per diem basis or a fee-for-service basis?” By not beginning her paper with a predetermined answer, Botts would explore both sides of the issue more thoroughly. She would also be more likely to formulate additional questions as she conducted her research, a strength of Leigh’s paper that Botts’s lacks.

**Guiding Students through the Writing Project**
If you are assigning the exploratory essay as a preliminary paper to the writing project in another chapter, you will need to ensure that the topic students chose for this project is suitable for both. On page 190 of the textbook, Ramage, Bean and Johnson write, “Many instructors will collect [an initial research-log entry explaining the student’s investment in a topic] as a quick check on whether you have formulated a good question that promises fruitful results.”

Because students’ selection of topics will affect their performance on two major papers, you may even wish to schedule brief conferences with students to discuss their topic selections. Conferences are also valuable at this point in the term for assessing each student’s course grade to date, and with the student, collaboratively designing strategies he or she can use to improve future work. Based on prior assignments, does the student have a recurring difficulty that he or she should focus on in subsequent work? Should the student solicit additional feedback on this area during peer reviews? How might tutoring benefit this student? What feedback can you offer the student on his or her attendance and class participation? Does the student have other concerns about the course at this point? However you have structured your syllabus, students are likely to have completed several assignments before this one, and since most teachers will link the exploratory essay to a later writing project, conferences scheduled now would provide an ideal opportunity to summarize students’ past performance, approve their current plans (their topics for this project), and guide their future work (what weaknesses they should devote their attention to, based on their past performance).

If students have difficulty thinking of a topic for the exploratory essay, the exercises on pages 189-190 of the textbook can help them. Exercise three suggests that they read a current newspaper or weekly news magazine to find a public issue that appeals to them. It was a high profile shooting that led Christopher Leigh to his interest in preventing school violence. Sheridan Botts wrote about hospices because she was motivated by her brother-in-law’s death to advocate for hospice care. Your students might follow her example by choosing a topic that stems from personal experience. Another useful source for topics is reading students may have done (Christopher Leigh’s essay serves as an example of developing questions from reading as well.) Your students might look for topics by considering questions they have as a result of their studies in this course, any of their other courses, or their own reading. Their questions might be directly related to their studies, or their studies may have only provided the spark for inquiry on a tangentially related subject.

Students must keep careful records during their exploration in order to reconstruct the sequence of their research, findings, and opinions. Ramage, Bean and Johnson recommend that students keep a research log to record such information; pages 190-192 of the textbook
illustrate two portions of one student’s log. Make sure your students realize that the example on page 191 is not a complete log, only the analysis of one article. Although this dialectic notebook format is useful for analyzing their sources, remind students that they must also keep records of their research sequence. If an attempted research effort is futile, students won’t need to discuss the irrelevant source in their research log, but they should still note their effort in their essay.

You should establish clear expectations about format. The sample essays in the text use MLA format, but they do not generally use attribute tags. If you want students to write more formally about their exploration of sources, you should make that clear. In addition, if you have particular requirements about length, communicate that in your assignment sheet or assignment presentation.

Recommend to your students that they reread their research logs before they begin writing their drafts to make sure that their reflections reveal dialectic thinking, a movement from thesis to antithesis to synthesis. If the log is inadequate in this sense, students should explore further before they write. Their exploration is most likely to become dialectic if they pose numerous questions.

One part of the peer review guidelines (II.B.3) asks reviewers to recommend additional sources for the writer’s further research. If your students are having difficulty with their research, you may want to devote some class time to small groups for such suggestions even before students write their drafts. Another strategy is that at the beginning of each class session in which you are working with this chapter, you could offer two or three students a chance to briefly share with the class what obstacles they are encountering in their research, so that the class as a whole can brainstorm for other potential resources. If writers don’t have time to act on all the suggestions they receive, they can acknowledge their specific plans for continued research in the final paragraph of the paper (you might choose to add this to the possible suggestions for the paper’s “ending point,” described on page 193 of the textbook).
Chapter 9
Writing an Informative (and Surprising) Essay

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter differs from chapters on informative writing in other composition textbooks because of its emphasis on surprising reversal. Ramage, Bean and Johnson recommend that students make their informative writing compelling for non-compulsory readers by identifying readers’ expected understanding of the subject matter and then offering new or contrary information. This chapter can be taught well on its own. Yet because the instruction provided in this chapter is less difficult than in many of the other chapters that lead to major writing projects, this writing project provides an ideal occasion for incorporating instruction from chapters in Parts III and IV of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing.*

If you decide to teach this chapter in conjunction with others, there are several especially effective combinations you may want to consider. One possibility is to cover Chapter 20 while students work on this chapter. Although one of the options students will have for the informative essay is to write it in somewhat open form (as modeled in the informative chapter by the reading “The Face of a Spider: Eyeball to Eyeball with the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” on pages 207-210), most students will probably approach the informative essay as closed-form prose. Therefore, Chapter 19 (“Composing and Revising Closed Form Prose”) can complement students’ writing on this project (as well as later writing projects) but will not overwhelm them at a time when the writing project itself is highly complex.

Another possible combination of chapters is to teach this chapter along with Chapters 21 through 23 on research. Ramage, Bean and Johnson explain that one way students may choose to develop their informative essays is through research. With this in mind, if you like you may use this chapter as the basis for a longer researched essay assignment rather than an informative essay. Students can still use the surprising reversal form discussed in this chapter to structure their researched essays, yet provide support from research to develop their texts more fully. Chapters 9 and 21 are consistent in urging students to begin their writing process with a question. Chapter 21 (“An Introduction to Research”) and Chapter 22 (“Finding and Evaluating Sources”), and Chapter 23 (“Using, Citing, and Documenting Sources”) teach students additional skills that would help them conduct research and incorporate sources into an informative text. You may even wish to include
Chapter 8 (“Writing an Exploratory Essay”) as part of this comprehensive research unit. Students could begin with an exploratory essay writing project that leads to an extended informative (and surprising) essay, i.e., a research paper (based on Chapters 9, 21, and 22).

One other possibility is to assign parts of Chapter 22 which deal with electronic courses along with this chapter. Students could then access listservs, newsgroups, Gopher, and the World Wide Web to discover both what is commonly known and what may be surprising about the informative topic they select. Chapter 22 could be assigned as an aid to this informative essay writing project or as yet another complement portion to the research sequence just described (if you assign it as part of the research sequence, be sure to allot sufficient time to cover the numerous chapters that would comprise the unit).

In summary, there are many options for how you might frame this writing project, from the most basic (this chapter treated autonomously as guidelines for an informative and surprising essay) to the most comprehensive (this chapter treated as guidelines for an informative and surprising research paper, written within a more prolonged research sequence). Tailor the chapter to fit the needs of your students, your course objectives, and course length. Whatever you choose, this is an important chapter because informative texts are likely to be the kind of texts students will most often be required to write throughout their college curriculum.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Informative Purpose

One potential difficulty students may have with this chapter, explain Ramage, Bean and Johnson, is distinguishing informative from persuasive writing. Because the emphasis in this essay is on surprise, which implies a change in the readers’ understanding of the topic, students may think that they must persuade readers to change their minds about the topic. Ramage, Bean and Johnson discuss the distinction between this assignment and a persuasive essay on page 199.

There are additional ways you can explain this distinction to students. In his text *A Theory of Discourse*, composition theorist James Kinneavy distinguishes informative and persuasive discourse based on what each emphasizes. Whereas the subject matter is the predominant focus in informative prose, the audience is the predominant focus in persuasive prose. Certainly, audience affects informative discourse: to compose effectively, the writer should know why the audience needs or wants to know about the subject matter and how much the audience already knows about the subject. Yet an analysis of the
audience is far more critical for persuasive discourse, when the writer must anticipate the audience’s objections and accommodate the audience’s values.

Other differences between informative (and surprising) discourse and persuasive discourse—specifically classical argument, as taught in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*—are listed on the transparency master at the end of this chapter in the manual. To make sure that students are indeed writing informative (and surprising) essays, not persuasive essays, you may want to ask students to submit their thesis statements for your approval early in their composing process. The thesis should expand readers’ knowledge of $X$, the writer’s topic. It follows that the topic shouldn’t be highly esoteric: most readers must already have some knowledge of $X$ in order to be surprised.

The two closed-form essays in this chapter (Leo Banks’s essay about tarantulas, and Cheryl Carp’s essay about prisoners serving life sentences) can be paraphrased as follows: “Whereas most people have primarily negative impressions of my topic, what they don’t realize is my topic is actually positive/harmless.” Students may want to model their thesis after this paraphrase, substituting their own topic, or may want to state its opposite: “Whereas most people have primarily positive impressions of my topic, what they don’t realize is my topic is actually negative/dangerous.” These are two common patterns for surprise, although thesis statements that convey surprise in other ways are also possible.

**Surprising Reversal**

Students are likely to be most familiar with informative texts that don’t depend on surprise. On page 200, Ramage, Bean and Johnson cite encyclopedia articles, technical manuals, budget reports, experimental observations, instruction sheets, and many college textbooks as examples of works “which convey detailed information without being thesis based and without intending to surprise the reader with an unexpected view.” Yet Ramage, Bean and Johnson add the element of surprise to the components of traditional informative essays in order to generate greater interest for readers. The surprise is what gives the essay tension and makes it engaging for non-compulsory readers. To illustrate the importance of surprise in hooking readers’ interest and keeping them reading, discuss with students the abstracts of *Atlantic Monthly* articles on page 200 of the textbook. You may want to further emphasize the effectiveness of surprise by assigning students to bring to class an additional abstract of an informative essay in a popular magazine such as the *Atlantic Monthly* or *Harpers*. Students can easily scan past issues in public libraries to learn how frequently and successfully this surprising reversal pattern is used to enliven informative writing.

In order to compose a text that entails a surprising reversal, students must consider the audience for their essays. Ramage, Bean and Johnson comment, “You don’t have to surprise everyone in the world, just those who hold a common view of your topic” (212).
Yet for some topics, students may need help determining exactly what knowledge is "common" and what is "surprising." Classmates are an ideal resource for this information. Rather than having students discuss their topics in small groups, you might wish to do the following activity, which allows each student to get suggestions for developing his or her paper from every other student in the class.

Begin by asking students to move their chairs into one large circle within easy reach of each other. Then ask students to write their thesis statement at the top of a blank sheet of paper. Once students are ready, ask them to pass their page to the student sitting immediately to their left. That student should read the thesis at the top of the page, then write down no more than three statements in response to the thesis. The statements can be a brief identification of what the respondent already knows about the topic (indicating what "common knowledge" might be) or can be questions that the respondent has (indicating what readers may not know, what would "surprise" them). When the first respondent finishes, the page would then be passed clockwise to the next student, who completes the same process by adding a few sentences or questions. This procedure is continually repeated, with all students adding responses to each sheet, until the pages travel the entire circle and return to their original owner. In classrooms where chairs are bolted to the floor, students may complete this activity by passing their papers up and down the rows in a sequence you suggest.

One potential difficulty with this activity is that sometimes students become so intrigued with each others’ work that they interrupt the flow of papers by not responding quickly. Especially near the end of the class, students can easily spend five minutes or more reading all the responses and then trying to think of something that hasn’t been said. Meanwhile, the next student or two may be waiting with nothing to do. To prevent backlog, encourage students to write their responses after reading just the thesis and the last two or three students’ contributions. Even if they end up repeating what someone else has already written, that too can be informative to the writer in showing what knowledge or questions multiple students share.

As students work on this activity, you should monitor the circulation of papers. If one student has several papers to comment on and the next students in the chain are unoccupied, divide the papers needing comments among those students who are waiting. To let a few papers bypass a student who has difficulty keeping up will ultimately increase the number of responses that all papers receive. Whenever students are passing papers efficiently, you can join the circle yourself and add your comments along with other students’ comments as the papers circulate. Students enjoy this activity because it allows them to read other students’ thesis statements and see how writers enact “surprising reversals” for a vast array of topics. They also appreciate the activity because at the end of just one class session, they leave with many ideas for developing their essays.
Another class activity that can be useful is to invite private writing in the early stages of exploration. Ask students to brainstorm a list of all the topics they are reasonably well-informed about. Some students may profess not to be expert about anything, but remind students that we all have specialized knowledge about a range of topics. Invite students to consider what hobbies they have; places they have traveled; sports they play; interests that are common in their family; family customs; cultural traditions; school traditions, etc. Once students have formed a list, ask them to consider what misconceptions about any of these topics they have encountered (a student who has a stamp collection may have encountered the view that all stamp collectors are unathletic, for example, or a student who rides a motorcycle may have encountered the view that all riders are rebels). Contrasting their “expert” views with these misconceptions may help them see room for creating surprise.

Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities

In this chapter, only one activity is labeled “For Writing and Discussion”; nevertheless, there are actually four prompts that lead students to invent and discuss possible topics for this writing project: see page 198 (“Exploring Informative [and Surprising] Writing”), 203 (“Thinking Critically about ‘Not Guilty’”), 206 (“For Writing and Discussion”), and 213 (“Exploration Task”). Alert students to all of these activities early in the unit so that they may decide upon a topic quickly, begin composing and, if necessary, researching.

If your students have already worked with Chapter 22 of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing, “Finding and Evaluating Sources,” or if you wish them to work with that chapter in conjunction with this writing project, you may also want to devise computer-assisted activities for exploring their informative topics. Students can use listservs and the World Wide Web to expand their own knowledge of the topic they intend to discuss. Also, much like circulating their thesis statements in class (as explained above), students could use electronic resources to request others’ impressions of their surprising reversals.

Discussing the Readings

“Not Guilty: Despite Its Fearsome Image, the Tarantula is a Benign Beast” (pages 201-203)

One of the chief concerns of this chapter is how writers make informative writing interesting for non-compulsory readers. Ramage, Bean and Johnson suggest that surprise is
one way writers do so; descriptive examples is another. Because of this essay’s brevity and intrigue, it is a particularly good essay for students to analyze to determine how the writer keeps readers engaged. An effective method for eliciting this analysis is to ask students to assume the role of non-compulsory readers. They should close their textbooks while you read the essay aloud to them. As you read, stop periodically and ask students to rate their level of interest, in keeping with the following procedure (students should write down their responses because they will be discussing them in small groups at the end of this activity):

1. Read just the essay’s title, then say to students “On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest), rate how interested you would be to read this essay if you saw the title in the table of contents of a magazine. Write down the score and one or two sentences briefly explaining your reason for this score.”

2. Read just the first three paragraphs and ask students to again rate the essay: “Using the same scale of 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest), rate how likely you would be to continue reading if you had read these opening paragraphs. Write down the score and a brief explanation of why your interest has increased, stayed the same, or decreased.”

3. Read paragraphs four and five. Ask students to use the same rating scale of 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest) to answer this question: “To what extent does this information surprise you?” They should again briefly explain their scores.

4. Before you begin to read again, tell students that you now have approximately one page of the essay left to read. Explain that what you’d like them to do while you read the remainder of the essay is to briefly jot down anything you say that piques their interest, whether that be one or multiple pieces of information, and whether it interests them because of the facts themselves or because of the manner in which the writer presents them.

5. When you finish reading the essay, ask students to rate the essay once more on the scale of 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest) as an overall score of how informative and engaging they found the essay to be. Students should write down this score and, again, a few sentences explaining the basis of their score.

6. Students should now move into small groups to compare and discuss their reactions to the essay. Tell students they may now turn to the essay in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* so that they may analyze their reactions more carefully. For example, students may wish to examine more fully the parts of the essay that most interested them (especially those parts that students noted for step 4 above). Did the author disperse the most fascinating points, so that he could regain readers’ interest at critical places when that interest might be waning? How did the dialogue—not only of
authorities, but also of “ordinary folks” in paragraphs eleven and thirteen—contribute to the essay’s appeal?

7. Finally, ask the small groups to generate some recommendations, on the basis of this essay, that the class can use when writing their informative (and surprising) essays to keep the essays engaging for non-compulsory readers. After small groups have had sufficient time to invent these recommendations, have each group share theirs with the remainder of the class.
“Behind Stone Walls” (pages 201-203)

For this informative (and surprising) essay, the writer relies exclusively on her personal experience. Students will find this essay especially pertinent if they feel they are not “experts” about spiders or similarly empirical topics and if you are not requiring that they do research for this assignment. As with the other readings in this chapter, you can discuss with students what they found interesting and surprising about the information this writer presents. Even if some students are not fully convinced that the writer accurately characterizes prisoners serving life sentences, do they still feel this essay has informed them? What other information would they like to know?

Students may suggest that the essay could be strengthened if the writer included in her essay the answers to questions such as these:

- Are all prisoners serving life sentences allowed to participate in the “Concerned Lifers” program, or are there more violent prisoners who are not permitted to participate and to whom the writer has not been exposed?
- How else do prisoners occupy their time?
- What are other interests of the prisoners, besides origami and clowning? What about these unusual and harmless activities do prisoners find most appealing?
- What kinds of topics do the prisoners like to discuss? [Note references in paragraphs one and six to personal conversation.]

When students draft their own essays, their peer groups can be similarly helpful in identifying aspects of the topic that readers may want to be more fully developed.

“The Face of a Spider: Eyeball to Eyeball with the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” (pages 207-210)

As Ramage, Bean and Johnson observe, this essay differs from the other readings in the chapter by being less closed-form. The essay is informative in providing information about black widow spiders, as well as about the Jain religion of India. But it is also informative in raising questions the reader may not have previously considered.

Ask students to identify what they find “surprising” about this essay. Some may find the topic itself surprising: they may be startled to learn that others consider the ethical treatment of insects a complex issue. The extent of the Jains’ respect for other life forms may surprise students. It may surprise students too that, after such prolonged deliberation,
the writer decides to kill the baby spiders with bug spray. It may also surprise students that, even though the writer acts with such finality, at the conclusion of the essay he still feels uncertain about this issue. The writer does not, then, raise and ultimately resolve this issue for readers; rather, he informs readers by raising an issue they may not have previously considered, then informs them further by illustrating the issue’s complexities, and finally informs them that the answer to this dilemma is elusive: “I still keep their dead and dried mother, and their vacated egg sac, in a plastic vial on an office shelf. It is supposed to remind me of something or other. And the question continues to puzzle me: How should a human behave toward the members of other living species?” (207). Ask students what they have learned from this writer’s more open form that they may wish to apply to their own writing projects.

Guiding Students through the Writing Project

Ramage, Bean and Johnson give students ample guidance for writing their informative (and surprising) essays on pages 212-216 of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing. You may also wish to draw from other chapters of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing to advise students about the writing process for closed-form prose, traditional research methods and documentation of sources, or electronic research, depending on how you have shaped this assignment (see “Understanding the Chapter’s Goals” earlier in this chapter of the instructor’s manual).

It may also be helpful for students to review Chapter 3 while working on this writing project. Chapter 3, “Thinking Rhetorically About Questions, Thesis and Support,” includes instruction in writing surprising theses and detailed support. Some principles discussed there, such as using the scale of abstraction to produce specific support, can greatly help students develop their essays. The pages of this manual which accompany Chapter 3 may also help you guide students as they write this paper. The transparency master on page 60, for example, offers additional template sentences for writing surprising thesis statements.
## Distinguishing Rhetorical Purposes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informative and Surprising</th>
<th>Classical Argument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expands readers’ knowledge</td>
<td>Challenges readers’ views</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addresses undisputed question</td>
<td>Addresses controversial question</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conveys new information</td>
<td>Prompts debate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emphasizes facts</td>
<td>Emphasizes values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires detailed support for curious reader</td>
<td>Requires vehement support for skeptical reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs evidence derived from personal experience, observation or research</td>
<td>Needs evidence derived from personal experience, observation or research. In addition, needs to appeal to readers’ sense of trust and emotional conviction.</td>
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Chapter 10
Analyzing Images

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This is the first of five chapters devoted to writing that analyzes. Perhaps the most suitable target for analysis that students are exposed to daily is advertising. In training students to be more critical readers of advertisements, the chapter accomplishes many important goals. Ramage, Bean and Johnson lay out four benefits from the study of advertising on page 219: students will appreciate the creativity of advertisements, they will become more savvy consumers, they will learn rhetorical strategies that can be applied elsewhere, and they will become cultural critics. Generally, the work of this chapter invites students to apply their critical thinking and analytical skills to their daily lives, beyond what are traditionally considered “academic” subjects. It raises students’ awareness of the vital role audience often plays in shaping texts, and it introduces students to some basic tenets of social constructionism by exploring how advertisements affect an audience’s identities and values.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Audience Analysis

Advertisements provide an ideal opportunity to teach students that writing is most effective when it appeals to a particular audience. Specifically, the audience of advertisements is consumers. Yet advertisers define the audiences for their texts even more narrowly, as illustrated by the VALS system identified on pages 228-229 of the textbook. The VALS system categorizes consumers by their motivations for purchases. You might ask students to examine this system to decide which subdivision they think best describes their own buying behavior, or the buying behavior of friends or family whom they know well. Ask them to explore whether they would categorize themselves differently if they consider different buying behaviors (whether they act differently as consumers of clothing than fashion, for example).

Whereas the VALS system allows advertisers to analyze buyers’ values and needs, advertisers also analyze buyers demographically. Ramage, Bean and Johnson cite several demographic factors advertisers consider: “ethnicity, gender, educational level, socioeconomic class, age, and so forth” (227). Advertisements are then created to appeal to people with particular characteristics, and the ads are placed where they are most likely to
reach those audiences. Advertisers often hope to create brand loyalty among their customers.

Most students are already aware that products are advertised on television according to which consumers are likely to be watching the program. The commercials during Saturday morning cartoons feature toys, those during mid-day soap operas promote cleaning products and food suggestions for family dinners, those during televised sports are often for cars and beer. Invite the class to discuss other ways in which advertisers adapt their marketing for different audiences. How does the expected audience of a magazine influence the ads in it? How do billboard advertisements differ in neighborhoods with different demographics? You might bring various magazines with different audiences to class and organize a group activity to compare the ads in, say, *Ebony, Good Housekeeping, The Advocate*, and *Sports Illustrated*.

Of course, advertisements will often be seen by those who are not the intended audience. Ask students to consider how they typically respond when they see advertisements that are obviously created for other audiences. For example, if their limited income while they are students makes them “sustainers” or “emulators” on the VALS system, how do they respond when they see an ad clearly directed toward “achievers”? Do they quickly disregard the ad as irrelevant? Or does the ad make them feel in any way inadequate? How might that feeling foster their purchase of items that are more affordable? Or, if some students in your class consider themselves inner-directed consumers, as defined by the VALS system, how do they typically respond to an ad that is targeted to outer-directed consumers? Do they ignore the ad or do they criticize it in order to reinforce their own values? In other words, even misdirected ads can affect our sense of identity and our values.

After your class has completed this chapter, you may wish to refer back to it to strengthen students’ awareness of the importance of audience analysis in all writing. Teach students that writing is most likely to be effective when it is adapted to a specific audience. The writer should appeal to that audience’s values and needs, but be alert to how other readers may respond as well.

**Image Analysis**

On pages 226-227 of the textbook, Ramage, Bean and Johnson provide extensive suggestions for the analysis of magazine advertisements, followed by their own analysis of an advertisement on pages 229-231. Students will sometimes want to analyze television commercials, and if you permit that option, you will need to support it with in-class activities. You can videotape some commercials that the class can watch together and then discuss, using the criteria in the textbook chapter. Recommend that if students want to analyze TV commercials for their writing project, they should videotape the ads too so that
they can watch them repeatedly. Analyzing a TV ad requires the writer to observe the ad just as closely (perhaps even more closely) than one would observe a print ad. Therefore, relying on one’s memory is insufficient for this assignment. You may find that it is more convenient for you to focus on print advertising, since students can easily bring their ads to class for review and discussion.

When students analyze an ad, they must study its denotations (explicit content) to determine its connotations (underlying meaning). To draw conclusions about the ad’s connotations, suggest that students speculate about the purpose of each element of the ad. Students should be especially attentive to the features of the ad that are most unexpected, those that are most emphasized, and those that are most subtle. Most ads “sell” something besides the product: something people want, like beauty or friendship, or an escape from fears, such as the fear of harm or the fear of others’ disapproval. Advertisers hope that consumers will associate their products with these more fundamental needs and thus buy their products to get these needs met.

Urge students to identify what is being “sold,” besides the product, in the ads they select for this chapter’s writing project. For example, the ad on page 230 of this chapter implies that Coors Light beer sustains friendships and may lead to romantic involvement. Yet what is the causal relationship between Coors Light and the fictionalized friendship of Sam and the ad’s narrator? The ad copy explains that they’ve been friends since first grade, long before their drinking days (one hopes). More importantly, the ad gives the impression that if consumers buy Coors Light, they too will find a comfortable, pseudo-sexual friendship. Similarly, the ad on page 234 implies that Zenith audio products may offer consumers beautiful bodies. Note that the visual images that appear at the beginning of each part of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing also offer food for class discussion. In addition, reminds students that television commercials also bait consumers with promises that have little to do with the products being sold. For example, women are continually barraged with the message that their husband and kids will love them only if the kitchen floor glows, the school lunches are packed with the right peanut butter, and their clothes are the whitest white.

As students analyze ads together for practice and begin to analyze them independently for their writing project, encourage them to assess the ad’s persuasiveness. Do they find it effective? Do they think others would find it effective? Can it be effective even if, after analysis, at least parts of it are objectionable? What most contributes to its effectiveness? Is it effective because the values and needs it relies on are immense?

Every year, television commercials are competitively judged and the very best are given a Clio Award. A trait common to many winning commercials is humor. If the ads students analyze rely on humor, students should also analyze the contribution this
approach makes in the ad’s overall persuasiveness. What is the source of the ad’s humor? Some TV ads are humorous because they poke fun at themselves, at the grand exaggerations that advertising makes; viewers smile and know to discount the hyperbole, but may subconsciously retain the exaggeration.

Some Internet resources may be helpful in the general presentation of this chapter. Adbusters is one group that presents spoof ads and media commentary in order to encourage public discussion of images in the information age. As the Adbusters website (http://www.adbusters.org) explains, the group is “a global network of artists, activists, writers, pranksters, students, educators and entrepreneurs who want to advance the new social activist movement of the information age.” Adbusters’ spoof ads can be compared to commercial advertising for food or fashion, and the analysis techniques presented in the chapter will help students see the assumptions at the heart of each image. A more commercial view of advertising is available at Adcritic.com, which is owned by advertising companies. Here you and your students can find information about advertising agencies and their latest campaigns. This can be useful for creating common images for students to analyze and discuss in class.

Cultural Issues

Ramage, Bean and Johnson provide numerous examples of how advertising reflects and reinforces gender inequalities. Often, the use of women in advertisements focuses on their bodies (see the ad on page 234 of the textbook). This use degrades women by treating them as ornaments, rather than as thinking human beings. Ads that emphasize women’s bodies are likely to affect male and female viewers differently. Many male viewers may find the woman’s sensuality arousing. Advertisers hope that, if male viewers desire her, they will consider the product desirable merely through association. On the other hand, many female viewers may compare the woman in the ad to themselves. There is extensive cultural pressure for women to feel that a chief measure of their worth is their attractiveness. Therefore, if women consumers feel less attractive than the woman in the ad, they may associate the product with becoming desirable, more like the woman featured. In this way, many ads are created primarily for male audiences but consider women secondary audiences. The reverse—ads which target women and appeal secondarily to men—are far less common, which is itself indicative of society’s sexism. Increasingly, however, men’s bodies are sexualized in advertising, and students may well have lively discussion about the ways in which men and women are visually depicted.

Another expression of sexism in advertising can be seen by contrasting how women and men are portrayed in magazines that are read almost exclusively by one gender. The primary audience for Cosmopolitan magazine is female, yet in this and many other fashion magazines with almost exclusively female audiences, often ads still portray women as sexual
objects. This practice shows the extent to which many women have been socialized to judge themselves by their appearance: even when male viewers aren’t present, women are likely to view themselves through men’s eyes. The same phenomenon is not true of magazines targeted to men. Whereas women are often statically posed, waiting for a judgment of approval from others, men are portrayed as decisive, active, and inherently important.

Extreme examples of sexism in print ads can be found on the back cover of every issue of Ms. magazine. The ads are clipped from other publications by readers and submitted to Ms. for this regular department. Some of the reprinted ads are shockingly misogynist, while the sexism of others is more subtle. Because all are reprinted without editorial discussion (the name of this periodical department is “No Comment”), you may want to take a few back issues of Ms. to class so that students can become more attuned to cultural issues by analyzing the sexism of these ads.

Of course, gender is not the only cultural issue at stake in advertisements. The full spectrum of prejudices exists. It is rare to see people who are visibly gay, disabled, or working class in ads. Although racial minorities are increasingly represented, they are usually accompanied (and outnumbered) by whites in the ads where they appear. And one minority is considered sufficient: ask students whether they’ve ever seen an ad that depicts people of more than one race without including whites. The elderly are used almost exclusively in comic roles (recall the Wendy’s fast food spokesperson who would bellow, “Where’s the beef?”) or to sell life and health insurance plans. The implication is that the elderly should be viewed as the brunt of jokes or as nearly dead. Portrayals of overweight people are also rare in ads, except for humor or to sell weight loss programs. Both treatments are derogatory in implying that obese people are not worthy of respect at their current weight. Throughout your work with this chapter, encourage students to look for such biases in the ads of magazines they frequently read and television programs they regularly watch.

You can complicate students’ analysis of these cultural factors by bringing in magazines targeted at minority readerships. Using mainstream gay or lesbian publications (such as The Advocate) is a good way to explore images of beauty and sexuality in advertising. Images from men’s fashion magazines (such as Esquire or GQ) complicate the presentation of masculinity, since in these magazines men’s bodies are frequently objectified (although not perhaps in the same way that women’s bodies are in mainstream magazines). You can bring a range of magazines to class for students to analyze together.

Students can apply lessons they have learned from Chapter 6 of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing when analyzing the cultural assumptions of advertisements. To analyze, students must “read against the grain,” as Chapter 6 explains. Many of the questions for
reading against the grain, on page 88 of this manual, are relevant for this assignment as well. Students should look at what is excluded from the ad (including who is excluded from the ad), what is questionable about the advertiser’s stated and unstated beliefs and assumptions, what assumptions the advertiser makes of the consumer’s views, and what a consumer will gain and lose by accepting the advertiser’s view.

Collectively, advertising creates not only an image of products, but also an image of culture. Advertising affects how people define their identities, their relationships with others, and their positions in the world. You may wish to discuss with your students the cultural implications of advertisers using images to shape societal norms and values, all as a means of enhancing corporate profits.

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

The “For Writing and Discussion” activities throughout this chapter ask students to create and analyze advertisements, tasks they are likely to enjoy. In addition to the activities in the textbook, you may wish to ask students to keep a daily log for a week of the advertisements they are exposed to through magazines, television programs, billboards, and sales brochures. In the log, they could write a brief description of each ad, and then one or two observations that interpret the ad. The observations could be analyses of the ad’s audience (perhaps as identified by the VALS system), any subtle connotations created by the ad’s image, and/or any cultural issues in the ad. You may then wish to reserve the first five minutes of each class session for a few students to describe an ad they’ve noted in their logs and to offer a quick assessment of its effectiveness. Keeping a log in which they analyze ads will help students become more critical observers of the images they see on a daily basis. This assignment will also give students many ads to select from when they do their writing project for this chapter.

Although it is not explicitly labeled “for writing and discussion,” the exploratory exercise at the start of the chapter (page 220-222) is a good way to get students working with analysis. The questions on page 221 move students through a structured consideration of the visual elements of photography. The questions ask students to consider how different magazine audiences connect to the advertisers’ intentions in the wake of an environmental disaster. Students’ may notice that the different images on page 222 reflect different values; the image of the duck landing on water conveys a more pristine image of nature, whereas the image of the duck hunter conveys an image of nature as a human playground. You may want to bring a copy of *The Atlantic Monthly* to class so that students can get a sense of the publication’s focus and advertising patterns.

**Discussing the Readings**
From “Visual Persuasion: The Role of Images in Advertising” (pages 237-239)

This reading introduces students to more theoretical research about advertising. Messaris’ emphasis on iconicity is something worth spending class time on; the term is likely to be new to students. Some students are resistant to the notion that advertising affects them at all, and Messaris’ essay can help them explore the ways in which advertising images affect perceptions of lived reality.

Messaris’ excerpt focuses on the ethical issues associated with advertising, and it stakes a middle ground between critics and celebrators of advertising. In paragraphs two and three, Messaris outlines the contrast between earlier advertising, which focused on simple images of carefree consumers, and modern advertising, which often focuses on negative images (such as “heroin chic”). He is particularly interested in images of adolescents and African-Americans, and the four ads on pages 240 and 241 are a vehicle for exploring his analysis (students can also identify their own ads involving these groups, of course). Draw students attention to the ways in which Messaris reads “with the grain” and “against the grain” as he considers the criticisms of abrasive or belligerent teenage behavior or the alleged phoniness of racial depictions in some ads. The discussion questions that follow the reading will direct students to consider the contexts for the advertisements in the chapter, as well as other advertisements they may recall from experience.

“How Cigarette Advertisers Address the Stigma Against Smoking: A Tale of Two Ads” (pages 232-234)

This student essay is a strong model of the assignment students will complete for the writing project in this chapter: an analysis of two ads that sell the same kind of product but appeal to different audiences. This student, Stephen Bean, follows the outline recommended on page 235 of the textbook for organizing this writing project. Rather than describing and analyzing the first ad fully before discussing the second, the writer relates the ads to one another by describing each and then analyzing each. Suggest that students follow this organization too so that their essays will not seem like two mini-papers.

Major strengths of Stephen Bean’s essay are his careful study of the ads (for example, noticing that in the first there is no smoke coming from the cigarettes but that the cigarettes in the other emit smoke), and his thoughtful analysis of the symbolic messages conveyed by the images. He interprets the images in each ad well, demonstrating how the ad’s components work collectively to give the ad a dominant message. You might want students to compare paragraphs two with paragraphs five and six in this essay, and paragraph three with paragraph seven. Your students should notice that nearly everything Stephen Bean
writes in his early descriptions of the ads is critiqued in his latter paragraphs. Stress to students that they should be equally thorough in their analysis.

Perhaps the greatest strength of this essay is that Stephen Bean analyzes these ads within a larger societal context, the current stigma associated with cigarettes and smoking. For this reason, Bean’s essay is more revealing than an essay that simply explains how two ads for a product differ. By discussing the differences not only in these advertisers’ audiences, but also in their purposes, Bean successfully analyzes the rhetorical decisions of the ads’ creators.

Even if your students choose to analyze ads with less socially charged products, the ads themselves may be socially charged. In this essay, Bean did little analysis of the cultural issues presented in the ads. Although the ads are not included in the chapter, even from Bean’s essay it seems a critique of class or race would be fruitful in the Benson and Hedges ad, while gender roles could be extensively analyzed in the Richland ad. Working with the “On Manner and Activity” reading earlier in the chapter would have helped Bean to more carefully analyze the characters’ expressions, gestures, and positions.

**Guiding Students through the Writing Project**

One of the most important skills students will need to complete this writing project is the ability to analyze every minute detail of an ad. To give them practice with such analysis, you may want to give students a photocopy of one advertisement and ask them to analyze its features using Ramage, Bean and Johnson’s guidelines on pages 226-227. After students complete this individually for homework, give them some time during the next class period to meet in small groups and compile their observations. Then have the small groups report their analyses to the class. In all likelihood, each stage of this activity—moving from individual student, to groups, to the full class—will increase the thoroughness of the analysis. Students can then compare the final analysis of the ad done by the full class to their own individual analyses and can realize how much they initially overlooked. This should motivate them to be persistent in their analyses when they do their writing project, rather than ending their observations prematurely.

Another difficulty students may have is writing the conclusion. Ramage, Bean and Johnson offer this description of what the conclusion should accomplish: “[make] final comments about the significance of your analysis or [touch] in some way on larger issues raised by the analysis” (246). Advise students that to achieve these goals, they need to focus on something other than the ads in their conclusion. Their analysis of the ads might lead them to an observation about the role of audience in advertising, the cultural significance of the product being advertised, the social construction of people’s identities in the ad, or a similarly important point.
Chapter 11
Analyzing Numerical Data

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

It is so rare for composition textbooks to include an entire chapter on analyzing numerical data that some teachers and students may not understand the chapter’s relevance for writing courses. In many respects, the goals for this chapter parallel those for Chapter 10, “Analyzing Images.” Like analyses of advertisements, analyses of numerical data teach students that rhetorical decisions affect even non-traditional texts. Students will learn from this chapter that all texts, even statistics, can be best expressed when the purpose and audience of the document are considered.

More practically, learning how to interpret and fairly present numerical data can help students be more critical readers and writers of informative texts. You may use this chapter to assign its autonomous writing project, or you may want to use the instruction in this chapter to better prepare students for writing an informative paper or research paper (see pages 34-38 of this manual for more detailed advice about sequencing chapters). You can dip into this chapter to use class activities to support the analysis of numerical information or graphs in other assignments, you can use this chapter to support a brief writing assignment, or you can use it as an extended writing assignment. Some composition programs have writing courses linked with courses in other disciplines, and this chapter works very nicely in social science links.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Graphics

You may find that individual students’ level of competence with this chapter is quite different from their competence with other chapters of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing. Students who are intimidated by writing courses may feel more confident working with quantitative material, while students who typically write strong papers may experience “math anxiety” when they first encounter this chapter. Consider using these variations from students’ typical abilities to your advantage in class discussion. You may notice that students who don’t normally participate in class quite willingly volunteer their responses while working with this chapter. Call on these usually quiet students whenever possible to give them a chance to share their expertise. Assure all students, though, that the
chapter contains sufficient information for them to understand the tasks being assigned. Those students who have less experience with visual representations of data may simply need to study the chapter more carefully.

Ramage, Bean and Johnson present a lot of information in this chapter, much of which may be unfamiliar to your students. To help them learn the material, encourage them to first read the chapter, writing marginal notes and highlighting important passages as they read. You can also duplicate, as a handout, the summary about graphics on pages 136-137 of this manual. Finally, urge students to reread pertinent sections of the chapter as they draft their writing projects.

Make sure students understand that no one type of graphic--table, line graph, bar graph, or pie chart--is necessarily better than any other. The decision about which to use in any circumstance should be based on three factors:

• the information that needs to be presented (for example, percentages of a whole are best illustrated as a pie chart, whereas the correlation of two variables is best represented as a line graph)

• the rhetorical purpose that the graphic intends to serve (one type of graphic may best highlight points the writer wishes to emphasize and obscure points the writer wishes to minimize)

• the audience for whom the graphic is being designed (some audiences may need more detailed information, which is best presented as tables and sometimes bar graphs, whereas lay audiences may need less detailed presentations with more visual immediacy, which is best accomplished using line graphs and pie charts)

Evaluation of Data
Several compelling reasons exist for assigning students to find texts for class discussion that include numerical data. First, students will realize that the problems with numerical data identified in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* are quite widespread. Students will then be more likely to apply what they are learning in class to their reading and writing beyond this course. Second, students may better comprehend the part the presentation of numerical data plays in influencing opinions and causing real change. Manipulations of numerical data are not just magicians’ slight-of-hand tricks; analyses of numerical data are not just clever academic exercises. By looking at textual examples they have found in current newspapers and news magazines, students will realize that the rhetorical treatment of numerical data affects politics and social policy immensely.

A text with a single reference to numerical data is sufficient for discussion purposes.
Only the texts that will be analyzed for the writing project in this chapter need to include multiple references to numerical data, enough to provide material for an essay-length analysis. If you think students may have difficulty locating texts with numerical data for discussion, you may want to offer extra credit to students who bring in such material, rather than assigning this task to everyone. Also try to locate a few examples yourself. Most institutions prepare reports about the academic performance of its students, and you may find that such a report offers good possibilities for class discussion. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson suggest using information from the *Statistical Abstracts of the United States* (they provide a URL for this source in the note on page 225).

On page 264-266 of the textbook, Ramage, Bean and Johnson discuss the ways writers shape the use of data for particular rhetorical effects. You can use the texts students provide for discussion to give them practice evaluating how other writers have shaped data. The first principle, that writers should use data selectively, means that data are included (or, importantly, excluded) from texts in order to support the writer’s conclusions. This means that readers should be aware of things left out of any data presentation. Critical reading strategies (such as those introduced in Chapter 6) will help students see the complexity in the data they read.

