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NINTH EDITION

Exploring Issues and Ideas

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Laurie G. KIRSZNER

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The Blair Reader

Exploring Issues and Ideas

Ninth Edition

Edited By

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Contents

Topical Clusters

Classic Essays

Note: Essays are listed in alphabetical order by author's last name.

Civil Rights and Liberties

The College Years

Conformity and Rebellion

Costumes and Masks

Exiles

Fear and Courage

Generation Gap

Government and Misgovernment

Innocence and Experience

Law and Justice

Mother Tongues

Names and Naming

Nationalism and Patriotism

Prejudice

Reading and Writing

Rural Life

Self-Image

Social and Economic Class

Stereotyping

Suburban Life

Teenage Wasteland

Urban Life

Violence

Speeches

Note: Speeches are listed in alphabetical order.

Rhetorical Table of Contents

Note: Selections are listed alphabetically within categories.

Narration

Description

Process

Exemplification

Cause & Effect

Comparison & Contrast

Classification & Division

Definition

Argument & Persuasion

PREFACE

After many years of teaching composition, we have come to see reading and writing as interrelated activities: if students are going to write effectively, they must first be able to read actively and critically. In addition, we see writing as both a private and a public act. As a private act, it enables students to explore their feelings and reactions and to discover their ideas about subjects that are important to them. As a public act, writing enables students to see how their own ideas fit into larger discourse communities, where ideas gain meaning and value. We believe that students are enriched and engaged when they view the reading and writing they do as a way of participating in ongoing public discussions about ideas that matter to them. From the beginning, our goal in *The Blair Reader* has always been to encourage students to contribute to these discussions in the wider world by responding to the ideas of others.

The core of *The Blair Reader* is, of course, its reading selections. As we selected the readings for this book, our goal was to introduce students to the enduring issues they confront as citizens in the twenty-first century. Many of these readings are contemporary; many are also quite provocative. Whenever possible, however, we also include classic readings that give students the historical context they need. For example, Chapter 4, "Issues in Education," includes "School Is Bad for Children" by John Holt; Chapter 5, "The Politics of Language," includes "Learning to Read and Write" by Frederick Douglass; and Chapter 11, "Making Ethical Choices," includes "Letter from Birmingham Jail" by Martin Luther King, Jr. It was also important to us that the selections in *The Blair Reader* represent a wide variety of rhetorical patterns and types of discourse as well as a range of themes, issues, and positions. In addition to essays and articles from print and electronic sources, *The Blair Reader* includes speeches, short stories, poems, and a short play. It is our hope that exposure to this wide variety of formats, topics, and viewpoints can help students discover their own voices and express their own ideas.

As teachers, we—like you—expect a thematic reader to include compelling reading selections that involve instructors and students in spirited exchanges. We also expect readings that reflect the diversity of ideas that characterizes our society and questions that challenge students to respond critically to what they have read. In short, we expect a book that stimulates discussion and that encourages students to discover new

ideas and see familiar ideas in new ways. These expectations guided us as we initially created *The Blair Reader*, and they continued to guide us as we worked on this new ninth edition.

What's New in the Ninth Edition?

In response to the thoughtful comments of the many instructors who generously shared with us their reactions (and their students' reactions) to *The Blair Reader*, we have made many changes in this new edition, adding two new chapters on the reading and writing processes, new readings, new study questions and writing and research prompts, and new visuals.

- **A new Chapter 1,** "Becoming a Critical Reader," includes updated and expanded guidance for reading and reacting critically to texts (including visual texts) and formulating original responses.
- **A new Chapter 2,** "Writing about Reading," explains and illustrates the process of writing responses and academic essays about a range of texts.
- **New Focus sections** showcase related essays that examine contemporary concerns, zeroing in on questions such as "How Free Should Free Speech Be?" and "Why Are Zombies Invading Our Media?"
- **New readings** have been added to stimulate student interest and to introduce them to some of the challenging issues that they confront as students and as citizens. Among the many essays that are new to this edition are Tao Lin's "When I Moved Online . . .," Zeynep Tufekci's "After the Protests," Sheryl Sandberg and Anna Maria Chávez's "'Bossy,' the Other B-Word," Reza Aslan's "Praying for Common Ground at the Christmas-Dinner Table," Jonathan Safran Foer's "How Not to Be Alone," and Barbara Hurd's "Fracking: A Fable." New literary selections—such as Charles Jensen's "Poem In Which Words Have Been Left Out," Lydia Davis's "Television," and Steven Korbar's *"What Are You Going to Be?"*—have also been added.
- **A new Appendix: MLA Documentation** helps students to incorporate research ethically, offering numerous sample citations for commonly used sources.
- **New learning objectives** at the beginning of each chapter reflect and help students to assess their understanding of the chapter's content.