The second component of shaping data involves the effects created. This issue ties in with the visual rhetorical analysis introduced in Chapter 10. The way that data are presented visually will have an enormous impact. The use of a table, pie chart, or bar graph can affect readers’ views of what information or evidence is most important.

A related component of data shaping is the strategic use of numbers. Writers working with data often have multiple options for presenting it. They can present raw numbers or percentages, for example, and they can break down subcategories seemingly endlessly. The way the data are presented will affect the rhetorical presence of the text.

When students consider how other writers have shaped data, they may find that texts do not include all the information they need to make an evaluation. As in this chapter’s reading entitled “Help Troubled Teens--Don’t Forget Them,” the writer may simply refer to “a new study of high school seniors” (paragraph 11) without indicating the actual scope of the study (the number of seniors surveyed). It may be that seniors in only one high school were surveyed, yet the results are here being generalized to refer to all U.S. high school seniors. Tell students that if there is not sufficient information about how the study was conducted, they should conclude that the data is not trustworthy. The burden of proof in representing numerical data is on the presenter.

**Representation of Numbers**

Once data is selected for discussion, one must then decide the manner in which it
should be presented. On pages 257-262 of the textbook, Ramage, Bean and Johnson identify four ways to express numerical data: as raw numbers, as percentages, as adjusted numbers (for example, salaries adjusted for inflation), or as a narrative alternative to statistics (to emphasize human significance). Sometimes a table or graph will use more than one method of representing data within one visual; for example, the table on page 252 of the textbook uses both adjusted numbers and percentages. When referring to adjusted income levels, the table identifies both the median (the middle point in a distribution list of all incomes) and the mean (mathematic average) for each family characteristic and year. Ask students whether they view such dual representations less suspiciously. Before starting discussion of this table, it can be useful to refresh students’ memories on the difference between median and mean; this is a good time to allow those students with better math skills to help others in the class with these concepts.

The “For Writing and Discussion” activity on pages 261 of the textbook shows how greatly different representations of numerical data can affect a reader’s perception. Because this lesson is so important, you might want to reiterate it by having students examine sources in addition to those in The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing. Again, if you assign or give extra credit to students for bringing short texts to class that include numerical data, the class can speculate about why the writers chose to represent numbers the way they did. If writers use different methods of presenting data in the same text (for example, raw numbers in one paragraph and percentages in another), what might be the reason?

If there are line graphs or bar graphs in the texts students bring in, the class can also discuss the writers’ decisions when designing the x and y-axes. Why are the increments on the axes the size that they are? Why do the axes begin and end at the points they do? The line graphs on page 265 of the textbook demonstrate how profoundly such decisions can affect the visual persuasiveness of a graph.

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

The “For Writing and Discussion” activities in this chapter address how numerical data is represented in texts and graphics. The first activity, on page 258, asks students to select material from the table of data on page 252 to first refute and then support a position. If you want to reduce the time the class devotes to this activity, ask students to look only at the figures for one particular year rather than all three years. To complete this activity, students will first need several minutes to become oriented to this detailed table.

Before they start to work with the table, briefly remind students of the distinction between the terms “median” and “mean,” used here as headings for some of the table’s columns. A median is the center number when all numbers being discussed are listed in sequence; the mean, on the other hand, is the mathematical average of the numbers being
discussed. For example, imagine that the following annual salaries of five families are being discussed: $18,000; $27,000; $34,000; $52,000, and $87,000. The median salary of these families is the middle one: $34,000. The mean salary of these families is the total of all five salaries ($218,000) divided by five: $43,600. When characterizing longer lists of numbers, the median is helpful in eliminating both the low and high extremes of the list to identify what number is most typical. The mean takes into account all the numbers in determining how to characterize the list. Thus, both the median and mean characterize a group of statistics accurately, even though they do so differently. This possibility is itself evidence that the representation of numerical data is rhetorical.

Suggest that students begin to analyze the table in this activity by looking for the highest and the lowest number within each “family characteristic” grouping. Students can then additionally assess the degree of proximity among other numbers in the group. The greater the difference in numbers, the greater the salary inequity. This activity can be completed in several ways: individually as a brief writing task; through full class discussion; in small groups; or through the division of the class into two debate teams, each side arguing for one of the positions in the activity’s directives.

The second “For Writing and Discussion” activity, on pages 259, has a similar task. Students are again asked to work with data from the table on page 252 in order to examine how some groups in the U.S. population fare economically. This activity asks students to speculate about the causes of some of the data, and it will help students see that the examination of data itself raises other questions for research.

The “For Writing and Discussion” activities on pages 261 and 262 invite students to compare the difference between graphics of different design presenting similar data. These activities will further reinforce the rhetorical choices associated with data presentation, and they are good preparation for students to design their own visual data displays. Since all these activities rely on data from the table on page 252, you might organize a class period that works through each of these activities in one period. The table itself is so dense that students will be more easily able to work with these activities if they concentrate their efforts.

The activities in the opening portion of the chapter (pages 250-255) set up two tasks that can involve the whole class (as individuals, or groups) in writing and discussion. The first task moves students through the editorial on teen pregnancy (pages 250-252). Later in the chapter, a student example appears which engages in similar analysis. This exercise is a good in-class opener for a discussion of numerical data. It relies on a high-interest subject, and gives students good direction for analyzing the way the writer of the editorial shaped data to fit a point. The second task involves careful analysis of the data in the table on page 252. While this activity is less likely to provoke the immediately heated discussion that
task one does, it is a solid introduction to careful analysis and reading of data.

Discussing the Readings

“Understanding Calories, Fat Content in Food” (pages 266-268)

This reading uses the example of milk to explain that the same numerical data can be represented differently in ways that are far more subtle than what has been discussed in the chapter thus far. In this essay, the numbers are consistently expressed as percentages and the element consistently measured is the fat content of 2 percent milk. Yet subtle differences in how fat is defined generate drastic differences in fat percentages. When measured by weight, the fat content of this milk is 2%, yet when measured by calories (the percentage of calories that can be attributed to fat), the fat content of the same milk is 37.5%.

The first question following this reading uses the terms tweak, cook, and massage to inquire about the industry’s labeling of milk. These terms are used in the introduction to the chapter, but are not defined in the chapter. You may find these definitions helpful to use with your students:

- **Teased/tweaked data:** data that is deliberately but legitimately portrayed in a better light
- **Massaged data:** the moderate manipulation of data, still with acceptable limits; more severe than “teased” or “tweaked” data, but less severe than “cooked” data
- **Cooked data:** deliberate, extreme misrepresentation of data; more severe than “teased,” “tweaked,” or “massaged” data

This reading will likely result in a spirited discussion about whether the labeling is massaged or cooked.

When analyzing data, students should be alert to how categories are being quantified and defined. Everything grouped within one category should be synonymous. It should also be clear to readers (in this example, readers of the milk label) exactly what the numbers refer to. The second question following this reading asks students to think of similar situations in which technically accurate statistics can be deceiving. Unlike other forms of teasing, massaging or cooking data—such as converting raw numbers to percentages or vice versa—this manipulation of data relies on loose definitions of what is being measured.

An example that students are likely to easily understand is college grade point averages. Imagine a situation in which two friends discuss their GPAs. Jessie’s GPA is
3.6, whereas Kirby has a 3.2 GPA. Clearly, Jessie’s GPA appears higher. But if Kirby attends a college where students’ GPA is determined on a 4.0 scale and Jessie attends a college where the GPA is based on a 6.0 scale, then Kirby’s 3.2 GPA is actually higher than Jessie’s 3.6 GPA. Even students attending the same college, where GPAs are tabulated on the same scale, may not always be able to make fair comparisons between their GPAs. Jake’s GPA may be 3.4 and Cindy’s may be 3.6; however, if Jake is a senior and Cindy is a freshman, Jake’s GPA may be seen as more impressive because he has been able to sustain a high GPA even in more demanding, upper-level courses. Cindy, of course, may be able to do so too, but there is no way to know for sure until she takes those courses. Even students at the same college with the same number of credits may not be able to compare their GPAs directly if the difficulty of the academic programs they are majoring in is much different. And of course, colleges differ in their reputations for academic rigor, so the GPA of a student at one college may not be directly compared to the GPA of a student at another college even if the students have the same number of credit hours completed, the same major, and the colleges’ grading scale is the same. Explain that this is why most college graduates applying for graduate school admission must take a Graduate Record Exam (GRE): based on students’ scores on a common test, the applicants to graduate school can be directly compared.

Another example students can easily understand is children’s summer reading programs sponsored by public libraries or schools. When awards or prizes are given to the kids who read the most books, it doesn’t take long for even the youngest children to discover that they can improve their odds by selecting shorter books to read. In this situation, there is a good chance that the questions “Which child has read the most books?” and “Which child has read the most?” would not be answered identically. The library staff must then decide how to fairly quantify the children’s reading so that their efforts are judged comparably. Counting page numbers may be better than counting books, yet even then the number of words per page may vary greatly. With the help of examples like these, students will realize the need to analyze not only how the data is represented, but also how the categories of data are defined. Students should be skeptical of numerical data if the terms of measurement are misleading or ambiguous.

“Trouble With Teens or With Numbers?” (pages 268-270)
Although the editorial on which this student paper is based is more than ten years old, the thesis of the editorial is timeless: times were better in the past; the teen generation is unprincipled. The editorial writer has attempted to support this generalization with statistics, but as this student analysis explains, the statistics give false impressions.

Before you assign your class to read this student analysis, have the class read the editorial “Help Troubled Teens--Don’t Forget Them” on pages 250-251. Ask students if they find the editorial persuasive, which statistics most impress them, and which statistics
they find unconvincing. Then ask students to read this student analysis and discuss the extent to which their impressions have changed. This student essay is the only full-text example in the chapter of an analysis of numerical data (the remaining essays are presentations of numerical data), so be sure to thoroughly discuss how the student has approached her analysis. Your students can use this essay as a model when they complete their own writing project for this chapter.

“How Well-Off are Retired People?” (pages 270-271)

This essay represents an example of the shorter writing project option, the microtheme. It illustrates the use of both text and graphics (a bar graph and a line graph) in response to the data in the table on page 252, although some additional graphics appear following the piece. Your students can use this microtheme as a model for their own work on the microtheme option in this chapter. They should pay careful attention to the way Fleming draws conclusions based on the data she has selected for highlighting.

Guiding Students through the Writing Project

There are two options for a writing project in this chapter. In one option, students can locate a reading that relies on numerical data for its argument, and they can analyze the writer’s rhetorical choices. You may wish to pre-approve students’ selections before they begin writing their papers. Students can only complete this assignment successfully if the readings they select include ample statistics for them to analyze and the essays’ writers use those statistics to argue specific claims. Readings that use statistics for informative--rather than persuasive--purposes are not as well suited for rhetorical analysis. If students have begun to work on a research paper for this course, or have at least identified (with the help of the exploratory assignment in Chapter 8) a topic they wish to research, they may wish to locate a reading on that topic that contains numerical data they can analyze.

It is important to stress the importance of keeping focused on an analysis of the data, not students’ own agreement or disagreement with the reading’s claim. Students will find they have more to write if they disagree with the way data is used in a reading, but their own position on whether or not the minimum wage should be raised, for example, is inconsequential to their analysis.

Students should begin their analysis by writing a concise list for their own review of all the data that appear in the reading. Students can then evaluate the data, looking at the way the writer has shaped the data for presentation. If the reading includes any graphics, students can use the discussion of graphics in the textbook to analyze their effectiveness. If
no graphics appear in the reading, students may find that their understanding of the data and how to analyze it is enhanced if they sketch their own graphics. The transparency masters at the end of this chapter in the instructor’s manual can help them decide which graphics best suit their purposes and can alert them to special precautions for each.

Encourage them to begin the project early so that if they have difficulty, they will have time to get the help they need with the data and still have sufficient time to write the essay. Although the math skills required for this assignment are minimal, you may want to have information available about your college’s academic tutoring center (not just the writing center) for students who need that review.

If you work with the microtheme project, you may choose to do it as an in-class activity or a homework activity. You can select portions of the data on page 252 for students to work with, you can invite students to find their own data (although it would be wise to approve their choice of data to begin with), or you can present another graphic or table to your students for analysis. If you are working in a class with a theme or a link to another discipline, you may find that the common discussion of some relevant data helps students pursue a topic of common interest.
Graphics of Numerical Data

Table

Definition  The presentation of numerical data in columns and rows. See the example on pages 252, 256 and 258.

Best uses

• To present detailed or abundant numerical data

• To present data in a simple form

Important tips and cautions

• Read the title and headings carefully to understand the significance of the numerical data.

• Select certain numbers to orient yourself to the table before going on to analyze the remaining numbers. Try not to be overwhelmed.

Line Graph

Definition  The presentation of numerical data as a series of points on an imaginary grid formed by horizontal and vertical axes, with a line then connecting those points; the line shows the relationship between whatever is represented on the x- and y-axes. See examples on pages 254, 257, 259 and 265.

Best use

• To visually convey the relationship between two variables

Important tips and cautions

• Define the increments on the x- and y-axes so that changes in variables are not visually exaggerated (for example, contrast the line graphs on page 265).

• Don’t assume that because $x$ and $y$ are related, that $x$ causes $y$. It may be another variable that is causing the change.
**Bar Graph**

**Definition** The presentation of numerical data using bars of varying length and width, extending either horizontally or vertically, to contrast two or more quantities. See example on page 260.

**Best use**

- To visually convey the relationship between variables, like a line graph. Yet because differently-shaded bars can be used to subdivide each x-axis variable, bar graphs can present more complex data than can line graphs.

**Important tips and cautions**

- Read the legend carefully to understand what quantity or item each bar represents.

- As with line graphs, define the increments on the x- and y-axes so that changes in variables are not visually exaggerated.

**Pie Chart**

**Definition** The presentation of numerical data as percentages (slices) of a total (the full pie). See examples on page 261.

**Best uses**

- To depict different percentages of a total, particularly to show that some portion of the whole is disproportionately large or disproportionately small

- Whereas line graphs show changes over time, pie charts show static relationships

**Important tips and cautions**

- Don’t use more than five or six slices because the visual effect of the pie chart will diminish
Chapter 12
Analyzing a Short Story

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

Although many English teachers enjoy the opportunity to teach literary analysis in a writing course, often students find such assignments intimidating. They may feel as if only English majors can excel in literary analysis; worse, they may think that literary analysis has no relevance to other writing they may do. This chapter addresses students’ concerns by presenting literary analysis as simply another type of reading. Like any analysis, it entails a process of inquiry and interpretation.

Throughout the chapter, Ramage, Bean and Johnson emphasize that there is no single correct interpretation of a story. Quite the opposite, they provide opportunities for students to explore in small groups how their interpretations of the same story differ, and they urge students to use these differences as focal points of their essays. The writing project for this chapter includes two documents: an essay analyzing a short story, and a reading log that contains responses to fifteen tasks assigned throughout the chapter. The reading-log tasks demystify the analysis of literary techniques (plot, characters, setting, point of view, and theme) and ensure that students gain experience in interpreting all literary techniques, not just the technique they choose to emphasize in their essay. The requirement for students to submit their reading logs along with their completed essay enables you to reward them for their entire interpretive process.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Literary Reading

In the opening pages of this chapter, Ramage, Bean and Johnson distinguish between reading literally and reading literally. You can reinforce this distinction by helping students realize they often read differently, even when they don’t consciously change their stances as readers. To do so, bring to class a wide range of texts meant for either kind of reading. The stack might include a telephone directory, an encyclopedia volume, a paperback romance novel, a hardbound “classic” novel, a hardcover edition of a nonfiction book currently on the New York Times’ bestseller list, a department store catalog, a street map, and so on. Remind students that earlier discussions of reading strategies (which accompanied your work with Chapter 6, “Reading
Rhetorically”) explored the ways in which different texts require different reading strategies.

As you hold up each volume, ask the class to tell you all they can about it based solely on the cover: whether they would read it literally or literarily; what types of information they could expect to find in it; whether they are expected to read it starting at the beginning and moving to the end, or if the author anticipates that they might skip around in their reading; the extent to which the text is “truthful”; and so on. From this activity, students will see that they already vary their reading strategies depending upon the text they read, often before they even scan the opening lines of the text.

**Literary Techniques**

The most common error of students inexperienced in literary analysis is that they summarize the plot of a narrative, engaging in little interpretation. To discourage mere summary, you might want to advise students to analyze the plot of a narrative by writing the major events of the story in one column, labeled “What Happens,” and then describing what they believe to be the significance of each event in a parallel column, labeled “Why It’s Important.” Completing the second column teaches students to interpret the plot by identifying how the events are connected and how each contributes to the narrative. The double-entry format helps students realize that they must analyze—not merely summarize—the plot of the short story that you assign for their writing project.

The concept of the “minimal story” discussed in Chapter 20 can also help students analyze a short story. There, Ramage, Bean and Johnson identify the four elements that are necessary for a text to be a narrative: the depiction of events; connectivity between those events; tension or conflict; and resolution of the conflict. In addition to the reading-log tasks assigned throughout this chapter, students may want to try condensing the story they are analyzing to its barest essentials as a “minimal story.” They can then explore how this synopsis of the story enlightens their understanding of the narrative techniques. How do each of the narrative techniques--plot, character, setting, point of view, and theme--reflect the narrative’s tension or conflict? Which techniques play the greatest role in the conflict’s resolution?

Because open-form prose uses many of the techniques of literary narrative, Chapter 7 (“Writing an Autobiographical Narrative”) builds on the information about plot, character, setting, and theme conveyed in this chapter. Therefore, you may wish to refer students to pages 155-159 of Chapter 7 to read more about literary techniques,
particularly if they choose to focus on a question of plot, character, setting, or theme for their analysis. Chapter 7 does not discuss point of view, an additional narrative technique discussed in the present chapter.

Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities

All of the “For Writing and Discussion” activities in this chapter require students to discuss their reading log entries, either as a class or in small groups. In other chapters, you may decide to use only some “For Writing and Discussion” activities, based on the time you have allotted for that chapter. With this chapter, it is essential that you devote class time to every activity. If you do the activities that allow students to discuss plot and character, but not those that focus on other narrative techniques, you will be putting students who wish to write their essays about setting, point of view, or theme at a disadvantage.

There are five activities in this chapter, all of which must be completed by the time students have done the first nine of their required fifteen reading log entries. Thus, when you plan the class sessions you can devote to this chapter, consider how to pace the “For Writing and Discussion” activities. Even though students are directed to write each log entry as they come to it in the textbook, without reading ahead, you can still assign students to complete several for homework, all to be discussed during the following class.

For example, on the first day of class devoted to this chapter, you might assign students to read pages 275-276 which open the chapter, as well as the story you select for this writing project, and then complete the first three reading-log tasks on page 280 (collectively, requiring twenty-five to thirty minutes of writing). On the second day of class, you can give students time to discuss their first three reading-log entries, as directed in the “For Writing and Discussion” activity on pages 280-281.

The four remaining “For Writing and Discussion” activities assign students to discuss their responses to reading-log tasks four through nine, tasks which collectively require eighty minutes of freewriting. Because students will have little reading to do as they complete these reading-log tasks (only pages 281-285), you may want to have students complete reading log tasks four through nine for one class session’s homework. Although you may wish to distribute students’ discussion of these reading-log entries over several class periods, by assigning students to complete the tasks early, students can continue to read the chapter and to complete the six remaining log entries, which need not be discussed in class. This pace will also leave students ample time to begin writing their essay.
To keep students’ interest throughout the “For Writing and Discussion” activities, you may wish to vary how you arrange the discussions. The first, on pages 280, might be done as a full class discussion (be careful when using this format that students do not relate to you as an authority on the story who knows its “correct” interpretation; you should play the role of a facilitator as they discuss their ideas with each other). In a later class session, students might discuss the plot and characterization reading-log entries in small groups. Still later, students can be directed to switch groups to discuss the setting, point of view, and theme of the story. In this way, students can be exposed to the wide range of ways in which their peers responded to the story and can gain increasing confidence in their own ability to interpret literary texts.

You should consider how to collect and evaluate students’ writing log entries; you may wish to collect them with the essay and grade the whole packet, or you may wish to collect and grade the logs separately. If you are using portfolios and grades are deferred, you may evaluate the logs in some way (using checks/plus/minus, perhaps) as they are completed. It is important that students conscientiously complete the tasks prior to the in-class discussions. If students do not come to class prepared, their discussions of the story will be less thoughtful, less diverse. Students who feel insecure about their ability to understand literature may be tempted to wait until after they have heard other students’ interpretations of the story to write their reading-log entries. If that happens, those students will not learn that they too are fully capable of analyzing literature.

Therefore, to ensure that students complete their reading-log entries before they hear other students’ interpretations, announce that you will check during class to see that each student completed the reading-log task(s) you assigned. You need not read the log entries now, only scan them to make sure all are complete. You may assign participation points or use some other incentive for homework completed on time. You can attend to such matters quickly at the beginning of the period if the “For Writing and Discussion” activity will be set up as a full-class discussion, or if students are sharing their log entries in small groups, you can walk around the room to check assignments as students meet. If you plan to enforce a penalty for students who have not completed the reading-log entries on time, announce what that penalty will be in advance. Do not collect the individual log entries prior to the due date for the writing project because many students will want to refer to their log as they write their essay.
Discussing the Readings

“The Medicine Man” (pages 276-277)

As the questions that follow this reading indicate, this Navajo legend is included in the chapter to illustrate the difference between literal and literary reading. The first indication that the legend should be read literally is the opening clause: “There is a telling that, in the beginning . . .” (which students may recognize as similar to the classic opening of many children’s books: “Once upon a time . . .”). Because the events in this legend are so imaginative (including the anthropomorphism of animals), it is difficult to imagine a literal reading of the text.

Nevertheless, students can recognize the differences between literal and literary texts better if you ask them how the legend would change if it were meant to be read literally, not literarily. A literal version of this text might be summarized as follows: “There is a Navajo legend that explains why coyotes howl and why they do not hunt or kill field mice. According to this legend, coyotes howl because they have a perpetual toothache, which they received as a punishment for releasing stars they were entrusted to deliver in a bound pouch. The reason coyotes don’t hunt mice is that coyotes are grateful to mice for providing them with medicinal herbs that help to ease their toothaches.” Clearly, the events described in the summary are still fictional, but the text of the summary is literal because it directly explains the Navajo legend. In literary texts, a writer uses plot, character, setting, point of view, and theme to give a story immediaciy, to help readers experience the story’s meaning. In literal texts, the meaning is usually more explicit. Even in non-literary texts where the thesis is implied, not directly stated, the reader is only expected to deduce the meaning, not experience it.

“Everyday Use (For Your Grandmama)” (pages 285-292) and “Summer” (pages 292-296)

The two longer stories in this chapter are discussed here together because how you use them with your class will depend upon which story, if either, you assign students to analyze for their writing project. The story that students interpret for their papers should only be discussed in class as directed in the “For Writing and Discussion” activities. The other story may be used by the class to collaboratively practice a thorough interpretation of a story, without risking that doing so will leave
students with nothing original to write in their own essays. Before you begin to teach this chapter, then, read both stories to decide which you want to assign to students for their writing projects. Keep in mind that a student analysis of “Everyday Use (For Your Grandmama)” is included in this chapter, so your decision may be based on whether or not you want students to have a sample analysis of the story they are required to interpret. If neither of the stories in this chapter seems suitable for your students, you can provide another story for their writing project; in that case, you could use either or both of the stories in this chapter to model a thorough literary analysis.

Tell students they must read any story they intend to analyze several times. The first time, they should read it as directed in the first reading-log task on page 280 of the textbook, stopping periodically to freewrite their predictions of what will happen next. You may want to designate the three places they should stop to freewrite for this reading-log task. Points you might recommend, which will give students enough context to allow them to make plot predictions, yet which simultaneously invite a wide range of possibilities, are after paragraphs 12, 44, and 67 in “Everyday Use (For Your Grandmama),” and after paragraphs 2, 4, 9 and 12 in “Summer.”

The second time they read the story, students should place a question mark in the margin by anything they don’t understand. Explain that before they can understand a story literally, they must be able to understand it literally. Students should go back over confusing areas, using a dictionary to define unfamiliar words and jotting down questions they can ask in small groups or in class discussion so that the author’s literal meaning is clear.

There may be some unfamiliar cultural references or vocabulary words that hinder students in interpreting the literary aspects of the story. For example, immigrant students may have difficulty analyzing Walker’s story because they may not know what a butter churn is (an artifact crucial to the theme of the story; see paragraphs 46-55) or may be completely unaware that some people collect and display antique, handmade items like quilts (ironically, these similarities to Maggie and Mama in valuing domestic items only for their “everyday use” is precisely what may prevent such students from being able to analyze the story’s thematic conflicts). If your students have immense difficulty understanding the literal meaning of either story, you may want to have them work in groups writing a paragraph-by-paragraph synopsis of the story in their own words.

After students have read the chapter’s explanations of plot, characters, setting, point of view, and theme, lead the class in exploring each of these for the story you will analyze together. What does each technique contribute to the story? You might
want the class to recast the plot as a “minimal story” (see pages 488-491 of Chapter 19) and then discuss the importance of each event. For each of the major characters, ask students what they most liked, what they most disliked, and what most surprised them. Which characters, if any, do they think changed in the course of the story? How so? Also discuss how the setting contributes to the story. How would the story need to be changed if the writer used a different setting? Similarly, how would the story change if it were told from other points of view?

As Ramage, Bean and Johnson acknowledge on page 159, “The word ‘theme’ is difficult to define.” Therefore, consider devoting more of the class discussion time to this literary technique than to others. Begin by asking students to volunteer how they would define this term. Then encourage other students to refine the definitions that are offered. Ramage, Bean and Johnson compare a narrative theme to the thesis of closed-form prose, but a theme is not necessarily the story’s moral. Rather, it is the universal issues that the narrative explores through the use of specific events and characters. You may want to give students time in small groups to discuss what they think might be the predominant theme of the story before discussing it as a full class.

Assure students that theme is almost always more ambiguous than the other literary techniques. No attempt at identification of a narrative’s theme is “wrong” as long as the students have evidence from the story to support their claim. In fact, an analysis of theme often provides a reader the greatest opportunity to be a “cocreator of the text,” a concept Ramage, Bean and Johnson discuss on page 281 of the textbook.

Resist the urge to point out nuances students overlook in this or other stories you discuss. The goal of this chapter is to foster students’ independence in analyzing short stories. Although they may press you for the “right” answer when they generate conflicting interpretations, prod students to grapple with those differences themselves, stressing that having supporting evidence from the story is the only measure of validity.

“How Do You Want to Be?: Finding Heritage in Walker’s ‘Everyday Use’” (pages 297-299)

By the time students have finished all fifteen reading-log entries required for this writing project, they will have many ideas for interpreting the assigned short story. One of their biggest challenges will thus be deciding on a thesis for their essay. Their essay will not be coherent if they include every insight they have regarding the story. They must choose one or two interpretive arguments they can best develop. In discussing this essay, then, talk with students about how this student focuses her
essay. She does not discuss all the narrative techniques of the story, but concentrates on its theme. She also discusses the character of Dee/Wangero and specific events that take place in the story, but only because they affect how the readers of the story perceive its theme. Advise your students to similarly limit the narrative elements they analyze. If you allow them to analyze “Everyday Use (For Your Grandmama)” for their writing project, you may wish to require them to write their analysis on a narrative technique other than theme (and possibly, if they choose the technique of characterization, a character other than Dee/Wangero because she is discussed extensively in this sample essay).

This essay is also useful for helping students understand how to emphasize literary analysis over narrative summary. To demonstrate how analysis and summary are integrated, you may want to have students make a photocopy of this student essay, then use two different colors of highlighter markers to distinguish which comments are interpretive and which are summative. Are there any instances of summary given that do not seem to be tied to interpretative comments? If so, what seems to be their purpose? What is the relative proportion of interpretation and summary?

**Guiding Students through the Writing Project**

Much of the guidance students will receive for this writing project will be in the form of their reading-log tasks and the practice students receive analyzing “Moonlight.” Advise them to read the short story they are analyzing several times; each additional reading can yield new observations. Suggest annotating the story as they read to help them remember these connections. Discourage (or prohibit) students from researching literary criticism on the story so that they challenge their own analytical abilities. Remind students as well not to spend excessive time summarizing the plot of the story. They should assume that the essay’s reader knows the story well. The student reading “Who Do You Want to Be?: Finding Heritage in Walker’s ‘Everyday Use’” models well an emphasis on interpretation, not synopsis.

You may also wish to discuss with them how to paraphrase and quote from the story to support their claims. If they need additional assistance with these skills, they can refer to Chapter 23 of the textbook. Its section on Skill 6, “Use Sources Purposefully Through Clearly Attributed Summary, Paraphrase, and Quotation” (pages 617-631) explains when to paraphrase, when to quote, and how to use attributive tags to smooth the transition between one’s own voice and others’ work. Pages 623-626 explain how to format long and short quotations, how to modify quotations using brackets and ellipses, and how to punctuate a quote within a quote.
(which students might need to do if citing a passage that includes dialogue). Pages 634-635 explains the MLA system for in-text citations. You may decide not to require in-text citations because the only source likely to be cited is self-evident--the short story you assign --yet doing so (especially for quotations) can give students good practice for their future writing projects.

Finally, you will need to decide how you intend to grade this writing project. Do you want to assign the reading-log and essay separate grades, or one grade that reflects a collective evaluation of both parts of the assignment? In either case, do you want to weigh the two parts of this assignment equally, or is one more important? What criteria will you use for grading the reading-log entries? What are the consequences if any entries are missing? Make such decisions in advance and announce them to your class.
Chapter 13
Analyzing and Synthesizing Ideas

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter, new to this edition of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing, teaches students important critical thinking skills: they learn to analyze groups of ideas or texts, looking for patterns and connections among them. Synthetic thinking enables students to reflect on how their reading affects their own thinking on the topics they are writing about, and it enables students to develop informed positions through inquiry. This chapter develops ideas about dialectic thinking first discussed in Chapter 8 (pages 178-179). The writing project in this chapter has two parts, an extended research log and a formal essay. You will need to decide how much emphasis to give to the research log activities in class and for homework. Because of the focus on inquiry and synthesis, this project can be taught as a precursor to another formal essay (such as the projects in the chapters which follow). However, the project can also stand alone.

Synthesis is a difficult skill to teach. It involves strong rhetorical reading, active summarizing, solid paraphrasing and quoting, and analytical organization. The learning logs support students as they move through extended reading and reflection; they are an essential tool in the development of a formal synthetic essay. This chapter previews the kinds of assignments that students will often be asked to do in other disciplines, and it can be helpful to ask students to profile the kinds of research writing assignments they have been asked to do in other classes, or to ask their instructors in other classes what kinds of researched assignments are common in those other disciplines.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Focusing Questions

The focusing question is the heart of any synthetic writing project, since the writer’s own focusing question is what prompts inquiry. On page 312, Ramage, Bean and Johnson identify focusing questions for the reading options supported in the chapter. If you are using one of these questions, you will need to help students understand why each question is significant. If you are using readings from outside the chapter, you may want to present students with a focusing question, or you may invite students to develop their own. In any event, spending class time with students’ focusing questions will help frame the writing project effectively.
At the start of your work with this chapter, it can be useful to find analogues to academic focusing questions. Start by asking students what experiences they have with important decisions. When students have faced choices like “What high school or college should I attend?,” “What daycare arrangement best suits my child?,” or “What volunteer work should I choose to satisfy my school’s requirement for community service?”, they have likely engaged in analytic and synthetic thinking. In order to make choices about what we should do or think, we naturally turn to analysis and synthesis, although we may not think of it in those terms. Ask students to tell stories about how they have made some major decisions, and then ask them to tease out the elements of that decision. Students will usually be able to articulate the ways in which they compared available options, and the ways in which they identified points of comparison (for example, the costs of different daycare options, the experience of the daycare providers, the credibility of the people who served as references, and the facilities available). As the discussion progresses, help students to see that the focusing questions for their writing assignment will help them make informed choices about a position or action. The Learning Log tasks will help them make increasingly sophisticated connections among the texts they read. Students will need to understand the focusing question before they move into summarizing, analyzing, and synthesizing.

Analysis of Ideas

Synthesis begins with analysis, which is to say that students’ success with this writing project depends on their beginning with a solid understanding of their sources. The first task facing students is to summarize the readings they will be using. Although summary is assigned in Learning Log Task 1 (page 313), do not assume that students will easily and adequately summarize the texts in one sitting. As they work through this assignment, they may need to re-read their sources and adjust their summaries. You can support this activity by connecting back to Chapter 6, “Reading Rhetorically,” particularly the section on pages 118-199 on summarizing the gist and function of each paragraph in a source. You can also use the material in Chapter 6 on reading with and against the grain (pages 117-118).

To prepare for the synthetic elements of this assignment, students’ summaries should focus on naming the major themes and ideas that are covered in their sources. It can be useful to give students structured directions for their initial summaries, using Chapter 19’s Lesson 5, “Placing Points Before Particulars” as a resource (pages 518-522). For example, you can ask students to identify

- The author’s thesis (this focuses students’ attention on the broadest summary of the source)
• The points that the author uses to support the thesis (this focuses students’ attention on the different themes, ideas, or categories raised in the source)

• The particulars, or evidence that the author uses to illustrate the points (this focuses students’ attention on the kind(s) of data an author has used—personal experience, statistics, anecdotes, etc.)

• Counter-arguments or alternative points of view raised in the source (this focuses students’ attention on a range of perspectives about the idea under discussion)

Emphasize that the purpose of summary in this chapter is to understand the text fully from the author’s perspective in order to gain an appreciation of all points of view on a complicated topic. Students may want to jump to writing responses (especially if you worked with the writing project in Chapter 6, which required a strong response). You will need to help students see that spending time on summary early in the project helps them form better responses later. In their formal writing project, the summary serves to recapitulate the source for a reader who is unfamiliar with the source, but at the start of the project, the summary serves to help the writer understand the range of issues involved with the topic at hand.

**Synthesis of Ideas**

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson define synthesis as “the skill of wrestling with ideas from different texts or sources, striving to forge a new whole out of potentially confusing parts” (304-305). The key element of this wrestling is the identification of patterns or connections across different texts or sources. On page 316, the bulleted list of questions will help students begin to identify similarities and differences in the texts they have read. Students may be confused if the texts they are reading do not directly challenge each other. At first glance, for example, the first two readings in the chapter (“Young Entrepreneurs’ Disdain for Time Off” and “The Late, Great Outdoors,” pages 306-310), appear to address completely different topics. The first piece is about the ways technology workers no longer want to take much vacation time, and the second piece is about the ways technology is able to create artificial outdoor environments in urban areas. Yet both pieces are excellent resources for writers interested in the chapter’s first focusing question, “To what extent does technology enrich or dehumanize our lives?” (306). Looked at through the lens of the focusing question, both pieces offer valuable themes about technology in modern life. Students should use their focusing questions to help them develop their summaries, and then use their focusing questions to help them develop points of comparison across readings.
A useful tool for teaching synthesis is a grid (see the overhead at the end of this chapter in the manual). Students can graphically represent the relationships between their sources using a simple table with different themes across the top row and with each source treated in a separate row on the table.

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

The “For Writing and Discussion” activities in this chapter work in tandem with the Learning Log Tasks. Each activity requires students to share the writing done for the task in order to develop additional ideas. In many chapters, it is possible to pick and choose among the activities, depending on your interests, time constraints, and the nature of the writing project. In this chapter, however, it is important to do all the “For Writing and Discussion” activities as part of the Learning Log Task sequence. To skip any of the Learning Log Tasks is to jeopardize students’ ability to carry out the project; each task emphasizes a different element of the assignment.

Because the “For Writing and Discussion” activities are so tightly connected to the Learning Log Tasks, they are discussed in the “Guiding Students Through the Writing Project” section of this chapter, below.

**Discussing the Readings**

“**Young Entrepreneurs’ Disdain for Time Off**” (pages 306-308) and “**The Late, Great Outdoors**” (pages 308-310)

These readings are discussed together because the chapter provides them in order to lay the groundwork for synthetic thinking. As you work with these readings, you should encourage students to see the thematic connections between them. It can be useful to assign students to read the essays and do the individual questions on page 310 for homework. Class time can then focus on building more complicated understandings of the relationships between the two pieces. A sequence of guided questions can help illuminate the ways in which each reading become richer when considered in light of the other:

- Start by inviting students to list the different issues raised in the first of the pair, “Young Entrepreneurs’ Disdain for Time Off” (themes like workaholism, jobs that don’t provide vacations, the development of new technologies, and the high demands of many jobs, for example).
• Ask students to read the second article in order to see what light that article can shed on any of those themes (students may note that the artificial environments in the city provide recreational outlets for overworked city dwellers, for example).

• Now ask students what themes in the second article have been left untouched in the discussion so far (reasons people engage in different sports; the role of the outdoors in our lives; interest levels in various outdoor activities).

• Have students return to the first article to see how it sheds light on the themes in the second article (the ways technology can intrude on vacation experiences seems more important now).

Following this discussion, you can use the group or whole-class tasks on page 310 to pull things together. Students should see that approaching reading through a focusing question invariably results in even more questions.

“Technology’s Peril and Potential” (pages 320-323)

This student reading provides an excellent example of a synthesis essay, and the annotations in the text will help students see the various moves Kate MacAulay makes as she considers the focusing question “What effect is technology having on humanity and the quality of life in the twenty-first century?” Draw students attention to the ways in which MacAulay starts with a broad question but comes to a more particular focus as she works with the readings by Turkle and Ritzer. Her essay focuses on evaluating the differences between Turkle’s and Ritzer’s views and on raising questions about values and morality in our attitudes about technology.

You should also help students see the role of summary and analysis in the opening section of the essay. MacAulay has selected themes from the readings to highlight in her presentation in order to answer her focusing question (see paragraphs 2 and 3). The opening section of the essay (through paragraph 6) focuses almost exclusively on the views of Ritzer and Turkle, although MacAulay’s own questions have determined the nature of her summary. As paragraph 6 ends, it introduces MacAulay’s views, and paragraph 7 begins to emphasize the development of MacAulay’s views on technology. For the rest of the essay, MacAulay’s informed views dominate, and this is a result of the synthesis she achieved in the first half of the essay.

The vocabulary on pages 295-296 of the textbook can also help students who wish to refute this essay’s claim. Has the author oversimplified the problem in attributing the decline of the American educational system to students’ work hours? What might be other
precipitating causes? The author goes so far as to conclude his essay with this statement “And perhaps our economy will continue to decline as full-time students from Japan and Europe continue to outperform our part-time students.” Are students who work really a contributing cause of a decline in the American economy? It would seem instead that if working students are spending money frivolously, they are contributing to the economy.

“The Environmental Issue from Hell” (pages 323-326), “Global Warming: Are We Doing the Right Thing” (pages 326-330) and “Land of the Free…Parking” (pages 330-331)

If you assign these readings, you will likely be using them as sources for students’ writing projects, so an explicit set of discussion questions are not provided. You should decide whether you want to require that students use all three of the readings, or a particular pair, or any two. Together, the readings address the focusing question “What lifestyle changes should we make to combat global warming and the depletion of nonrenewable resources?”

Encourage students to use the reading strategies discussed in Chapter 6 (pages 115-117) as they move through the assigned readings. Those reading strategies, in combination with the Learning Log Tasks, will support students in thorough and careful summary and analysis. Although you will probably not want to discuss the essays in class in advance of the students’ Learning Log Tasks, you should read through the essays in advance and have some idea of the thematic connections among them. Your students will see possibilities you did not consider, but you will be better able to help students through the early sections of this project if you are prepared. Some connections you will note are attitudes toward SUVs; attitudes about the poor in the U.S. and abroad; the role of science in public policy debates; the effect of individual actions on global problems; the strategies which cause people to change their habits; the nature of the global problem; strategies that are likely to have effects; the nature of urban environments.

Guiding Students through the Writing Project

The five Learning Log Tasks (pages 313-320) are an excellent guide to the development of the formal synthesis essay. They offer fairly self-explanatory opportunities for students to engage in exploratory writing prior to drafting the formal essay. The tasks get increasingly complicated, moving from summary to analysis to synthesis, and they open many opportunities for class discussion and reflection.
The first Learning Log Task (page 313) invites students to summarize the main texts they will use, and the second Learning Log Task (page 315) invites students to consider the rhetorical strategies used in each text. Depending on the nature of your class, the amount of time you will devote to this chapter, and the complexity of the texts under discussion, you may want to divide or rearrange some elements of these tasks. You might, for example, have students summarize one text at a time, pausing to discuss each summary as it evolves. Or you might assign parts of the second task first, or in conjunction with the first, asking students to consider the nature of the source along with the summary. It can be helpful for students to consider what kind of publication an article first appeared in as they begin to summarize it.

The third Learning Log Task (page 316) asks students to identify the main issues and themes in their selected text and to begin to compare the texts. Here the grid described above can be helpful. At the end of this chapter in the manual, a transparency with a sample preliminary grid appears. This sample grid illustrates some of the ways in which student Kate MacAuley compared the articles by Ritzer and Turkle she wrote about. A good class activity is to ask students to create a grid of their sources either before or after this learning log. The visual display of the similarities and differences recorded in the log can help students see additional points to add. And if your entire class (or portions thereof) is working with the same sources, students will see how different grids emphasize different themes. This will help students develop additional ideas for analysis.

The “Composing Your Synthesis Essay” section of the chapter (pages 332-335) offers some straightforward warnings about the complexities of this assignment. As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson note, “focusing and organizing your ideas for a synthesis essay are challenging writing tasks” (332). It is normal for the drafting stages of this assignment to take quite some time; you should plan to devote a good bit of class time to working with students’ preliminary readings of the sources. The “For Writing and Discussion” activities following each Learning Log Task can each take up as much as a full class period, depending on your schedule (some can be combined if you need to move more quickly, of course).

One important point: the thesis of a synthesis essay is usually complicated. As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson explain, sometimes the thesis statement is actually the joining of two lower-level thesis statements, one on the nature of the sources and one on the writer’s personal views. The example thesis statements on pages 333-334 will help students develop a thesis with tension. The thesis should avoid stating the obvious (“Both these articles agree on some things and disagree on others”) and they should include references to the sources and to the writer’s own views.
A Preliminary Grid based on Kate MacAulay’s Learning Logs and Sample Essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Health problems</th>
<th>Human connections</th>
<th>Ability to respond to technology</th>
<th>Moral Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ritzer</td>
<td>McDonald’s food is not healthy and that leads to problems</td>
<td>Technology interferes with human relationships</td>
<td>Society is in a downward spiral b/c of technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkle</td>
<td>MUDs and other online situations can interfere with healthy identities</td>
<td>People can adjust to technology changes and learn to live them happily</td>
<td>Cybersex scandals online</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 14
Investigating Cause and Consequence

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter teaches students important critical thinking skills: they learn to use a variety of inquiry methods (sequential logic, naturalistic inquiry, and analogies) to thoroughly probe the causes and consequences of phenomena. The phenomena students are invited to investigate include one-time events, recurring events, or trends; however, this chapter can be especially effective when taught in conjunction with Chapter 17, “Proposing a Solution.” If you would like students to identify the causes of a problem for their writing project in this chapter, and then propose solutions to that problem for their writing project in Chapter 17, there are many suggestions below that will help you coordinate these assignments.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Topic Selection

To begin their essay, students must decide upon a topic. On pages 340-341 of the textbook, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson offer three categories of phenomena to help students brainstorm for possible subjects: one-time events; repeatable events or recurring phenomena, and trends. As students look at the sample topics on these pages, you may wish to comment on another way to classify these topics. Most of the topics look for the causes of negative occurrences (e.g., an airplane crash, math anxiety among females, the increasing contempt for women in rap lyrics). It is also possible to investigate causes of positive occurrences (e.g., hair trends for men or patterns in clothing styles). Finally, some topics may be neither negative nor positive at first glance. Speculations about trends—e.g., the return to popularity of bell bottom pants—may be driven primarily by a writer’s curiosity.

When understood as a search for causes of negative, positive, or neutral phenomena, the benefits of this writing project are accentuated. If a one-time phenomenon has occurred that has negative consequences, identifying its causes allows those involved to learn from earlier mistakes, so that the negative phenomenon is less likely to be repeated. Also, if the people affected know what caused the phenomenon, they may be able to devise constraints to prevent its recurrence. If the negative phenomena being studied recur often, analyzing their causes may be the first step in changing a destructive pattern. In short, knowing the
cause of a problem is the first step in solving it. Their hope for a solution (immediately or for similar future events) is often what motivates people to look for the causes of phenomena that have negative consequences.

Knowing the causes of phenomena that have positive consequences is also instructive. If what has worked in the past is known, it can be repeated in the future and perhaps even adapted for analogous situations. Trends in popular culture often appear to have neutral consequences. Yet trends usually symbolize widespread, underlying social needs. Therefore, knowing the causes of trends can help in gauging the general public’s individual and collective state of mind, so that the public’s needs can be met more directly and future problems can be avoided. Furthermore, the study of apparently neutral trends in popular culture can often contribute new understandings. You may want to connect back to lessons in Chapter 9, “Writing an Informative (and Surprising) Essay,” and Chapter 10, “Analyzing Images,” to remind students about the ways surprise and the study of popular culture enhance writing projects.

Questions about causes, then, are not merely speculation for the sake of speculation. Any investigation of causes is a recognition that phenomena don’t happen magically, devoid of context. Identifying causes involves attributing blame to the persons or things responsible for negative consequences, and awarding praise to those responsible for positive consequences. When the causes are within the control of human beings, this writing project can be construed as an act of civic responsibility. Explaining these ramifications to students may help them to realize the potential significance of this assignment.

You may wish to link this writing project with the writing project in Chapter 17, “Proposing a Solution.” You could require students to identify a problem that affects themselves and others, use this writing project to analyze its causes, and use the writing project in Chapter 16 to propose solutions to the same problem. By analyzing the problem’s causes and consequences with the help of this chapter, students will be much better prepared to propose feasible solutions to the problem later in the course. Granted, this directive would limit students’ options in topic selection, but it may make their projects more socially relevant.

If you decide to narrow the writing project in this way to a local community problem or organization’s problem, you may want to select one topic—with students’ help—that the class can explore together as an example before they write their own papers. The topic should be one that all students have (or can easily obtain) information about and that concerns most students. It could be a campus-related problem, such as retention of minority students, recruitment of minority faculty, low participation in student organizations, a shortage of introductory course offerings, or hazing. It might be a problem in your community or city, like the lack of supervised recreation programs for kids or low
participation by residents in the city’s recycling program. Students could also agree to use their collective efforts to help a local agency and then contact that agency to identify a problem the class can investigate. Sheridan Botts did this when she wished to support the work of hospices (see her exploratory paper in Chapter 8 and her proposal in Chapter 17).

To help the class reach agreement on a question of causality to explore together, as a model but not a replacement for their own topics, you can assign students to each come to class with three possible suggestions. For each question, they should write a few sentences identifying what makes the question problematic, why it is significant, and why they would be invested in solving it. Tell students that if they cannot think of three ideas, they should read the campus and city newspapers to become more familiar with what others identify as significant local problems.

When students bring their three topics to class, give them a few minutes in small groups to discuss their ideas and then decide on the one topic they like best. Finally, give each group a chance to present their preferred question of causality to the rest of the class, write the questions on the board, and let the class vote on which they want to collectively investigate. This selection process can take twenty or thirty minutes to complete, but is worth the time investment if you plan to use the same topic to illustrate the principles discussed in both this chapter and Chapter 17. When individuals all generate possible topics, small groups narrow the selection to the most promising, and the class then votes, it is likely that most students will be interested in the topic the class decides upon. This topic can then be used to give students “hands-on” experience with the investigative methods described in this chapter (see “Methods of Developing Causal Arguments” below for more discussion).

Even if you decide not to restrict students to writing about community-based problems for their own projects—that is, if you want to also allow them the choice of writing about the causes of positive consequences or trends—you may still wish to prohibit or discourage them from writing a paper which is rooted in speculation. Students could get the idea for this approach from the various “For Writing and Discussion” activities which invite students to develop causal chains. Depending on the level of knowledge among your students, these causal chains can be based in excellent information, or mistaken assumptions. It is important to consider the ways in which students can have the information available for the development of these essays. If you connect this assignment to readings in the textbook (in this chapter or elsewhere), readings in your course, or to common campus information, you will be better able to evaluate and guide students’ work. It is important for students to think creatively while doing this project, but it is equally important for them to be writing about topics with information at hand.
Methods of Developing Causal Arguments

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson identify three methods of developing causal arguments: first, directly through articulating a series of links in a causal chain; second, inductively through naturalistic inquiry such as observation and interviews, through scientific experimentation, or through analysis of statistical correlation; and third, analogically through precedents. Students can also use all three methods to brainstorm a fuller range of possible causes than might initially occur to them. Applying all three modes of inquiry—sequential logic, empirical study, and analogies—to a question of causality enables students to cast their nets widely, to not settle upon any one explanation of causality prematurely.

Impress upon students that they must be equally thorough when inventing and testing causal hypotheses. Both processes are labor-intensive, although differently so. When developing hypotheses of causality, students should be playful and non-evaluative. In this brainstorming period, they should consider all imaginable causes. Yet when no additional likely hypotheses can be conceived and the writer must begin rejecting those that lack credibility, he or she must then be scrupulous in testing them. Using a common question about causality for the class to explore will give students practice with this investigative process.

Once the class has decided on a question they would like to explore together (see advice for determining this question in “Topic Selection” above), direct them to generate many causes for the problem. You might wish to divide the class into three investigative teams. One team could work on brainstorming causal chains that explain the problem. Another team could engage in naturalistic inquiry, researching the problem through whatever empirical methods are relevant: observation, interviews, scientific experimentation, or reading about statistically proven correlations. The third team could be charged with identifying analogies or precedents that explain the problem.

Once the teams have had time to work (see “Guiding Students through the Writing Project” below for suggestions on managing the timing of this sequence), ask each to write their hypotheses on the board and appoint a representative to explain them to the students on other teams. Once all the teams’ ideas for precipitating and contributing causes of the problem have been presented, lead the class in a discussion of how each might be tested. How could each be confirmed, logically or empirically? How could each be rejected? Can students from other teams refute any of the hypotheses now?
You can then facilitate the class in discussion and, if necessary, additional research to decide which causes are most probable. Remind them that their time investigating causes that they eventually reject is not wasted: by citing and then refuting competing causes, students can bolster their credibility.

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

The two activities in this chapter give students practice in articulating causal relationships which they may never have considered. Although they may have difficulty establishing the relationships on their own, with others’ help in small groups or as a class they should be able to complete the activities successfully. It may help if you assure them that there is no single correct answer for linking these sets of phenomena. They should, however, try to support their explanations as convincingly as possible. Rather than going to class with your own carefully constructed explanations of causality, play devil’s advocate to encourage students to probe their explanations more fully. This will help students develop the ability to identify and defend causal links, which is far more important than their accuracy in analyzing these particular examples.

In the exercise on pages 344-345 of the textbook, students asked to identify the ways in which the listed actions contribute to global warming (this exercise will be particularly successful if you have assigned the readings on technology and global warming in Chapter 13). Remind students that there is no preset number of links that they should use. Indeed, the activity suggests that the causal chain for eating beef might need to be more detailed because it is, on its face, more far-fetched than the other activities. The goal here is to practice the development of persuasive chains. Others need to easily follow the progression from one link to the next. As if striding easily across a muddy path on well-placed stepping stones, readers should be able to move from one point to the next without needing to stretch very far. When students share their causal chains, urge them to ask whether each link is clear to their group members or classmates. Which link do other students think is the weakest? Could another link be added to make that connection clearer? How do the chains of different students or groups compare? If they differ greatly, which is the most persuasive and why?

The activity on page 347 invites students to respond to a draft causal chain developed by a student. This activity can model some discussions the students will want to have later with their own drafts. The discussion will raise questions about the kind of information Sam will need to have at hand in order to persuade readers that his chain is sufficient. For example, Sam may need information from studies about patterns of drug use to determine whether his assertion that marijuana use leads to cocaine and heroin use is substantiated.
This activity will allow students to experience the different methods of supporting causal analysis. The hypothetical example of the state legislature proposing to sell marijuana in liquor stores will lead students to consider the similarities between alcohol and marijuana, neatly introducing the inductive method of establishing causality. This activity will likely spark heated debate among your students, which will make it easy to illustrate the ways causal analysis helps writers explore the complexity of an issue.

**Discussing the Readings**

*“Why Are We Getting so Fat? A Few Theories on America’s Weight Problem” (pages 349-350)*

This essay addresses a matter puzzling to author Steven Landsburg: Why is obesity increasing so markedly in the United States? The structure of the essay demonstrates the ways in which various causal links are taken up—but then rejected—in the pursuit of an ending point.

Landsburg first proposes that obesity is on the rise because portion sizes at fast food restaurants have increased markedly, but in paragraph 5 Landsburg rejects this causal chain because he thinks that fast food franchises are responding to customer demand (rather than creating that demand). His next causal chain rests on the assumption that computer use restricts physical activity, which leads to obesity. But in paragraph 7, he rejects that causal chain, citing evidence about the correlations between computer ownership and obesity. He next proposes a causal chain centered on smoking habits, and again rejects that theory. The final paragraph proposes his pair of explanations (a combination of medical advances and low-fat foods).

The overt structure of this essay will make it relatively easy for students to identify the causal chains in Landsburg’s work. The third discussion question following this essay asks students to speculate Landsburg’s humorous tone, and you can expand this question to cover the essay as a whole. Landsburg’s humor invites readers to develop their own theories, and to join with him in analyzing the data he presents as he throws out, and rejects, various explanations. You can use the combination of structure and humor as the focusing points for a discussion of how causal analysis reveals the complexities of the subject at hand.
“The Mirage of a Growing Fuel Supply” (pages 351-352)

This essay illustrates an analysis of consequences, rather than causes. This essay will likely be more difficult for students to analyze, as its structure is not as overt as the previous reading’s. The first question following the reading asks students to paraphrase the various scenarios Evar Nering imagines. It is important to note that Nering’s analysis of the consequences of various scenarios leads him to his thesis: that major shifts in our lifestyles are necessary in order to achieve significant reductions in the growth of our oil use. Nering, in fact, uses his analysis of consequences to support a proposal argument, so this is an important example if you are combining this chapter with Chapter 18.

“What Causes Latino Stereotypes in the United States?” (pages 353-355)

This essay is a good model for demonstrating how causal analysis essays can be rooted in personal experience. Student Edgar Lobaton opens his essay with an account of his movement between cultures which spawned the question in his title. This essay demonstrates his research strategies, which included a short questionnaire as well as the analysis of easily available media information. He drew on the information in Chapter 11 to help him with the visual display of his numerical data.

This relatively short essay establishes what stereotypes exists by using the survey data to explain other students’ attitudes, and then proposes three causes for Latino stereotypes: Americans’ views of poverty (paragraph 4); images on TV shows (paragraph 5) and images in news reports (paragraph 6). The discussion questions which follow the essay will enable students to explore the extent to which they find the essay persuasive. Students who are not familiar with the TV and film references in paragraph 5 will likely develop alternative causal chains, which again illustrates the complexity of the issue at hand.

“Denying Desire: The Anorexic Struggle with Image, Self, and Sexuality” (pages 356-366)

This essay is a useful model for demonstrating how students can draw on skills they have learned in other chapters of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing to complete this writing project. Like the writing project in Chapter 9, this essay is both informative and surprising, and the author has used Chapters 22 and 23 to help her locate printed and electronic sources for support.

Much of this essay reviews the most commonly identified causes of anorexia nervosa. These causes include the media’s role models for girls (paragraph four), peer pressure (paragraph five), anxiety and illness (paragraph six), family dynamics (paragraph seven),
and depression or low self-esteem (paragraph eight). The writer does not refute any of these causes—quite the contrary, she provides evidence to support them—yet she writes that they are an inadequate explanation of what causes anorexia. In the final two paragraphs of her paper, the writer identifies what she thinks is a crucial, often-overlooked cause: girls’ resistance to becoming objects of sexual desire. As your class discusses this essay, tell students they may wish to approach the writing project in this chapter similarly, by demonstrating that the causes commonly attributed to some event, phenomenon, or trend are oversimplified and then arguing for some additional cause(s).

**Guiding Students through the Writing Project**

As has been suggested throughout this chapter of the instructor’s manual, you may want to guide students in their individual completions of this writing project by working through a sample common question of causality as a class. If the question concerns a topic that can be solved, the same topic can be used for a class example when completing Chapter 17, “Proposing a Solution.” It is very important that you establish whether or not research will be used in conjunction with this writing project. If students will be doing research or reading as they pursue this assignment, be clear about your expectations.

To organize your time for this chapter, you may wish to use the first day of class discussion to explain the methods of developing causal arguments and let students practice them using the “For Writing and Discussion” activities. For homework, assign students to identify two possible topics for class consideration (see “Topic Selection” above for more information concerning this assignment). When the class next meets, devote the first half of the class session to leading the class through the process of deciding on a shared topic (again, see “Topic Selection” above). Once the topic is decided, for the second half of the class, students can begin to work in one of three teams, each assigned to develop particular kinds of causal explanations (see “Methods for Developing Causal Arguments” above for more information about this group activity). The team appointed to conduct naturalistic research will not be able to conduct their inquiry during class, but these students can still brainstorm causal hypotheses to test empirically and can plan what naturalistic research they can do quickly.

For the next several days, you might allot the teams a brief portion of each class session to meet and discuss their progress, yet devote most of the class to discussing the chapter’s readings with students and guiding them in the topic selection and development of their own writing projects. The teams should then be ready to report their hypotheses to the class (see “Methods of Developing Causal Arguments” above) so that the class can, through modeling, learn to consider multiple causes open-mindedly and argue persuasively for the most probable. Once the class collaboratively decides which cause(s) to espouse, you can also facilitate their collaborative effort to outline the structure a draft might take, if
the project were to be completed in writing. The outline can include causes that seem likely but were rejected, as well as evidence for the causes that the class accepts. With this collective experience, students will be prepared to complete their own writing projects more confidently and skillfully.
Chapter 15
Writing a Classical Argument

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter begins a series of chapters on persuasive writing. Here students are assigned to write an essay that argues a stance on a controversial issue. In subsequent chapters, when students are given more specific tasks—making an evaluation and proposing a solution—the skills that they learn in this chapter will help them to be more persuasive. Beyond the assignments in this course, knowing how to critique arguments can help students resist manipulation and participate more knowledgeably in public discussions of controversial issues. Knowing how to write persuasively can empower students to create change.

The chapter presents what Ramage, Bean, and Johnson call a “basic course in argumentation,” and then adds some “advanced considerations.” Your context will determine how much of the chapter you assign. The first portion of the chapter covers claims, reasons, and evidence, and invites students to reflect on assumptions and counter-arguments. The advanced considerations include types of argument and fallacies.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Truth Seeking

Students usually associate argument with wins and losses, and with proving a point. These elements of argument are usually linked to persuasion. An important theme in this chapter is that argument is not wholly about persuasion; it is also about truth-seeking. Particularly if you assign research in conjunction with the classical argument, you will want to emphasize that argument is a process which enables readers and writers to construct informed positions. It is important for students to approach argument with something of an open mind. This is not to say that students always change their minds while writing and researching arguments. Rather, students should be open to understanding a range of views on the topics they explore, and they need to look beyond sources they already agree with. Truth-seeking is an important way of wallowing in complexity.
Claims and Reasons

To supplement the discussion of claims in the textbook, explain to students the variety of argumentative goals they may choose from for their writing project. If the audience they intend to address holds the opposite opinion than they do, writers may either attempt to fully change the audience’s opinion or may strive simply to make the audience more open-minded about the issue, so that they will be more likely to change their mind in the future. Making readers more open-minded may be all that is realistic if the issue being discussed is broad and/or highly controversial (for example, the two readings in this chapter that argue about capital punishment). Writers may also address an audience who has no pre-formed opinion about the issue. In this situation, the writer needs to provide more background information on the subject before attempting to persuade the audience to adopt the writer’s view. A final category of audience is one who already agrees with the writer’s position intellectually but isn’t acting on that opinion (for example, someone who agrees that natural resources should be preserved but who doesn’t regularly recycle their waste). For this final audience type, rather than providing arguments that support the position, the writer needs to develop arguments showing why it is urgent that readers act on the issue. Once students identify what opinion, if any, their audience is likely to already hold regarding the subject, they can then state their claim so that it reflects the appropriate argumentative goal.

This chapter introduces a new vocabulary of classical argument. You should help students see that the rhetorical principles underlying this chapter are the same ones you have worked with all along. The specialized vocabulary helps identify some particular features of argument, which will focus your attention on the development of a good claim. Remind students that the terms claims, reasons, and evidence bear striking relations to the terms thesis, points, and particulars introduced in Chapter 19 and used elsewhere in the textbook.

Qualifiers also help students write more specific, tailored claims. Qualifiers are discussed later in the chapter, on page 388, as a way of making a claim less susceptible to counterarguments. If students are assigned to read this section before they choose a topic and formulate a claim, they will realize that qualifiers can help them to write persuasively about complex issues. Students will be less likely, then, to reject potential topics that would be too difficult to argue absolutely.
**Unstated Assumptions/Warrants**

Assumptions about values and beliefs are inherent in all arguments, even when neither the arguer nor the audience is aware of them. The covert nature of these assumptions does not make them any less important in argument. On the contrary, when readers reject an argument, it is often because they disagree with the argument’s assumptions. Without the readers’ agreement to assumed values and beliefs, a writer cannot convince the audience of a claim, no matter how logical the reason or how thorough the evidence. When writing arguments, then, writers should choose reasons that assume values and beliefs that the audience will share.

Many arguments have unstated assumptions that imply not only what is good or bad (as in the examples on page 379-380), but also what is better or best, i.e., what values should take precedence over other possible values. There may be readers who accept the assumed values, but not the *hierarchy* of these values. These readers may find merit in the argument but still not be fully convinced. For example, on page 380 of the textbook, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson give the following example of a claim and reason: “Women should be allowed to join combat units because the image of women as combat soldiers would help society overcome gender stereotyping.” Ramage, Bean, and Johnson identify the unstated assumption—the warrant—of this statement to be “It is good to overcome gender stereotyping.” There may be readers who agree that gender stereotyping should be overcome but who also think that the foremost priority of combat is the safety of troops. If these readers think that troop safety is at all threatened by women serving in combat, they may perceive the warrant for this example to be “Overcoming gender stereotyping is more important than the safety of military troops.” Consequently, these readers are likely to reject the argument being made.

Another example of the hierarchy of values implied by warrants can be demonstrated using a claim and reason from the “For Writing and Discussion” activity on page 380. The third claim states “After-school jobs are bad for high school students because they use up valuable study time.” The unstated assumption or warrant of this argument could be stated “It is bad to use up valuable study time.” However, a reader might pose the following counterargument: “Sure, study time is important, but it is not the only valuable use of high school students’ time. High school is an important time for entry into adulthood in many respects: not only intellectually (academically), but also personally (learning to develop more complex relationships and other interests through extracurricular activities) and professionally (learning to assume the responsibilities of the work force). High school students should balance their time to develop in all facets of adulthood.” This counterargument reveals a more accurately stated warrant of this claim and reason: “Studying is the *most* valuable use of a high school student’s time.”
As students identify and account for their warrants, challenge them to use counterarguments in this way to examine the hierarchy of values implied by the warrants. Readers can’t be persuaded to accept an argument unless they already agree with the warrant’s value judgments or the writer convinces them to accept those values. Therefore, if readers disagree with the warrant’s inherent assumptions, the writer must take one of two possible actions. One solution is to demonstrate why the values and beliefs that the warrant implies are the most viable and desirable. Or, the writer can support the claim with a different reason, one whose warrant the readers already wholeheartedly embrace.

**Evidence**

The body of an argument text consists primarily of evidence. Encourage students to use a wide variety of types of evidence in their argumentative writing, as discussed on pages 381-383. In addition, review with students the material covered in Chapter 2 (if you didn’t assign Chapter 2, it would be worthwhile to have students read this chapter now). Many of the techniques discussed in Chapter 2—freewriting, idea mapping, dialectic discussion, active reading and research, and e-mail correspondence—are likely to generate additional evidence for students’ arguments. You may want to assign students to use several of these techniques while planning their argument papers and to turn in written evidence of their explorations. In addition, students can explore the evidence for their arguments most thoroughly if they allow themselves to wallow in complexity, as explained in Chapter 2. If students will be doing research for their argumentative writing projects, refer them to Chapter 22 for help with finding sources. The discussion of reading against the grain in Chapter 6 can also help students judge more critically the value of sources they may wish to cite.

**Objections and Counterarguments**

Counterarguments help to compensate for the inability of the audience to respond to an argument, as they could in conversation. They are a way of bringing the audience’s voice into the argument. By summarizing and then rebutting or conceding to opposing views, writers produce arguments that are more thorough and therefore more persuasive. Students can identify possible objections by playing the believing and doubting game (see the brief writing project in Chapter 2 for a fuller explanation) and by discussing their arguments in small groups and having group members play devil’s advocate.

Addressing counterarguments also makes the persuasive impact of the argument more lasting. If a text raises a counterargument that readers have not considered and then rebuts it, the readers’ opinions won’t change if they are made aware of the counterargument in some later experience.
Ramage, Bean, and Johnson recommend that writers concede to counterarguments they cannot refute. Students may view concessions as losing the argument. Explain that, like qualifiers on a claim, concessions acknowledge the complexities of an issue, that truth is rarely absolute. Concessions are also indicative of Rogerian argument in that the readers’ values and interests are explicitly acknowledged.

**Ethos and Pathos**

Ethos and pathos are important to argument because as humans—not machines, not computers—our judgments are affected not only by our minds, but also by our sense of trust and our passions. Advertising serves as a good example of the influence that ethos and pathos can wield in argument. Although arguments based on logic alone can elicit an audience’s intellectual agreement, advertisers know that it is often appeals based on credibility and emotion that stir an audience to act. For class discussion, you might ask students to recall examples of appeals to ethos and pathos in advertising.

Another useful activity for exploring these methods of argument is to ask students to bring to class one or two pieces of “junk” mail they have received recently: appeals for charitable donations, applications for credit cards, sales letters for magazine subscriptions, and so on. Then ask students to analyze these texts, searching for examples of appeals to ethos and pathos. (This is also a useful method for giving students practice in looking for fallacies.) Allow time for the class to discuss examples they find convincing and ones they find superficial or calculating. How do they discriminate manipulative appeals from those that are genuinely persuasive?

You may also want to give students experience planning appeals to ethos and pathos. To do this, ask groups to choose one of the claims and reasons in the “For Writing and Discussion” activity on page 386 of the textbook. The groups should brainstorm some specific ideas for conveying ethos that they might use if they were to write out the argument for this audience. They can refer to page 388-389 for suggested strategies. Also ask them to write a short passage that uses vivid language and examples, an appeal to this audience’s pathos, as exemplified on pages 389-390. When they finish, ask the groups to share their work with the class. Discuss how these writings would contribute to the effectiveness of their arguments.
Fallacies

After instruction in fallacies, some students begin to identify every unconvincing reason given in support of an argument as a fallacy. To prevent this, emphasize when you first discuss fallacies that they are specific types of flawed reasoning. An argument may be unconvincing for many reasons: it may have insufficient support ("grounds"), may be based on a warrant the audience doesn’t accept, or may even include inaccurate facts. All of these situations would weaken or destroy an argument, but they are not logical fallacies.

Occasionally, you may have a student or two who suggests that fallacies should be used in persuasive writing, claiming that they can be a very effective method of convincing unsuspecting readers. Even if no students raise this point, some may be thinking it, so you may wish to initiate a discussion about this stance. Ask students what they think of the purposeful use of fallacies, by others and even by themselves. Would they ever consider using them knowingly? This question can initiate an enlightening discussion about ethical considerations regarding persuasion.

Preferably, students will be able to resolve these ethical concerns through class discussion without much intervention from you. If necessary, however, remind them that persuasion should not be viewed as a contest that results in a “winner” and a “loser.” At its noblest, persuasion is instead a mutual search for the best possible position on an issue. Rather than resorting to the deception and manipulation of intentional fallacies, if students find themselves unable to support their position, they should consider changing it. Ideally, persuasion is first and foremost self-persuasion.

After discussing the nature of fallacies generally, take time to talk in class about each of the kinds identified on pages 392-394 of the textbook so that students do not merely skim over them. For this discussion, you might expand on the explanations given, ask students to explain in their own words the logical flaws in the examples, and, where possible, urge students to revise the example so that it is no longer a fallacy. Here are more specific suggestions for the discussion of each fallacy:

Post hoc, ergo propter hoc: [Note: In the textbook, the “t” was inadvertently left out of “propter.”] Point out that this is a specific type of non sequitur fallacy. Non sequiturs claim a logical relationship when none exists; this fallacy does the same, but the specific relationship that is claimed is causal. Encourage students to identify non sequiturs that imply a cause and effect relationship more specifically as “post hoc, ergo propter hoc” fallacies.
In the example cited, the argument seems convincing because a prolonged medical condition changed only after the pills were taken, but the result could have been caused merely by the patient’s belief in the pills, a well-known phenomenon scientists call “the placebo effect.” If your students have trouble understanding this fallacy, you may wish to share with them a more blatant example: “Because roosters crow every morning just before sunrise, roosters must make the sun rise.”

!  **Hasty generalization:** Mention that this is the same logical error commonly known as stereotyping.

!  **False analogy:** Students shouldn’t be afraid to use analogies all together. Students should, however, use analytical arguments cautiously. In this example, the analogy links two relatively simple things to two more sophisticated things: tulips are relatively plain flowers compared to the complexity of roses; similarly, kids are compared to the sophistication and maturity required to be a musician. Yet the analogy is fallacious because, while a tulip can never transform into a rose, many children do become musicians.

!  **Either/or reasoning:** Tell students that this fallacy does not always include the actual words “either” and “or.” The fallacy occurs whenever someone presents only two choices, even though there are other possibilities. The arguer does this to “stack the deck,” hoping that if one possibility is rejected the other (the arguer’s own) will automatically be accepted. In rare situations, there may be only two choices, so presenting them would not be a fallacy. To test for this fallacy, whenever students are confronted with only two choices, they should ask, “What other possibilities might exist?”

!  **Ad hominem:** Explain to students that judgments of character may certainly be made. They just do not belong in arguments when it is the person’s viewpoints or stance that is under question, not his or her character. In this example, Fulke’s subscription to *Playboy* may be considered disrespectful of women, but it does not affect the validity of his opinion on sexual harassment in the workplace.
Appeals to false authority and bandwagon appeals: These are grouped together because both types of fallacies involve deciding the validity of arguments based on who supports them, rather than on the arguments’ own merit. Explain that it is acceptable to cite a famous person as an authority as long as that person has expertise in the subject about which they are speaking. In the first example, Joe Quarterback is a false authority about motor oil, but he could be an appropriate and convincing authority about football-related subjects. The second example illustrates a bandwagon appeal.

Non sequitur: Ask students to explain why there is no necessary connection between the ideas in this example. They should realize that to avoid a fallacy, the student must dispute the grade on the basis of his or her performance in this course, not other courses.

Circular reasoning: Tell students that this example would not be a fallacy if this were the first sentence in a paragraph that specifically identified the various ways marijuana harms one’s body (although such a sentence might not be considered felicitous!). On its own, however, the second half of the sentence does no more than restate the first half, without providing any evidence.

Red herring: Students may be interested to learn that this fallacy is named after the hunting practice of dragging a herring across the trail of an animal so that dogs tracking the animal lose its scent. In the same way, a red herring argument distracts an audience, directing it away from the issue at hand.

Slippery slope: You may want students to know that this fallacy is also sometimes informally referred to by other names. One is the “snowball effect,” because what starts as a small ball of snow at the top of a hill will get increasingly larger as it rolls down, picking up more snow until it is out of control, just as the ideas in this type of fallacy lose all proportion once the momentum is built up. Another name for this fallacy is the “domino effect,” based on the recognition that domino pieces standing on end near each other will all topple in succession when just one is pushed, just as this fallacy begins a series of collapses from just one idea.

Slippery slopes exist whenever the initial action or belief need not necessarily incite the others. In the example given, the military intervention could be halted at any point. Sending weapons doesn’t ensure an all-out war; it doesn’t even ensure that military advisers will be sent.
Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities

The activity on page 377 can be used as part of students’ writing process to help them identify an issue they may wish to write about for this chapter’s writing project. The remaining activities give them experience generating and analyzing key components of an argument: the reasons (page 379), the unstated assumptions (page 380), and the evidence and counterarguments (pages 386). Notice that two of the sample arguments are repeated in the activities on pages 380 and 386 (about welfare payments to unwed mothers and after-school jobs for high school students), so you may want to use these claims as examples throughout your discussion of the concepts in this chapter.

Discussing the Readings

“Death and Justice: How Capital Punishment Affirms Life” (pages 394-399) and “The Death Penalty” (pages 399-403)

Students can gain a wealth of insight into argumentation by comparing and contrasting these two readings on capital punishment. A full class session could be wisely spent analyzing these readings; if possible, devote more than one day to the discussion. Because the arguments are intricate and the authors discuss similar arguments in different ways, assign students to read the essays closely prior to the class discussion. You may want to assign all students to read both essays, then have half the class reread and annotate Koch’s essay, and the other half reread and annotate Bruck’s essay. Tell students that they should come to class prepared to be knowledgeable about both essays but an “expert” on the essay they are assigned to annotate. This division of labor can facilitate informed debate in the classroom while keeping the workload for each student manageable.

Begin the discussion by examining the credibility of both authors. Koch explicitly establishes his credibility on this subject in paragraph four. Bruck’s credentials are given in Ramage, Bean, and Johnson’s introduction to the essay, not in the essay itself. Nevertheless, Bruck’s citations of statistical information and legal cases, as well as his ability to correct Koch’s misstatements (e.g., the timing of Shaw’s statement against capital punishment), proves his expertise on the subject. Point out to students that the well-established credibility of both authors on capital punishment is what enables them to write persuasively on such a broadly-defined, controversial topic. Students should not attempt to write on topics of this magnitude unless they have comparable credibility on the issue. It is conceivable, for example, that a student could have been directly impacted by the death penalty if a close friend or family member was the victim of a crime that resulted in a death
sentence or if a close friend or family member received such a conviction. The student may still be less knowledgeable about the legal and historical perspectives on capital punishment than these two writers but could be quite persuasive in arguing about the topic based on personal experience. Comparable criteria regarding the writer’s credibility exist for other frequently discussed, highly controversial topics, such as abortion, euthanasia, and gun control. Students should assess their own credibility on a topic by asking, “Why should readers believe me?”

One form of evidence used by both Koch and Bruck is criminal cases. The only case that both authors discuss is that of Joseph Carl Shaw. Students should contrast how the authors present this example. Koch quotes Shaw’s statement opposing killing and describes the incident, and another like it, as “being lectured on morality by cold-blooded killers” (paragraph two). In paragraph two of his essay, Bruck includes the information that Shaw’s crime was “propelled by mental illness and PCP”—probably meant to temper the intentionality conveyed by Koch’s phrase “cold-blooded killer”—but acknowledges that the murder Shaw committed was “one of terrible brutality.” What Bruck elaborates upon, however, is Shaw’s dignity facing death while a jubilant crowd celebrates and mocks his death. Differences in the authors’ portrayals of this execution can teach students how to adapt evidence to suit their claim. Students can also examine the references to cases that both authors didn’t use and discuss why the authors, obviously both well-informed on this issue, may have cited and omitted the cases they did: in Koch’s essay, Willie (paragraphs one and two), Vera (paragraph three), Biegenwald (paragraph eight), and Smith (paragraph eight); in Bruck, Ford (paragraph six), Jeter (paragraph seven), Green (paragraph nine), and Knighton (paragraph ten).

Another form of evidence used by both authors is the citation of experts. Ask students to contrast the authors’ references to Hugo Adam Bedau, in paragraph eight of both essays. The authors use Bedau’s work to draw opposite conclusions. Which conclusion do students find more convincing? Do students think that either writer has misrepresented Bedau’s work? If so, do students think that misrepresentation was done knowingly?

Yet another type of evidence used by both authors is argument via comparisons and analogies. The comparisons and analogies in Koch’s essay are as follows: capital punishment is comparable to the treatment of cancer (paragraph six); the need to sentence severely for murder is comparable to the need to sentence severely for rape (paragraph ten); and not executing a killer is like making the victim die twice (paragraph sixteen). These are Bruck’s analogies: the execution of Knighton was like being “picked out to die the way a fisherman takes a cricket out of a jar. No one cares which cricket gets impaled on the hook” (paragraph ten); executing murderers is like sodomizing rapists (paragraph sixteen); and the electric chair is comparable in its misguided regard for justice to lynching (paragraph
seventeen). Ask students to evaluate the effectiveness of these comparisons and analogies. Are any of them false analogies, one of the types of fallacies explained in this chapter? Koch admits, for example, that his analogy of capital punishment and the treatment for cancer is inexact. Yet his own analysis of this imprecision is inadequate. He writes:

>[O]ne does not have to like the death penalty in order to support it any more than one must like radical surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy in order to find necessary these attempts at curing cancer. . . . The analogy between cancer and murder is imperfect, because murder is not the ‘disease’ we are trying to cure. The disease is injustice. We may not like the death penalty, but it must be available to punish crimes of cold-blooded murder, cases in which any other form of punishment would be inadequate and, therefore, unjust. (paragraph six)

What Koch overlooks is that in this analogy, cancer is not equated with murder or even injustice, but with the person who commits the murder. It is not the disease or murderous act that is eradicated through capital punishment; it is the person who committed that murder, that injustice. Koch subtly de-personalizes the analogy by referring to high principles, rather than explicitly writing that people—not “injustice”—are executed. Such abstraction makes his analogy less objectionable than if Koch were to write for the final sentence quoted above: “We may not like the death penalty, but it must be available to punish people who commit cold-blooded murder, people for whom any other form of punishment would be inadequate and, therefore, unjust.” Discussing this and other analogies used by these authors will show students that analogies can often be powerful techniques of persuasion, but they must be used carefully.

Question three on page 403 prompts students to consider commonalities among the authors. To answer this question, students must realize that although Bruck wrote his essay as a response to Koch’s essay, he did not write his essay trying to convince Koch to change his position. Rather, Bruck published his essay in *The New Republic*, the same magazine that Koch’s essay appeared in (the introduction to the essays tells us they were published the same year; they may have even been published in the same issue) so that magazine readers who may have found Koch’s essay convincing would not readily adopt his claim. Ask students to imagine how Bruck would need to change his essay if his intended audience was not the readers of Koch’s essay but Koch himself. Do students think he could persuade Koch to change his claim, at least somewhat? Next have students imagine that Koch has read Bruck’s essay. What do students think Koch could say to Bruck to persuade him to be more tolerant of capital punishment? How might Rogerian argument strategies help them to discuss their views? Can students identify values the authors share? For example, both are clearly disturbed by violent crimes and would like them to decrease. Can students articulate a warrant that both writers would accept?
Question five on page 403 can generate a lengthy discussion of the authors’ effectiveness in refuting counterarguments. Koch’s entire essay is formatted as a series of refutations to counterarguments. Yet Koch does not identify one crucial counterargument among the nine he delineates for refutation: that capital punishment does not deter acts of murder. Clearly Koch is aware that this counterargument exists because he concludes paragraph six by writing “If we create a society in which injustice is not tolerated, incidents of murder . . . will diminish.” Bruck implies in paragraph thirteen and fourteen of his own essay that Koch is well aware that the death penalty is not a deterrent for murder. Yet by numbering the counterarguments and refuting each in turn, Koch gives the impression in his essay that he has been thorough in citing and refuting all the possible counterarguments to capital punishment (this is the answer to question six on page 343). Without the aid of Bruck’s essay, few readers would stop to ponder what counterarguments Koch omitted.

The arguments Bruck makes in his essay are most directly related to Koch’s third and fifth points. Ask students whether they think Bruck has successfully refuted Koch on these points. Also point out that Bruck addresses the issue of racial biases in sentencing by presenting his suspicions as a series of questions (see paragraph ten). Why do students think he phrases these accusations as questions, rather than sentences? Would a more direct stance cause readers to resist Bruck’s charge of racism? If so, Bruck has employed a stylistic decision as a strategy for discouraging counterarguments.