Resources for Students

We designed the apparatus in *The Blair Reader* to involve students and to encourage them to respond critically to what they read. These responses can lay the groundwork for the more focused thinking that they will do when they write. In order to help students improve their critical reading and writing skills, we have included the following features:

- An **Introduction** maps out the book's features to help students get the most from *The Blair Reader*.
- **Paired visuals** introduce each thematic chapter. These visuals engage students by encouraging them to identify parallels and contrasts. In addition, they introduce students to the themes that they will be considering as they read the selections in the chapter.
- A brief **chapter introduction** places each chapter's broad theme in its social, historical, or political context, helping students to understand the complexities of the issues being discussed. This chapter introduction is followed by **Preparing to Read and Write**, a list of questions designed to help students focus their responses to individual readings and relate these responses to the chapter's larger issues.
- **Headnotes** that introduce each selection provide biographical and other background information as well as insight into the writer's purpose.
- **Responding to Reading** questions that follow each selection address thematic and rhetorical considerations. By encouraging students to think critically, these questions help them to see reading as an interactive and intellectually stimulating process.
- **Writing about Reading** prompts (after essays and speeches) give students the opportunity to write a short, informal response or a longer essay that may require research. A **Responding in Writing** prompt after each literary selection encourages students to write a brief, informal response.
- A **Focus** section at the end of each chapter is introduced by a provocative question related to the chapter's theme, followed by a visual that is accompanied by **Responding to the Image** questions. The heart of the Focus section is a group of readings that take a variety of positions on the issue, encouraging students to add their voices to the debate and demonstrating that complex issues elicit different points of view. Each reading is followed by "Responding to Reading" questions and "Writing about Reading" prompts.

- At the end of each Focus section, a **Widening the Focus** feature includes a writing prompt ("For Critical Reading and Writing") that asks students to tie the readings together; a list of essays in other chapters of the book that also address the issues raised by the Focus question; an Internet research assignment; and a field research assignment ("Beyond the Classroom").
- **Exploring Issues and Ideas** suggestions at the end of each thematic chapter encourage students to explore the chapter's theme in greater depth.
- A **Rhetorical Table of Contents,** located at the front of the book on pages xx–xxviii, groups the text's readings according to the way they arrange material: narration, description, process, comparison and contrast, and so on.
- **Topical Clusters,** narrowly focused thematic units (pp. x–xix), offer students and teachers additional options for grouping readings.

Additional Resources for Instructors and Students

Instructor's Manual (0134110404)

Because we wanted *The Blair Reader* to be a rich and comprehensive resource for instructors, a thoroughly revised and updated *Instructor's Resource Manual* has been developed to accompany the text. Designed to be a useful and all-inclusive tool, the manual contains teaching strategies, collaborative activities, and suggested answers for "Responding to Reading" questions. The manual includes web and/or multimedia teaching resources for almost every reading. It also contains new questions for stimulating classroom discussions of the new chapter-opening images. Contact your local Pearson representative for details.

MyWritingLab

MyWritingLab™

MyWritingLab is an online homework, tutorial, and assessment program that provides engaging experiences to today's instructors and students. By incorporating rubrics into the writing assignments, faculty can create meaningful assignments, grade them based on their desired criteria, and analyze class performance through advanced reporting. For students who enter the course underprepared, MyWritingLab offers a diagnostic test and personalized remediation so that students see improved results and instructors spend less time in class reviewing the basics. Rich multimedia resources, including text-specific writing assignments and eText, are built in to engage students and support faculty throughout the course. Visit www.mywritinglab.com for more information.

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On the home front, we once again "round up the usual suspects" to thank. And, of course, we thank each other: it really has been a "beautiful friendship."

INTRODUCTION

The Blair Reader is a collection of readings, and it is also a book that encourages you to write about what you read, focusing your ideas and at the same time discovering new ideas. To support this dual process of reading and writing, *The Blair Reader* includes a number of features to help you explore your reactions to the readings and express your ideas in writing.

The readings in *The Blair Reader* (classic and contemporary essays as well as speeches, interviews, fiction, and poetry) are arranged in nine thematic chapters, each offering a variety of different vantage points from which to view the chapter's central theme. Each chapter opens with a brief introduction, which provides a context for the chapter's theme and includes a list of **Preparing to Read and Write** questions to guide you as you read. These questions are designed to sharpen your critical skills so you can apply those skills effectively. Each chapter introduction also includes a pair of contrasting visual images to introduce you to the chapter's theme and encourage you to begin thinking about the fundamental issues related to that theme.

Following each essay are three **Responding to Reading** questions that ask you to think critically about the writer's ideas, perhaps focusing on a particular strategy the writer has used to achieve his or her goals. In some cases, these questions may ask you to examine your own ideas or beliefs. Question #3 in each set, designated **Rhetorical Analysis,** may ask you to comment on the writer's audience and purpose as well as consider rhetorical strategies such as thesis, organization, evidence, and stylistic techniques. Following these three questions are two **Writing about Reading** prompts. The first prompt, which does not require research, is suitable for either a short, informal response or a longer essay; the second prompt, designated **Writing with Sources,** calls for a source-based essay. (Fiction, poetry, and drama selections are followed by three **Responding to Reading** questions as well as a **Responding in Writing** prompt suitable for a brief informal response.)