Finally, lead students to discuss the two writers’ appeals to pathos. While not overly emotional, Koch repeatedly uses the adjective “cold-blooded” (paragraphs two and six) and includes details like “He then mutilated and dismembered her body” (paragraph eight). Because he is defending killers, Bruck must rely on appeals to pathos even more so to generate sympathy for those facing execution. He describes one prisoner vividly so that capital punishment cannot be softened through generalities: “only seconds before his death, as he waited, shaved and strapped into the chair, for the switch to be thrown” (paragraph five). He describes the crowd awaiting this execution as less dignified than the murderer (paragraph five), alludes to the Ku Klux Klan’s support of an execution so that readers will want to dissociate themselves from that position (paragraph nine), depicts people who want to punish murderers as having little respect for human life—“it gives us the satisfaction of knowing that we got one or two of the sons of bitches” (paragraph fourteen), and graphically describes the public’s desire for “retribution on the flesh and bone” of murderers. Ask students whether these appeals to pathos cause them to feel empathy for those convicted of murder. If not, what more might Bruck have included to help readers understand these murderers’ humanity? How might students use appeals to pathos in their own writing projects to make seemingly indefensible people or views appear more sympathetic?
“Spare the Rod, Spoil the Parenting” (pages 403-405)

Pitts’s claim, that mild spanking is an appropriate child-rearing practice, is not stated explicitly anywhere in his op-ed piece, although in paragraphs 9 and 18 he comes very close to making an explicit claim. Pitts’s essay is a good example of one that addresses counterarguments well. In paragraph 12, he addresses two failings of the anti-spanking “orthodoxy,” and in paragraph 13 he addresses a possible counterargument to his own position.

Pitts’s essay is also a good example of an argument written in response to a reading. It is not clear whether or not his reading of reports of a recent Time/CNN poll or his reading of Diana Baumrind’s work prompted his work, but his references to both reports suggest that his argument was motivated by a current issue in the news. His careful use of Baumrind’s report illustrates a good focus on a single source for a short argument. Particularly if you are using a microtheme approach to a classical argument, Pitts’s essay will be a good resource.

“Is No Adoption Really Better Than A Gay Adoption?” (pages 406-407)

Savage’s article, like Pitts’s, illustrates the ways arguments appear in response to current controversies (here a public policy debate about criteria for prospective adoptive parents). Like Pitts, Savage addresses counterarguments, here trying to move the debate from one premise (gay parents aren’t as good as straight parents) to another (gay parents are better than no parents). Students will identify a number of claim/because structures for Savage’s essay, one of which might be:

- Gay men and lesbians should not be barred from adopting children
  - because there are more children needing homes than families available to adopt
  - because gay men and lesbians are often willing to adopt children with special needs

A warrant for Savage’s argument is that states should promote adoption for children, and that states should not restrict the pool of potentially adoptive parents; careful readers might also see a warrant in Savage’s contention that states should be consistent in their criteria (he points out Florida’s “married home standard” is not used to exclude unmarried heterosexuals from adopting).
This essay presents a good opportunity for discussing audience. Savage published his essay in *The New York Times*, although he was addressing a particular controversy about Florida’s adoption laws. Ask students what motivates people to write in the national media about one state’s issues. Savage’s reference to national issues (in paragraphs 5 and 6) illustrates the way state controversies can connect to each other.

“Salvaging Our Old-Growth Forests” (pages 351-353)

This may be the reading that students find most helpful as a model for their own writing projects because its organization is so clearly structured. It begins with an emotionally stirring introduction to grab readers’ attention, then succinctly states the argument’s claim and three reasons in the second paragraph. Paragraphs three through five refute counterarguments; paragraphs six through nine present evidence for the writer’s claim; and the concluding paragraph offers a final appeal to the reader’s pathos.

Guiding Students through the Writing Project

Soon after your students begin to work with this chapter, ask them to submit a short paragraph describing the arguable issue and audience they want to use for this writing project. You can then briefly respond to their plans so that students don’t invest considerable time in projects that are not well-suited for this assignment. When you check their plans, make sure their topics are, indeed, arguable, as discussed on pages 320-321 of the textbook. If students select a topic that entails making an evaluation or proposing a solution, you may want to suggest that they reserve this idea for a subsequent assignment (Chapters 16 and 17 address these writing projects).

Also respond to the scope of students’ proposed topics. Students will have most success if they can narrow their topics by applying them to a local situation. If students want to approach overly used, overly ambitious argumentative issues—e.g., gun control, capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia—work with them to generate a specific angle on the issue (the visuals on women and gun control that head this Part of the textbook are a good example). Invite students to explain their connection with the topic. Their ethos will be strengthened when they can demonstrate their interest in the topic, perhaps with personal experience, perhaps with background knowledge.

When students submit their topic, they should also indicate the audience they will address so that as the class works through the chapter, students will be better prepared to write warrants, reasons, ethos, and pathos sensitive to their intended readers. You may even want to give students the option of writing their paper in the form of a letter.
As students begin to draft their arguments, you may also wish to add to Ramage, Bean, and Johnson’s recommendations for organizing texts. Although appeals to ethos and pathos are important throughout an argument, each is particularly important in one part. A writer’s ethos must be firmly established in the beginning of the text, in the introduction or soon after. Readers must know that the writer is well-informed on the issue and has the readers’ best interests at heart. Appeals to pathos are most needed at the end of the text to help the text resonate with the readers after they have finished and if appropriate, to stir the readers to action.

**Essential Vocabulary for Understanding Argumentation**

*argument:* a combination of truth seeking (a diligent, open-minded, and responsible search for the best course of action or solution to a problem taking into account all the available information and alternative points of view) and persuasion (the art of making a claim on an issue and justifying it convincingly so that the audience’s initial resistance to your position is overcome and they are moved toward your position) (page 372)

*backing:* the term used by philosopher Stephen Toulmin to refer to evidence and arguments used to support a warrant (page 381)

*claim:* the position you want to take on an issue, stated as a brief, one-sentence answer to your issue question (page 377)

*conditions of rebuttal:* the term used by philosopher Stephen Toulmin to refer to the anticipation of counterarguments (page 384)

*counterarguments:* readers’ likely objections to a text’s arguments; these objections should be anticipated by the writer and responded to in the text either through refutation (an analysis of the counterarguments’ shortcomings) or concession (an acknowledgment of the counterarguments’ validity) (pages 383-387)

*ethos:* textual appeals to gain the reader’s confidence in the writer’s credibility and trustworthiness; evidence that the writer is knowledgeable, trustworthy, and fair (page 388-389)
**evidence:** particular support for an argument’s claim and reasons; may consist of examples, summaries of research, statistics, testimony, and subarguments (pages 381-383)

**fallacies:** murky reasoning that can cloud an argument and lead to unsound conclusions (pages 392-394)

**grounds:** the term used by philosopher Stephen Toulmin to refer to evidence in support of a reason (page 381)

**pathos:** textual appeals that arouse the audience interest and deepen understanding of an argument’s human dimensions; often manifested as vivid language and examples, and reasons that appeal to the audience’s values and beliefs (pages 389-390)

**qualifier:** the term used by philosopher Stephen Toulmin to refer to words that limit the scope or force of a claim to make it less sweeping and therefore less vulnerable to counterarguments; examples include “perhaps,” “in many cases,” “often,” “likely,” and “may” (page 388)

**Rogerian argument** an approach to argument named after the psychologist Carl Rogers that is particularly suited for audiences likely to resist an argument’s claim; the perceived threat of an argument is reduced by the writer who depicts the audience’s point of view empathetically, articulates values the audience and writer share, and delays stating an opposing thesis (page 392)

**reason:** a subclaim that supports your main claim; usually linked to the claim with such connecting words as “because,” “therefore,” “so,” “consequently,” and “thus”; also known as a premise (page 378)

**unstated assumption:** a general principle, rule, belief, or value that connects the reason to the claim; must be made explicit and supported with evidence if the audience is unlikely to accept it (page 379-380)

**warrant:** the term used by philosopher Stephen Toulmin to refer to unstated assumptions (page 380)
Chapter 16
Making an Evaluation

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

Chapter 15 introduces persuasive writing by discussing how to structure and support arguments. In this chapter, students get to apply those more general persuasive skills to an evaluative task. Students are taught to approach evaluations as two-pronged persuasion: arguments identifying and supporting the criteria by which the writer’s subject will be judged, and arguments assessing whether or not the subject meets each criterion. The use of criteria is what distinguishes evaluative writing from classical arguments, taught in Chapter 15.

Knowing how to use criteria to determine merit is an important critical thinking skill. It helps students understand the importance of standards, that judgments are not unfounded preferences. To better understand the role that learning evaluative writing can play in developing students’ critical thinking skills, you may want to reread Ramage, Bean, and Johnson’s summary in Chapter 2 of the stages of intellectual development identified by William Perry (pages 25-27 of the textbook).

Perry found that many traditionally-aged students begin college in the initial stage of dualism, in which they see all judgments as simply right or wrong, with one single, unproblematic answer. Once they regularly confront the complexity of problems, they become multiplists, believing that “anything goes,” that everyone has his or her opinion and that there is no basis for favoring one judgment over another. Only in the two final stages of relativism and commitment in relativism are students able, to cite Ramage, Bean, and Johnson, “to take a position in the face of complexity and to justify that decision through reasons and evidence while weighing and acknowledging contrary reasons and counterevidence” (27).

Clearly, the use of criteria to make evaluations encourages students’ movement toward relativism and commitment in relativism. Establishing criteria helps students learn that there are bases for judgment (we are not doomed to relativism), but that the criteria must be carefully determined (they are not as clear-cut as dualists expect). Students also discover that while the subject they are evaluating may meet many of the criteria, it may not meet them all. This scenario puts students in positions of relativism and committed relativism: students can support a judgment based on their subject’s adherence to the primary criteria, while still recognizing that the subject doesn’t meet all criteria. Evaluative writing assignments can thus be quite instrumental in promoting students’ intellectual development.
Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Criteria Task

The proper selection of criteria is essential to a successfully argued evaluation. Begin your discussion of criteria by explaining to students that they essentially have two topics for their papers: the specific thing they are evaluating, and the large class to which that thing belongs. Advise students to make their identifications of class as specific as possible so that what they are evaluating will not be judged by unfair standards. The scale of abstraction (introduced on page 50 of the textbook) can help students learn to move from a more general identification of class to more specific identifications: “a good restaurant” can become “a good ethnic restaurant,” which can become “a good Chinese restaurant,” which can become “a good Chinese carry-out restaurant.” This specificity will help students avoid what Ramage, Bean, and Johnson discuss on page 424 as “the problem of apples and oranges.”

Students must know the particular topic they wish to evaluate in order to identify the class. However, once the class is identified, they should concentrate only on the class—not the particular member they will write about—while they brainstorm criteria. If students think too much about their particular topic while generating the criteria, the criteria may be biased. One way such bias can occur is when the student’s topic for evaluation possesses a pleasant but unnecessary feature. For example, the student may like the fact that his or her fitness facility has numerous television monitors, each set to a different station and tuned to different AM radio stations, so that gym members can hear any show they like on headsets while other members exercise undisturbed. Granted, this may be a feature that gym members enjoy, yet it is not what most people would insist (or even expect) that a fitness facility have in order to be considered good. On the other hand, such a feature might prove to be one that tips the scales in favor of a particular facility if the gyms under comparison are equivalent in all other respects. Encourage students to prioritize their criteria as appropriate.
Thinking too much about the particular topic can also bias the selection of criteria in the opposite way, by causing the student to overlook a criterion that the student’s topic doesn’t meet. To again use the example of a fitness facility, perhaps the one the student belongs to has a staff knowledgeable about exercise routines and the gym’s equipment, yet no one who is trained to assist with diet and overall health. By thinking only of one’s own gym while developing criteria, the student may unintentionally omit this important criterion. Therefore, it is important that students concentrate on the class, not their particular topic, to identify criteria that hold true for any and all members of the class.

Another vital task in selecting criteria is to consider the values held by the essay’s audience. If the criteria selected do not reflect the audience’s values, the audience is unlikely to accept the evaluation, no matter how strongly the “match argument” is made. For example, major box office releases rarely win the Cannes Film Festival because most film critics value different criteria than the typical American moviegoer. No matter how much an evaluation praises the film’s cinematography, if the actors are not widely recognized, many people will not care to see the movie. The audience’s values should also influence the relative weight assigned to different criteria.

Finally, the criteria should be manageable in number. After students have brainstormed all the possible criteria for their topic’s class and weighted them to reflect the audience’s values, students should decide how criteria can be grouped so that the essay does not resemble a lengthy list. In the extended example in the chapter (an evaluation of Seattle’s Experience Music Project), three different sets of criteria are provided (to evaluate the museum as a tourist attraction, museum of rock history, or rock and roll shrine; see page 428; students may want to consult the Experience Music Project website, http://www.emplive.com, for additional information about the museum). Each set of criteria is focused. Students should similarly construct focused sets of criteria in order to promote deeper analysis.

**Match Task**

If readers agree with the criteria a writer is using to evaluate something, the writer’s chief remaining task to get readers to accept an evaluation is to match the writer’s specific topic to those criteria. Students must provide numerous examples to demonstrate the extent to which the topic being evaluated meets or does not meet each criterion. To give students practice with this type of support, you could have students develop criteria for a different topic all students are likely to know and could illustrate with examples. What are the
criteria for a good college campus? A good college classroom? A good textbook? Students can then match these criteria to particular characteristics of your college campus, your own classroom, or even *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*. Have the class generate specific examples they could cite to support their judgments regarding each criterion.

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

The activity on page 422 gives students experience in identifying, weighting, and grouping criteria (in this case, for careers) and using them to make evaluations (here, of particular careers). Some minor refinements can make this activity even more instructive. In the first step, after students have brainstormed possible criteria, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson direct them to “rank your criteria from highest to lowest priority.” You may wish to have students not simply rank their criteria, but instead assign percentage weights to their importance. This will help students to consider even more thoughtfully the relative importance of different criteria. They may decide, for example, that their top three criteria are nearly equal in importance, while their fourth is substantially less important. As students begin to match particular careers to the criteria, they can then be more decisive about their evaluations. What percentage of the weighted criteria must a career meet before it is judged to be a good career choice? Is it possible, for example, for a career to receive a positive final evaluation if it meets all the criteria except the most important one? What if it fulfills only the most important criterion?

Step four in this activity states, “When disagreements arise, try to identify whether they are disagreements about criteria or disagreements about the facts of a given career.” Obviously, disagreements about the facts of a given career may arise because any given career may vary in how it matches criteria, depending upon the particular organization one works for, the supervisor and colleagues one has, etc. During your class discussion, you may wish to take one career choice and apply the criteria to two different locales your students will recognize. Would the criteria be met differently, for example, for a bus driver who transports children to the local elementary school than for a bus driver who works transporting long-distance travelers for Greyhound? Would a police officer for your city match the criteria differently than a police officer who works for your college? According to students’ criteria, which is the better career: a physician who works at a community health center or a physician who works in a hospital emergency room?

The activity on page 423 teaches students that the same topic can receive different evaluations depending upon the class and accompanying criteria used to evaluate it. This activity can help students get beyond dualistic, black and white thinking, and understand that most things have both merits and weaknesses. After the students have completed the first two parts of this exercise, you may want to challenge them further by asking them to
think of one thing they greatly value and one thing they strongly dislike. Can they think of
some category or class for each of these items that might lead them to give the item an
opposite evaluation?

The final activity in this chapter, on page 430, asks students to evaluate the extended
student example about the Experience Music Project. How does their evaluation compare
to this student’s?

**Discussing the Readings**

*EMP: Music History or Music Trivia?” (pages 430-432)*

Student Jackie Wyngard’s essay is a good model for students working on their own
writing projects. Wyngard uses several strategies particularly important for evaluation
arguments: she presents her own connections to the topic in paragraph 1, and at the start of
paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 she presents a criterion for evaluation. In paragraph 5, she handles
counterarguments (which are applications of additional criteria).

Wyngard’s criteria are clear: EMP should cover the history of rock and roll from its
beginnings to the present; it should include influential individuals and groups; it should have
accessible and relevant explanations. In each paragraph, she uses ample details from her
visit to the museum to show the ways EMP fails to meet her three criteria.

Students are likely to get involved in a discussion of the appropriateness of
Wyngard’s criteria. As Wyngard responds to other views towards the end of her essay, she
lists some other features that others may find enjoyable. Students may well offer additional
criteria for evaluation (a museum should have interactive exhibits; a museum should contain
artifacts from tours, not just personal items of musicians). While students who have not
visited the EMP may need some prompting to discuss this essay (they may object that
they cannot evaluate Wyngard’s argument because they don’t know the museum), you can
courage them to analyze the structure of Wyngard’s argument and then to apply her
criteria to a specialized museum in your location.

*Sesame Street: Brought to You by the Letters M-A-L-E” (pages 433-434)*

This essay demonstrates the importance that a single criterion can have when making
an evaluation. There is a quick reference in paragraph eleven to the many criteria this
children’s show meets: “educational value, lack of violence and emphasis on cooperation.”
This same paragraph even acknowledges that in terms of the one criterion of non-sexism, the show is partly successful: “the adult characters on the show are admirably balanced in terms of avoiding sexual stereotypes.” Aside from this brief, positive paragraph, however, the entire reading is dedicated to demonstrating the shortcomings of the show in its shortage of major female characters and interesting minor female characters.

The third question following the reading asks, “If you agree with the argument that Sesame Street is sexist, should that criterion be sufficient for undermining the popular assessment of Sesame Street as a model educational program for children?” The authors themselves do not think so. In paragraph eleven, the authors proclaim, “Yes, we believe that Sesame Street is one of the best shows on television for small children.” Their purpose in placing such negative emphasis on the show, however, is revealed in paragraph twelve: “But even the best of the bunch has room for improvement.”

Ask students how their impressions of the show might change if the authors had begun the essay with their statements about the show’s attributes. The delay of these praises until late in the essay accentuates how seriously they view the show’s sexism, despite its many other positive attributes. This essay models a technique students may want to try in their own writing project: a thorough examination of one crucial flaw in something that is otherwise quite good. The approach works best if, as in this essay, the flaw is not widely acknowledged.

“Picnic at Hanging Rock as an Art Film” (pages 435-437)

Much like the “For Writing and Discussion” activity on page 367, this essay illustrates the importance of correctly identifying the category or class that is appropriate for evaluating a topic. In paragraph two of this essay, the writer identifies commonly-accepted criteria for evaluating mainstream popular films. “Picnic at Hanging Rock” should not be evaluated by these criteria, she argues, because it is an art film, not a mainstream film. She then identifies the criteria valued for art films: original and often unpredictable in form; abundant in its use of symbolism to connect ideas; dependent in its meaning on the viewer’s analysis of characters, settings, and recurring themes; and ultimately “original, mysterious, and ambiguous” (paragraph two). After a one-paragraph summary of the film, the writer then discusses how “A Picnic at Hanging Rock” succeeds in meeting each of these art film criteria. The readily-apparent organization of this essay makes it a useful one to discuss with students.
Guiding Students through the Writing Project

Students who look only at the list of topics on page 437-438 may need to be reminded of the chapter’s earlier directive that they evaluate something controversial or problematic. Students should not review any TV show, movie, book, etc. unless they can demonstrate why an evaluation is necessary, that the merit of what they are evaluating is in question. At the same time, students should not feel that the subject of their essay must be the center of a raging controversy. Reviewing a popular book or TV show is an excellent way to come to a better understanding of cultural values. As students select their topics, work with them to identify what draws them to this topic.

You may also wish to supplement the discussion of organization offered on page 439. Encourage students to thoughtfully consider the order in which they should discuss their criteria. If they are writing to resistant readers, they may want to begin with their most important criterion to strengthen their argument. If the audience is relatively uninformed about the topic being evaluated, placing the strongest argument last may be a better way to lead readers toward conviction. Another option is to adhere to a pre-existing, natural arrangement among the criteria. For example, an evaluation of a restaurant might discuss the ambiance, the service, and then the food, mirroring the order of a patron’s dining experience.

In the essay’s conclusion, writers may want to provoke their readers to act on the evaluation by either utilizing or avoiding what has been evaluated. The conclusion is also a good place to stress the significance or implications of the evaluation.
Chapter 17
Proposing a Solution

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter can be considered the culmination of many skills developed in the textbook’s earlier writing projects. In Chapter 14, students are taught how to investigate causes and consequences. This skill can help them identify the root of a problem that needs to be solved. Chapter 15 trains students to write a classical argument. Their knowledge of Toulmin’s model of argument, ethos, pathos, and fallacies gained from that chapter can help students be more persuasive when proposing a solution to a decision-maker. Chapter 16 instructs students how to use criteria to make evaluations, a strategy important to proposals when a writer must justify the merit of one solution over other possibilities. If your students have worked with some or all of these preceding chapters, encourage them to apply what they learned to this writing project. This chapter adds to what students have already learned by encouraging them to use their persuasive abilities to argue for a specific change.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Discussion of the Problem

All of the questions listed on pages 442-443 of the textbook will help students explore the problem they are writing about more thoroughly. You might suggest that students freewrite their responses to these questions to help them brainstorm possible solutions. However, it is not necessary, or even appropriate, that all of the answers be incorporated into the essay.

Some students may already have sufficient credibility about the problem they have chosen to write about, while others may need to do research. It is important that they understand all of the problem’s complexities. For example, if entry-level classes on campus close early every registration period and they want to propose that more such classes be offered, they must find out why the problem hasn’t already been fixed. Perhaps there are not enough classrooms available to schedule additional sections because all rooms are used at all periods of the day. Knowing this will necessarily change the writer’s solution: proposing that more classes be offered would be naive. In this case, as in many situations, what is identified as the problem changes after some research. There should be more
classes, but the greater problem that must be addressed first is the lack of classroom space. Only after the writer has identified the root problem should solutions be explored.

In a proposal, the amount of discussion that a writer should devote to describing the problem depends on the proposal’s intended audience. If the audience is already convinced that a problem exists and that it needs to be solved, this section of the paper may be only a few sentences or a paragraph. If, however, the audience is unaware of the problem, the writer must spend more time arguing that the problem exists and has serious consequences, enough to demand the reader’s attention.

**Discussion of the Solution**

On page 443 of the textbook (under item 2: “Proposal for a solution”), Ramage, Bean, and Johnson explain that sometimes writers submit “planning proposals” that call for further study of a problem and do not themselves propose a solution. Although it is useful for students to know that proposals can be complex documents requiring extensive study to prepare, discourage them from writing a planning proposal for this writing project. If they do, they will not gain experience with justifying a solution and comparing it to alternative solutions. If students cannot think of a feasible solution to the problem they are interested in, urge them to choose another problem for this assignment, unless they have the time to research the problem more. Following the process of exploratory research described in Chapter 8 might help them identify a solution they can support.

If your class has completed Chapter 16, “Making an Evaluation,” facilitate a class discussion in which they suggest criteria for what makes a good solution. Their list might include the following: it should be detailed; it should be cost effective; it should be effective in terms of time/labor needed to implement it; it should be capable of solving the problem; it should cause no other great harm. How important is it that the solution require little labor? Must it be a solution that can be enacted immediately, or in some cases is a long-range solution preferable? What other criteria can they suggest? Asking questions such as these gets students thinking about solutions more from the position of decision-makers, rather than just how a solution might benefit themselves.

When writers rebut alternative solutions, they must be especially thorough but should not “stack the deck” by including clearly outlandish suggestions. Connecting back to material from Chapter 2, on wallowing in complexity, will help students see that taking time to ponder reasonable alternative solutions will strengthen their project. You may want to give students time in groups even before they draft the papers to discuss their proposed solutions. Group members can serve as devil’s advocates, examining the writer’s solution for weaknesses, and proposing alternative solutions. This activity will help students refine their solutions so that they can write more persuasive, complete drafts.
Advocacy Arguments

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson link advocacy ads (see the striking example on page 449) to proposal arguments. Students may see advocacy arguments as forms of classical arguments; point out that advocacy ads usually highlight some particular action or stance as a solution to a problem. Some ads, like the advocacy ad in Figure 17.2, emphasize key facts in an effort to sway public opinion (the ad does not overly request action on readers’ parts, although it is a part of a campaign to decriminalize drugs). Other advocacy ads, like those described on pages 448 and 450, overtly present a solution (we should provide medical care for pregnant women who use drugs, rather than imprison them). Point out that most advocacy ads do make fairly specific and focused demands on readers (they want readers to do something, such as sign a petition, vote, or donate money). The material in Chapter 3 on using images to change views (pages 55-56) and in Chapter 4 on the relation between genre and document design (pages 74-77) will be helpful if your students’ writing projects involve advocacy ad analysis or design.

Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities

The activity on page 446 gives students experience in justifying solutions they propose. If you assign this activity, decide whether you want students to write justifications that both support and denounce each proposal (the claims for the exercise are written positively and negatively), or if students can choose which version of the claim to support. Students will benefit from learning that each type of justification can serve arguments that support and denounce a claim, so you may want to at least ensure that opposing viewpoints are heard in class discussion. Not all students will be familiar with the concept of service learning courses, referred to in the first claim, so you may need to explain that these are courses in which students learn through required involvement with community agencies.

Figure 17.1 on page 447 provides template sentences that can help students invent justifications based on principle, consequence, and analogy/precedent for each claim in this exercise. Under “Approach 1: Argument from Principle,” Ramage, Bean, and Johnson provide a list of positive words that can help students argue for the intrinsic value of a claim. You may want to brainstorm with students what principle-based words could be used to denounce a claim: bad, unjust, wrong, unethical, dishonest, uncharitable, inequitable, unfair, unimportant, etc. When students work with “Approach 2: Argument from Consequence,” remind them to draw on what they learned in Chapter 14 about identifying consequences. “Approach 3: Argument from Precedent or Analogy” encourages students to
cite similar situations elsewhere and to use the consequences experienced by others as models or anti-models for what should be done regarding their own claim. If students choose to develop an analogy for this form of justification, remind them that analogies can sometimes be fallacies if crucial differences are ignored in the two situations being compared. Turn to page 393 for a quick review of the “false analogy” fallacy.

The activity on page 451 addresses advocacy ads and document design. The advocacy ads share several features in common with verbal argument: highlighting of key information and presentation of evidence; appeals to authority; direct address to readers. The use of visuals to attract attention has much greater affinity with advertising than with verbal argument, and you can explore the ways the placement of images directs readers’ attention and highlights (or obscures) certain elements of the advocacy ad. In verbal argument, the source of information is more easily apparent than it is in the small print at the bottom of Figure 17.2.

The advocacy ad in Figure 17.2 makes appeals to logos with the factual information presented, which also increases ethos in that it conveys a research base for the ad. Students may also see the presentation of information in columns as an appeal to ethos, in that it presents multiple aspects of the issue. The ad appeals to pathos with the appeal to fairness (“Can you find anything wrong with these pictures?”) and with the image itself, suggesting that an African-American boy is more likely to be imprisoned than his White peer.

**Discussing the Readings**

“A Proposal to Provide Cruelty-Free Products on Campus” (pages 451-456)

This proposal models a campus-based approach to the writing project in this chapter. It begins with a transmittal letter conveying the proposal to the person responsible for the situation. Taylor’s problem is stated in paragraphs 1-3: the lack of cruelty-free products on campus forces students who want to buy such products to go off campus and to spend money off campus. She frames the problem as one not simply about ethics of animal testing, but about student well-being. This appeal is likely to connect with the values and beliefs of university administrators, who are responsible for the quality of student life on campus. This line of reasoning is carried forward in the justification section of the proposal, which continues to focus on the proposal’s connection to the university’s mission and to student safety.
Taylor’s strategies reflect some good exploration of the nature of the problem and the audience for the proposal. In paragraph 4, she notes that she had previously requested the bookstore take action to provide cruelty-free products, but the bookstore had declined because it would be too expensive. Taylor reports this, making clear that her proposal will address the previous objection.

Taylor’s proposal illustrates a number of argument strategies: arguments from principle (carrying cruelty-free products supports our university’s progressive values, paragraph 14); arguments from consequence (carrying cruelty-free products will be economically successful, paragraph 13, 15; students will be safer, paragraph 15).

Taylor’s proposal addresses the issue of availability of cruelty-free products, although students may find that her proposal for volunteer students to stock the shelves is not feasible. A volunteer program might not have consistent staff available, and the proposal to create the program could, in fact, constitute a whole different proposal. Students may also find that Taylor’s proposal fails to address the economic issue previously raised by the bookstore: the products are too expensive. Some students may find her economic arguments persuasive, however, and a debate in class about the merits of this proposal will help students understand the criteria for successful proposals better.

“Saving Hospices: A Plea to the Insurance Industry” (pages 456-459)

As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson’s introduction to this essay explains, the student writer imagined her proposal as an op-ed piece in a newspaper. Her audience, then, is the general public (more specifically, “insurance customers,” to whom she appeals in the final sentence of the essay), to urge them to pressure private insurance companies into providing per diem funding for hospices. She suspects that most of her readers are uninformed about this issue, as she was before she began to work on this topic (see paragraphs three and four of her exploratory essay on this topic, which can be found on page 185-188 of the textbook). Therefore, she must give background information about hospices before she can even describe the problem in detail to this audience.

Students must similarly decide for their own writing projects how much background the audience will need to understand the proposal. If the audience already understands the problem, delaying the discussion of the solution may cause the readers to lose interest; even worse, it may seem patronizing, or imply that the audience is too short-sighted to have noticed the problem.

Ask students why they think this writer chose not to write directly to private insurance companies, the ones with the power to make the funding decision. Although her chief justification is one of principle—more holistic health care is ethically mandated (see
paragraph eleven)—she knows from the interviews she conducted while writing her exploratory essay that appeals to principle alone will not persuade insurance companies to change their policies. Therefore, she includes justifications based on consequences—per diem funding really is more cost effective (paragraph ten)—but still needs the help of other insurance customers to shame the insurance companies into ethical behavior. Ask whether any students in your class have similarly selected a proposal topic that will also work better if addressed to incite the public’s anger, rather than the decision-maker directly.

“National ID Cards Would be the Dragnet We Need” (pages 460-461)

This essay highlights one element of proposal arguments: arguments about consequences that focus on the benefits of the proposed solution. In the first paragraph, Jenkins and Rind set up the rhetorical situation (America’s need to act in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks). The proposal is very detailed; paragraphs 4-7 present the workings of the solution along with its benefits. The amount of detail provided in these paragraphs creates credibility; it is clear that Jenkins and Rind have thought through their proposal, and the quick movement from detail to detail creates momentum that is appealing to readers.

In paragraph 8, Jenkins and Rind refer to opposing views held by those “too addicted to the rhetoric of rights.” Jenkins and Rind don’t explicitly rebut these views, nor do they present these views in any detail. Jenkins and Rind close their essay admitting that their proposal may cause some harm (“If our eyes get just a little irritated, so be it”), harm they are willing to live with. Invite students to explore the harms or irritations this proposal would bring with it, and invite students to explore the civil rights arguments caricatured in paragraph 8. This proposal raises serious questions about the government’s right to stop and question U.S. citizens.

“The Secrets of Gun Violence in America: What We Don’t Know is Killing Us” (pages 462-470)

On page 471 of the textbook, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson write, “Note that the problem you pose for this paper can be personal, but shouldn’t be private; that is, others should be able to benefit from a solution to your personal problem.” This essay’s beginning illustrates one writer taking a personal stance at the start of an argument, and moving beyond autobiography into a larger public policy debate. He also illustrates the problem with a story from his own experience (paragraphs 8-9) Corlin uses his own autobiography
as a way of charting the growth of the problem he wants to solve. Students can use this essay as a good example of how to plumb their own experiences for argumentative topics. Asking students to reflect on what changes they have observed at work or in their communities can sometimes help generate excellent topics for this writing project.

This argument was presented as a speech to the American Medical Association. You can use it in conjunction with parts of Chapter 25 on giving speeches to help students see how an argument is presented orally in order to appeal to readers. Corlin’s extended autobiographical introduction and his use of personal examples throughout the speech (paragraphs 8-9, 33-38) enable listeners to see other people involved in these issues. Corlin’s attention to audience is also reflected in his use of “we” throughout the speech (first to refer to members of the AMA, in paragraphs 14-16, and then later to refer to Americans more generally, in paragraphs 23 and following). In paragraph 27, his opening sentence, which begins “I want you to imagine with me….” involves the audience in his reasoning process and creates persuasive images in listeners’ minds.

Corlin’s speech relies on arguments of resemblance to redefine gun violence as a public health problem. In paragraph 23 he notes other products that are regulated (cars and drugs, for example), and in paragraph 25 he compares gun violence to tobacco. Paragraphs 26-28 raise comparisons with video games as well as animal rights, and in paragraph 28 he addresses other health issues that are connected to safety. Point out that these arguments appeal to the values and ethics of the AMA. Doctors are likely to be interested in policy issues connected to health and safety.

Numerical data runs throughout this speech. Students might point out that Corlin’s presentation does not include per capita analysis (there are more people living in the United States than in the other countries listed in paragraph 18). In paragraph 45, resistant readers might wonder what percentage of U.S. deaths are caused by the diseases Corlin mentions.

Corlin’s speech addresses the complexity of arguments about gun violence and gun control in its later section (paragraphs 49 on). He lists a good number of research questions that should be pursued, and in paragraph 52, he notes that “we will only base our conclusions on evidence-based data.” His argument for research, rather than for a particular action (banning gun sales, for example) has potential to win over resistant readers. Even those who disagree with Corlin’s presentation of the problem may concede that a call for research and information is important. (This is another kind of appeal likely to work with medical professionals. Their scientific training would lead them to value evidence.)
Guiding Students through the Writing Project

This chapter’s placement in the textbook, as well as its reliance on former chapters (see “Understanding the Chapter’s Goals” above), might lead many teachers to assign this as the final writing project of the course. If so, you might want to consider approaching this assignment in less traditional ways. Consider giving students the option to research the problem and write the proposal collaboratively. Or, encourage students to contact a community agency and offer to work on a problem they face, as Sheridan Botts did for her exploratory essay in Chapter 8 and completed proposal this chapter. As students research and draft their proposals, encourage them to use electronic research methods (see Chapter 22 and 24) to find solutions used by others that they might cite as precedents.
Chapter 18
Writing as a Problem-Solving Process

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter provides an overview of the composing process. It provides an “eagle’s eye view” that complements, but is distinct from, the goals of other chapters in The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing. The chapters in Part I of the textbook, for example, teach students how to pursue and solve a number of specific writing problems: content problems such as thesis and support, as well as rhetorical problems such as purpose, audience, and genre. Also, Chapter 19 discusses the writing process of closed-form prose specifically, and Chapter 20 discusses the writing process of open-form prose. Yet this chapter explains holistic writing processes that apply to all forms of writing. These three chapters form a unit that can be used flexibly throughout the course.

Here, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson emphasize the need for multiple drafts and discuss the strategies that experienced writers use to produce effective texts. If possible, teach this chapter early in your course while students are simultaneously working on a writing project from another chapter. You may want to assign Chapter 18 in conjunction with or immediately following the reading of Part I. By reflecting on the writing process early in the term, students will be able to benefit from the strategies explained here for all writing projects they do in the remainder of the course. Also, by working on a writing project as they study this chapter, they will be better able to observe and adapt their own writing process to the recommendations given in this chapter.

Another reason to teach this chapter early in the term is that the final section of the chapter offers general advice for peer review workshops. Peer review guidelines that are tailored to each writing project appear at the end of their respective chapters; however, in this chapter, the general function and design of peer review workshops is discussed. If possible, have students read and discuss this material prior to their first peer review workshop.
Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

The Writing Process

It is possible that one or more students in your class have not been taught in prior writing courses to approach writing as a process. They may have learned about the importance of thesis statements, how to develop paragraphs, and various modes of organization (comparison/contrast, classification, and so on), but may never have had a teacher talk to them about the importance of planning (beyond outlining) or the recursiveness of composing. Even students who were not trained in this manner, commonly referred to as the “current traditional” approach to writing, may nevertheless believe that the written product is all that truly matters because that is often all the teacher reads and grades. Connect the presentation of the writing process to the notion of problematizing (presented in Chapters 1 and 2), and invite students to talk about the ways their previous writing experiences are like—or not—the processes presented in this chapter.

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson explain that writing is a complex activity that exceeds the capacities of short-term memory. By using multiple drafts, writers are able to focus on one concern at a time. Often, when writing about a topic, the writer comes to understand it more fully, which may mean that parts of the text that have already been written must be changed to accommodate this new understanding. Although novice writers may think of multiple drafts as just more work, experienced writers recognize that expecting multiple drafts makes writing easier: knowing that no one but themselves will read the initial attempts, writers can be more playful in their thinking and tentative in their wording.

Make sure that students understand that revisions are not merely the number of changes, but more importantly, the kinds of changes. A writer may take a text through many drafts, each time for a different purpose (see pages 482-484 in the textbook for listings of various types of revisions). Even the simplest revisions can require a multi-stage process: writers who commonly make more than one type of grammatical or mechanical error find it helpful to proofread a text they’ve written several times, looking for one particular type of error each time.

As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson report in this chapter, there is no single, ideal writing process. The process differs from person to person, and even for the same person, from text to text. Just as one person may use different reading strategies for different texts (see Chapter 6), so too will one person use different revising strategies. What typifies good writers, though, is that their writing process is recursive and complex. To authenticate this characterization, allot class time for discussion of individual writers’ processes. Students
may share accounts of their own writing process, especially how their process may have changed as they have matured as writers. Share accounts of your own writing process. If you write scholarly articles, how does your process differ than from other types of writing you do? How did you go about writing the syllabus for this course? If you are in the midst of writing anything when you discuss this chapter, consider taking it to class and discussing your process for that text with your students.

You might also invite colleagues to your class to discuss their writing processes, to reinforce the fact that often different strategies work best for different writers. If possible, invite colleagues from other disciplines to show students that writing processes are important to most fields, not just the province of English classes. You might also invite friends who are not academics but who write regularly, either for their own enjoyment or for work-related projects. You could even ask students if they have friends, family members, or coworkers who spend a lot of time writing and would be interested in talking to the class about their writing processes. Because students rarely have an opportunity to observe experienced writers compose, they may not realize the effort that even the best writers put into composing. Students may falsely believe that they’re not “meant” to be writers if writing is difficult for them. Having successful writers describe their own writing difficulties may help students realize that their struggles aren’t unusual.

Rather than construing the writing process as linear and sequential—choosing a topic, narrowing it, writing a thesis, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing—Ramage, Bean, and Johnson propose a less precise model of the composing process. On pages 485-486, they identify tasks a writer generally performs early in the process, midway through the process, and late in the process. If you have described your writing processes to students, or if invited guests have described theirs, ask students to compare those processes to the model described in the textbook. Have experienced writers mentioned any composing strategies that are not mentioned in this model? For example, is there a particular time when writers are most likely to put away a text they are writing on in order to gain a better perspective on it through a later, fresh reading?

Students should also compare their own writing process to this model. Which of the strategies do they regularly use? Which do they regularly omit? A useful homework assignment would be to ask students to write a paragraph in response to each of the following questions:

- Which aspects of the writing process model on pages 485-486 of the textbook do you think are your strengths as a writer? Why?

- Which aspects of this writing process do you think you most need to improve in your own writing? Why?
• What might you do differently during your next writing project to improve in the skill you’ve just identified?

• Describe one or two plans of action you could take to strengthen your writing process during this writing course. The list of various composing strategies on pages 488-489 of the textbook may help you set specific goals.

Once students have analyzed their writing process and set goals for improving it, you can periodically ask students to evaluate their success in meeting these goals. When they submit their next writing project, ask them to reassess their composing process; if their writing process has not changed, ask them to reformulate goals for themselves. You might ask for another assessment midterm, and again just before the final writing project for the course. Improving their writing process is one of the ways students can most benefit from this course. The material in Chapter 27, “Assembling a Portfolio and Writing a Reflective Self-Evaluation,” will help students carry out this reflection on their own work.

Another strategy for encouraging students to be reflective about the writing process model Ramage, Bean, and Johnson propose, as well as students’ own writing processes, is to ask them to think of an analogy for each. This is similar to the “For Writing and Discussion” activity in Chapter 1 which asks students to create a metaphor, simile, or analogy to explain the difference between closed-form and open-form prose. See additional discussion of that activity, most of which would apply to this activity as well, on page 15 of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing or pages 42-43 of this manual.

Students might, for example, envision composing as sculpting because in both the creator starts with an unformed mass which gradually takes shape as the creator works. Or, they might construe writing as analogous to the growth of a fetus. Pregnancies are often described in terms of trimesters, each associated with critical events in the fetus’s development, although obviously the fetus also grows more holistically throughout the pregnancy. So too, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson describe a “trimester” model of the birth of a text. The writer puts a text through different critical developments in each trimester, but like a fetus, the text also develops organically. This analogy even complies with Ramage, Bean, and Johnson’s encouragement to learn to “satisfice” (489). Both a fetus and text are delivered before their development is complete.
Students’ own analogies will reveal much about their understanding of the writing process. If a student suggests the analogy of an assembly line, for example, he or she is still misunderstanding the composing process as linear. You might ask students to create analogies in small groups and then share them with the class. As groups contribute their ideas, point out what assumptions about writing underlie their analogies and correct any misperceptions.

The Reader’s Perspective

An important skill for writers to develop is the ability to see their own work from the perspective of readers. Only then can a writer revise his or her work to make its organization, development, and style most effective for others unfamiliar with the writer’s intentions. Thus, it is important that students have an opportunity to observe how readers react to their texts. Peer review groups provide one such opportunity. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson recommend that peer reviewers describe to each student writer what their experiences were while reading each paper: “I got lost when . . . ” or “I could tell you were excited in the section where . . . ,” for example. See pages 493-496 in the textbook.

You might occasionally structure peer reviews so that writers get responses to their work from other classmates as they read, rather than after the texts are read in their entirety. To do this, peer reviewers would not receive the paper prior to class (and perhaps not even during class because they might be tempted to read ahead), but would instead have the paper read aloud to them by the writer. The writer could then stop reading at various points to ask classmates what their response is, as readers, by that point in the essay. For example, after they hear the title and introduction, what is their level of interest in hearing the rest? (You can remind students that this is similar to the reading strategies introduced in Chapter 12.) After every few paragraphs or every page, the writer can pause again to ask peer reviewers how they are responding to the text at that point. Peer reviewers can also be encouraged to interrupt the writer when they become confused or want to offer praise. This procedure can help students realize that most readers interact with a text as they read. After hearing how readers respond to their texts as they read, students are likely to be more aware of readers’ needs as they write.

You can also respond to students’ papers in ways that encourage them to view their own work from a reader’s perspective. One way to do this is to let students observe you read one of their papers during a scheduled conference. The paper may be either a draft or a completed writing project. In either case, ask the student to bring the text to the conference rather than reading it in advance. Then, with the student following along on the shared copy or with an identical hard copy, read the paper aloud and share your responses as you do so. Resist the urge to read as a teacher; instead, share with the writer the reactions you are
having as an experienced—but not atypical—reader. If conferences are too inconvenient for your schedule or students’ schedules, you can still provide this impromptu, in-process feedback by responding to students’ papers on audiotape. Page 23 of this manual explains in more detail how to provide comments for students on audiotape.

Yet another way you can help students develop a reader’s perspective is to encourage them to be more attentive to their own responses as they read the work of other writers, whether that be essays included in this textbook, reading they do for other courses, or self-initiated reading. For some of the readings in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*, lead students through an analysis of their reactions as they read. Pages 114-115 of this manual explain how to do this for the essay “Not Guilty: Despite Its Fearsome Image, the Tarantula Is a Benign Beast” in Chapter 9; a similar process could be applied to any reading in the textbook.

If you have assigned an essay for reading that students do not discuss readily, complaining that it was too hard or boring, seize that as an opportunity to encourage their reader’s perspective. Don’t ignore or condemn their reactions. Instead, ask what made it hard or boring. What could the writer have done to make it more clear or appealing? If they disliked the topic of the essay, challenge them to imagine an essay on that topic that they would want to read and to describe what approach could make the topic more interesting.

**Peer Review Workshops**

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson recommend that, in peer review workshops, students read their drafts aloud while group members follow along on photocopies that the writer provides. Review with your students the reasons for this practice, as explained on pages 493-496 of the textbook. Assure students that they need not feel self-conscious as they read. Because a writer in every group will be reading at the same time, the classroom will be noisy and no one but their own group members will be able to hear each reader’s paper. You can reinforce this practice by occasionally role-playing the writer when you discuss an essay in class. In preparation for peer reviews, read aloud a student essay from the textbook aloud and then ask the entire class to serve as your group members, offering you feedback on the essay you have read using the guidelines for either response-centered workshops or advice-centered workshops, both explained on page 495 of the textbook. Resist the urge to provide the “right” answers as the teacher. Instead, use your energy to help students develop increasingly analytical conversations about each others’ writing.

The chief difference between response-centered and advice-centered workshops is that in the response-centered workshops, group members describe their reactions to the writer’s essay without explicitly directing the writer to make particular changes. This workshop method may be preferred by student respondents who lack confidence in their ability to
assess writing. The advice-centered workshop method is more directive in its feedback to
the writer. Each major writing project in Part Two of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*
includes “Guidelines for Peer Reviewers” tailored to each assignment to help students
perform advice-centered reviews. As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson explain, the reviews are
best completed by two students writing the review together.

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson also explain that reviews can be written outside of class.
When deciding whether to arrange workshops so that students are required to work together
outside of class, consider how feasible this requirement will be for students at your campus.
If the majority of the students in your class live off campus and have jobs and/or family
responsibilities, requiring them to schedule time to meet with other students outside of class
may be unrealistic.

Whatever peer review format students use, remind writers to listen open-mindedly to
suggestions rather than to defend their drafts. If writers find themselves needing to explain
or defend their drafts, clearly their draft isn’t meeting readers’ needs; they should then listen
to their reviewers, rather than talking to themselves, to discern what would make the draft
more clear. Writers should ask follow-up questions to encourage their peer reviewers to be
specific in their comments. Writers should also ask their reviewers follow-up questions so
they can better decide how to act on what may be contradictory advice from various peer
reviewers. Chapter 25, especially pages 685-692, offers further advice on how to promote
successful group interaction and resolve problems in group dynamics.

Remember that it takes time for students to become effective peer reviewers. You can
help them develop skills by structuring workshops over the course of the semester. Don’t
simply point your students to a set of peer review questions and turn over the whole class
period to discussion. Ask students to turn in some evidence of peer review and perhaps a
reflection on the peer review activities from a writer’s perspective. Early in the semester,
design focused peer review activities that focus on limited elements of a draft (such as the
activity described above which focuses on a single paragraph). As the semester goes on,
gradually extend the complexity of the peer review activities and the time allotted.

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

The activity on pages 488 obviously is most effective if students are working on a
writing project from the chapters in Parts I or II of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* as
they work through this chapter. If they are not, however, you may still use this activity by
asking them to bring to class a paper they are writing for another course or even asking them
to use one of the paragraphs they have written for the homework assignment described above, in which they analyze their own composing process and set goals for improving it. Or you can use the activity on pages 491-492, which addresses questions to a draft that appears elsewhere in the textbook.

In addition, it would be useful to do this activity more than once using the same paragraph. You could do it early in your work with this chapter, ask students to save their two versions of the paragraph (or collect their papers and save them yourself), then have them repeat this exercise a week or two later to see that even the second version can probably be improved. In fact, a repetition of this activity could be saved for the next time the class finishes your planned lesson early. It does not have to be done while you are working on this chapter. Repeating it even a month later could demonstrate to students the value of approaching a text for revision freshly.
Chapter 19
Composing and Revising Closed-Form Prose

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter deals primarily with the organization of closed-form prose. Students learn what readers expect of closed-form prose so that they can successfully meet those expectations. They also learn many organizational patterns or “moves” that can expand their repertoire of structures and add greater variety to students’ texts. The chapter is organized into ten distinct lessons. Rather than assigning the entire chapter in sequence, you may wish to assign only the lessons that your students need most (perhaps you will want to assign some lessons to the entire class and other lessons only to the students who especially need help with the skills those lessons review); you may wish to assign the lessons at various times during your courses; and you may wish to alter the sequence of the lessons, based on your students’ greatest needs.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Lesson 1: Reader Expectations

This lesson provides an overview of skills that are discussed more thoroughly in later lessons. The skills of “unity and coherence,” “old before new,” and “forecasting and fulfillment” somewhat overlap. Nevertheless, students can use this first lesson to diagnose what reader expectations they typically have the most difficulty satisfying. Students can then concentrate on the lessons that best correspond to those reader needs.

Lesson 2: Thesis/Support Structures

When a paper just doesn’t work, it will often be because it is written with one of these three riskless structures. A chronological structure is troublesome when it lacks a thesis; an encyclopedic structure has no thesis; and a formulaic structure is dissatisfying when it lacks surprise. Remind students of these problematic structures before they write major closed-form writing projects and encourage them to watch for them in each others’ essays during peer reviews. If you notice any of these structures when you are grading students’ work, in your comments refer the writer to this lesson. As long as students have a clear thesis that surprises, they will avoid these structures.
Lesson 3: Structure

This lesson discusses three visual devices that can help students structure their writing: outlines, tree diagrams, and flowcharts. Students who dislike writing formal outlines may find tree diagrams and flowcharts less intimidating. In addition to helping writers plan the structure of a text they will draft, these techniques can also be used to detect organizational flaws after a text is already written.

You may want to distinguish outlines, tree diagrams, and flowcharts from another method of visual planning students were taught to do in Chapter 2: idea maps (an example of an idea map appears on page 34 of the textbook). In idea maps, students put their topic in the center of the page and explore by drawing branches outward. As their ideas get more specific, they create minor branches off of related major branches. Writers use idea maps to generate ideas without self-censorship early in the writing process; however, rarely do writers put all of the ideas from an idea map into their paper.

Like idea maps, outlines, tree diagrams, and flowcharts are visual methods for generating ideas. Yet unlike an idea map, everything that is represented in these three forms of visual planning is included in the text. Also, these visual plans are arranged more deliberately: the ideas are positioned to represent the order in which the points will be made in the text, whereas in an idea map, the arrangement of ideas is more random. Like idea maps, however, the three visual methods discussed here can be generative. As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson explain on page 509, a writer can diagram the points and particulars of a text on branches and sub-branches of a tree diagram and then add question marks to “hold open” spots where the plan needs more development. Place-holding question marks can be similarly used in outlines and flowcharts.

Encourage students to try all three visual devices for planning a text’s organization. Through such experimentation they may discover that they like one form most; however, help them realize that the other visual planning devices may prove more useful with other texts they may write (for example, an outline may be most suitable for a text that requires an elaborate hierarchy of ideas). Whenever a student’s paper has structural weaknesses, consider advising (or assigning) that student to write an outline, tree diagram, or flowchart of the written text. Such a condensed visual may help the student detect incongruities that are obscured within the full text. Also encourage peer reviewers to use these visual forms to explain organizational weaknesses in drafts.
Lesson 4: Titles and Introductions

Students often write weak titles and introductions. Many students simply don’t title essays at all, and introductions can often be difficult if written at the start of the writing process, rather than at the end. This lesson is particularly helpful in getting students to form ideas about titles and introductions, and it offers concrete strategies for action. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson delineate possibilities that are likely to expand students’ repertoires: four conventions for titles of closed-form prose and four common features of academic introductions. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson are also helpful in advising students to write (or rewrite) these parts of a text last, when the meaning of the text is utterly clear. A text need not be written in the order in which readers will receive it.

You may want to have them examine the titles and introductions of several closed-form texts to see how these aspects of the texts affect them as readers. The closed-form readings in other chapters of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing are handy examples.

Begin by asking students to turn to the table of contents in the textbook and, looking at the chapters devoted to closed-form prose, identify one or two essays for each of the four types of titles Ramage, Bean, and Johnson list: those in the form of questions, thesis statements, purpose statements, and two parts separated by a colon. After students have had a few minutes to search for and categorize titles on their own, you might want to use the transparency master on page 203 to discuss students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of these titles. Which of these titles do they most like? Why? Is there one format for titles that they like more than the others? Why? Is there one format they particularly dislike? Why? Would all of these titles be similarly appropriate and effective for all audiences? How should audience affect the writer’s creation of a title?

Titles can also combine several of these four formats. Some examples of readings in The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing that combine formats are these: “ Saving Hospices: A Plea to the Insurance Industry” (Chapter 17), which uses a colon and purpose statement format; “Not Guilty: Despite its Fearsome Image, the Tarantula is a Benign Beast” (Chapter 9), which uses both a colon and thesis format; and “Who Do You Want to Be?: Finding Heritage in Walker’s ‘Everyday Use’” (Chapter 12), which combines question, purpose statement, and colon formats. After the discussion of titles, ask students to apply what they’ve learned by choosing a writing project they wrote earlier in the course and revising its title. Have them share their revisions in groups or call on several students to share their revised titles with the class.
Similar activities can be done to motivate students to write stronger introductions and conclusions. Ask them to select several closed-form essays in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* (perhaps ones they are interested in because of the class discussion about titles). They should read the essays in their entirety, but pay special attention to the essays’ introductions and conclusions. How well does each satisfy the student as a reader? What piques or deters students’ interest? Having read the body of the paper will help students identify which type of conclusion the writer has used. Again ask students about the role of audience in constructing an introduction and conclusion. Conclude the activity by having them revise the introduction and conclusion of an earlier assignment.

**Lesson 5: Points and Particulars**

Closed-form prose is structured so that points (main ideas) are placed before particulars (examples and supporting evidence). This order is preferable because readers’ needs are different when reading closed-form prose than when reading open-form prose. On page 66 of the textbook, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson explain that readers of closed-form prose are often busy and thus need texts that are clear, easy to summarize, and predictable enough in form that readers can glance at the beginning of each paragraph and understand the main ideas.

One example of closed-form prose that students frequently encounter is most college textbooks. You might ask students to notice where they most often direct their attention when reading college textbooks. When they use a highlighter, take notes on their reading, or otherwise interact with a textbook, how often is their attention directed to the beginning of paragraphs or sections? How do students think their understanding and retention of the information would change if the particulars preceded the points? Ask students what other writings they encounter regularly in which they would expect to find points before particulars.

You may also want to comment upon how the points-to-particulars order corresponds with what their former writing teachers taught them about the function of topic sentences. A topic sentence is the “point” of the paragraph and generally begins the paragraph. The advice to put points before particulars in closed-form prose is consistent with the purpose of the topic sentence. “Points before particulars” is also sound advice, though, for larger portions of the text than single paragraphs. It is relevant for every level of the text: its overall thesis, its major sections (which may span several paragraphs or pages), as well as its individual paragraphs.
Knowing the structure of points to particulars can be generative. Students can check that they adequately develop both points and particulars as they compose; if either is sparse, students then know what they must add. As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson explain on page 50 of the textbook, the points are the skeleton of a text (the points alone would be a summary or abstract of the text), while the particulars are what make the points believable. Tell students that if their “particulars”—their examples and support—are each referred to only briefly, the text needs more of them; if the particulars are extended examples, in most cases fewer will suffice.

Lesson 6: Transitions

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson allude to the concept of transitions in lesson 5, when they discuss the need for each part of a closed-form piece to link to the preceding material. The list of transitions provided in this lesson is very thorough and illustrates how important transitions are between and within sentences as well as between paragraphs.

If you would like to encourage the use of headings and subheadings as transitional devices, make sure students know that headings must be grammatically parallel. Parallel structure is explained in the Handbook 4 of the textbook. If your class is using the brief edition of the textbook, without the handbook, explain that all headings of the same level must have the same grammatical structure: if one is a noun, they all must be; if one begins with a verb, they all must; if the verb ends in “-ing,” they all must; and so on.

If students are using headings in a long document and wish to include subheadings too, a tree diagram (explained in Lesson 3) can help them identify appropriate places for the subheadings. Explain to students that the visual presentation of headings and subheadings must reflect the hierarchy of ideas in the text (see Lesson 8 on document design as well). Ideas that would be presented as major branches in a tree diagram must be identical in their font size and style, indentation, and use of capitalizations, boldface, and italics. Ideas that would be identified as minor branches of a tree diagram must be different in appearance from the ideas of the main branches, and identical in form to other minor subheadings. You might ask students to identify the styles of headings and subheadings in this chapter of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*. Tell students there is no single format for distinguishing headings and subheadings, as long as the hierarchical and lateral relationships between ideas is clear.

For example, the largest headings in this chapter are for the nine lessons. As exemplified by the heading for this lesson, on page 522, these are in large font and are in all capital letters. Tell students to contrast this heading with the subheadings for the first lesson. The four main subheadings are “Use Common Transition Words to Signal Relationships” (page 522), “Write Major Transitions Between Parts” (page 524), and
“Signal Transitions with Headings and Subheadings” (page 525). Visually, all four have a font size smaller than that of the first lesson and only the first letter of key words is capitalized, rather than all letters being capitalized. The next level of headings, identifying the “thought exercise” within each of these subsections, is even smaller in font size and is centered between the left and right margins. Prompt students to analyze the headings and subheadings throughout the remainder of this chapter too. They will discover another level of headings in Lesson 3 on page 508, for example, where “Outlines” appears in the same font size as the thought exercises in Lesson 6, yet this heading is not centered between the left and right margins. Ask students to explain the rationale for this difference in indentation. Students may design their own heading and subheading styles for their texts but must be sure to apply the styles consistently.

Lesson 7: The Old/New Contract

In closed-form prose, the sentences of most well-written paragraphs are so thoroughly governed by the old/new contract that the sequence of the sentences cannot be changed even slightly. An activity that impresses upon students this phenomenon is to give them separate slips of paper, each containing a single sentence from a closed-form paragraph, and ask them to reconstruct the paragraph. You can prepare for this activity with minimal effort. Copy or type the first full paragraph of this chapter (page 437), beginning every sentence on a new line, so that after you duplicate the sheet for each group of students, the sentences can be cut apart with scissors. In class, give each group a set of jumbled sentences and tell students to rearrange the sentences into their proper order.

When the groups are finished, have them compare their arrangements with each other and with the original version in the textbook. In all likelihood, all of the versions will be identical, which will surprise students who have never been aware of the old/new contract. Ask them to discuss the decision-making process they undertook when arranging sentences. If there is some variation of sentence order among groups, ask students to discuss the reasons for their differences.

You may also want to assign students to analyze a paragraph or two of their own past writing to determine how well they instinctively follow the terms of the old/new contract. Direct students to revise any places where the old/new contract is broken. Students should also determine the variety of ways they link back to old information. If necessary, they should revise the paragraphs to increase the variety. You may want to mention to students that deliberate attempts to adhere to the old/new contract as they write may stifle their ideas, causing writer’s block. Therefore, it may be best to administer this principle when revising.
Lesson 8: Document Design

This lesson emphasizes the way document design—the text’s physical appearance—contributes to the document’s rhetorical effects. This lesson emphasizes four principles of document design which can be the focus of various classroom activities.

Document design is intimately connected to genre. If you used the classroom activity described above in Lesson 4 and asked students to review the titles and introductions to various closed-form essays in the textbook, you can revisit those essays, exploring the connection between titles, introductions, and genre. The genre of a document will affect things like the use of subheadings, the appearance of graphics, and the documentation of sources.

Elements of document design affect both credibility and clarify. A good class activity to illustrate this point involves multiple versions of current student work. Ask students to take one page of an essay they are writing, and invite them to change the document design. They might change margin size, fonts, insert or remove subheadings, for example. Have students rotate through the room and make notes on the ways the different texts affect them.

Lesson 9: Organizational Moves

The organizational moves discussed in this lesson can be applied to small segments of a text (such as a few sentences or a single paragraph), large segments (numerous paragraphs or pages), as well as the entire text. Clarify for students that although Ramage, Bean, and Johnson explain some moves using paragraphs as examples and explain others using tree diagrams as examples (representing the structure of the entire text), all of these organizational moves can be used for any amount of text. You can incorporate this lesson into peer review activities in order to help students see how these moves are used with different amounts of text.

To help students comprehend the structure of texts, you may want to have them analyze the organizational moves they made in a paper they wrote earlier this term or prior to this semester. What organizational moves did they make unknowingly? If the paper had organizational weaknesses, where were moves needed but absent? What moves would have corrected those weaknesses? If students don’t have former papers of their own to analyze, you might ask them to bring to class a text they have read that could be improved with better organizational moves. Whether their work is their own or someone else’s, students should come prepared for a group discussion of the text’s existing structure and organizational moves that would improve it.
Lesson 10: Conclusions

You may want to use this lesson in conjunction with Lesson 4 on introductions. Students often wonder how to distinguish introductions and conclusions, since both are often thought to summarize an essay. The questions embedded in this lesson will help students think about the type of conclusion best suited to their essay. As with the introduction, the conclusion is best written late in the process, when students are more clear on the meaning and significance of their text.

Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities

There are activities that follow each lesson in the chapter, and these are very helpful as in-class exercises. They work very well for promoting whole-class practice of skills you may then ask students to do individually or in peer review groups. Doing the “For Writing and Discussion” activities allows students to practice skills with common materials.

For the activities that require tree diagrams, you may want to ask some students to copy their tree diagrams on the chalkboard for class discussion. This practice would be helpful for the activities on organization in Lesson 9.
Sample Titles of Closed-Form Texts

Question Format:
“Trouble With Teens or With Numbers?” (Chapter 11)

Thesis Format:
“Help Troubled Teens--Don’t Forget Them” (Chapter 11)
“The Myth of Violence in the Old West” (Chapter 23)

Purpose Statement Format:
“Exploring Problems About Hospice” (Chapter 8)
“Understanding Calories, Fat Content in Food” (Chapter 11)
“National ID Cards Would be the Dragnet We Need” (Chapter 17)

Colon Format:
“Death and Justice: How Capital Punishment Affirms Life” (Chapter 615)

“Denying Desire: The Anorexic Struggle with Image, Self, and Sexuality” (Chapter 13)
“Sesame Street: Brought to You by the Letters M-A-L-E” (Chapter 15)
Chapter 20
Composing and Revising
Open-Form Prose

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter offers a fuller treatment of open-form writing, a rhetorical option that is discussed repeatedly throughout The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing. In Chapter 1, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson discuss the differences between closed and open forms (see pages 13-18 of the textbook). In Chapter 4, the authors offer guidelines about the appropriateness of closed-form prose and open-form prose in various situations (see pages 70-73). Chapter 7, about autobiographical narrative, gives students an opportunity to write a specific genre of open-form discourse. The exploratory essay assignment in Chapter 8 is also at least partially open form because of its emphasis on the writer’s process toward a thesis.

This chapter explains rhetorical principles and techniques that are common to most genres of open-form discourse. Like Chapter 19, it is presented as a series of discrete lessons that highlight different elements of open-form prose. The chapter can be taught at any time during the course, although it may be most helpful to teach it in conjunction with Chapter 7 on autobiographical narratives or with any other writing project that involves elements of open-form prose. You may teach the lessons in any order, and you may choose to assign some to the whole class and some to individual students.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Lesson 1: Creating a Story

This lesson introduces the distinction between a story and an “and then” chronology. The contrast between the two student readings in this lesson (one in the running text of the chapter, and the other in the “For Writing and Discussion” activity) provides an accessible way for students to articulate for themselves stylistic differences that can affect readers. Students can usually discuss the student examples very well, but have trouble with the more theoretical components of this lesson. Working with the examples first, before the students read the rest of the lesson, usually works well. Although a story consists of depicting events in time, essays that depend purely on chronology to advance the plot often lack tension (the central problem in “The Stolen Watch”).
Ramage, Bean, and Johnson identify four components of effective stories: depiction of events through time; connectivity; tension or conflict; and resolution. Of these four elements, students are most likely to need help understanding tension. To students without strong literary training, the words “tension” and “conflict” may have misleading connotations. Students may think that to have narrative tension, a story has to be about a stressful situation, or that to have “conflict,” the characters in the narrative need to have a combative relationship. It is likely, though, that some students in your class will understand these terms more accurately (particularly if they have taken introductory literature courses) so you may wish to begin your discussion by asking students what “tension” and “conflict” mean in this context.

Once all students understand that narrative tension/conflict denotes difference, but not necessarily negativity or aggression, you might ask students to create an analogy or metaphor (individually or in small groups) that conveys their understanding of these terms. This exercise is similar to the “For Writing and Discussion” activity in Chapter 1 that asks students to generate metaphors for closed and open forms (see page 15 of the textbook). Pages 42-43 in this manual, which accompany that activity, provides tips for helping students think of metaphors and would be relevant here as well.

To review all components of a story, you may wish to try the following activity, which could take most of a class session to complete. Ask students to think of one event that has happened to them in the last week that can be presented as a story; then give them a few minutes to freewrite about the event. Next, direct students to form groups of five. One student should begin the group activity by orally recounting his or her story. The remaining group members should try to identify the story components. To keep all group members involved, each can be assigned a certain analytical task. Whoever is sitting to the left of the storyteller can briefly identify the key events of the story; moving clockwise, the next student can explain the connectivity of the events; the next can discuss the tension or conflict; and the last can identify the resolution. Once one student’s story has been analyzed, the next student in the circle, moving clockwise, can tell his or her story and the analytical assignments can similarly shift one person. In this manner, all students can gain experience creating and analyzing all aspects of the story. You may wish to analyze one or two students’ stories together as a class before the groups convene to ensure that all students understand the components adequately. When the groups are finished, ask if any had trouble analyzing a story, or what component of the stories was most difficult to identify. You can discuss a particular story, or particular story elements, as a whole class.
Lesson 2: Staying Low on the Ladder of Abstraction

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson devote considerable discussion to word choice for open-form prose. Whether the words are specific, revelatory, memory-soaked, or figurative, students should realize that highly descriptive words greatly enhance open-form writing. You may wish to remind students at this point of the attention that advertisers give to minute details, as discussed in Chapter 10, “Analyzing Images.” Like advertisements, open-form prose strives to shape an image and create a mood, so care in details is similarly important. Advise students to be attuned to stylistic matters throughout their process of planning, drafting, and revising open-form prose.

Lesson 3: Disrupting Readers’ Desires

At first glance, descriptions such as “disrupting predictions,” “making odd juxtapositions,” “leaving gaps,” and “employing unstable points of view” seem to depict the behaviors of weak writers. Yet often in open-form writing, these characteristics are effective when they are used deliberately and purposefully. Make sure students understand that open-form writing does not mean that anything goes, that the writer holds no obligations to the reader. Yet structural unconventionalities, used well, can significantly contribute to the reader’s engagement with a text. Peer review workshops on drafts provide the ideal means for student writers to learn whether their texts’ structural irregularities entice or unduly frustrate readers. This lesson helps students see that the structural considerations are rooted in their purpose and relationship with the reader.

Lesson 4: Tapping the Power of Figurative Language

This lesson explores the differences between figurative and literal language, noting the ways figurative language is often a hallmark of more open-form prose. Metaphors and other forms of figurative language enable writers to compare or equate unlike things, and the juxtapositions inherent in this language can extend the work of Lesson 3.

Lesson 5: Expanding Styles

This lesson introduces the technique of creative imitation, in which you work with a passage from an expert writer, substituting your own content but imitating the style and organization of the original. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson note that creative imitation often helps writers attain new insights into their subject matter. Creative imitation is also useful
because it must begin with careful stylistic analysis. This lesson contains a series of questions that will help students describe the style of an expert text. It can be helpful to introduce creative imitation first to the whole class, so that you can discuss the style of the original.

If you use stylistic imitation as a technique, make sure to connect your use of stylistic imitation to your discussion of source citation and plagiarism (in Chapter 23, Skill 6). Your expectations for documented research work may well be different from your expectations for creative imitation, and you need to be very clear with students about the differences you see between the two activities.

**Lesson 6: Creating Voice**

It is important to discuss closed and open forms as a continuum so that students understand that characteristics of the open form are adaptable to many writing projects, not only autobiographical narratives. Humor is perhaps the most common example of an open-form technique that appears regularly in more closed-form prose. Still other elements of open-form prose appear in different genres. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson cite the exploratory essay assignment in Chapter 8 as one example of prose that has traits of the open form, yet is not fully so. When discussing this continuum, have students refer to Figure 1.1 on page 16 in the textbook. This visual can remind students of the variety of ways in which closed and open elements can be combined.

If you did not do so during your class discussion of Chapter 1, you may now wish to have students bring to class brief readings they have found that they would identify as having both closed and open elements. Popular magazines are a good source for such materials. For a fuller explanation of this task, see pages 41-42 of this manual under the heading “Closed Versus Open Forms.”

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

This chapter has many “For Writing and Discussion” activities to give students ample practice analyzing and composing open form prose. Assign as many as you have time for because few college teachers give students a chance to gain experience with open-form texts. You can use these activities either to help students read and analyze others’ open-form texts, or to help students revise their own open-form texts.

The activity on pages 547-549 asks students to analyze the essay “The Stolen Watch” as an example of an “and then” narrative that fails to meet the criteria for a story. “The Stolen Watch” meets the first criterion of a story by depicting events. However, the criteria
of connectivity, tension or conflict, and resolution are not met satisfactorily. The only connectivity throughout the narrative is the inclusion of the narrator and Karen as characters. Although there is potential for tension/conflict and resolution in two arenas—the narrator’s relationship with Karen, and the theft and return of the narrator’s watch—neither is adequately developed to gain the reader’s involvement. Challenge your students to imagine how this narrative might be retold to constitute a story. What events would need to be omitted? What theme could be developed to better connect the story’s events? How could the tension/conflict and resolution be developed so that they engage readers? The other questions in this activity bring students into discussing “Berkeley Blues.” See the “Discussing the Readings” section of this chapter for some perspectives on the ways that essay functions as a story.

The “For Writing and Discussion” activity on page 555-556 directs students to use specific, revelatory words to describe particular people and settings. Students may feel uneasy with the stereotyping this activity makes them to engage in. Of course, not all junior-high boys who congregate on a street corner will have the appearance depicted in the example. Perhaps other junior-high boys—wearing their school uniform of dark slacks, white dress shirt, and dark tie—discuss their upcoming math exam as they gather on the corner to wait for the school bus. Assure students that they can depict the people and settings listed in the exercise however they wish: college professors need not be absent-minded and their offices need not be messy; the kitchen shared by college students need not be crowded and unkempt—instead, it may be a sunny spot where roommates gather to share their thoughts and experiences over coffee. Ironically, even if students adhere to traditional stereotypes in their descriptions of these people and settings, the specificity of the words students choose will ensure that the descriptions are unique, not clichéd stereotypes.

The activity on page 557 also offers students practice with choosing descriptive words for open-form prose. The memory-soaked words this activity elicits may vary depending on the age, gender, socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, and cultural heritage of your students. Other differences will probably be reflected in the memory-soaked words as well, such as the region where the student grew up and even the student’s unique family traditions. As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson explain immediately prior to this exercise (they contrast the phrases “to let” and “to rent” as examples), writers should not over-explain the emotional connotations of word choice. It’s best to let readers either discern the meaning from the context of the passage or simply overlook the emotional impact of the word choice with no crucial loss of the text’s meaning.
The activity on pages 561-562 invites students to examine figurative language that is successful and clichéd. You may bring in a reading for students to analyze, or you can use the text’s suggestions of readings in Chapter 7. Achieving consensus can be difficult with this activity, and the lack of consensus offers the chance to explore why some people consider language trite that others find engaging.

On page 563, students are instructed to do creative imitations. You may need to help students understand that in creative imitation, it is perfectly acceptable—indeed, required—to adopt the structure and organization of the original. As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson note, this technique has centuries of history behind it. Students who are worried about plagiarizing might need some help getting started (and of course, you will need to be clear about the difference between this exercise and an exercise in incorporating sources effectively). You can do a creative imitation of a short passage as a whole class before moving into individual work. Allow students to share their imitations and then discuss which imitations seemed more or less successful.

The activity on page 565 asks students to evaluate the appropriateness and appeal of humor in instructional books. You may wish to expand on these questions by having students discuss the use of humor in texts other than instructional books. For what kinds of texts would humor be a strong asset? On what basis do students base their opinion: the text’s purpose? the text’s subject matter? the text’s audience? Are there purposes, subject matter, or audiences for which humor would not be appropriate in open-form prose?

The final “For Writing and Discussion” activity on page 567 is especially important for prompting students to see the relationship between forms of writing and forms of thought. The exercise asks how changing a particular writer’s stridently closed-form text to open form might change the writer’s thinking. Adapt this question to allow students to assess their own experiences as well. How has learning to compose open-form texts changed their thinking?
Discussing the Readings

“Berkeley Blues” (pages 545-546)
In the first edition of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing, Ramage and Bean included the following helpful discussion of this narrative’s theme:

The theme of ‘Berkeley Blues,’ baldly stated, might be ‘It is bad to stereotype people.’ But the story resonates more deeply than this. The story looks at the source of stereotyping—superficial knowledge, social and economic difference, and the fear that results from ignorance—as well as its effects. Moreover, it juxtaposes [white] middle-class students’ fearfulness to the black man’s confounding message of love. Whereas the old man is an impenetrable mystery to the students, their thoughts are apparently transparent to him. It would be difficult to put all this into a one-sentence moral like the moral of a fable. And so it would be with most good stories, no matter how simple they appear. (499-500)

Writers must often quite carefully decide what to include and what to exclude from a narrative so that the desired theme is clear. You may wish to have students analyze how the effect of this narrative would change if the depiction of events was altered in even minor ways. For example, how would the impact of the essay have been different if the writer had omitted his suspicion, in paragraph fourteen, that the man was about to reveal a knife rather than a flask? How would the essay change if the writer omitted paragraph seventeen? What would be the effect of expanding the essay to include how the writer now responds to disadvantaged strangers as a result of this incident? This discussion should help students understand that the depiction of events is not automatically determined once the writer chooses his or her topic; it too requires decisions of craft.

“Living Like Weasels” (pages 568-571)
This essay is often lyrical in its wording, providing students with ample opportunity to analyze specific words, figurative language, and memory-soaked phrases. Students can work in pairs or small groups to identify examples of each; as a class, then, compare what wording different groups picked out as being particularly striking. Encourage students to not restrict their selections to nouns, but to also include verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. For example, in the first paragraph, unusually descriptive verbs are used in the phrases “his tail draped over his nose,” “crunching the brain at the base of the skull,” and “a weasel who was socketed into his hand.”
You may also want to point out that in addition to using words that are memory-soaked, Dillard sometimes associates a strong image with a particular word, then uses that word again later in the essay to recall the same image and emotions. In other words, through her descriptive powers, Dillard creates a memory for a particular word, then repeats the word later in the essay in order to recall that memory. For example, in paragraph two she offers a graphic description of a weasel’s tenacity in remaining affixed to an eagle’s throat even in death. The final word of the essay is “eagles,” which conjures in the reader’s mind the strong visual image from that second paragraph and the emotions that image evoked. Your students may want to try this strategy of creating specific, emotion-laden associations for words early in their texts, then judiciously repeating these now-memory-soaked words later in the text.
Chapter 21
An Introduction to Research

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter provides an overview of the research process. It provides an “eagle’s eye view” of research that complements the more detailed instruction in the other chapters in Part IV of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing. The overview of research presented here also complements the view of the composing process presented in Chapter 18 as well as Part I of the textbook. This overview of research presents a sensible introduction to research that explains why learning to research effectively can be difficult, and it previews seven essential research skills for writers. The other chapters in Part IV cover these skills in more detail.

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson put research in the rhetorical framework the text has developed all along. Researched writing pursues interesting questions or important problems; it presents a “contestable thesis” (575) that allows readers to see how the writer has evaluated and synthesized sources to come to a position. Researched writing also uses appropriate documentation to display the research process in the text. As you begin to work with this section of the textbook, remind students that the principles introduced in many previous chapters are still at work. The informative and surprising writing project in Chapter 9, for example, can be easily connected to the rhetorical principles here, and the basic view of writing as a problematizing and rhetorical activity (Chapters 1-4) is the foundation for this presentation of research.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

The Demands of Research Writing

On pages 576-578, Ramage, Bean and Johnson present six reasons why research writing is difficult for novice writers. These difficulties may be grouped in three areas: difficulties setting up a research project (which involves learning how to ask research questions and how and why to find sources), difficulties understanding sources (which involves reading rhetorically), and difficulties working with sources in writing (which involves decisions about working sources into a text as well as citing and documenting correctly).
To get a sense of how your students’ previous experiences with research may affect their work in your course, assign a short freewriting activity with this prompt: “Think about the last research project you did. When you had received the assignment from your teacher, what did you do?” When students are done, you can ask students to compare their experiences in groups and have groups report on patterns that emerge, or you can simply have a whole class discussion of their experiences. You will likely find that many students’ research processes begin with a search for sources and end with questions about citation format. Ask students to make lists of what kinds of research difficulties they have encountered in the past (and again ask them to find patterns among their experiences, whether in small groups or the whole class). At this point, turn to the list of difficulties that Ramage, Bean, and Johnson suggest and ask the class to map their patterns against the difficulties the text presents. Note the rhetorical principles at work in any missing difficulties. Students who report difficulties finding sources for a previous research project may have neglected the forming a research question phase, for example. Point out the ways in which forming a question is connected to the problem-posing aspects of writing presented in Chapter 1 and throughout the writing projects you have completed so far.

It can be useful to invite a librarian to class, or to take your class to the library for an orientation to the research process. College or university librarians are often delighted to have the opportunity to work with a class in the early stages of a research project, and librarians have broad perspectives on information literacy. While a librarian’s introduction to the mechanics of searching for information on your campus is important, you may find that a librarian’s introduction to the ways the library can help students shape a research project in its early phases—even before the actual search for sources has begun—is even more important.

**Research as a Learned Skill**

The chapter’s last major section, on pages 579-580, lists seven essential skills for novice researchers. Since each of these skills is treated in more depth in later chapters, this instructor’s manual will not discuss them in any detail here. For your purposes with this chapter, it is important to let students know that your class will support them, and instruct them, in how to do research. Many students experience research as a lonely endeavor. They may have cultivated independent abilities to locate information on the Internet and in libraries; they may have had experiences with note cards (sometimes faked after the fact!) or outlines or required summaries of sources; they may have experienced research as something
they did simply to support a thesis they had already identified. Their previous research experiences may have left them feeling overwhelmed, and if you have students who have come to a large campus from a small high school, or who have returned to college after many years away from school, they may not be confident of their abilities to complete college-level research. Use this list of essential skills to help students see that you will provide practice in various research skills, and that these skills grow out of the rhetorical writing and reading frame of the previous writing projects.
Chapter 22
Finding and Evaluating Sources

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter deals with the first five of the seven essential skills for novice researchers. Students will learn a variety of strategies which will help them control the research process. Like Chapters 19 and 20, this chapter is divided into a set of discrete lessons that are better assigned one at a time. Some you will want to assign to the whole class, and use as the basis for homework and in-class activities. Others you may assign only to individual students. You need not assign them in order, and you can come back to the skill sets as many times as needed during any researched writing projects.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Skill 1: Arguing Your Own Thesis

This skill is fundamental to a writer being in control of a researched project. As Ramage, Bean, and Johnson note, “A good question keeps you in charge of your writing” (1). This first skill set involves two “For Writing and Discussion” activities, and it uses as an extended example Christopher Leigh’s research (which was discussed in Chapter 1). It is very important to spend extended time with this skill, since the development and evaluation of a research question is very important. The better a research question students start with, the better their writing processes and projects will be.

Spend time on the distinction between a topic and a question. A question will help students see that they are pursing a purposeful project. A good question will help students focus attention on what they want to find out, and what their own role in the process will be. The bulleted list on page 582 will help students establish an active stance in the research process.

You can use the “For Writing and Discussion” Activity on page 583 to help students understand what this active stance feels like. Working together, they can develop questions that are appropriate to a variety of roles, and then they can do the same for their individual research projects. It can also be helpful to ask them to trace Christopher Leigh’s research steps (especially if you spent time on this example in Chapter 1). Designing a set of recursive activities that ask students to generate and evaluate research questions will help students identify their interests. At the end of this lesson, you can collect students’ own
research questions and give them feedback. Even with in-class attention to questions, it is likely that some students will need to revise their questions further.

**Skill 2: Understand the Different Kinds of Sources**

This skill emphasizes the different kinds of sources students are likely to encounter in their research processes. Just as earlier chapters emphasized that different kinds of texts may require different reading processes (Chapter 6) and writing processes (Chapter 18), this skill reminds students that different kinds of texts may require different research processes. You may find it helpful to spend time on this lesson with connections back to Part I of the textbook, which emphasizes a general rhetorical framework. The tables on pages 587-589 graphically represent rhetorical differences among print and Web sources.

It’s a good idea to spend some time developing a shared vocabulary for discussing sources. While every student in your class will know what a book is, the term “periodical” (which is frequently used by librarians, and may appear in your library’s catalog, signs, or handouts for students) is likely to be less familiar. Students will be familiar with various periodicals, of course, but they won’t know the term. Use this lesson as an opportunity to acquaint your students with the vocabulary used by your campus library.