Following the essays that explore each chapter's general theme is a **Focus** section that zeroes in on a specific issue. The Focus section's central question—for example, "Is a College Education Worth the Money?"

(Chapter 4) or "What Has Happened to Academic Integrity?" (Chapter 11)—introduces a cluster of thought-provoking readings that take different positions on a single complex issue; a related visual image is also included here. The assignments in the Focus sections encourage you to analyze, interpret, or evaluate the ideas explored in the Focus readings as well as in related outside sources. Each Focus essay is accompanied by three **Responding to Reading** questions, one of which is designated **Rhetorical Analysis** and two **Writing about Reading** prompts; **Responding to the Image** questions follow each visual. The Focus sections end with **Widening the Focus**, which includes "For Critical Reading and Writing" (an essay prompt that asks you to draw connections among the three Focus readings, perhaps referring to other sources in your discussion); "For Further Reading" (a list of related readings in other chapters of the book); "For Focused Research" (a comprehensive research assignment that relies on web sources); and "Beyond the Classroom" (a prompt designed to encourage you to write about your own observations and experiences). Each chapter ends with **Exploring Issues and Ideas**, a collection of additional writing prompts that offer you an opportunity to explore a general topic related to the chapter's theme.

As you read and write, you will also be learning how to think about yourself and about the world. By considering and reconsidering the ideas of others, by rejecting easy answers, by considering a problem from many different angles, and by appreciating the many factors that can influence your responses, you will develop critical thinking skills that you will use not just in college but throughout your life. In addition, by writing about the themes explored in this book, you will participate in an ongoing conversation within the community of scholars and writers who care deeply about the issues that shape our world.

1

Becoming a Critical Reader

In this chapter, you will learn to

- interpret a text
- analyze a text
- highlight and annotate a text
- analyze a visual text

Reading and Meaning

Like many readers, you may assume that the meaning of a text is hidden somewhere between the lines and that you only have to ask the right questions or unearth the appropriate clues to discover exactly what the writer is getting at. But reading is not a game of hide-and-seek in which you search for ideas that have been hidden by the writer. As current reading theory demonstrates, meaning is created by the interaction between a reader and a text.

One way to explain this interactive process is to draw an analogy between a text—a work being read—and a word. A word is not the natural equivalent of the thing it signifies. The word *dog,* for example, does not evoke the image of a furry, four-legged animal in all parts of the world. To speakers of Spanish, the word *perro* elicits the same mental picture *dog* does in English-speaking countries. Not only does the word *dog* have meaning only in a specific cultural context, but even within that context it also evokes different images in different people. Some people may picture a collie, others a poodle, and still others a particular pet.

Like a word, a text can have different meanings in different cultures—or even in different historical time periods. Each reader brings to the text associations that come from his or her own cultural community. These associations are determined by readers' experience and education as well as by their ethnic group, social class, religion, gender, and many other factors that contribute to how they view the world. Each reader also brings to the text beliefs, expectations, desires, and biases that influence how he or she reacts to and interprets it. Thus, it is entirely possible

for two readers to have very different, but equally valid, interpretations of the same text. (This does not mean, of course, that a text can mean whatever any individual reader wishes it to mean. To be valid, an interpretation must be supported by the text itself.)

To get an idea of the range of possible interpretations that can be suggested by a single text, consider some of the responses different readers might have to E. B. White's classic essay "Once More to the Lake" (p. 37).

In "Once More to the Lake," White tells a story about his visit with his son to a lake in Maine in the 1940s, comparing this visit with those he made as a boy with his own father in 1904. Throughout the essay, White describes the changes that have occurred since his first visit. Memories from the past flood his consciousness, causing him to remember things that he did when he was a boy. At one point, after he and his son have been feeding worms to fish, he remembers doing the same thing with his father and has trouble separating the past from the present. Eventually, White realizes that he will soon be merely a memory in his son's mind—just as his father is only a memory in his.

White had specific goals in mind when he wrote this essay. His title, "Once More to the Lake," underscores that he intended to compare his childhood and adult visits to the lake. The organization of ideas in the essay, the use of flashbacks, and the choice of particular transitional words and phrases reinforce this purpose. In addition, descriptive details—such as the image of the tarred road that replaced the dirt road—remind readers, as well as White himself, that the years have made the lake site different from what it once was. The essay ends with White suddenly feeling the "chill of death."

Despite White's specific intentions, each person reading "Once More to the Lake" will respond to it somewhat differently. Young male readers might identify with the boy. If they have ever spent a vacation at a lake, they might have experienced the "peace and goodness and jollity" of the whole summer scene. Female readers might also want to share these experiences, but they might feel excluded because only males are described in the essay. Readers who have never been on a fishing trip might not feel the same nostalgia for the woods that White feels. To them, living in the woods away from the comforts of home might seem an unthinkably uncomfortable ordeal. Older readers might identify with White, sympathizing with his efforts as an adult to recapture the past and seeing his son as naively innocent of the challenges of life.

Thus, although each person who reads White's essay will read the same words, each will be likely to interpret it differently and to see different things as important because much is left open to interpretation. All essays leave blanks or gaps—missing ideas or images—that readers have to fill in. In "Once More to the Lake," for example, readers must imagine what happened in the years that separated White's last visit to the lake with his father and the trip he took with his son.

These gaps in the text create **ambiguities**—words, phrases, descriptions, or ideas that need to be interpreted by the reader. For instance, when you read the words "One summer, along about 1904, my father rented a camp on a lake," how do you picture the camp? White's description of the setting contains a great deal of detail, but no matter how much information he supplies, he cannot paint a complete verbal picture of the lakeside camp. He must rely on his readers' ability to visualize the setting and to supply details from their own experience.

Readers also bring their emotional associations to a text. For example, the way readers react to White's statement above depends, in part, on their feelings about their own fathers. If White's words bring to mind a parent who is loving, strong, and protective, they will most likely respond favorably; if the essay calls up memories of a parent who is distant, bad-tempered, or even abusive, they may respond negatively.

Because each reader views the text from a slightly different angle, each may also see a different focus as central to "Once More to the Lake." Some might see nature as the primary element in the essay and believe that White's purpose is to condemn the encroachment of human beings on the environment. Others might see the passage of time as the central focus. Still others might see the initiation theme as being the most important element of the essay: each boy is brought to the lake by his father, and each eventually passes from childhood innocence to adulthood and to the awareness of his own mortality.

Finally, each reader may evaluate the essay differently. Some readers might find "Once More to the Lake" boring because it has little action and deals with a subject in which they have no interest. Others might believe the essay is a brilliant meditation that makes an impact through its vivid description and imaginative figurative language. Still others might see the essay as falling between these two extremes—for example, they might grant that White is an accomplished stylist but also see him as self-centered and self-indulgent. After all, they might argue, the experiences he describes are available only to relatively privileged members of society and are irrelevant to others.

Reading Critically

Many of the texts you read during your years as a student will be challenging. In college, you read to expand your horizons, so it makes sense that some ideas and concepts that you encounter in your assigned reading may be difficult or unfamiliar. When you approach an academic text for the first time, you may feel somewhat intimidated, or even overwhelmed, and you may find yourself wondering where to start and what to look for. This is natural. Fortunately, the reading strategies discussed below can make it easer for you to interpret unfamiliar texts.

Before you begin to read, you should understand the difference between *reading* and *reading critically*. For some students, the act of

reading a text is simply a search for facts that must be digested and memorized. For critical readers, however, reading is a much more active and dynamic process.

Reading critically means interacting with the text, questioning the text's assumptions, and formulating and reformulating judgments about its ideas. Think of reading as a dialogue between you and the text: sometimes the writer will assert himself or herself; at other times, you will dominate the conversation. Remember, though, that a critical voice is a thoughtful and responsible one, not one that shouts down the opposition. Linguist Deborah Tannen makes this distinction clear in an essay called "The Triumph of the Yell":

> In many university classrooms, "critical thinking" means reading someone's life work, then ripping it to shreds. Though critique is surely one form of critical thinking, so are integrating ideas from disparate fields and examining the context out of which they grew. Opposition does not lead to truth when we ask only "What's wrong with this argument?" and never "What can we use from this in building a new theory, a new understanding?"

In other words, being a critical reader does not necessarily mean arguing and contradicting; more often, it means actively engaging the text by asking questions and exploring your reactions—while remaining open to new ideas.

Asking the following questions as you read will help you to become aware of the relationships between the writer's perspective and your own:

- **Whom is the writer addressing?** Who is the writer's intended audience? Does the writer think that readers will be receptive to his or her ideas? hostile? neutral? How can you tell? What preconceived ideas does the writer expect readers to have? For example, the title of John Holt's essay on early childhood education, "School Is Bad for Children" (p. 78), suggests that Holt expects his readers to have preconceived notions about the value of a traditional education—notions his essay will challenge.

- **What is the writer's purpose?** Exactly what is the writer trying to accomplish in the essay? For example, is the writer's main purpose to explain, to entertain, or to persuade? Does the writer have any secondary purposes—for example, to justify, evaluate, describe, debunk, instruct, preach, browbeat, threaten, or frighten? Or, does the writer have some other purpose (or combination of purposes) in mind? Does the writer appeal to the prejudices or fears of his or her readers or in any other way attempt to influence readers unfairly?