Table 22.1 distinguishes scholarly, trade, reference, public affairs, and niche magazines. If you have preferences about what kinds of sources students should concentrate on (or avoid), make that clear. It can be helpful to visit the library together, or invite a librarian to visit your class, in order to have some hands-on demonstrations with different types of sources. It can be helpful for students to see, for example, a discussion of eating disorders in an article in the American Journal of Psychiatry (a scholarly journal), a local and national newspaper, a public affairs magazine, and a niche magazine for young women. You can provide copies of a set of articles for your students and invite groups to compare pairs or groups of the articles, noticing differences in everything from document design, titles, and types of evidence. Similarly, Table 22.2 categorizes websites, and you can easily design an activity that invites students to look at similar content on a variety of websites.

**Lesson 3: Purposeful Strategies for Finding Sources**

This skill addresses what many students already consider to be the fundamental research skill: how to locate relevant sources. If you have worked with the previous skills in this chapter, students should have a good research question and a basic understanding of the kinds of sources they may encounter (or the kinds of sources you require) for their current project.
The skill begins by presenting how to find books in an online catalog. You may find that it is more effective to start this skill at its second main section, on using licensed databases, since most projects in first-year composition courses do not permit students time to read a book in the course of a researched project. Whatever type of source you introduce first, note that subject and keyword searches are first introduced in the section on looking for books, on page 591-592.

As you introduce students to licensed database searching, focus attention at first on one database to which your students have easy access. Even if your assignment permits students to do more wide-ranging research, starting with one database is a good way to have students practice accessing a database through your library’s interface and reading the complicated information on the header. If you don’t have an overhead projector in your classroom that can be connected to the database, use Figure 22.3 to help students work through the electronic headers together.

Web searching is a complicated matter. For some classroom activity ideas, see this manual’s chapter on using *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* in an electronic environment. It is important that your activities help students understand the difference between different search engines and how to “read” a URL in order to determine the nature of the site (see the example on page 598). If students can identify the nature of the source, they can apply the information in Chapter 6 on reading rhetorically to begin their analysis.

**Skill 4: Use Rhetorical Knowledge to Read and Evaluate Sources**

This lesson returns to a familiar theme: it is important to read rhetorically in order to make the best use of time and sources. The connections to Chapter 6 are myriad here; as the skill explains, reading strategies will depend on the writer’s purpose, and the purpose varies with the stage of the writing assignment. Emphasize that students should read broadly and quickly in the early stages; they should look for sources that will help them get a good sense of their research question (connect back to Skill 1 as well).

The questions in Figure 22.4 will help students read with what the text calls “rhetorical awareness” (page 601).

A series of exercises that can be helpful here involves asking students to evaluate the nature of the bibliographies developed by the students whose work appears earlier in the textbook. To begin with, students can look at the sources mentioned in Christopher Leigh’s exploratory writing for this project on school violence (see pages 180-184 in Chapter 8),
and the bibliography on his final version of the essay. Ask students to evaluate the bibliographies, examining the kinds of sources Leigh used early and later in the process. Do his early sources serve the overarching purpose this Skill calls for?

Once students have established their own preliminary bibliographies and gotten some general reading underway, it will be important to take effective notes. On page 601, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson advise that writers should determine how a source might be used in a project in order to select a note-taking strategy. Sources will end up being used in ways the writer fails to predict, of course, but some early consideration of these questions will help prevent problems later. Encourage students to become familiar with the four purposes for taking notes outlined in this skill set; it will make it easy for them to talk with each other, with you, and with librarians about their emerging projects, and it will also focus their attention when taking notes.

Material from Chapter 8 on exploratory writing will be helpful here. Reviewing Christopher Leigh’s first exploratory essay will help students understand how he reflected on the first sources he encountered. You will likely have to remind students that the form of Leigh’s exploratory essay is not to be reproduced in the opening section of their researched essays. Rather, the habits of mind Leigh displays should be reproduced by students as they take notes.

Another key element of this skill involves evaluating sources. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson advise evaluating sources in four ways: test the author’s angle of vision, degree of advocacy, reliability, and credibility (pages 603-605). Table 22.4, on page 601, represents the political bias of some popular magazines and commentators. The place of publication is often a good clue to an author’s angle of vision, and it can also be connected to an author’s degree of advocacy. The reliability of a source can be difficult for a novice writer to determine. If you connect this skill set with the lessons in Chapter 13 on synthesis, you will help students learn to cross-reference their reading.

You may find it helpful to assign an annotated bibliography as part of the research process. The bibliography can contain a short summary of each key source, as well as an evaluation of a source according to the criteria presented here. If you have your class work with common materials, you can assign annotations to different groups, which provides a good way for students to practice this complicated skill before having to do it independently.
Skill 5: The Rhetoric of Web Sites

This skill is an extension of Skill 4, but it involves some specialized evaluation of electronic sources. The chapter in this manual on using *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* in electronic classrooms contains useful information on activities involving searching for electronic information.

As the material in this skill makes clear, the World Wide Web is an incredible research tool. Both its possibilities and perils are under- and over-estimated by teachers and students alike, and it is important for you to work through your own assumptions about the Web and its function in your writing assignments. Web sites are wonderful resources for introducing students to issues of document design (see Lesson 8 in Chapter 19), and they are also wonderful resources for getting recent scientific data, current news, and personal expression. Web sites are also wonderful resources for teaching about credibility and ethos, since it is all too easy to find examples of poorly designed websites or websites with erroneous information. The extended examples in this section of the chapter works with websites about women and gun control, and it helps students evaluate the visual display of the sites, analyze the domain names, and the site rhetoric. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson propose that students evaluate websites according to these criteria: authority; objectivity/disclosure of advocacy; scope of coverage; accuracy; currency. These evaluation criteria extend the rhetorical framework of Skill 4.

Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities

The activities that appear in this chapter are clearly connected to the presentation of each skill, and each activity offers students well-directed, hands-on practice in the relevant skill. Since these activities involve students in locating and evaluating sources, you will need to plan how you can offer students access to appropriate materials. If you can meet in a library classroom or a computer classroom, you will make it easy for students to try their hands at database searching. Forming a partnership with a librarian may extend your options. Consider scheduling time in the library more than once. Students will need some hands-on orientation to your local resources as research skills are introduced, and they will likely need another round of assistance once they get into their projects and begin running into problems. This is to be expected, and you will learn a lot if you are able to work with your students as they research (rather than hearing reports about problems after the fact).
It can be helpful to use mini-quizzes after library tours or research skill practice sessions, more to help you evaluate how much information students retained. A short quiz that asks students to identify the names of three good databases in your library, or to define what different web site extensions mean, will help you see whether more presentation of search and evaluation strategies is necessary.
Chapter 23
Finding and Evaluating Sources

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter deals with the last two of the seven essential skills for novice researchers; these skills involve the use of sources in students’ own writing. The lessons in Chapter 22 helped students locate and evaluate sources; this chapter will help them incorporate sources into their own writing in order to fulfill their own purposes. Like Chapters 19, 20, and 22, this chapter is divided into discrete lessons that are best assigned one at a time. Because working with sources is complicated business, this chapter is one to which you and your students will return at various points during the semester. It makes sense to have the whole class work with this chapter to start with, and then you can refer individuals and groups back to these skill presentations as needed. Chapter 22 is useful in getting students started with researched writing, and Chapter 23 is useful in getting them finished with it.

This chapter will help students determine how best to make use of their sources, how to integrate others’ ideas with their own, how to indicate to readers where different ideas originated, and how to use APA or MLA format. The work in this chapter assumes that students have already identified a research question and located important and relevant sources.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Skill 6: Using Sources Purposefully

Skill 4 in Chapter 22, on reading and evaluating sources, introduces students to various note-taking strategies aligned with various purposes for using a source. Generally, most writing teachers expected researched writing to demonstrate students’ abilities to summarize, paraphrase, and quote from sources; it’s important to teach students how to decide when to use each of these skills. On pages 617-618, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson remind students of the six different purposes for the use of sources in a writing project, and the extended example which opens the chapter will help students see how different purposes, and different skill levels result in different effects.

Pages 622-626 provide general guidelines for when to summarize, paraphrase, and quote. Students can use the sample research paper on pages 647-658 to analyze how those guidelines worked in Christopher Leigh’s essay on preventing violence in high schools.
Assign students, either individually or in groups, to read through the essay, noting each instance of source use. Some sample questions you can use to follow up on students’ reading:

- For each citation, why do you think Leigh used the source as he did? In other words, why did he choose to summarize/paraphrase/quote that particular source? Although it may be difficult without the sources at hand, try to determine whether the use of the source is effective or ineffective for the point Leigh is making.

- For each citation, are attributive tags used to fully acknowledge the origin of ideas and to provide a transition between the voice of the student writer and the voice of the source writer? Do the attributive tags indicate that Leigh has evaluated the credibility of each source?

- What is the proportion of summary to paraphrase to quotes in the essay? (These are listed in what would generally be descending order of frequency.) Are any of these used too much or too little?

- How does the parenthetical documentation reveal Leigh’s ability to integrate sources? For example, does each citation of a source truly contribute to the paper, or do some seem like padding? Are each of the sources dealt with in distinct sections of the paper, which can be indicative of a “cut and paste” paper that subsumes the writer’s own voice, or are some interwoven throughout the essay, which can indicate that the writer, not the sources, is in control?

The section of this skill on using attributive tags should help students see how the active reading and critical evaluation skills presented in Chapters 6 and 21 are reflected in their formal writing. The activity on page 629 will give students practice in evaluating different uses of attributive tags, although they may find it easier to evaluate the examples in the student paper at the end of the chapter because they will have more context for each tag.

Issues of plagiarism are always important in researched assignments, and this skill set introduces the ethical and conceptual dimension of plagiarism following the section on attributive tags. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson note that plagiarism has two forms: failure to provide citation (that is, a reference to the source used) and failure to use the techniques of citation (quotation marks or block indentation to mark language borrowed from a source). The examples on page 630 provide an excellent illustration of the extent to which similarities in sentence or paragraph structure should be considered.
Skill 7: Cite and Document Sources Effectively

This skill deals with the nuts and bolts of citation: the mechanics of MLA and APA style. Although questions of punctuation loom large in the polishing of in-text citations and bibliographies, remind students that at heart, citation and documentation are ethical and rhetorical issues. Proper citation assures readers that writers have well-researched and well-considered sources in the course of writing the project. In addition, the key differences between MLA and APA citation systems are driven by epistemological differences. For social scientists and scientists, the date of publication is crucial. That is why APA highlights the date, much more so than MLA, which focuses on the person who did the research. APA style highlights the main questions and conclusions of others’ studies; MLA style is more discursive. These differences affect punctuation and layout, but they are rooted in disciplinary divisions between the humanities and the sciences.

That said, it is important that students learn the principle of following a style sheet. You might ask them to survey their other professors and find out what kind of citation systems are used in other departments on campus. You will likely find a range of answers. Some professors tell students that they can use any system they please, so long as they are consistent. Others will require APA, MLA, or other specialized disciplinary citation systems. Still others will model citation systems after a prominent journal in their field. While students will need to learn how to satisfy your expectations for effective citation in your course, they will also need to learn how to find out what other professors’ expectations are.

Start by presenting the logic of in-text citation systems. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson point out that it is often difficult to construct in-text citations for downloaded sources. When material appears either on the Web or in a licensed database, citation requirements demand that students find the original print source to get complete information. (Most database headers supply the number of pages for an article, but don’t give the full page range, which is required for a bibliographic reference.) Most students won’t bother to get the original print source simply for what seems a minor technicality, and in some cases, the original source would be impossible to obtain in a timely fashion. You will need to work out how to compromise on citation systems with your class for exceptions like this. No matter how detailed your assignment sheet in this regard, you will find that some student will discover a handy and relevant electronic source that doesn’t quite fit anything in the text or on your assignment sheet. Simply use these exceptions as a chance to return to the section of the text on the logic of citation systems, and work out an appropriate solution.
This skill, and Skills 4 and 5 in Chapter 22, should enable students to determine what kind of source they are reading well in advance of the need to form citations and bibliography entries. On pages 634-646, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson provide an overview of MLA-style basics, and on pages 659-667, they provide an overview of APA-style basics. Some exercises that work well to supplement the text and help students learn to use whichever style you require:

- Provide a sample citation for a source the class has in common for students to use as a model. Constructing bibliography entries can seem arbitrary, and a model that uses a source students are familiar with can make the textbook examples much more accessible.
- Construct bibliographies together in class, especially if the students have sources in common.
- Provide examples of researched writing with errors in documentation, and ask students to correct the errors (see transparency at the end of this chapter).

### Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities

The activities in this chapter, like those in Chapter 22, offer hands-on practice associated with both skills presented here. The activities presented in Skill 6 are well-used in class, where you can see the kinds of questions students have as they practice working with sources. It can be very helpful to ask groups to work together on the activities on page 629 and 631, putting their answers on an overhead transparency, on the board, or in a computer file which can be shared with the rest of the class. When students have the opportunity to see the different ways these tasks can be approached, they will better understand the complexities involving source use.

In general, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson’s discussion of plagiarism should be sufficient to ensure that students move in the right direction on source use. Remember that using sources is complicated, and not all students will learn all of this material at the same pace. Some students will take longer, and you will need to consider how to tell the difference between plagiarism as an issue of academic misconduct and improper use of sources as an issue of incomplete learning. Using the transparencies at the end of this chapter in the manual can help students understand the basics you expect in any passing paper, and you can then articulate descriptions of more sophisticated uses of sources which are associated with higher grades.
Set up your researched writing assignments so you have ample opportunity to interact with students as they proceed through the research, reading, and writing processes. If you collect work from students all through the research process, beginning with the development of research questions, you will be familiar with students’ projects and able to help them throughout the process. As your researched assignment proceeds, consider collecting and responding to:

- Students’ research questions
- A proposal for a researched project that provides more justification for the research question
- A preliminary bibliography (you might require a minimum number of sources, or a spread of sources from particular places, such as two from EBSCOHost, one from a newspaper, one from a book, one from an encyclopedia, one from before/after a particular date, etc.) Be prepared to be flexible if some students’ topics don’t lend themselves to particular kinds of sources.
- Initial reading notes (you might require a certain format, such as a double-entry journal, or you might require that certain evaluation questions be considered for a particular number or sources)
- A draft of the essay, with a bibliography page and in-text citation
- Selected sections with particular types of source use (you might require that peer review focus on sections of the essay which summarize or use block quotations, for example)

You don’t need to respond extensively to all this work. In some cases, you can quickly check through the work while students are doing an in-class activity. In other cases (such as with the drafts of the essay), you might want to take more time and care. But collecting work in stages will help you help students avoid plagiarism. You will see which students are having problems, and which are making errors in citation (conceptually or technically).
Bibliography


Errors on the transparency

1. Should be works cited, not bibliography.
2. All entries should be typed double-spaced.
3. In the first source, quotation marks missing around title.
4. In the second source, the author’s first name should be written out.
5. In the second source, the year is missing after the volume number.
6. In the third source, the date should be in the format date/month abbreviation/year (7 Sept. 1993).
7. In the fourth source, the second author’s name should be first name before last name, and there should be a comma after Jacqueline.
8. In the fifth source, the website provided is a very general one (the CDC’s main home page). This will not get students to the particular report provided. (This error may be difficult to catch in this exercise, although sharp readers of the URL may notice it.)
9. In the sixth source, the name of the journal should be underlined.
10. In the final source, capitalization of the title should be regular.
Chapter 24
Advanced or Specialized Research Skills

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter deals with specialized research skills that go beyond the basics of the library catalog, the World Wide Web, and central databases. Depending on the technological sophistication of your campus and your students, and the nature of your writing assignments, you may find it useful to introduce these more specialized skills: subject-specific databases, electronic discussion forums on the Internet, and field research. This chapter adopts the same rhetorical framework as Chapters 21, 22, and 23; it connects students’ research activities to their research question and purpose.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Specialized Library Resources

For some students or some assignments, general databases that search national newspapers or general-interest periodicals may not produce enough relevant information. If this is the case, consider introducing some subject-specific databases such as those listed on pages 668-669, or some specialized reference materials such as encyclopedias or historical dictionaries. Working with a librarian can help you identify appropriate advanced resources for your students and assignment. You want to make sure that students are researching in places they will understand. While it is important for your course to help students read challenging texts, students whose research takes them into the realm of the wholly inaccessible text are likely to be frustrated. Medline, for example, contains materials of considerable scientific sophistication, and first-year students are not likely to be able to understand those materials unless their previous experience or research has prepared them well on particular points.

Exploring Ideas on the Internet

Chapter 22 introduced students to evaluation criteria for Web-based information. This chapter introduces other sources of Internet information: listserv discussions, Usenet newsgroups, and chat rooms or MOOs.
**Listserv Discussions**

Listserv discussions are an excellent way for students to see the real conversations that occur between interested professionals or hobbyists. Some listservs have restricted memberships; others are open to anyone, and public listservs offer students a wonderful chance to see dynamic discourse communities at work. You—and your students—should be aware that different listservs function at different paces. Some are wildly busy, generating bushels of e-mail daily. Others are more sedate, generating very little traffic. The discourse conventions of listservs vary widely. Some are very structured, with active moderators, frequently posted FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions lists, which help depress common questions sent to the whole group), and regulated conversations; others are more anarchic, with greater tolerance for overt disagreement and digression. It is very important that students observe a listserv before joining in, in order to ensure that their first posting does not inflame the group.

Because listservs are not necessarily a quick or even convenient way to gather organized information, consider using them only if you have students who are already likely to feel at home in a given listserv community, and if you have time for students to observe the listserv and begin to make sense of the postings. If your research assignment is focused in a short timeframe, a listserv is likely not the best source of information for students.

Allyn & Bacon’s *CompSite* sponsors listserv discussion lists for writing students. A *CompSite* list would allow your class to experience a listserv discussion with perhaps less pressure than a public listserv would. See [http://www.abacon.com/compsite/conversation/lists.html](http://www.abacon.com/compsite/conversation/lists.html) for more information.

**Usenet Newsgroups**

If you are concerned about students’ ability to deal with the large amounts of e-mail that listservs generate, Usenet newsgroups may be a good alternative. Like listservs, newsgroups are carried about by groups of users who share a specialized interest. But unlike listservs, newsgroups (sometimes called bulletin boards) reside on a news server, and participants visit the newsgroup in order to check current messages. Listservs send e-mail to each user’s mailbox, but newsgroups wait for users to come to them.

The technological set-up at your campus will determine what, if any, newsgroups your students have access to. Students can study past postings together or individually, and if you have access to a networked computer in class you, too, can see the postings students are reading. Newsgroups are even less orderly, on the whole, than listservs, and you should prepare yourself and your students for the sometimes anarchic world of Usenet. Don’t allow students free choice of newsgroups for browsing unless you have browsed the
available newsgroups on your campus and have seen what is available. You will likely improve students’ abilities to find useful information if you provide the class some central research questions and investigate some newsgroups in advance.

Students will quickly notice that newsgroups come in great variety. The information in Chapter 22 on evaluating sources is crucial when dealing with either listservs or newsgroups. Some groups will contain regular news articles, others will contain postings by experts, others will contain rants or random conversations. Most groups will offer a mix of all these types of postings, and students will need to evaluate the information they are reading. The advantage of reading newsgroups is that the range of views is vast; many newsgroups have archives that students can search. Students will quickly pick up a great deal of information. The disadvantage, perhaps, is that this range of information will need to be carefully evaluated, and there is often little information available about posters.

**Real Time Chats**

In real-time (synchronous) discussions, communication takes place instantaneously, much as it does face to face. Since these exchanges are mediated by computers, however, some exciting pedagogical possibilities arise. The primary feature of real-time is increased student participation. The entire class can be composing messages simultaneously so that the number of students who enter into a discussion is automatically increased. In a sense, everyone is able to “speak” at once. Real-time interactions can equalize the power relationships of many discourse situations because students who are typically reluctant to speak in class often feel more comfortable contributing in these situations.

Like newsgroups, however, selecting the appropriate forum can be key to success. Chat users can be unabashed both in the topics they discuss and the decorum they observe. If you simply send students into the mix, they are likely to enjoy themselves (although some will get overwhelmed or confused), but get little pedagogical benefit from the exercise. It is probably best if you identify a particular synchronic conversation for students to join, or set up your own using a MOO. Some good MOO resources are:

- Diversity University MOO
  Erau.db.erau.edu 8888

- Daedalus MOO
  Logos.daedalus.com 7777

- Virtual Online University
  Coyote.csusm.edu 8888
Working in MOOs does require some advanced technical skills, and if you want students to participate in MOOs in class, make sure that your own comfort level with the technology is high.

**Observation**

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson note that the key to successful observation is a clear sense of purpose. When students use observational data, they offer real-life testimony connected to a point they are making. Such data can bring a writing project to life, and make vivid connections between school and workplaces, homes, or public places. But for observation to work well, students must plan their work. The guidelines on page 676 offer solid suggestions. You can connect back to Chapter 5, “Seeing Rhetorically,” to remind students about earlier sections of the text which support such work.

**Interviews**

Interviews can be an excellent way for students to conduct research. It is important for class time to prepare students to interview well, and that includes starting with instruction about how to select an appropriate subject for an interview, and how to politely approach a subject. Show students a good invitation to a potential subject, such as:

I’m Joan Wetherby, a first-year student at State University, and I’m researching the impact of learning communities on student satisfaction. I’m wondering if I could have fifteen minutes of your time to ask you some questions about our university’s use of learning communities that have come up as I’ve been reading about what other campuses do. I’m available most afternoons and I’d be very grateful if you have the time to assist me as I work on this project for English 101.

Notable features of this opening move include:

- A self-description of the student, which orients the potential subject. If the student is already familiar with the potential subject, that part can be omitted, but it is useful to situate the request in the current project (“Aunt Mary, I’m working on a project for my English class, and I’m researching student satisfaction….”).
- A brief statement of the project, so the potential subject knows what the student is interested in. This allows the subject to determine whether s/he is
really the right person for the interview. Sometimes students will find that their subject declines the interview, but refers them to someone more appropriate.

- A timeframe for the interview, which gives the person an idea about the scope of the time commitment involved.
- Allusion to research previously done, which assures the person that the student is prepared to ask good questions.
- A willingness to schedule the interview at the subject’s convenience.
- Gratefulness for the subject’s consideration, which indicates that the student will be polite and professional throughout the process.

The guidelines on page 677-678 will help students prepare effective interview questions.

**Questionnaires**

Questionnaires or surveys are complicated research instruments, but a well-designed short survey can give students a real feel for a common research method in the social sciences. The brief instruction provided in this chapter will allow students to dip into survey research, but not so much so that extensive claims will be able to be generated from the data collected. Still, a small survey can get students engaged in their research process and can generate useful information.

Survey researchers are concerned that the questions they ask not unduly bias respondents, and that the people who fill out the survey are a random sample of the population of interest. It is beyond most students’ abilities to generate random samples, so students will likely use what is called a sample of convenience: they will have their surveys filled out by people who are easily available. Encourage students to consider what impact their sample of convenience has on their research results. Who is included in this sample? Who is left out? If students have distributed a survey in their dorm, they may make tentative claims about what dorm residents think about the issue at hand, but they would not be able to support claims about what the population of your town thinks about the that issue. Encourage students to think about the limitations of their available sample.

The material in Chapter 11, “Analyzing Numerical Data,” will help students present their survey data, which in almost all cases will be quantitative. If students have an open-ended question or two on their survey, they can look for themes in those answers and report patterns quantitatively for ease of reading.
Chapter 25
Oral Communication:
Working in Groups and Giving Speeches

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter encourages students to think about social dimensions of writing projects: the thinking, writing, and speaking that happens with and for other people. Some of this material, on working with groups, appeared in the second edition of The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing, but much of this chapter is new to the third edition.

The chapter’s first section gives students guidance on how to work more effectively in groups. It starts by discussing basic principles of successful group interaction. It then addresses strategies or consensus-building that can be used during small group problem-solving activities. The chapter also teaches students how to use groups to brainstorm and to orally rehearse their drafts (in order to generate and clarify their ideas). Specific advice on using groups for peer review appears in Chapter 18, although the principles of successful group interaction explained here can certainly improve those workshops.

The later section of the chapter offers guidance on how to give effective oral presentations. It starts by presenting the rhetorical principles associated with oral presentations, introducing students to the range of presentations they may be asked to give at school or at work. Then the chapter provides practical guidance for delivering effective presentations.

You may want to teach this chapter at different points in the course, and probably not all at once. The section on groups is useful early in the term, when group work first gets underway. As groups develop more complicated ways of working together, the chapter may be re-assigned. The section on oral presentations is useful at the point when students are getting ready to do an oral report.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Principles of Successful Group Interaction

You might begin the class discussion of successful group interaction principles by asking students to describe their past experiences using groups in classrooms. Ask them to evaluate what made the groups successful or unsuccessful. Success may be defined as the group’s ability to accomplish their task, but it may also be defined as the degree of
satisfaction and enjoyment group members experience while working together. Both definitions of “success” are important. For example, it may be that the group generates good ideas in response to a task, yet some group members are resentful that they have had to do most of the work, or some are ill at ease because they feel their ideas didn’t receive a fair hearing. Conversely, it’s possible for group members to be so polite toward one another that ideas do not receive the rigorous review necessary for quality work. By discussing as a class what they have liked and disliked about their past experiences in groups, students can begin to formulate their own goals for their group work in this course.

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson identify two distinct leadership roles for group members: the leader/coordinator and the recorder/reporter. The authors then recommend, “In writing classrooms, we have found that groups work best when each student takes a rotation in each of these roles. Some instructors prefer to combine the two roles so that a group recorder serves as both leader and note taker” (688). Extroverted students may feel more comfortable in the leader/coordinator role than more introverted students; however, if students in the group rotate the role they play, all will feel a greater sense of investment in the group. Rotating roles also prevents the sexist practice of always ascribing the role of recorder or “secretary” to a female and/or the role of leader to a male.

You can use the transparency master that appears at the end of this chapter in the manual throughout the course to remind students of the principles of successful group interactions. You may want to project this transparency whenever students work in groups so that they remain alert to their interactive skills. If at any point in their work they answer any of the questions on the transparency negatively, the group should adjust its interactions. If the group notices that it frequently answers the same question negatively, it should take more time for group maintenance to identify the causes of this difficulty and to brainstorm ways to overcome it in future group work.

Whereas the explicit focus of this chapter is small group interaction, many of the principles discussed can also be applied to improve the dynamics of the class as a whole. For example, full class discussion can improve when students make conscious efforts not to interrupt each other, to refer to what other students in the class have said before adding their own contributions, and to use “I statements” rather than “you statements” when they disagree with another student’s comment. As you teach this chapter, you may want to point out to students how the chapter’s principles can help students’ participation in this and other courses even when they are not meeting in small groups.
**Consensus-Building in Groups**

Consensus-building is important for groups working on collaborative tasks. Assign groups a collaborative task to complete so that students can practice using the consensus-building guidelines that Ramage, Bean, and Johnson detail on page 691 of the textbook. If the class is working on a writing project at the same time that you are discussing this chapter, you can use one of the activities recommended for that assignment in either the textbook or this instructor’s manual.

Another possible task for consensus-building is to have all students freewrite their responses to two of the prompts for group maintenance that Ramage, Bean, and Johnson provide on page 689 of the textbook:

- Our group performs best when ________________________________.
- Our group’s effectiveness could be improved if ____________________.

After each group member has used freewriting to reflect on past group experiences and has completed the above sentences, each student should share his or her ideas with the other group members. Then assign groups to reach consensus on one shared completion of these sentences. They can accomplish this by using their individual completions as a starting point, and then following the consensus-building guidelines in the chapter. When students finish, discuss as a class their reactions to consensus-building. You may even want to collect each group’s completed statements and return the statements to them later in the course so that in the future, groups can assess how well they have achieved the improvements they are now identifying.

**Group Strategies for Brainstorming and Rehearsing Drafts**

When a group is brainstorming to generate ideas, it is essential that group members remain non-judgmental. Otherwise, some members may be hesitant to voice their ideas. If the group members convey trust in each other’s abilities, then people in the group will be more likely to share ideas they have that may seem problematic, yet have the potential to be quite helpful once refined with the group’s help.

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson also recommend that students generate ideas for their drafts by interviewing each other in pairs or triads. You might challenge students who are serving as interviewers to avoid questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no.” The
Interviewers’ goal should be to make the writers talk about their plans as extensively as possible. Interviewers should also use follow-up questions to encourage the writers to think through their plans thoroughly. Interviewers can also serve as devil’s advocates by using statements that begin with phrases like these: “But suppose that . . .”; “Yet what if . . .”; “But what about the argument that . . .”

**Oral Presentations**

You might begin your unit on oral presentations by asking students to report their previous experiences with public speaking. This is likely to evoke a range of reactions, from highly comfortable to highly anxious. If your campus requires students to take a speech course, some students may have completed this requirement and have additional perspective to offer. Ask students to explain what kinds of speaking situations have made them most nervous or uncomfortable, and which situations have been easiest. Students often report that speaking to strangers is difficult and speaking to a familiar audience is easier, although some students will get more nervous in front of people who know them well.

Once students have outlined their reactions to public speaking, use the rhetorical framework you have been developing to help students analyze the class’ reaction. How have audience concerns affected their reactions? How have concerns about content affected their reactions? How have different purposes or settings affected their reactions?

On page 694, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson explain that making outlines of a speech can serve several functions. It can help the speaker stay focused, and it can also convey the gist of the speech to the audience. Connecting back to Lesson 5 in Chapter 19, on points and particulars, may help students outline effectively. The guidelines on visual aids will also help students decide what points and particulars to emphasize for their particular purpose.

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

The “For Writing and Discussion” activity on page 687-688 of the textbook is a useful activity to help groups reflect on their listening skills; however, it is challenging because whatever difficulties a group typically has in listening to one another may be replicated during this exercise. The exercise may be particularly difficult for students who don’t feel their views are listened to well by the group, perhaps because they don’t even feel comfortable enough in the group to share their thoughts openly. Assigning students to begin this exercise by freewriting their responses, as the directions explain, can help these students be more forthright in expressing their dissatisfactions or discomforts. Rather than blaming other group members, dissatisfied group members can follow the same advice.
Ramage, Bean, and Johnson give on page 690 for dealing with an “impossible group member”: using “I statements” to focus on their own feelings rather than “you statements” to charge accusations.

During this exercise, an additional strategy that can help students learn to listen more empathically is that after group members summarize one person’s shared freewrite, the person who wrote the freewrite should then be given the opportunity to correct the group’s understanding. The summary may be incorrect in three ways: the group may misrepresent a comment that person made; the group may omit something the person thinks is important; if someone expresses multiple sentiments, the group may misunderstand the relative importance of the person’s views. After the speaker is given a chance to correct the group in its summary, the group should then again summarize what the speaker has said. Empathic listening is achieved only when the speaker agrees that the group’s summary is a satisfactory synopsis of what he or she was trying to say.

Modest group members may be hesitant to voice their dissatisfaction with their group, even when given the opportunity. Encourage group members to foster one another’s trust by not becoming judgmental or defensive. When each group member finishes sharing his or her assessment of the group’s past interactions, the remaining group members can encourage more disclosure by asking encouragingly, “Is there anything else you’d like to say?”

The first “For Writing and Discussion” activity in the oral presentation section asks students to analyze the structure of a speech that appears elsewhere in the textbook (page 695). This can be a good activity to do at the start of work on the oral presentation, since it involves no public speaking. Students may take comfort and courage from analyzing another’s speech before moving to the next activity, on page 700. That activity involves a practice speech before a small group.

It will be important to consider the level of speaking anxiety among your students. If you plan to have a heavily weighted oral presentation at any point in the semester, make sure you lead up to that presentation by having a variety of opportunities for students to speak to the class. You might make a point of having group reporters rotate so that everyone in the class has the experience of reporting to the whole class about their group’s activity on a regular basis, and you might design a sequence of oral presentations so that students can start with something short and simple before doing a longer presentation.
Checklist for Successful Group Interaction

1. Are your chairs arranged to help everyone in the group feel equally included?

2. Have group members taken turns as leader/coordinator and reporter/recorder?

3. Does the body language of group members indicate everyone feels comfortable and involved in the group?

4. Are you careful not to interrupt each other?

5. Do you listen empathically, by maintaining eye contact, asking clarifying questions, nodding, and avoiding disapproving frowns or gestures?

6. Do you test whether you’ve understood a group member’s views by summarizing the person’s comments and asking whether your summary is correct?

7. In your own comments, do you avoid clone-think and ego-think?

8. Do you refer to others’ comments before presenting your own contributions?

9. Do you use “I statements” to express your feelings rather than accusative “you statements”?

10. Is the group participation equally shared, so that no one dominates the discussion time?
Chapter 26
Essay Examinations:
Writing Well Under Pressure

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter challenges students to consider how to adapt the problem-posing strategies they’ve developed in other chapters to situations that don’t allow the luxury of ongoing rethinking and revision. In addition to academic essay exams, students can use the strategies discussed in this chapter to respond to other situations that require the quick composition of a polished document, such as news articles, sales presentations, public information briefings and business memos.

You can use this chapter in several ways: as a supplement to help students succeed in their other courses, as the basis for a timed writing assignment of your own, or in conjunction with one of the writing projects in Chapters 5-17. More discussion of each of these options is discussed below under the heading “Guiding Students through the Writing Project.”

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

The Rhetorical Nature of Exams

As you begin this chapter, encourage students to discuss the exams they’ve taken or will be taking in their other courses. Suggest that they bring sample tests and responses to share with the class, and refer to these samples as you work through the chapter. If several students have a major exam coming up, ask the rest of the class to suggest preparation and composing strategies, then have the test-takers follow up with an analysis of how well the recommendations worked. Even if few of your students are currently taking courses that incorporate essay exams, you can collect examples from your institution’s test files or from colleagues’ courses. Having a variety of models to examine helps students identify common rhetorical elements and reiterates the importance of this kind of writing task to their success as academic writers.

Students will most fully appreciate the differences between timed writing and out-of-class writing if they have plenty of opportunities to practice both. Throughout the course, offer students occasional opportunities to compose on the spot: at the beginning of class,
give them 10 or 15 minutes to write a couple of paragraphs in response to a central question raised by that day’s reading assignment; or have groups polish their response to one of the “For Writing and Discussion” activities to turn in. For longer essay assignments, see the exam option suggestions on page 714 of the textbook.

**Preparation for an Exam**

Pages 702-704 provide basic guidelines for learning and preparing material for an exam. If you will require students to take an essay exam, consider dividing the class into several study groups. Set aside some class time for groups to sort through the study techniques discussed in the chapter and devise a specific plan their group can follow to prepare for the test. You may even want to require groups to meet for a specified amount of study time (perhaps 1-2 hours) outside class. Talk with students about the benefits and drawbacks of studying collaboratively, and begin class each day with brief reports about how group work is progressing.

**Exam Questions**

When you introduce students to the question verbs in Table 26.1, remind them that different professors may use terminology in different ways, and that disciplinary communities’ ideas of what constitutes a “complete” or “logical” treatment of a topic vary somewhat. Some teachers look for coherent, independent arguments, while others may reward “all about” responses that rehash everything the student knows about the topic. Some value tightly organized essays, while others look primarily for relevant content, no matter how it’s presented. Encourage students to see the terms and definitions in the chapter as general guidelines to be enriched by their own experiences. Compare the terminology on the “real” exams students bring to class with Table 26.1 and invite students to create an appendix of additional terms, examples, and definitions.

**Test Situations**

Once students feel comfortable analyzing the kinds of writing tasks that commonly appear on exams, they are ready to grapple with the constraints a test setting imposes. As a prewriting technique, encourage students to arrange ideas in an idea map (explained in Chapter 2) or one of the organizational heuristics explained in Lesson 3 of Chapter 19: an informal outline, a tree diagram, or a flowchart. Draw students’ attention to the sample outline on page 712 and point out how disorganized it looks initially: the writer has simply jotted down general ideas about each area of the question, then later added arrows to organize those ideas. Note also that the student’s thesis doesn’t materialize until the end of her “outline.” Had she started writing without brainstorming, her thesis would likely have been less rich and her argument less complete.
Create opportunities for students to practice these prewriting techniques, especially if you’ll have them write a timed essay in your course. Devise one or more sample questions, then give students five minutes to brainstorm and outline a response. As a class, compare and critique their outlines, discussing which of the approaches worked most successfully. If students want more help with invention, encourage them to review the writing strategies discussed in Chapters 2, 18 and 19.

**Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities**

The writing and discussion activities in this chapter have been sequenced to help students understand the requirements of an exam setting and to flourish within them. Try to set aside class time for these exercises, even if you don’t plan to have students complete a full essay exam.

The section entitled “Analyzing Exam Questions,” pages 704-711, lays out practical frameworks for understanding the rhetorical structure of exams that students can apply in almost any course. You can apply this table to essay exam questions that students collect in their other courses. Ask students to keep track of their essay exam questions, and at the appropriate time in the semester, invite volunteers to write their questions on the board, then have the class collaborate to identify key terms and decide how a successful response might be organized. Alternatively, if you plan to require students to take an essay exam at the end of the unit, let them try their hand at a question similar to the one you’ll assign.

The exercise on pages 709-711 hones students’ analytical abilities further by asking them to choose from a group of closely-related questions the one that best matches a particular essay response. As groups discuss this task, encourage them to justify their responses by matching specific passages in each response to key terms and phrases in the question. You may want to raise one or more of the following points in your discussion.

In your discussion of the first essay (pages 709-710), note that the essay is an inadequate response to question one because while it summarizes both Skinner’s and Bandura’s theories, it applies only Bandura’s theory to children’s book selection. Similarly, the essay doesn’t include important information required by question four: a presentation of current theories that govern children’s book selection and a discussion of how they differ from and match Skinner’s and Bandura’s ideas. Nor does this essay discuss the central concern of question three, which is to evaluate the accuracy of Bandura’s ideas about learning. A successful response to this question would need to assess the theory’s validity, then provide reasons and evidence to prove or disprove it.
The first essay is, however, a thorough and insightful response to question two. The writer begins with a clear account of Bandura’s major ideas. The comparison to Skinner in the first paragraph isn’t explicitly required, but it helps to clarify the concept of modeling. The writer goes on to make a clear connection to children’s book selection and then illustrates it with several titles. Note how this writer uses the question as an organizational heuristic: her response addresses topics in the order presented in the question. Her own insights about the lack of strong role models in popular media are relevant and clearly connected to course material.

Matching the second essay (pages 710-711) with the appropriate question may prove tricky for your students. If confusion arises, observe that some instructors might consider this essay an adequate response to question one, but it probably wouldn’t receive an “A.” The essay focuses primarily on similarities between Swift’s and Shelley’s views and mentions only one, vaguely defined difference (that Shelley is “more optimistic” than Swift) in the final paragraph. An exemplary answer to question one would identify several differences between Shelley’s and Swift’s views and illustrate these with textual examples. Although this response also touches on the concerns of questions two and three, neither scientific knowledge nor character analysis is central to the discussion. Because the essay revolves around the texts’ exploration of human nature, most instructors would consider it an off-topic response to either question.

The second essay is a successful treatment of question four, a lengthy question that requires sophisticated interpretation and analysis. Although the question begins with several generalizations and offers numerous topic options, note how this writer refines her response to fit the basic requirements: a discussion of two works on the list, geared to the key issue (how the texts suggest a pessimistic or optimistic view of human nature), and supported by specific textual examples. The discussion of Frankenstein is less fully developed than the section on Gulliver’s Travels—perhaps because the writer ran out of time—but the overall strength and coherence of the argument earned it an A.

**Guiding Students through the Writing Project**

Students will learn the most from this chapter if you offer them concrete opportunities to apply their knowledge in one or more timed writing assignments. Depending upon your course plan and your pedagogical goals, you might integrate this chapter into a writing project in one of three ways:
One option is to teach this chapter as a separate unit, in which students prepare for and complete a timed essay exam using one of the three exam options in the “For Writing and Discussion” activity on page 714. Exam options one and two invite students to rethink and synthesize chapters they have already read in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide To Writing*; these topics will work particularly well if you don’t want to build in time for students to master unfamiliar readings. The exam question for each of these options appears in the textbook, so students will know what to prepare beforehand. If you want to add an element of surprise, tell students that you will modify the question somewhat for the exam. Exam option three invites you to select your own exam topic. This option is best if you wish students to explore an issue not treated in the textbook, such as a local controversy, a current issue in language studies, or another appropriate topic. Distribute copies of the readings to students when you begin this chapter and gear class discussion to the upcoming exam topic as you work through the chapter. If you assign a timed essay exam, plan to spend at least two weeks on this chapter, so that students will have sufficient opportunities to prepare, and devote an entire class period to writing the exam.