- **What genre is the writer using?** Written texts, such as those in this book, fall into categories called **genres**. Each genre is defined by distinct conventions, structures, and techniques. For example, an academic essay is a genre that has three parts: an introduction,

a body, and a conclusion. Its purpose is to convince readers that its statements are reasonable and worth considering. An academic essay deals with ideas—sometimes complex ideas—and discusses them in precise language, which includes discipline-specific vocabulary. In general, it avoids the use of the first person *I*, and it is free of slang and ungrammatical constructions. An academic essay almost always has a thesis statement, which it develops using facts, examples, and material from credible outside sources (all borrowed material is documented). Essays can be *descriptive*, *narrative*, *expository* (explanatory), or *argumentative*, and each of these types of writing has its own characteristics. For instance, descriptive essays frequently use subjective language and rely on imaginative comparisons to tell what something looks or feels like.

As you approach any reading in this book, ask yourself what genre the writer is using and how this genre determines the way in which the writer treats his or her subject. In addition to the genres represented in this book—which include essays, editorials, op-eds, speeches, poems, and short stories—you will often encounter other writing genres, all of which have their own distinctive forms and conventions.

Throughout your education, you will become familiar with the genres characteristic of your major as well as those of the other subjects you take. Some of these genres appear in the chart below.

Narrative Essay	Argument Essay	Research Essay	Rhetorical Analysis	Response
Purpose				
to tell a story or to relate a series of events	to persuade readers to accept (or at least consider) a debatable idea	to locate, interpret, and evaluate sources related to a topic	to examine the way the elements in a text work together	to reflect on a text and discuss it
Characteristics				
Thesis statement identifies the point the narrative is making Events are usually (but not always) arranged in time order Includes details that help readers visualize events	Thesis statement identifies the position the writer is taking Points are supported by facts, examples, and opinions of experts Refutes opposing arguments by showing that they are inaccurate, incorrect, or misguided	Thesis statement identifies the stand the writer will take or asks a question that the writer will answer Weaves together paraphrases and summaries as well as quotations and original ideas to support points	Thesis statement identifies the point that is being made about the text selected for analysis Examines various elements of the text—for example, the writer's use of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*	Opens with a statement that expresses the writer's reaction to the text Identifies the text's central idea or claim Discusses how the writer feels about what he or she is reading

(*continued*)

Narrative Essay	Argument Essay	Research Essay	Rhetorical Analysis	Response
Characteristics				
May be written in first person (*I*) or third person (*he*, *she*, *it*), depending on whether or not the narrative is based on personal experiences	Relies on logic Uses an appropriate documentation format	May use charts, graphs, infographics, and other visuals to present information May use headings to separate sections of the essay Uses an appropriate documentation format	Makes points supported by references (quotations, summaries, and paraphrases) to the text being analyzed Uses an appropriate documentation format	Identifies points of agreement or disagreement May include personal observations or experiences if they are relevant to the reading May include questions that need to be answered

Other genres you may encounter in your reading as well as in written assignments include the following.

Abstracts
Blog posts
Book or film reviews
Emails
Job application letters
Lab reports
Literacy narratives
Literary analyses
Memoirs
Memos
Paraphrases
Résumés
Summaries
Visuals (charts, tables, infographics, photos, and so on)

- **What voice does the writer use?** Does the writer seem to talk directly to readers? If so, does the writer's subjectivity get in the way, or does it help to involve readers? Does the writer's voice seem distant or formal? Different voices have different effects on readers. For example, an emotional tone can inspire; an intimate tone can create empathy; a straightforward, forthright tone can make ideas seem reasonable and credible. An ironic tone can either amuse readers or alienate them; a distant, reserved tone can evoke either respect or discomfort.

- **How does the writer try to influence readers?** Writers use rhetorical strategies—called **appeals**—to influence readers. One such strategy is the appeal to **logos**, or logic. Another type of appeal is the appeal to **pathos**, or emotion. A final type of appeal is the appeal to **ethos**, or the credibility of the writer. For example, in the Declaration of Independence (p. 320), Thomas Jefferson constructs

a logical argument to support his point that King George III is not fit to rule a free people. In addition, he appeals to the emotions of readers by describing the indignities that he and other colonists must face every day. Finally, he establishes his credibility by identifying himself and the other signatories of the Declaration of Independence as representatives of the United States of America. By doing so, Jefferson makes it clear that he has authority and that he has something important to say.

When you read, ask some of the following questions: Does the writer appeal to reason? Does the writer supply evidence to support his or her ideas? Is this evidence convincing? Does the writer appeal to emotion? What strategies does he or she use to influence you? Finally, does the writer establish his or her credibility? How does the writer demonstrate that he or she is a convincing, legitimate, and trustworthy source of information?

- **What position does the writer take on the issue?** Sometimes a work's title reveals a writer's position—for example, the choice of the word *war* in Christina Hoff Sommers's title "The War against Boys" (p. 247) clearly reveals her position on society's attitude toward boys. Keep in mind, though, that a writer's position may not always be as obvious as it is in these examples. As you read, look carefully for specific language that suggests the writer's position on a particular subject or issue—or for explicit statements that make that position clear. Also, be sure you understand how you feel about the writer's position, particularly if it is an unusual or controversial one. Do you agree or disagree? Can you explain your reasoning? Of course, a writer's advocacy of a position that is at odds with your own does not automatically render the work suspect or its ideas invalid. Remember, ideas that you might consider shocking or absurd may be readily accepted by many other readers. Unexpected, puzzling, or even repellent positions should encourage you to read carefully and thoughtfully, trying to understand the larger historical and cultural context of a writer's ideas.

- **How does the writer support his or her position?** What kind of supporting evidence is provided? Is it convincing? Does the writer use a series of short examples or a single extended example? Does the writer use statistics, or does he or she rely primarily on personal experiences? Does the writer quote experts or just present anecdotal information? Why does the writer choose a particular kind of support? Does the writer supply enough information to support the essay's points? Are all the examples actually relevant to the issues being discussed? Is the writer's reasoning valid, or do the arguments seem forced or unrealistic? Are any references in the work unfamiliar to you? If so, do they arouse your curiosity, or do they discourage you from reading further?

- **What beliefs, assumptions, or preconceived ideas do you have that color your responses to a work?** Does the writer challenge any ideas that you accept as "natural" or "obvious"? Do you consider yourself a hostile, friendly, or neutral reader? What has the writer done to address possible objections to his or her ideas? Should he or she have done more to address these objections? Do your preconceived ideas make it difficult for you to fairly evaluate the writer's ideas?
- **Does your own background or experience give you any special insights that enable you to understand or interpret the writer's ideas?** Are the writer's experiences similar to your own? Is the writer like you in terms of age, ethnic background, gender, and social class? How do the similarities between you and the writer affect your reaction to the work? What experiences have you had that could help you understand the writer's ideas and shape your response to them?

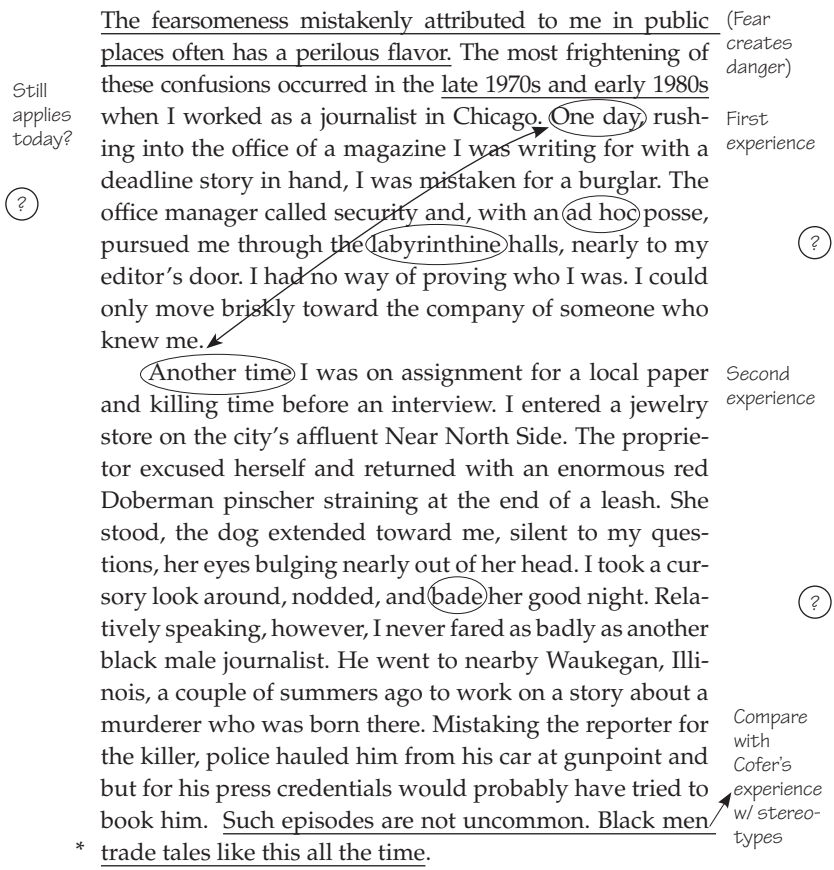
Recording Your Reactions

It is a good idea to read any text at least twice: first to get a general sense of the writer's ideas and then to react critically to these ideas. As you read critically, you interact with the text and respond in ways that will help you to interpret it. This process of coming to understand the text will prepare you to discuss the work with others and, perhaps, to write about it.

As you read and reread, record your responses; if you don't, you may forget some of your best ideas. Two activities can help you keep a record of the ideas that come to you as you read: **highlighting** (using a system of symbols and underlining to identify key ideas) and **annotating** (writing down your responses and interpretations in the margins of the text).

When you react to what you read, don't be afraid to question the writer's ideas. As you read and make annotations, you may disagree with or even challenge some of these ideas; when you have time, you can think more about what you have written. These informal responses are often the beginning of a thought process that will lead you to original insights. Later, when you write about the text, you can refine these ideas into the points that you will develop more fully in your essay.