If you don’t want to devote a major writing project exclusively to exam writing, consider another option: pairing this chapter with one of the writing projects described in Chapters 5-17. For example, students studying Chapter 6 might prepare and write a “strong response” to a homework reading using the strategies discussed in this chapter. This kind of pairing allows you to cover many skills in a single course unit. But if you decide to pair chapters in this way, be sure to allow enough time for students to study both chapters thoroughly. Also, if necessary, modify the writing assignment so that it is suitable for in-class writing (for example, eliminate requirements for outside research and streamline tasks too lengthy to be addressed in the allotted writing period). Assignments that might work particularly well in conjunction with this chapter include the projects in Chapters 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15, and 17.

Finally, if you simply don’t have the time or the desire to have students write a timed essay in your class, you can use this chapter as supplemental information geared to helping them improve their writing in other courses. In this case, you’ll need to encourage students to bring in and work with as many samples as possible of exams and questions they’ve received in other courses. Even if you don’t have students compose a full essay, provide plenty of opportunities for them to practice analyzing questions, brainstorming, outlining, and writing. At the very least, you can point out to students that the chapter is there for their independent use, and some enterprising students may choose to work with some of the information on their own. You could point out that Table 26.2 is a handy reference during study periods. In addition, the “For Writing and Discussion” activities offer a good starting point for practice.
Chapter 27
Assembling a Portfolio and Writing a Reflective Self-Evaluation

Understanding the Chapter’s Goals

This chapter teaches students how to be reflective about their own writing. Two types of reflective self-evaluation are explained: single reflections, written to a nonjudgmental audience about one essay or draft; and comprehensive reflections, written to an instructor or portfolio reader to accompany a set of completed writing projects. The second part of the chapter explicitly associates comprehensive reflections with portfolios.

Rather than assigning a universal writing project, the chapter allows you to assign the type and number of self-reflective evaluations you consider most pertinent for your course. If you are using portfolios, consider assigning parts of this chapter early in the semester so that students understand your views on portfolio assessment. Portfolios function effectively if you work with students consistently to evaluate their own work. Students need to have practice reflecting on their work in order to assemble a good portfolio.

Reinforcing the Chapter’s Rhetorical Principles

Reflection

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson define on page 716: “to reflect is to turn or look back, to reconsider something thought or done in the past from the perspective of the present.” This chapter focuses on reflecting about writing, and it connects well with Chapter 18 to show students how writing is a complicated and recursive process. The chapter provides a variety of structured invitations for students to think about their own writing, although it also points out some ways that reflection is used in other contexts to assess performance. This chapter is most useful as a means of helping students consider their own performance in the course or on a particular assignment. It is usually helpful to ask students to read this chapter in short segments in connection with an assignment they are completing. You will find it handy to return to this chapter at the end of every formal writing assignment so that students can reflect ever more thoroughly on their own work. It is also helpful to assign this chapter in conjunction with preparation for peer-reviewing activities. The more students reflect on their own work in advance of peer review, the better able they will be to participate in group or partner activities.
Using the “For Writing and Discussion” Activities

The activity on pages 717-718 asks students to reflect upon a past experience and freewrite an evaluation of that experience from their present perspective. Some students may find it helpful to brainstorm ideas before they freewrite. Explain that they can generate ideas for this activity by constructing three columns: one labeled “Past View” (how they understood the experience at the time it occurred), one labeled “Present View” (how they perceive the experience now) and one labeled “Desired Changes” (how they would change the experience if they could). After filling in the columns that ask for their past and present perspectives on the experience, they can compare and contrast the columns to dialectically reach insights for the third column. In this “Desired Changes” column, they can record ways they wish the experience had been different, as well as what they would do differently if they had the experience today. This column can also help them identify ways they need to further reflect upon the experience: perhaps they are unsure of what could improve the experience; that uncertainty is itself something that needs to be changed, and they can record in this column what steps they could take to resolve their uncertainty. After this brainstorming, students should freewrite about the insights they have obtained to increase their understanding.

The two remaining activities in the chapter, on pages 722-723 and 728-729, ask students to evaluate sample reflections in the textbook. In addition to the questions given for each activity, ask students to evaluate each sample reflection using the criteria stressed in the chapter: reflections should be selective, specific, dialectical, and adequately detailed. If you or your program add additional criteria for the evaluation of reflective writing or portfolios, explain that to students and offer them practice in using your or your program’s language. Particularly if you plan to assign a grade to reflections your students will write (see “Guiding Students through the Writing Project” below), ask students what grade they would give each reflection. Then share with them what grade you would assign and why.

Guiding Students through the Writing Project

There is no prescribed writing project for this chapter. However, you may decide to assign students to write reflective self-evaluations at any time--even multiple times--during your course. To encourage an instructive dialogue between yourself and students, you may wish to have students submit a single reflection for every writing project. If so, the bulleted list of sample assignments on page 720 will give you ample ideas. To keep students’
interest, you may want to assign different forms of the single reflection for multiple assignments. You can also invite students to participate in creating reflective questions as the semester goes on. This will help students develop independent abilities to reflect on and assess their own work.

Even if your students are not having their work graded by a portfolio method, they can still benefit immensely from writing a comprehensive reflection on their work for the course. Consider having them write two: they can write the first one at mid-term, to review the work they have completed for the course so far, identify the skills they most want to improve in the remainder of the course, and establish a plan to help them meet those goals. You may want to have students write such mid-term comprehensive reflections and bring them to mid-term conferences, so that you can compare students’ assessments of their trouble spots with your own and together devise a detailed plan for their writing improvement. If you teach a long course session, you may opt to keep students goal-oriented by having them write a reflection like this monthly. Students should also write a comprehensive reflection at the end of the term, to both articulate what they have learned and to plan how they intend to continue improving their writing skills beyond your course.

Some students may initially view reflective self-evaluations as busywork. There are several steps you can take to help them approach these assignments conscientiously. First, when you announce the assignment, set aside some time for students to frankly discuss the role they think writing plays in their lives. Some may not have much incentive to improve their writing skills because they think there will always be an available resource—a secretary, a computer software program, a skilled friend—to “fix” whatever mistakes they make. Others may value strong writing skills, but only see them as relevant to academic and career situations. Reflecting on their writing requires students to take writing seriously, so share with them some of the benefits you have experienced by being able to write well. Particularly share anecdotes of times when writing well gave you an unexpected advantage (e.g., you were able to resolve a consumer complaint easily because you could present yourself professionally and clearly in a letter; you were able to comfort a grieving friend because you could express your feelings compassionately in a sympathy card). Students will only be motivated to write thoughtful self-evaluations of their writing if they are motivated to be better writers.

Students will also be more likely to prepare their reflections conscientiously if they are given adequate time to write them. If it is due at the same time as one or more major writing projects, they are likely to devote their time to the project itself and complete the reflection quickly. If possible, make the due date for comprehensive reflections one class session after the assignments themselves are due. That deadline will ensure that students remember the work well enough to discuss it specifically, but are not so rushed completing the writing project that they have little time to write a reflection.
Finally, students will approach reflective self-evaluation assignments more seriously if you treat them seriously. This means that you must either grade them or comment on them in some detail. If you simply check off that the assignment was done, many students will not put forth the effort that a sincere reflection requires. If you don’t feel you have time to respond in writing to the reflections, do so orally, in conferences or by briefly calling students to your desk individually while the rest of the class works individually or in groups on a “For Writing and Discussion” activity in the chapter you are presently discussing. If you decide to grade the reflections, to ensure that students write their reflections honestly (rather than trying to guess what you want them to say), tell them that the reflections will be graded only on the basis of the four criteria for good reflections discussed in this chapter: they should be selective, specific, dialectical, and adequately detailed.
Answers to Handbook Exercises

Page 758

Another difference between a taxi driver and other occupations is the way that taxi drivers interact with people. Driving a taxi is one of the few jobs where you really get to “know the customer.” In other service jobs, you rarely get to know the customer’s name. As a waiter or bartender, you can wait on one hundred people in a night or mix drinks for two hundred without personally talking to five of them. In a taxi, however, each customer spends at least ten to fifteen minutes in a quiet car with nothing else to do but talk with the driver.

Pages 760-761
1. I love to hear coffee perking in the pot on lazy Saturday mornings. Another of my favorite sounds is rain on a tin roof.
2. Correct.
3. Freud assumed that the unconscious was the basis for human behavior. Therefore, he believed that the pleasure audiences receive from art comes from art’s embodiment of unconscious material.
5. Although scientists don’t know for sure how much dinosaurs actually ate, they know that the food intake of the great reptiles must have been enormous. A question they ask themselves, therefore, is what the dinosaurs actually ate.
6. The doctor told me that my X-ray revealed nothing to be alarmed about; nevertheless, she wants me to come back in six months for another checkup.
7. Juan and Alicia began taking the engine apart. They worked diligently for four hours and then discovered that they didn’t have the right tools to continue.
8. Correct.
9. In a home aquarium fish will sometimes die from overeating. The instructions on fish-food boxes, therefore, stress that you feed fish a specified amount on a strict schedule.
10. Correct.

Page 768
1. Under a pile of old rags in the corner of the basement are a mother mouse and a squirming family of baby mice.
2. Hard work, together with intelligence, initiative, and a bit of good luck, explains the success of many wealthy businesspeople.
3. The first thing she emphasized was the differences between Pacific and Atlantic breeding patterns of these fish.
4. The myth, legend, prayer, and ritual of primitive religions contain many common themes.
5. Unfortunately, neither of the interviewers for the local TV station has read any of her works.
6. There are a number of students who are waiting to see the teacher.
7. Does one of the students still have my notebook?
8. One of the students who is trying out for the play wants to become a professional actor.
9. He is the only one of all the students in the theater arts class who really has professional ambitions.
10. The committee is writing individual letters to the judge.

Page 770-771
1. We improved our car’s acceleration by resetting the spark-plug caps and boiling out the carburetor.
2. Race-car driving requires practical experience and quick reactions.
3. After reading the events calendar, we decided to go to a festival of Japanese art and attend the symphony afterward.
4. I want to read a biography of a flamboyant figure living in the twentieth century who has altered history.
5. Carol not only does volunteer work in the school, but also coaches soccer every fall.
6. Either you must leave early or you must leave after the major rush hour.
7. The harvest moon shone brightly, pouring its light over the surrounding water and making the evening a special moment in their lives.
8. You can avoid a comma splice by joining main clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction, by inserting a semicolon in place of the comma, or by changing one of the main clauses to a subordinate clause.
9. Again and again psychologists explore the same questions: Are we shaped by our heredity, by our environment, or by our will?
10. To make friends you must first be a friend and then listen carefully.

Pages 772-773
1. Feeling cold, tired, and depressed, my friend cried, tears streaming from his eyes.
2. Their heads tilted back in awe, the children began trying to count the stars on this summer’s night.
3. Correct.
4. By studying the light reflected by Jupiter, you will learn its clouds are a poisonous mixture of ammonia floating in hydrogen.
5. Correct.
6. While my flight was cruising at 10,000 feet 45 miles east of Albuquerque, New Mexico, on July 16, 1945, at approximately 5:30 a.m., a brilliant flash of light, brighter than the sun, blazed across the sky.
7. Correct.
8. When we reported by radio what we had seen, ground authorities could find no satisfactory explanation.
9. Although we were still plagued by the event the following morning, the newspapers reported only that an ammunition dump had exploded in the approximate area where we had seen the flash.
10. Listening to the radio on August 6, 1945, we learned a similar flash of light occurred over Hiroshima, Japan; then we realized what we had seen several weeks earlier—the first explosion of an atomic bomb.

Pages 775-776
1. We girls want to bike to the store.
2. Natalie, who received the scholarship, will study microbiology.
3. If you and he can visit Tim and me next month, we will tour the national park.
4. Jessica and Lin-Ju will bring their skis.
5. His playing loud music annoyed the neighbors.
6. He is the racer who I believe fell at the finish line.
7. This vacation was necessary for you and me.
8. A burglar stole our computer, but no one saw him entering the house.
9. Stephen or Tom will do his practicing before school.
10. Emily and Amy do their practicing faithfully every day.

Pages 780-781
1. He seems to be an unusually quiet person who cares a lot about other people.
2. A person who hurries is apt to waste time and material.
3. Molly was interested in answering this question: What is the difference between “mental illness” and a disease of the brain?
4. Unfortunately, before he settled the issue, the mayor fostered a bitter public debate. He erred in pitting some of his key subordinates against each other and inflaming many other people’s emotions.
**Page 781**

1. The victor received the rewards.
2. Don’t kill a goose which frequently lays golden eggs.
3. Training children to avoid risk often makes them timid adults.
4. Juanita realized that she preferred to change her major from history to mathematics.
5. The teacher examined the student’s locker because the teacher suspected the student had hidden drugs.

**Pages 785-786**

1. The carpet layers installed the wrong carpets while the owners were away.
2. Unchanged (intransitive).
3. Hot liquid blackberry jelly was ladled into sterilized jars by Beth.
4. The sleeping man was slowly covered with piles of sand by his little daughter, who wore a green sunsuit.
5. Scientists have discovered some of the most important scientific principles accidently.
6. The turbine bearing rusted out and ruined the motor.

**Page 796**

1. Whenever I go home to Bismarck, North Dakota for Christmas vacation, the dinner conversation turns to cross-country skiing.
2. On my last visit, during dessert, my dad, who is an expert skier, asked me if I wanted to try dogsled racing.
3. “I’ve wanted to try dogsledding for years,” Dad said, “but we’ve never had the equipment or the dogs. Now, however, my friend Jake Johnson, the new agent for Smith Insurance, has just bought a team and wants his friend to give it a try.”
4. Rock shrimp, unlike some other species, have hard shells that make them difficult to peel.
5. Hiking or biking through southern Germany, you will discover a rich mosaic of towns, regional foods, colors, sounds, and smells of the rural countryside and historic Black Forest region.
6. Instead of riding on busy boulevards, you can pedal on a network of narrow paved roads built for farm vehicles or on graveled paths through lush green forests.
7. According to historian Daniel T. Rodgers, a central question that divided workers and employers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was how many hours a day the average worker should work.
8. Believing strongly in tradition, the early factory owners thought their workers should follow the old sunrise to sunset work schedule of agricultural laborers.
9. This schedule, which meant fourteen-hour workdays during the summer, could also be maintained during the winter, thanks to the invention of artificial light, which owners rapidly installed in their factories.
10. Spurred on by their desire to create a shorter working day, laborers began to organize into forerunners of today’s labor unions and used their collective powers to strive for change.

Pages 797-798
1. The two men defended themselves before the justice of the peace in Bilford; across the river, a similar case was being tried with attorneys and a full jury.
2. She claimed that most teenage shoplifters are never caught; moreover, those that are caught are seldom punished.
3. I admit that I went to the party; I did not, however, enjoy it.
4. I admit that I went to the party, but I did not enjoy it.
5. Although I went to the party, I did not enjoy it.
6. When the party ended, our apartment was in chaos from one end of the living room to the other end of the bedroom; a fine layer of confetti blanketed everything like snow.
7. Within twenty minutes of leaving the trail, we saw an antelope; two elk, one of which had begun to shed the velvet on its antlers; an assortment of squirrels, gophers, and chipmunks; and most startling of all, a large black bear with two cubs.
8. An effective education does not consist of passive rote learning; rather, it consists of active problem solving.
9. Failure to introduce and to use calculators and computers in school creates needless barriers for teachers and learners; furthermore, computer literacy is rapidly becoming a basic skill for the new millennium.
10. We watched the slides of their vacation for what seemed like an eternity--Toledo, Ohio; Columbus, Missouri; Topeka, Kansas; Omaha, Nebraska; and on and on across the continent.

Pages 804-805
1. My mother told me that she didn’t want me to buy a car until I had a “permanent” part-time job.
2. Jake has his little “quirks,” as Molly calls them, but he is still lovable.
3. My adviser recently remarked: “The nervous student who encounters a professor who states, ‘Twenty percent of the class usually fails,’ must learn to say, ‘Not I,’ instead of giving up.”
4. Did your friend’s teacher really say, “Attendance is necessary in this class”?
5. “We are guilty of gross misuse of language,” continued the speaker, “whenever we use ‘disinterested’ to mean ‘uninterested.’”
6. “I spent two hours worth of good homework time,” complained Thomas’ friend Karen, “trying to invent a tongue twister that would make people stand up and shout, ‘That’s a masterpiece.’”
Non-native speakers of U.S. English (NNS), also referred to as ESL students, present unique challenges to a composition instructor. At the same time, a class populated by students from diverse cultural backgrounds provides a rich resource for discussion due to the breadth of students’ collective experience. This chapter will help you focus on some issues of culture, writing style, and grammar that may set non-native speakers apart from U.S.-raised students.

Characteristics of Non-Native Speakers of English

Although they may have similar problems and difficulties with English composition, non-native speakers are hardly a monolithic group. Students’ purposes for living and studying in the U.S. vary greatly and affect their relationships to the English language and to English writing.

Immigrant students who intend to stay in the U.S. permanently are more likely to care about learning U.S. culture and history; they may be more eager to develop the skills involved in participating in public discourse. Foreign students who plan to stay in the U.S. only long enough to earn a degree at a U.S. college are less likely to be interested in many of the culture-saturated, U.S.-specific topics that often serve as the basis for discussion in composition courses. Between those two extremes lie dozens of variations—including students who would be interested in U.S. culture but whose total effort must go into their coursework, and students who perceive themselves to be culturally savvy but whose misinterpretations are mind-boggling.

In addition to language issues, students’ educational backgrounds will affect their performance in the composition class. Formal education in many places involves unquestioning memorization of material and perhaps little else. Students may have been carefully taught never to challenge authority (including a text). Students with such training may have a very difficult time with assignments that require critical
reading or formulating their own response to a reading. Developing their own opinions is something they’ve never been asked to do; in fact, they may have been strongly discouraged from any kind of independent thinking. Moving slowly through the material and exercises in Part One of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* is especially important for such students.

Some students are accomplished writers in their own language and may have particular difficulty adjusting their styles to U.S. preferences. Spanish and Russian speakers, for example, have literary traditions that favor long, complex, elegant sentences full of intricate description. These students may find U.S. writing abrupt and artless. Japanese or Vietnamese students may employ symbolism so subtle that you miss it altogether. One strategy for dealing with cultural differences in writing styles is to provide opportunities for students to talk and write about their intentions in their writing, either in class, in personal conferences with you, or in peer review groups with each other.

Cultural norms affect approaches to citation and documentation of sources. Helen Fox’s book *Listening to the World* provides an engaging introduction to the frustrations faced by international graduate students struggling to learn American researched writing conventions. Very often, successful writing strategies that led to praise in different contexts are treated as suspect in the U.S. Listen carefully to what your students tell you about their past experiences with reading and research. Be very clear about the cultural biases that inform disciplinary expectations about citations systems. In Chapter 23, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson explain the conceptual differences between MLA and APA citation systems. Help students understand those conceptual differences, and be open to learning about conceptual differences between you and your non-native students.

The four skills of language use—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—seldom develop at equal rates for language learners. You’re likely to encounter students with well-developed oral skills and lower English literacy skills, and students with well-developed reading and writing skills but poorer speaking and listening skills. The disparities for a single student between sound-based and print-based language can be so great that you’ll sometimes wonder if you’re dealing with the same person. Such disparities, however, are fairly common and are normal during language acquisition. Remember that it can take years for adult students to become fluent in additional languages, and be realistic about the goals you and your students form. Just as spoken accents may never fully disappear, so too will written “accents” linger long after a non-native writer has achieved considerable sophistication in English.
Pedagogical Courtesies

Often, small courtesies can make a tremendous difference in the success of your class. Attention to these concerns takes little effort, yet students are likely to notice and appreciate your consideration in these matters much more than the lesson that you stayed up all night to prepare.

- Ask students what they’d like to be called in class. Give yourself a system for notating the correct pronunciation. Some instructors learn a version of the phonetic alphabet used by linguists (phonetic charts in relatively non-technical, accessible form can be found on pages 19-20 and 29 of *The Structure of English: Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology* by Thomas E. Murray; Allyn & Bacon, 1995); others use a combination of rhyme, similar sounds, and creative spelling. You should, for example, be able to remember whether “Kai” is pronounced to rhyme with “hay” or with “high.” Some names contain sounds that don’t occur naturally in English and are difficult or impossible for monolingual English speakers to pronounce; most students will respect your effort, regardless of your degree of success in producing unfamiliar sounds.

- Give all important information like assignments both orally and in writing (using the board or handouts).

- Make sure that your writing on the board is very legible, and that students have enough time to copy information.

- Be aware that ESL students may require extra time to read in English, so be prepared to help students adjust to in-class reading assignments.

- Be aware of abbreviations; they’re not always as transparent as we think.

Topic Selection

Careful topic selection is one of the keys to writing a successful paper. It is important to keep ESL students in mind if you assign the whole class a single paper topic or a short selection of several topics. Obviously, topics which require extensive prior knowledge of U.S. culture or politics are inappropriate when other options are available.
It’s also unwise to universalize an assignment with the directive: “Write about X in your country.” Such an assignment is problematic because the particular X that you’re dealing with may not have a close enough equivalent in all your students’ countries. Also, information that is fingertips close for U.S. students may require substantial research for others, creating an imbalance in the work required to complete the assignment. Further, many immigrant students came to the U.S. at an age old enough to have a firm cultural/national identity, but not quite old enough to have a sophisticated grasp of history or politics. Such students are often embarrassed by their inability to speak as knowledgeable adults about their home countries.

In addition, where topics of international relations are concerned, students from countries engaged in disputes or negotiations with the United States may feel that etiquette and diplomacy restrain them from writing candidly. Refugees from war or famine may find it terribly painful to write about their countries. Finally, students’ strong feelings about their nations of origin sometimes prevent them from hearing any correction or criticism of their work, however gentle, when they write about home. Students may choose to write about their experiences or their home countries, of course, but it should never be required of them.

Peer Reviews

While the first peer review can be daunting for any student, it can be especially frightening for those unaccustomed to our U.S. style of blunt, direct speaking. The practice of critical analysis involved in peer reviewing may seem uncomfortably aggressive, rude or forward. Good preparation, well-defined review questions, and careful selection of group members can all ease the way considerably.

In addition to covering Chapters 18 and 21, spend as much class time as possible writing and discussing practice reviews of student papers in the text, using the same questions and format that the actual reviews will have. Have students assess the helpfulness of each other’s practice reviews. These preliminary exercises can be done in the same groupings that you will use for the peer reviews in order for group members to get to know each other’s work style.

You may want to choose only some of the review questions at the ends of Chapters 5-17, rather than using the entire set each time. A possible in-class exercise could involve students in small groups discussing and choosing which questions might be most valuable to them as writers. Such an exercise would project them into the role of review recipients and help them to envision the usefulness of the review they are about to write.
Sometimes, when reading drafts aloud, students’ pronunciation of English may make their writing sound choppy or awkward when it really isn’t. Or students’ ears for English may not be developed enough to allow them to catch all the problems that a native speaker could. Reading drafts aloud is still a worthwhile practice for such students; try to make sure, though, that students with strong accents are grouped with classmates less likely to make fun of non-native pronunciation.

Students who have studied English abroad are likely to be much more fluent with grammatical terms than their American counterparts, even if their grammatical performance is marked by systematic errors. You will find that many ESL students are able to have conversations about editing with more precision than some American students.

Textbook Comprehension

The following activity is useful for helping students to become more active readers and for developing an atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration among reticent students. It can be used for any section of the text. Try it early in the term and then repeat it for reading assignments that you anticipate will be difficult.

When the reading is assigned, distribute three to five index cards to each student. Assign them to write one question on each index card about anything in the reading that they don’t understand or aren’t sure about. The questions can be on any of three levels: words/phrases; sentences; paragraphs/concepts. At the next class meeting, bring three boxes or bags labeled with the above divisions and ask students to put their index cards in the appropriate container. Then have student volunteers copy the questions onto the blackboard. This elaborate procedure is worth the extra effort because it ensures anonymity and prevents the potential embarrassment someone may feel by asking a “stupid” question.

Next, explain that by working together, many of the questions can be answered, since each person knows different things. Ask a volunteer scribe to write student-supplied answers on the board. After you’re sure that the procedure is working and you sense sufficient focus and momentum, you should leave the room. Explain that you’ll check what they’ve written and answer whatever questions are left when you come back. Then do so.
Leaving the room is a good way to enhance the student-centeredness of the exercise. When students answer each other’s questions, they have an opportunity to notice that their efforts go towards helping each other rather than impressing the teacher. Without the teacher present, students gain a little more practice in collaborative problem-solving (which may be helpful during peer reviews), and their discussions may be less inhibited.

**Grammatical Correctness**

It’s clearly unreasonable to expect that an ESL student who begins the semester with serious problems in English grammar will be able to produce grammatically flawless prose by the end of the term. What, then, is a reasonable expectation? Unfortunately, there is no easy answer or tidy formula. What you can do is target one or two specific competencies for each student that can be addressed and improved in the limited time that you have.

When you evaluate the first set of writing assignments, identify the most serious grammatical or style problems for each student. There is an almost infinite set of possible trouble spots, but the most common patterns of grammatical problems for non-native speakers can usually be classified into one of these categories: nouns (and articles), verbs, prepositions, or subordinate phrases or clauses. It is possible to make perceptible progress in any of these areas during a course, and it’s reasonable to expect a gradual reduction in targeted errors.

Once you’ve become acquainted with students’ writing, ask students to identify what they think is their most serious grammar problem and what section of the handbook addresses that problem. Have them hand this in so you can approve their choice or suggest something else. Then have students select one of their drafts—maybe a current rough draft in the revision stage—and follow the handbook suggestions for making corrections. This will help students apply the grammar lessons provided in the handbook to their own writing.

The style problems of non-native speakers are generally similar to those of other students and can be treated nearly the same. Note, though, that while native speakers usually can easily distinguish between formal and informal speech, non-native speakers may not have developed that distinction yet. They may need to go a little slower in order to accommodate a smaller repertoire of English style patterns. Also, you may encounter students whose phrasing is grammatically correct, but markedly foreign. Such phrasing, particularly if the grammar is sound, is not likely to change by
any deliberate means. You may decide to correct or mark only the elements that are unusual enough to damage the writer’s argument or credibility, explain the logic where feasible, and live with the rest. You may also decide to introduce a new phrase or idiom each week, to help students add to their English vocabulary.

The Handbook

Grammar Exercises

Non-native speakers may be more aware of grammatical terms and concepts than native speakers. They’ve had to consciously learn perfect tenses, gerunds, past participles, and all the things that native speakers never have to think about. If you use the Handbook, especially HB2, for whole-class exercises, you could provide an opportunity for those ESL students who are usually reticent to assume leadership roles and do a little showing off.

Grammar exercises can be tedious and rote. To make them more meaningful, use student-produced sentences and forms as much as possible when you need supplementary material. For example, for the description of basic sentence patterns in Handbook 2, have students take a page from one of their drafts and identify each sentence according to the five sentence types.

Nouns and Articles

Some of the most common ESL grammar error patterns involve incorrect articles or pluralizing of non-count nouns. The simple little English words “a,” “an,” and “the” are devilishly difficult for students whose native languages don’t have equivalent forms (and many languages don’t). The chart and explanation of articles on pages 260-261 of this instructor’s manual is suitable for use as a transparency master. The exercises on pages 262-263 of this manual provide practice in determining the correct article. If you wish to use this page as a transparency or handout, be sure to cover the answer key at the bottom of the page before duplicating it. The chart assumes familiarity with the concept of count and non-count nouns. If you’re a native English speaker, you’ve probably never thought about the distinction, but it should be intuitively clear. Your students who received formal instruction in English are almost certainly familiar with the categories, even if they are not quite proficient in the application. Students who acquired English informally may need to begin with an explanation of count/non-count nouns; they can be referred to the books listed below or any good intermediate-level ESL grammar book.
Prepositions

Prepositions can be particularly troublesome for English learners. Because they are often used in very idiomatic or particular ways (Why do we say “at the expense of...” but “to the credit of...”?), acquisition is accomplished mainly through lots of practice. The chart on page 264 of this manual, also suitable as a transparency master or handout, works with one of the more logical patterns for the words “at,” “on,” and “in,” showing gradations in preciseness of placement in space or time. The system works reasonably well, yet there are common exceptions that are difficult to explain, like “She’s been at the university for seven years,” but “She’s been in the biology department for seven years.” There is no good way to effectively convey this and the hundreds of other nuances and exceptions to students. Exercises help, but exercises alone will never be enough.

Certainly you should mark incorrect prepositions. Yet since fluency with prepositions is such an advanced stage in language acquisition, it may be unfair to subtract points for an incorrect preposition unless perhaps it is utterly logic-defying and repeated often. Keep the emphasis on the positive development of vocabulary by providing regular opportunities for students to learn prepositions in phrases or idioms.

Additional Resources

There are literally hundreds of ESL grammar texts and workbooks currently in print. All have their strengths and weaknesses. Here are two that are very helpful for college-level students and will help you get a sense of how grammar is organized and presented:

This book has very clear (although terse) explanations and lots of good exercises.

While intended for teachers, advanced students could find this book very helpful.

This study of international graduate students offers a nuanced analysis of the ways culture, gender, status, and academic expectations interact.
### Articles with Count and Non-Count Nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COUNT</th>
<th>NON-COUNT</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SINGULAR</td>
<td>PLURAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>a/an</strong></td>
<td>a river</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an onion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>the</strong></td>
<td>the river</td>
<td>the rivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the onion</td>
<td>the onions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>none</strong></td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>rivers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>onions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Articles with Count and Non-Count Nouns

You’ll notice that each category--singular count, plural count, and non-count--has two correct possibilities. This guide will help you choose the correct usage.

1. Do I use a/an or the?

Use a or an when you introduce a singular count noun for the first time to your conversation or writing. All other times you refer to the same object, use the.

**Examples:**
Nancy put an onion in the salad.
The onion is from her mother’s garden.

2. Do I use the or leave out all articles?

Use the to refer to a specific item (or items) that your listeners or audience already know about. Leave out articles to refer generally to all items of that name, or to non-specific items.

**Examples:**
The rice is almost ready. (Specific rice that is cooking now)
Rice is very expensive. (All rice is expensive right now)

Molly is wearing the earrings you gave her. (Specific earrings)
Molly wears earrings every day. (Not specific earrings)
Using Articles with Count and Non-Count Nouns

Choose the correct way to complete the sentences below. Use a, an, the, or no article.

1. Bennie’s roommate has ________ cold.

2. ________ students in Dr. Grahn’s class have a lot of homework.

3. I showed her ________ photos in my wallet.

4. Do you like ________ tomatoes in your salad?

5. They agreed that ________ health is very important for ________ athlete.

Answer Key

1. a
2. the
3. the
4. no article
5. no article; an
Using Articles with Count and Non-Count Nouns

Find the incorrect articles (a, an, the, or no article) in the passage below, and correct them. HINT: There are ten errors.

The bus that I rode this afternoon was very crowded. A people were standing in the aisles, and all the seats were full. A woman got on with the large bag of the groceries, and she asked someone to hold it for her. A man put the bag on his lap. After a few blocks, bus turned a corner very fast, and the bag fell on a floor and split open. A bottle broke, and a milk spilled on someone’s feet. There was rice on seats and rice on the floor. Oranges went rolling all over the bus, between a legs of all the people. It was so crowded that nobody had room to bend over and pick them up. The woman was yelling, and many people were laughing. No one knew what to do. Bus driver had to stop the bus, and some people got off in order to make room for others to pick up the oranges. I was very glad when I finally got off a bus!

Answer Key:
The bus that I rode this afternoon was very crowded. [No article] People were standing in the aisles, and all the seats were full. A woman got on with a large bag of [no article] groceries, and she asked someone to hold it for her. A man put the bag on his lap. After a few blocks, the bus turned a corner very fast, and the bag fell on the floor and split open. A bottle broke, and [no article] milk spilled on someone’s feet. There was rice on the seats and rice on the floor. Oranges went rolling all over the bus, between the legs of all the people. It was so crowded that nobody had room to bend over and pick them up. The woman was yelling, and many people were laughing. No one knew what to do. The bus driver had to stop the bus, and some people got off in order to make room for others to pick up the oranges. I was very glad when I finally got off the bus!
## The Logic of Three Prepositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SPACE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>at</strong></td>
<td>sitting at her desk</td>
<td>at 10:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.</td>
<td>staying at home</td>
<td>at the moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(point)</td>
<td>PRECISE PLACEMENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>on</strong></td>
<td><strong>on</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(line)</td>
<td>on Palmer Street</td>
<td>on Tuesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on my way</td>
<td>on their anniversary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>in</strong></td>
<td><strong>in</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(whole)</td>
<td>in New Orleans</td>
<td>in October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Guatemala</td>
<td>in the evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PLACE</strong></td>
<td><strong>WITHIN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>A WHOLE</strong></td>
<td><strong>A WHOLE</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Creating recommendations about how to teach *The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing* in the computer classroom is a daunting task. Each institution has different resources available. You may be teaching primarily with local network resources. You may have limited access to the Internet. You may have both local network writing tools and full Internet access. You may have the ability to schedule a drop-in lab, or you may teach in a sophisticated networked classroom. You may have the ability to bring a networked station into a traditional classroom. The problem of addressing the range of resources is compounded by the rapid pace of technological change. The tools that are available now may be slightly dated (sometimes even outdated) by the time you read this. The most important thing you can do to prepare yourself and your students to use networked technologies in writing and research is cultivate rhetorical awareness of networked possibilities. If you help students see general possibilities for reading and writing with new technologies, they will be able to adapt to technological environments.

To counter these difficulties, this section of the manual will focus on possibilities that are at the forefront of teaching with computers today with the hope that as change progresses and institutions upgrade, these activities will be viable for most situations. For additional advice, read Chapter 22 in the textbook, “Finding and Evaluating Sources,” which contains discussions of electronic sources, and the corresponding discussion of the chapter in this instructor’s manual. Also, you may wish to consult *An Introduction to Teaching Composition in an Electronic Environment* by Eric Hoffman and Carol Scheidenhelm, available from Allyn and Bacon as a complimentary supplement for instructors who adopt *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*.

**Institutions and Teacher Authority**

**Institutional Relationships**

Whatever your situation, strive to develop solid working relationships with the technical support staff at your institution. Since technology is such an integral part of computer-assisted writing instruction, and most of us have yet to become, or may never want to become, experts with technology, it is crucial that you have institutional resources to provide advice and support. This doesn’t mean that learning the technology is not an important part of teaching with computers; it simply means that your learning should be fostered by a healthy relationship with the people at your school who can help you the most and who will also benefit from understanding your goals and interests. Make sure
you know what, if any, workshops are available for teachers and students, and make sure who know what number, if any, you can call for technical help when problems arise.

**Issues of Authority**

One of the largest issues that you will need to tackle as you work in a computer-assisted environment is the issue of teacher authority. Some teachers find that a breakdown of traditional authority takes place in computer classrooms, and you can use this to help support the textbook’s emphasis on student activities and collaboration. Computer environments bring many more voices into classroom situations. The model of the instructor as the disseminator of knowledge is less viable in an electronic classroom; students are easily drawn into their own work with easy access to a network. Pedagogies that take advantage of computer networks, in fact, highlight student-student connections, and seek to actively shift the teacher’s role. A networked classroom offers possibilities for making students’ work public, and for allowing students easy access to each other during or between classes. This can allow a wider range of student concerns to be presented to the class as a whole.

Additionally, the nature of online environments shifts many pedagogical situations. For instance, in an electronic discussion, messages can be strangely disembodied from their speakers. Although a name is attached to each statement, when messages roll down a screen organized only by the order in which they are sent, there may appear to be little difference between a comment made by the instructor and one put forth by a student; they are equal voices in the conversation. Students who are hesitant to break into a class discussion may find it easier to enter a typed conversation; you may find that different weight is assigned to different contributions in online vs. face-to-face discussions.

In many ways this is a good thing. Not only are messages judged more on their own merits than on the basis of who sends them, but also the relatively egalitarian nature of these forums prompts more students to contribute. As you might guess, however, the shifting of authority can also be a cause for concern for some teachers and students who are accustomed to the traditional workings of traditional classrooms. Electronic conversations may erode into frivolous play, even name-calling and offensive speech. If you’re an instructor who has been concerned with authority in a traditional classroom you may balk at the prospect of amplifying this concern by using computers. In any event, you should be aware of “netiquette” issues as students move online, and you should take the same care to orient students to your expectations, and to the rhetorical possibilities, as you would with any other activity.

Two recommendations may ease these potential problems somewhat. First, you will need to reassess your own position on instructor authority. The computer classroom is in many ways a decentered classroom. If you feel you need a strong presence in the classroom
in order to teach successfully, you may wish to reconsider teaching with computers. The second recommendation qualifies the first. Although teaching with computers is a form of co-teaming, it isn’t entirely divorced from traditional roles. You can work toward striking a balance between the environment that is developing in your class and your own sense of what is appropriate. You don’t need to use computers simply because they are there; it’s perfectly okay to use non-networked activities within a computer classroom. At the same time, this chapter of the manual encourages you to consider how some traditional activities can be extended and enhanced by access to computers. You will need to work within the uncertain confines of the decentered computer environment, but make that work coincide with your own goals and teaching style.

Local Opportunities

Although much attention has been given to the Internet in recent years, you can pursue a number of activities that will mesh with *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* in a local classroom setting. If you are teaching using local classroom writing software like Aspects, CommonSpace, or the Daedalus Integrated Writing Environment (DIWE), or a commercial package like WebCT or Blackboard, you can practice two important writing skills.

Real-Time Conversations

One of the greatest benefits of computer-assisted writing instruction is the opportunity to have conversations with classmates using the “chat,” “discussion” or “InterChange” function of your local network. These electronic conversations provide your students with opportunities to explore problems and brainstorm ideas. Since messages are freely exchanged in these forums, students feel like equal participants in an evolving conversation. Additionally, messages are composed on the keyboard and sent as text, so not only are students presenting ideas in an ongoing dialogue, they are composing as they do so. Electronic conversations, then, give them a chance to converse within a community and practice their writing.

Note, however, that these forms are geared toward free-flowing exchanges of ideas. Students will be less likely to concern themselves with the sentence-level structure of their writing as they will with the way their thinking fits in with the others in the group. Because participation increases in electronic discussions, students are likely to be exposed to an array of perspectives about the topic. Since these conversations evolve as they take place, students can also see the way that a given position is complicated through the process of electronic dialogue. Statements are often challenged. Students are prompted to clarify their positions, refute those of others and synthesize multiple perspectives. All of
these activities will benefit students using *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* as they work to clarify and articulate their own thinking about an issue.

If your system allows you to archive real-time conversations, you can take transcripts to class for later analysis. If an online discussion started off a unit, you will find that it raised many issues that can be further explored. You can highlight some interesting themes in the discussion and ask students to follow up with the next day’s activity, for example.

**Local Collaboration**

Another possibility afforded by some local networks is the opportunity to collaborate with classmates on writing projects. Some programs offer an electronic whiteboard or other collaborative mechanism. These functions allow a group of students to work on the same page at the same time. Most of them have a text editing feature and some allow students to draw or exchange graphics. Be aware that the logistics of these mechanisms make them most suitable for small group collaborative projects. Also, don’t forget that the mediation of these collaboration tools offers the same benefits and potential pitfalls presented by electronic discussions. There may be an increase in participation and a more fruitful production of ideas, but at the same time students may more easily fall off task or forget the people on the other side of the machine. As with most activities, you should balance using these electronic tools with traditional face-to-face models.

**The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing and the Internet**

By this time, most people have been exposed to some hyperbole about the Internet. The resources on the Internet can be staggering, and the interpersonal connectivity that it affords is unprecedented. Both of these potentials—the ability to use the Net to gather resources and the possibility of joining active discourse communities—make using the Internet a natural fit for teaching with *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*.