Highlighting and annotating helped a student to understand the passage on page 11, which is excerpted from Brent Staples's essay "Just Walk On By" (p. 313). As she prepared to write about the essay, the student identified and summarized the writer's key points and made a connection with another essay, Judith Ortiz Cofer's "The Myth of the Latin Woman" (p. 271). As she read, she underlined some of the passage's important words and ideas, using arrows to indicate relationships between them. She also circled a few words to remind her to look up their meanings later on, and she wrote down questions and comments as they occurred to her.



Reacting to Visual Texts

Many of the written texts you read—from newspapers and magazines to websites to textbooks such as this one—include visuals. Some of these visuals (charts, tables, maps, graphs, scientific diagrams, and the like) primarily present information; others (fine art, photographs, cartoons, and advertisements, for example) may be designed to have an emotional impact on readers or to persuade them to change their minds or to take some kind of action.

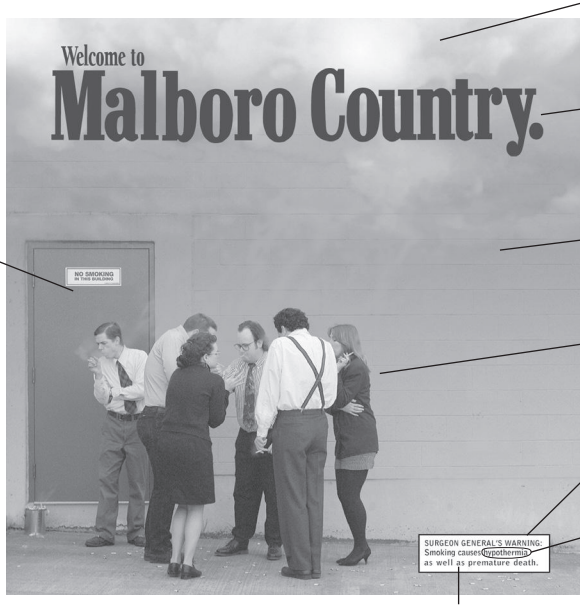
Visuals can be analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated just as written texts are. You begin this process by looking critically at the visual, identifying its most important elements, and considering the relationships of various elements to one another and to the image as a whole. Then, you try to identify the purpose for which the image was created, and you consider your own personal response to the image.

As you examine a visual text, finding answers to the following questions will help you to understand it better:

- **Who is the intended audience of this visual?** Does the visual seem to address a wide general audience or some kind of specialized audience, such as new parents, runners, or medical professionals? Is it aimed at adults or at children? Is it likely to appeal mainly to people from a particular region or ethnic group, or is it likely to resonate with a broad range of people? Often, knowing where a visual appeared—in a popular magazine, on a political blog, in a professional journal, or in a trade publication, for example—will help you to identify the audience the visual is trying to reach.
- **For what purpose was the visual created?** Is the visual designed to evoke an emotional response—fear or guilt, for example? Is it designed to be humorous? Or is its purpose simply to present information? To understand a visual's purpose, you need to consider not only its source but also what images it contains and how it arranges them. (Some visuals contain written text, and if this is the case, you will have to consider this written text as well.)
- **What elements does the visual use to achieve its purpose?** What is the most important image? Where is it placed? What other images are present? Does the visual depict people? What are they doing? How much space is left blank? How does the visual use color and shadow? Does it include written text? How are words and images juxtaposed? For example, a visual designed to be primarily informative may use written text and straightforward graphics (such as graphs or scientific diagrams), while one that aims to persuade may use a single eye-catching image surrounded by blank space.
- **What point does the visual make?** How does it use images to get its message across? What other elements help to convey that message? If the visual is designed to convince its audience of something—for example, to change unhealthy behavior, donate to a charity, vote for a candidate, or buy a product—exactly how does it communicate this message? A photograph of starving children on a charity's website, for example, might convey the idea that a donation will bring them food, but statistics about infant mortality might make the image even more persuasive. Moreover, a close-up of one hungry child might be more convincing than a distant photo of a crowd. Similarly, an ad might appeal to consumers either by showing satisfied customers using a product or by setting a memorable slogan against a contrasting background.
- **What beliefs or assumptions do you have that help to determine your response to the visual?** Is there anything in your background or experience that influences your reaction? Just as with written texts, people react differently to various visual texts. For instance, if you have expertise in economics, you may approach a

chart depicting economic trends with greater interest—or greater skepticism—than a general audience would. If you know very little about fine art, your reaction to a painting is more likely to be emotional than analytical. And, as a loyal Democrat or Republican, you may react negatively to a political cartoon that is critical of your party. Finally, if you or a family member has struggled with illness or addiction, you might not respond favorably to a visual that took a superficial, lighthearted, or satirical approach to such a problem.

The following visual is a parody of an ad for Marlboro cigarettes. The visual, which appeared on the website www.adbusters.org, was annotated by a student who was assigned to analyze it. As he examined the ad, he identified its key elements and recorded his reactions in handwritten notes.