But teaching with the Internet can also pose a number of problems. Many of the resources that students come across will be hastily written, poorly researched, and extremely biased. They may also unintentionally join conversations which have little or nothing to do with their writing topics. On the other hand, the Internet is also a source for up-to-date scientific information, news accounts from a variety of perspectives, and other kinds of data that would be difficult to find in a library. You can use the criteria for evaluating sources in Chapter 22 to help students understand how issues of authority and credibility are important to consider on the Internet.
It is also important for you to guide students in the etiquette expected of them in electronic environments. Just as you would help students prepare for face-to-face interviews with community members, prepare students for their research forays on the Internet. Especially in its conversational forums, the Net can still be very much a place of anarchy. Students may enter contentious conversations about hot topics and be surprised or shocked at the passions evident online. Exposing students to discussions centering on sex, violence and intolerance may not always be a good idea either from a pedagogical or an institutional perspective. Additionally, many of the participants on the Net are less than ideal conversants for students who are just joining discourse communities. Many netizens have little patience for “newbies.” Advise students to “lurk,” or observe, any online forum to get a sense of how people contribute before they post themselves.

There are, then, beneficial and detrimental ways of adapting this technology to your writing instruction. Always explore Net territory yourself before assigning a task to students. Not only will it be important for you to map out the logistics of the assignment—logging on to a news server, for instance—but you will also be able to get a sense of how well the task will mesh with your teaching goals. You will also get a first-hand view of how difficult the task will be for students to accomplish, and you will see what directions will be needed. Only use that technology that will support your pedagogical goals. It is often a misconception that computers make tasks easier. They do considerably speed up operations like word processing, but at the same time they complicate activities. Because each technology brings costs in terms of the time requirements and learning investments, use only what you need.

Also, have a backup plan and steel yourself for when things go wrong. Invariably—and especially if you are working with technology that is new to you—a planned fifteen minute e-mail tutorial will balloon into a whole class period, or the server will suddenly go down in the middle of your Web demonstration. When such things do happen, take it in stride and be ready to think fast or fall back on some other activities. Keep these general recommendations in mind as you read through the discussion of specific Internet media below.

**Research and the World Wide Web**

As you teach any of the research components of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*, you benefit tremendously from sending students out onto the World Wide Web. The Web has been mushrooming for the last few years and shows no signs of stopping. As it has grown it has incorporated a number of earlier more primitive Internet technologies, like Gopher and Newsgroups. When students search on the Web, they will be able to easily access files that previously required a fair amount of finger-work to get to. So if students
have access to the Web, they will be able to bring back abundant information for their research topics. Chapter 22’s lessons on learning the rhetoric of the Web will be important for students who need to sift through much irrelevant information.

There are essentially two ways of finding information on the Web. The first method involves browsing for resources. Students can spend some time exploring the available resources on the Web and developing their thinking about an issue. These browsing adventures often begin with an unfocused attitude and can be seen as a means of arriving at a more specific idea of what kind of information students are looking for and what they wish to write about. There is some benefit in randomly surfing the Web, but to make these initial forays more productive, try to steer students toward some of the sites which organize information under broad subject headings. These large subject categories make useful starting points for students who are beginning the research process. Although things shift rapidly on the Net, here are some useful subject categories where you can send students:

ElNet Galaxy
http://www.einet.net/

Infoseek
http://infoseek.go.com/

Lycos
http://www.lycos.com/

Yahoo
http://www.yahoo.com/

The second method for locating information is by using keyword searches. Just like a search of a library’s electronic catalog, Web keyword searches allow you to look for information by combining different terms and querying large databases. This is probably the most useful way of finding specific information on the Net. However, since Web databases are so large, there are a few caveats. First, if your students use a search term that is too broad, their results will be overwhelming. Submitting a query for a term like “politics” will bring back far too many results which cover a broad range of topics. So as you ask students to articulate their projects as research questions, also point out the need to narrow their search queries. A student who has focused an interest in politics into a research question like “What will be the impact of welfare reform on urban children?” will be able to perform searches looking for terms like “welfare,” “children,” or “poverty.”
You will also want to be sure that students learn the basic strategies for refining searches (connect to the lessons in Chapter 22 on this point). These include combining search terms, searching for specific people, events, or phrases, and excluding items from a search. A query for “children” will be no better than a search for “politics,” but combining the terms and searching for information that is related to “children and poverty and welfare” will most likely bring back information relevant to the student’s project. You might ask students to develop a list of potential search terms ahead of time as a way of focusing their projects and preparing them for their queries.

If students know a specific name or event that is associated with their topic, their query may be even more precise. If a student is looking at the welfare reform model in Massachusetts, she might combine the name of the governor, “William Weld,” with “welfare” to bring back pertinent information. If the search returns items related to welding, she can exclude that term, by looking for “William Weld and welfare not welding.” Students will need to familiarize themselves with the operations of different search engines before querying, but if you have stressed the importance of specificity and the tactics of combination and exclusion, students should be able to locate manageable amounts of relevant information if they persevere and remain flexible.

Here are some of the most useful keyword search engines:

Google
http://www.google.com

Lycos
http://www.lycos.com

Altavista
http://www.altavista.com

WebCrawler
http://www.webcrawler.com

Infoseek
http://infoseek.go.com

Yahoo!
http://www.yahoo.com

A useful class activity is to ask students to repeat the same web search in three different search engines and report to the class about how easy it was to use the search engine and what kinds of results each generated. This activity will help students explore the Internet beyond their favorite portal (many students consistently use only one search engine), and it will help students see that repeated searches are useful.

Finally, whether students are browsing to open up ideas and focus their topics, or are looking for specific information, you should stress the importance of tracking their movements. Students should understand the navigational features of most software, including Bookmarks, Favorites and Hotlists. They should also save and document their
discoveries. (For more information on documenting sources see “Documentation of Electronic Sources” below). The process of saving files and documenting their location, as well as the date they were accessed, is crucial because resources on the Net are often in a state of flux. Since sites are constantly being updated and servers go up and down, online information can be quite protean. The best way to be sure that students have access to the resources they need is to stress the importance of saving potential resources as they browse.

**E-Mail for Your Class and on the Net**

If your plans for implementing technology other than the Web are limited, using e-mail may be one of your most rewarding tools. With e-mail, you will be able to coordinate and tap into the resources provided by your institution. Most institutions now provide students with e-mail accounts; refer your classes to your campus computer consultants so that they can get e-mail accounts set up and receive information about logistics.

Early in the semester, establish the importance of e-mail and spend some time making sure that all students have gotten their accounts and mastered the basics. Once students have e-mail accounts set up and are comfortable handling messages, there are a number of ways you can incorporate e-mail into your curriculum. The first involves simple day-to-day contacts. By using e-mail you can significantly expand the temporal and spatial boundaries of the classroom. Students can contact you whenever a problem or question pops up, but you will have the luxury of responding at your own convenience.

Additionally, you can use e-mail to facilitate the operation of the class. Your institution may have the capacity to set up a mailing list for your class. If so, you can easily send announcements about scheduling, reminders about assignments, or other important information to all the members of the class. If you don’t have access to a class mailing list, you can use the “nickname” feature of mail readers to create an alias that will send mail to each member of your class.

A related activity involves using a mailing list to foster discussion of class topics. Students can exchange messages about class materials and the class as a whole can engage in an ongoing e-mail conversation. If you don’t have access to a mailing list for this purpose, again, you can use the nicknames function of mail readers. In this case, however, each member of the class will need to set up a nickname for the other class members, so you may want to copy all of the students’ addresses into a file and distribute that for students to use in creating nicknames.
Finally, you can use e-mail to facilitate student-to-student contact. If students are working on collaborative projects, they can set up nicknames for the other members of their group. Again, since the constraints of time and space are mostly overcome by e-mail, coordinating things like project tasks and meetings can be greatly simplified. Students can also use e-mail when working with each other on peer-review exercises. By mailing their work to their reviewers, students can not only simplify logistics, but also can begin an e-mail exchange. When a reviewer responds by pointing out a potential problem, the original student can write back, offering clarification or asking for an explanation. These exchanges can be kept up for the duration of student projects.

All of these activities involve mastering some logistics. Getting accounts set up and getting students comfortable with e-mail takes some time. Some students may have trouble subscribing to mailing lists or setting up nicknames. In general, however, investing that time early in the term will be worth the effort.

**Usenet Newsgroups in the Classroom**

At last count there were over 13,000 Usenet newsgroups. These groups have been compared to electronic bulletin boards. Users log on to a group, then post and respond to messages. The organizers of Usenet categorize different discussion groups under broad topics, such as “sci”—science, “comp”—computers, or “talk”—discussion. The configurations at your institution will determine exactly which groups are available, but generally your students will have access to a large number of topic-centered forums. Since groups are organized by topics, they offer students two potential benefits. First, they provide clearly demarcated areas where students can cull resources from conversations being held by people who are committed to a given issue. Second, they provide students with possible discourse communities they can join to test out their own ideas and refine their writing.

As your students begin to explore newsgroups, there are a few things to keep in mind. As with most Internet media, newsgroups offer a range of information, some of which is probably not very relevant to a writing class. Newsgroups which don’t fall into any of the sanctioned Usenet categories are grouped under the heading of “alt,” or alternative. In the alt category students are likely to find groups devoted to debating the merits of Sunday morning cartoons or trading explicit images. Additionally, even in some of the more sanctioned groups, exchanges can degenerate into name-calling or banter, and members can post hastily written pieces that offer little more than personal opinion in support of their claims.
Still, many groups are committed to thoughtful dialogue about their topics, and most have developed self-policing codes which assure that messages not clearly articulated or adequately supported are challenged. The first key to success when using newsgroups, then, is often finding the right group. If you are going to have students explore newsgroups in class, you should consider selecting some groups ahead of time. This will allow students to get started without scrolling through the entire list of groups at your school and assure that they are exploring topics and groups that are likely to provide the most pedagogical benefit.

Once students have selected an appropriate group, there are two basic ways they can incorporate the group into their writing activities. First, they can use the group as a sort of research resource. Since many groups are made up of individuals who are committed to a topic and many are even experts in their fields, newsgroups can provide a live database for gathering information. The first step in this process is to spend some time “lurking” in the group in order to get a feel for the major issues being discussed and the decorum of the group. Many groups also have archives of the most frequently asked questions (FAQs). If students are working on a common topic, they may be able to get valuable information instantly by checking the FAQs.

If students’ topics aren’t covered in the archives or the current discussion, then they can post a research query to the newsgroup. Posting a query is one of the best ways of tapping into newsgroups in order to gather resources. Again, problem posing and research questions are useful models for submitting queries to a newsgroup. Before posting a query, students should do some preliminary research. They should spend some time on the group, getting a feel for the major issues and the competing perspectives about the topic. Their query can then perform some analysis of the topic as a way of broaching their question. They can summarize the significant aspects and synthesize various positions. By demonstrating that they have done some prior research and that they have a good sense of the issue, students can increase the likelihood that their query will receive useful responses.

If students are working on articulating their project into research questions, posting these questions to a newsgroup will perform a two-fold service. Not only are they likely to receive responses that can be incorporated as resources into their projects, but they can also test their positions by submitting them to the dialectic process of the group. On newsgroups, messages are often challenged by other members of the group who don’t share the same assumptions about the topic. Additionally, members are often quick to point out gaps in the reasoning of a message or to ask for clarification when a position isn’t entirely clear. This kind of give and take can help students strengthen their own arguments and can help them better understand that knowledge is often constructed through communal argument.
Real-Time Interactions and Virtual Environments

The communal process of knowledge making can be made even more apparent by having students explore text-based virtual environments and engage in real-time interactions. Most of these explorations will take place in MU*s. Years ago, when Dungeons and Dragons players wanted to add a sense of reality to their gaming, they created shared spaces on networked computers. Users could log on to these spaces and interact with other players. Originally these spaces were called Multiple User Dungeons, or MUDS. Today there are a host of these environments delineated by the software which runs them, including MUSHS, MUDS, MUCKS and MOOs. Since most of them share the qualities of being text-based virtual environments where users meet to interact, many people use the acronym MU* to denote all of these spaces.

Because all of the spaces and the objects in them are depicted with text, they can be well-suited for writing students. You can use the MU* spaces to discuss the need for specificity and clarity in writing. By bringing your class to these virtual environments, you can enhance many kinds of role-playing exercises and students can get a sense of the complications involved in representing cultures and situations in writing.

In addition to exposing your students to virtual environments, MU*s offer a chance to engage in real-time interactions. The “Local Opportunities” section above explained the benefits of real-time conversation: more voices are heard in a conversation and students hone their argument and writing skills. These same benefits can be had in MU* environments. Additionally, because MU*s are Internet media, anyone with a connection can join your class in a discussion. You can use MU*s to bring guests into the class or to perform interclass activities. When you log on to a MU* (you can also usually sign on as a guest), you will be asked to create a character name. If you log on as a character, you can also set a description for yourself. These possibilities afford students a chance to consider issues of persona and ethos.

Finally, if your class is fairly comfortable with technology and you have some time to invest, you can have your students construct their own MU* spaces. In order to do so, you will need to get permission and instructions from a MU*. As students begin to build, they must think about the ways that purpose and genre influence composition. MU* spaces offer the best opportunity on the Internet to explore open forms of writing. Students can envision readers trying to navigate the spaces they create. As they do so, they can consider ways to weave narrative structures into the scenes they describe. Later, authors can invite readers into the spaces for feedback and conversation.
All of the possible MU* activities raise some issues for concern. Whereas local chat sessions sometimes erode into play or name-calling, the even more fantastic structures of MU*s may amplify this tendency. Additionally, navigating in MU*s can be challenging. When students build structures, it can be difficult to construct argumentative forms in the more open-ended space of the MU*s. Finally, greater technological skill is required for some of the more advanced activities.

To counter these problems, give students time to familiarize themselves with MU*s and try to maintain the activities for long enough to overcome many of the first-time jitters. You can record transcripts of MU* discussions and examine any difficulties together as a class. And finally, perhaps most importantly, consult with instructors who have experience using these spaces and draw from their expertise. Perhaps more than any other Internet activity, the incorporation of MU*s into your pedagogy requires a fair amount of preliminary thinking and guidance.

There are many websites that can help you find appropriate MU*s, as well as more information about using MU*s and about MU* pedagogy. For starters try:

MUDs, MOOs, MUSHes
http://www.itp.berkeley.edu/~thorne/MOO.html

Diversity University
http://www.du.org

Daedalus’ MOO Resources
http://www.daedalus.com/net/border.html

**Critical Reading and Internet Resources**

There are peculiar difficulties in evaluating Internet resources. Stress to your students that the Internet is largely a non-refereed publishing medium. Anyone with an account and a connection can post articles, join live discussions, or publish a web page. This means that many of the materials on the Internet have dubious scholarly value.

Critical reading of Internet resources requires more than weeding out the junk mail and offensive rants. The Internet provides an opportunity to discuss with students issues of authority and reliability. Discuss both the advantages and disadvantages of Internet resources with your class. Compare Internet materials to print sources, thinking of information dissemination in terms of power relationships, breadth, accuracy, and currency. What are the costs of the “quality control” assurances of print publication? Internet
resources include more perspectives and more kinds of materials than print ever could. Additionally, Internet resources are often much more current than those in print. Nevertheless, students will need to assess the reliability and credibility of each electronic resource they locate. Some engaging examples of websites to compare appear in this site developed by a teacher in Saskatchewan: <http://www.saskschools.ca/~ischool/tisdale/integrated/wysiwyg/students.htm>. The site gives students some basic principles of source evaluation and provides some good sites (some fake, others real) for evaluation.

**Documentation of Electronic Sources**

As you may imagine, keeping track of this wide variety of Internet resources is no easy task. When resources disappear over time and exist in a number of different forms in different places, developing a workable citation convention is no easy matter. This problem has been compounded by the early attempts of traditional citation guides like the MLA and the APA, which have come up short in accounting for the dynamic nature of the Internet. At the time of this writing, the standards for citing and documenting online sources do not cover all of the media the Internet offers.

In some ways, this grants you some added flexibility. You can settle on something yourself, or you may want to ask your class to develop a standard as a way of thinking about issues of documentation. You can also decide to use the MLA and the APA styles, which do cover some sources. You may also want to use one of the styles that is gaining favor among instructors who use the Internet, such as Janice Walker’s adaptation of the MLA style (see site address below).

Whatever you decide, there are some minimum requirements that you should consider. Because resources change so much on the Net, citations should always include a date of access. This may be different from the date of publication, but it is likely to be more helpful to future researchers. Additionally, citations should indicate which of the Internet media the source is taken from. For example, if a source is taken from a newsgroup, the media “Usenet” and the name of the newsgroup should be included. Finally, if the resource can be found at a specific Internet address, for example the URL of a Web page, then that information should also be provided.
Here are some sites where you can get more information on documentation:

The Columbia Guide to Online Style
http://www.columbia.edu/cup/cup/cgos/idx_basic.html

MLA and APA Information at Purdue
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/index.html

The International Federation of Library Associations citation guides
http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/ifla/l/training/citation/citing.htm

Conclusion

The electronic classroom and *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* can enhance each other’s use. Problem posing, composing with a purpose, and considering audience and genre are a natural part of most Internet activities. Thinking about various perspectives, focusing projects, and putting ideas through healthy dialectic processes are not just recommendations made in *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*; they are also the results of most Internet interactions. The Net has ample forums for students to practice exploratory writing as well as any other form of composition that might lie along the open/closed continuum. In short, the Internet, like *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* offers yours students a number of ways to strengthen their thinking and writing.

Finally, the Internet can invigorate many of your own ideas about teaching and writing. Here are some additional sites where you will find helpful advice:

Allyn & Bacon’s CompSite
http://www.abacon.com/compsite

*The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* Website
http://www.abacon.com/ramage

The Computer Writing and Research Labs
http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu

Mark Gellis’ The Rhetoric Page at Kettering University
http://www.kettering.edu/~mgellis/GMI_Rhet.htm
An Introduction to
The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing
and
The WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition

This portion of the manual addresses the Council of Writing Program Administrators’ Outcomes Statement for First-Year Writing. This statement was developed over a four year period. A core group of college writing teachers from across the country organized meetings, forums, conference presentations, and workshops to involve a wide range of teachers in discussions about what should be taught—and learned—in first-year writing sequences. From the start, the group recognized that standards for student achievement can only be set at the local level. Individual teachers, programs, and departments must work to set standards for their particular contexts. Whether you are planning one section or overseeing a program, this chapter of the manual should help you explore The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing in relation to the Outcomes Statement as you develop standards and expectations appropriate for your setting.

This chapter of the manual presents the full text of the Outcomes Statement, followed by commentary on The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing.

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1 The Outcomes Statement was published as “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition,” in Writing Program Administration 23.1/2 (Fall/Winter 1999): 59-63. It was officially endorsed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators in April 2000. It was also published in Harrington, Susanmarie, Rita Malencyzk, Irv Peckham, Keith Rhodes, and Kathleen Blake Yancey (Steering Committee of the Outcomes Group) “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition.” College English 63.3 (January 2001): 321-325.

The Outcomes Statement and additional background are available at the Outcomes Website, http://www.mwsc.edu/~outcomes/.

More information about the Council of Writing Program Administrators, a national association of college and university faculty with professional responsibilities or interests as directors of writing programs, is available online at http://www.wpacouncil.org.
**WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition**

**Introduction**

This statement describes the common knowledge, skills, and attitudes sought by first-year composition programs in American postsecondary education. To some extent, we seek to regularize what can be expected to be taught in first-year composition; to this end the document is not merely a compilation or summary of what currently takes place. Rather, the following statement articulates what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory. This document intentionally defines only “outcomes,” or types of results, and not “standards,” or precise levels of achievement. The setting of standards should be left to specific institutions or specific groups of institutions.

Learning to write is a complex process, both individual and social, that takes place over time with continued practice and informed guidance. Therefore, it is important that teachers, administrators, and a concerned public do not imagine that these outcomes can be taught in reduced or simple ways. Helping students demonstrate these outcomes requires expert understanding of how students actually learn to write. For this reason we expect the primary audience for this document to be well-prepared college writing teachers and college writing program administrators. In some places, we have chosen to write in their professional language. Among such readers, terms such as “rhetorical” and “genre” convey a rich meaning that is not easily simplified. While we have also aimed at writing a document that the general public can understand, in limited cases we have aimed first at communicating effectively with expert writing teachers and writing program administrators.

These statements describe only what we expect to find at the end of first-year composition, at most schools a required general education course or sequence of courses. As writers move beyond first-year composition, their writing abilities do not merely improve. Rather, students’ abilities not only diversify along disciplinary and professional lines but also move into whole new levels where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge. For this reason, each statement of outcomes for first-year composition is followed by suggestions for further work that builds on these outcomes.
Rhetorical Knowledge

By the end of first year composition, students should

- Focus on a purpose
- Respond to the needs of different audiences
- Respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations
- Use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation
- Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality
- Understand how genres shape reading and writing
- Write in several genres

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The main features of writing in their fields
- The main uses of writing in their fields
- The expectations of readers in their fields

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

By the end of first year composition, students should

- Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating
- Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources
- Integrate their own ideas with those of others
- Understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The uses of writing as a critical thinking method
- The interactions among critical thinking, critical reading, and writing
- The relationships among language, knowledge, and power in their fields
Processes

By the end of first year composition, students should

- Be aware that it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text
- Develop flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading
- Understand writing as an open process that permits writers to use later invention and re-thinking to revise their work
- Understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- Learn to critique their own and others' works
- Learn to balance the advantages of relying on others with the responsibility of doing their part
- Use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- To build final results in stages
- To review work-in-progress in collaborative peer groups for purposes other than editing
- To save extensive editing for later parts of the writing process
- To apply the technologies commonly used to research and communicate within their fields

Knowledge of Conventions

By the end of first year composition, students should

- Learn common formats for different kinds of texts
- Develop knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics
- Practice appropriate means of documenting their work
- Control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and documentation in their fields
- Strategies through which better control of conventions can be achieved
Introduction to *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* in relation to *The Outcomes Statement*

The Outcomes Statement distinguishes outcomes—concepts and abilities which can be generalized across contexts—from standards—levels of achievement which need to be specified in relation to the particular curriculum sequence in a department. As you plan your course, you will be making many decisions about the standards that will drive your classroom (which are, in turn, influenced by your program and department standards). You will also make many decisions about the particular activities you and your students will undertake to explore the world of college rhetoric.

*The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* offers a range of writing projects, many more than can be used in a single semester. The choices you make for your course and section(s) will be governed by your students’ past writing experiences, the options open to them later in the curriculum, and your estimates of their needs and abilities. As you select assignments and modify them to fit your local situation, you have many decisions to make about how students complete the assignments. An easy example of this is the fact that most of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* writing projects allow for, but do not require, outside research. As you select assignments, you will need to make choices about how you and your students will engage with the material. You will also be making choices about the genres available to students, the levels of formality involved in assignments, the relationship between reading and writing, and many other areas. This pamphlet outlines different approaches to those choices. It previews both *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* and the *Outcomes Statement* in the hopes that you will spend more time with each, working to build an effective curriculum for your local setting.

*The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* and Rhetorical Knowledge

The Outcomes Statement asks that students address rhetorical knowledge in several dimensions: they should be able to address rhetorical situations by appropriately manipulating purpose and audience in relation to voice, tone, and format; they should write in several genres, and they should understand the relationship between reading and rhetorical knowledge.
Part One of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*, “A Rhetoric for College Writers,” introduces students to the basic elements of rhetoric, including the interaction of purpose, writer, audience, content, form, and meaning. The opening chapter sounds a theme that repeats throughout the text: writers are people who pose problems and ask questions, pursuing those problems and questions in a variety of ways. The kinds of choices that writers make are illustrated with the presentation of open- and closed-form prose, which *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* presents in the first chapter as a continuum, not a strict opposition. By illustrating forms of writing along a continuum, the text presents writers as active decision-makers. The writing projects embedded in Parts One and Two (Chapters 5-17) offer students many chances to make decisions in writing projects as varied as an autobiography, an argument, and an academic research proposal, or a proposed solution to a local political problem. *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* thus presents the chance to work in varied genres within a consistent rhetorical framework. In each chapter, students are asked to think about audience, purpose, format, language, and structure and how those elements affect content and meaning.

The text’s primary task is to help students think and act like writers. *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* takes students’ writing and thinking seriously, and assumes that students can grapple with complexity. Rhetorical scaffolding helps students do this. Chapter 1 asks students to consider writing as problem-posing, immediately involving students in activities that address subject-matter problems and rhetorical problems. Issues of audience, purpose, and genre come up from the start.

In Chapter 1, open-form and closed-form prose are depicted as occupying two ends of a continuum along which a variety of choices are possible—as writing moves along the continuum, issues of thesis identification and placement, language, and style are treated differently. Authors Ramage, Bean, and Johnson note that while students are often bothered by teachers’ refusal to list simple rules for good writing, “the problem is that different kinds of writing follow different rules, leaving the writer with rhetorical choices rather than with hard and fast formulas for success” (13). From the start, they confront what students expect—a set of rules and guidelines—without sacrificing rhetorical concerns. *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* offers a highly structured approach to rhetorical situations, using structure to create spaces for students to wrestle with subject matter and rhetorical questions.

Chapter 4, “Thinking Rhetorically About Purpose, Audience, and Genre,” most directly addresses rhetorical knowledge, arguing that both internal and external forces affect writing. This chapter, which closes the text’s first section, brings together advice and practice about the writer’s motivation, purpose, audience, genre, structure, and style. Like each of the opening chapters, Chapter 4 closes with a brief writing project; this one asks students to “translate” a piece from one writing situation to another. This exercise, which
could be used quickly in class or as the basis for an extended assignment, offers students a chance to practice skills that will be valuable in any formal writing assignment. The chapter also contains a variety of “For Writing and Discussion” activities that ask students to engage in creative imitation, analysis, reading, and sharing activities. These short exercises will support class activities that extend students’ engagement with the textbook chapters.

Chapter 4 focuses attention first on issues of purpose: why am I writing this piece? *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* treats purpose as falling into one of several categories: to express, to explore, to explain, to analyze, to persuade, or to entertain. The early focus on purpose invites students to firmly establish their position regarding their writing. Focusing first on purpose reminds students that successful writing demands engagement. However, successful engagement demands analysis of both purpose and audience, and *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* presentation of expressive writing (arguably the type of writing least sensitive to audience considerations) notes that an impulse to share in writing is an impulse to share with an audience. Chapter 4 presents audience and purpose as always intertwined—and also notes that purposes can be overlapping and fluid. Exploratory writing, which seeks a thesis, can become informative or analytical writing, and literary purposes can always overlap with other purposes.

The writing projects presented in Part Two are too numerous to cover in a single semester. As you (and your students) choose among them, you will be making choices about which genres students will work in. The first chapter in this manual offers suggestions about how to pair various chapters in Part Two—for instance, the project on exploratory writing (Chapter 8) can be paired with any of the chapters on argument or cause and consequence (Chapter 14-17). Whether the exploratory part of the project is a full-fledged essay, as Chapter 8 suggests, or developed informal writing that leads to the full essays offered in the later chapters (as is the case in Chapter 13), would depend on the nature of your course. As you become familiar with the book, you’ll find ways to combine other chapters—for instance, Chapter 14 on causal analysis combines well with Chapter 17 on proposal writing. Working with whatever chapters you choose, students will be guided through different structures for different situations, asked to specify their audience and purpose and to shape content appropriately.

The relationship of rhetorical knowledge and reading is addressed most explicitly in Chapter 6, “Reading Rhetorically.” This chapter focuses on the ways reading processes, like writing processes, must match goals and situations. Reading strategies will vary based on the readers’ own goals—looking for a particular detail? or a thorough understanding?—and the genre they are reading. Reports, for example, with sections and subheadings, lend themselves to previewing and selective reading. Other genres will lead readers to use other strategies. This chapter encourages students to read in multiple drafts,
just as they will write in multiple drafts. Each writing project chapter further supports this approach to reading by including short reading selections followed by “Thinking Critically About….” sections, which help students go back into their reading to think again about how the rhetorical situation has affected both writer and reader.

**The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing and Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing**

The *Outcomes Statement* section on critical thinking, reading, and writing approaches reading and writing as complex and flexible processes for learning as well as communicating. By thinking critically, students will see how writing is an opportunity for them to use their rhetorical activities to develop ideas, situate their own ideas in relationship to others’, and understand how language use can confer power on speakers and writers.

A focus on critical thinking, reading, and writing runs throughout *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*, as the text’s Part One makes clear. The focus on problem-posing means every chapter asks students to begin writing by locating an area of uncertainty—an area of tension, a question without an answer, a problem to be solved. The chapter on exploratory writing (Chapter 8) will be useful for you, even if you don’t ask students to complete the writing project there. Similarly, the Learning Log Tasks presented in Chapter 13 can be good models for preparatory tasks for any writing project. Chapter 8 illustrates how writers seek a thesis by considering multiple solutions to problems. The student samples in this chapter are good illustrations of how to approach this work at an introductory level. The samples (one on preventing violence in schools, the other on hospices) show students’ processes as they begin to make sense of the issues involved in their projects. The activities built into the “Composing Your Exploratory Essay” section will inspire for class activities for virtually any writing project.

The writing projects in Part Two all use a consistent structure. The project assignment is presented at the start, and short readings by students and professionals are used to model the kind of writing assigned and to model the kinds of critical questions readers should ask about such writing. A section on composing the essay contains various strategies for invention, drafting, and revision; guidelines for peer reviewers close each chapter. This structure illustrates that there are many steps in any writing project, thus helping students to see the tasks involved with their essays. The chapters make clear that not all tasks require equal amounts of time and effort for each project or for each writer. *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing* encourages students to reflect on the requirements of their assignment and their rhetorical situation in order to make good choices.
Part Two opens with two chapters that build an effective bridge between the opening section’s focus on rhetoric and *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*’s writing projects. Chapters 5 and 6 build on the foundation provided in Chapters 1 and 4 to help students understand that seeing and reading are acts of interpretation. Seeing and reading rhetorically involve assigning meaning to particulars, and using particulars to build larger points. These are key steps in the fulfillment of any writing project, and these two chapters will help students work with ways of using writing for inquiry, learning, and thinking. The writing projects embedded in these two chapters make links between writing to learn and writing to communicate.

Most of the writing projects leave open the possibility of research. The issue of finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources is highlighted in Chapter 13, which leads students through a project dealing with multiple sources in order to develop a strong and informed thesis. These skills are important in the chapters involving argument (Chapters 15-17), as well as Chapter 11, “Analyzing Numerical Data” and Chapter 9, “Writing an Informative (and Surprising) Essay.” You will find many opportunities to bring readings and research into each chapter, whether you use the readings in the text, ask students to find their own, or make your own class assignments.

Whatever choices you make about the role of independent research in your curriculum, Part Four, “A Guide to Research”, will be invaluable. This section of the text opens with Chapter 21, “An Introduction to Research,” which previews the longer chapters which follow. It offers a rhetorical view of research, inviting students to think about why research can be difficult, and it offers a list of seven essential rhetorical skills for researchers. In Chapter 22, as lessons on five of the seven skills are presented, Ramage, Bean, and Johnson stress that strategies for converting an interest into a good research question must take priority over strategies for locating sources. Without a good research question, writers will quickly be awash in sources that are difficult to synthesize. Before moving to lessons about how to find sources, the chapter spends considerable time helping students understand what kinds of sources they are likely to encounter. After writers are comfortable with framing research questions, they are ready to move to the lessons on finding information in libraries and databases, and the chapter closes with lessons on evaluating traditional and electronic information. In Chapter 23, “Using, Citing, and Documenting Sources,” students will learn how to incorporate sources into their texts. This chapter stresses the complexity of working with sources, and it highlights the rhetorical choices students make as they decide whether to summarize, quote, or paraphrase sources. The final chapter in Part Four, “Advanced or Specialized Research Skills,” supports three strategies that extend the purposeful research taught earlier. This chapter will help students do interviews, use real-time Web resources, and construct questionnaires.
The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing does not explicitly address the connections between language, knowledge, and power, but it does build in numerous student and professional writing samples that illustrate how people use writing in many different settings. While The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing takes care to introduce students to college writing expectations, it also builds bridges between academic and non-academic writing. The writing examples, both student and professional, show writers debating and researching matters of local and national importance. The graphics that head each Part of the textbook additionally emphasize that writing is a way to express political concerns and join in the process of creating social change. The text provides many opportunities for you to show students that writing is a means of action, that writing allows not only the successful completion of graded assignments but also successful involvement in public debates. Writing situations referred to throughout the book demonstrate professionals and students engaging with local political and campus issues. The opening discussion of writing as problem-posing shows professional writers (both in and out of academe) using writing as a means of professional advancement. Furthermore, the chapter on essay examinations (Chapter 26) offers students another connection between writing and power: advice in their writing textbook about how to take tests in other classes (assuming that most writing classes don’t use essay exams).

On the whole, The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing’s focus on posing questions, solving content problems, taking risks, and seeking to inform and surprise audiences well supports outcomes related to critical thinking, reading, and writing. Each chapter provides careful scaffolding for working through complex issues in a way that should make students more aware of the processes required to move through a series of complex tasks for any assignment.

The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing and Processes

The Outcomes Statement section on processes challenges students to develop flexible processes that encourage good development of ideas, balancing individual and collaborative work at all stages of essay development. The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing offers much guidance for the development of writing processes, from the start of the book to the end.

In the first chapter, on writing as problem-posing, the text presents writing as an activity that usually occurs over time: writers wrestle with ideas, a process that involves many activities. Chapter 2 previews a range of exploratory techniques—both written and oral—that will help students pursue ideas and raise more questions. Writing processes are presented not simply as stand-alone activities, but a vital part of intellectual exploration. Exploratory activities are valued not in themselves, but because of the thinking they encourage—what the text calls “wallowing in complexity.” The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing links exploratory processes to the features of academic disciplines, college
professors’ expectations, and also individual development. Chapter 2 introduces techniques that will no doubt be familiar to many teachers—idea mapping, freewriting, dialectic discussion, journals, and reading notes. The text pushes students to consider these activities as flexible tools that will encourage invention. The chapter closes with attention to Peter Elbow’s “Believing and Doubting Game,” an activity that could spur a longer assignment or could be a quick class activity. Exploratory processes are the key to full engagement with writerly problems.

The focus on exploratory activities is supported in each chapter in the writing project section. A section on “Composing Your Essay” appears in each chapter. The composing strategies suggested reinforce the text’s basic theme that writing is about making good decisions. The text takes students seriously, and charges them with the responsibility for making good decisions—and the composing sections offer advice about how to do that. Composing strategies must be used in light of the assignment’s purpose, the essay’s context, and the readers’ expectations. Making those decisions means considering all elements of the rhetorical situation.

Chapter 7, “Writing an Autobiographical Narrative,” provides a good example of the presentation of flexible processes. The chapter presents the assignment and its fundamental characteristics, using freewriting techniques early in the chapter as an example of ways to develop early ideas. Structured, complete-the-sentence activities prompt students to consider some of the basic moves involved in this assignment (completing a sentence such as “You think that Maria has led a sheltered life until…..” helps students see how a good narrative essay develops tension and contraries). Processes are used to engage students throughout the chapter. The “For Writing and Discussion” boxes offer processes that ask students to brainstorm and then discuss. The processes nurtured here move between individual and group work, and they encourage students to see the early stages of a project as a time to consider many possibilities.

Chapter 13, “Analyzing and Synthesizing Ideas,” similarly introduces students to a range of processes, this time addressing reading and writing. A series of learning log tasks are built into the chapter. These tasks move students through careful examination of sources, modeling good reading and note-taking habits.

As each writing project develops, students must make more definitive choices. Guidelines for peer reviewers, included at the end of every writing project chapter, are tailored to the particulars of each project. The structured conversations that result from students’ use of the forms direct them to see that writing involves re-thinking at later stages, that writers must sometimes go back to the beginning to rethink what’s already on the page or screen. And the peer review guidelines urge students to take their roles as readers.
serious—each form prods readers to identify potential revisions which would improve the text, but also prods them to explain their readings of the text. The peer review guidelines thus ask students to work with each other, while encouraging writers to take responsibility for their own texts.

Chapter 27, “Assembling a Portfolio and Writing Reflective Self-Evaluations,” overviews the purpose of reflection (to evaluate, describe, and interpret past experience) and illustrates uses of formal and informal reflection both on the job and in the classroom. This chapter supports single reflection assignments (on one experience or essay) and comprehensive reflection assignments (on a sequence of assignments of a whole semester). This material will be particularly helpful to classes using portfolio assessment, but can be adapted to other assessment situations as well. Moving through Chapter 27 at various points in the semester will provide a forum for students to articulate their evolving notion of their writing processes.

For those looking for further support for peer review, Chapter 18, “Writing as a Problem Solving Process,” contains a thorough discussion of using peer reviews in the revision process. This chapter also stresses the ways that experienced writers revise. This chapter reinforces the support for writers’ choices offered in each writing project chapter, noting that “no two writers compose exactly the same way; moreover, the same writer may use different processes for different kinds of prose” (480). The focus here is on each writer coming to awareness of the kinds of strategies that work in particular situations. Yet the text’s respect for each writer’s decisions does not mean that it refrains from enforcing practice. Indeed, the chapter is highly structured, guiding students through a process of writing that focuses on exploring a problem, drafting, and returning to consider the problem. “For Writing and Discussion” boxes in this chapter offer various exercises that give students practice in different kinds of revising.

The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing offers extensive support for the development of collaborative and social aspects of writing in a chapter devoted to group work. Chapter 25, “Oral Communication: Working in Groups and Giving Speeches,” fits well with the Outcomes focus on learning to balance group and individual work and understanding the social dimensions of writing. Chapter 25 stresses that writers most often work in communities—groups of people who share conversations, passions, and questions. Group work is explained as a career-building necessity as well as a human necessity and a thinking necessity. Notably, the sections of this chapter on groups focus less on peer review work—a topic handled in each writing project chapter—than on other forms of group interaction. This chapter describes how groups work (by balancing groups and individual needs), stresses good listening skills, and offers practical strategies for monitoring group work (looking at roles, body language, and group maintenance techniques).
While some teachers may want to refer only briefly to this chapter, others will find it a great support, especially for classes that use team or collaborative writing assignments. The chapter’s section on problems in groups—clashing personalities, irresponsible members—will be very handy to classes or groups who struggle at times, and the section on group work and critical thinking will help students pull together their group and individual work. The chapter’s section on the connection between critical thinking and group work will help students see how working collaboratively can help them individually, how groups can be great forums for exploring alternatives.

On the whole, the chapters on revising, group work, and each writing project nurture students’ development of processes that should enhance students’ abilities as problem-posers and idea-generators.

The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing and Conventions

The Outcomes Statement section on conventions links conventions (often thought of as surface issues of spelling or usage) to rhetorical concerns, illustrating that conventions are functions of genre, that documentation is a complex task learned over time, and that many issues of grammar and usage are relatively stable in formal writing situations. The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing supports these outcomes by illustrating how textual features are linked both to genre and audience expectation, and by offering a carefully sequenced handbook section (in the hardcover edition) on editing.

Formats for different kinds of texts are covered in each writing project chapter. While the more open-form projects (such as the autobiographical narrative in Chapter 7) offer students wide choices, the chapters explain that choices are governed by constraints of audience and purpose. The more closed-form projects give overt guidance about structure, helping students to practice different forms (for argument and analysis) while introducing the rhetorical underpinnings of the forms.

Chapter 19, “Composing and Revising Closed-Form Prose,” based on reader expectation theory, shows students how to create coherence for readers by linking new information back to old information. By showing why readers comprehend texts more quickly when the introduction forecasts the whole or when points precede particulars, The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing grounds principles of coherence in the psychology of reading rather than in hardbound rules. In contrast, Chapter 20, “Composing and Revising Open Form Prose,” shows how open form writers conscientiously violate reader expectations and thus break the conventions of closed-form prose. Together, these chapters invite students to combine conventions in accord with the rhetorical situation.
Documentation is treated extensively in Chapter 23, “Using, Citing, and Documenting Sources,” which covers both MLA and APA systems.

The handbook chapters here address the challenge of teaching how to improve conventions by offering exercises that could be assigned to individuals or the class. The handbook chapters in Part Six, “A Guide to Editing,” illustrate the importance of editing (while offering hands-on guidance in learning this key skill). Self-assessment starts off Handbook 1, “Improving Your Editing Skills,” enabling students to identify areas to explore in the rest of the handbook. The focus here is on smart editing—looking for problems, understanding how problems are viewed by readers and how they interact with rhetorical concerns, and finding strategies to use in editing and revision. The handbook chapters on sentences, punctuation, usage, and style neatly separate out various editing elements and offer many chances to practice. In conjunction with Chapters 19 and 20, on composing and revising closed- and open-form prose, respectively, the handbook offers a comprehensive approach to revision and editing that address all levels of texts.