Clouds suggest open air of actual ads (and also suggest smoke)

Large headline mimics headline of actual ads

"No-smoking" sign and closed door show smokers are isolated from others

Blue background suggests open sky of actual ads

People hunched over, coughing

Cluster of smokers = isolated and off to side, reinforcing an idea that they're social outcasts

Parody of actual warning

Key word ("hypothermia") suggests smokers are literally "out in the cold"

Some people may not find this so funny

As you now know, reading critically involves more than just skimming a text for its ideas. It involves exploring the ideas of others as well as considering your own responses to those ideas. In the process, it enables you to discover new ideas and new ways of thinking about issues and to discover new things about yourself and your place in the world. In Chapter 2, you will take this process a step farther and examine the **writing process**—an activity that will help you sharpen your thinking and develop your ideas further. Not only will the writing process help you develop a better understanding of your subject, but it will also help you express yourself clearly, concisely, and effectively.

2

Writing about Reading

In this chapter, you will learn to

- recognize the kind of writing you are expected to do
- identify your purpose for writing
- analyze the audience for your writing
- express your responses to a text
- list ideas to write about
- develop a thesis
- arrange your ideas
- draft your essay
- evaluate and revise your essay

For years, journalists, academics, and others have been proclaiming the decline of writing. Because of the rise of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, the argument goes, people—particularly young people—are writing without taking the time to choose the right word or to craft careful, correct sentences. To a certain extent, of course, this is true: clearly, informal communications such as texts and social media posts are composed quickly, with much less planning and less thought than academic essays or business reports. In fact, many people are probably more accustomed to writing in this informal, spontaneous way than to composing formal, carefully structured pieces of writing.

Still, this situation is not as bad as some people think it is. In fact, when it comes to writing, there is a significant advantage to the rise of social media. Even though much of this writing is not polished or carefully structured, it is still writing, and now that social media has become part of our lives, more and more people are comfortable with expressing ideas in written form. They have also learned the value of concise, efficient communication as well as the need to write for a particular purpose and audience and to pay close attention to content. These valuable skills can be applied to the more formal writing you do in college:

- **Writing concisely** Informal electronic communications often have length restrictions—for example, Tweets are limited to 160 characters—so writers using Twitter learn to express themselves as concisely as possible. Therefore, they tend to be specific and direct.
- **Writing for a particular audience** Informal electronic communications are usually directed at a known audience—a friend or family member, for example, or members of a professional or business network or affinity group. Therefore, writers learn to tailor their messages to their own particular readers.
- **Writing with a purpose** Informal electronic communications are often written with a particular aim in mind—for example, to arrange a meeting or to garner support for a cause. Thus, writers learn to focus on achieving a definite goal.
- **Writing carefully** Informal electronic communications can be forwarded or reposted without the sender's permission. As a result, writers learn to scrutinize their messages more carefully, looking for any content that might have a negative effect on their reputation or on future employment.
- **Writing with images** Informal electronic communications often incorporate images, such as emoticons, emoji, or memes, to achieve particular effects on an audience. As they become accustomed to using images in their writing, writers learn to use them in academic writing as well—for example, adding a chart or a photo to illustrate or support ideas in an essay.

In a sense, then, informal electronic communication prepares you for the more challenging academic writing you will do as a college student (as well as the writing you will do in professional or business situations). As you might expect, however, informal electronic communication and academic writing are very different. For one thing, texts and social media posts are not necessarily grammatically correct or correctly spelled, and they are likely to include slang, abbreviations, emoticons, and shorthand. In addition, sentences are often incomplete or run together, and capitalization is random or even nonexistent. In college writing, this is definitely not the case.

Another difference between informal electronic communications and academic writing is the extent to which careful planning and consideration of rhetorical strategies come into play. When you text a friend or post on Facebook, you write quickly, giving little thought to your message or to the way you are presenting it. In college writing situations, however, instructors expect you to respond to a particular assignment, and to tailor it to the needs and interests of a specific audience.

Moreover, they expect your writing to focus on a single idea, called a **thesis**; to support this thesis with reasons, examples, facts, details, and so on; and to be well organized and coherent. Finally, instructors expect your writing to be clear and grammatically correct, adhering to specific academic conventions of style, structure, format, and documentation. The first step in meeting these standards is to see writing as a process, one that helps you to achieve your purpose, focus your ideas, and express yourself clearly and concisely. The rest of this chapter outlines and illustrates the writing process you will follow as you complete written assignments for your college courses.

The activities discussed below actually overlap and are often repeated. In other words, the writing process is recursive rather than linear, more likely to be characterized by backtracking and repetition than by an orderly forward movement. As you become a more experienced writer, you will discover what works best for you and develop your own approach to this process.

Understanding Your Assignment

The writing assignment you are given usually specifies the kind of writing—or **genre**—for example, a response, an essay, a proposal, or a report—you are expected to do. Academic genres vary from discipline to discipline and from course to course, and they follow specific stylistic and structural conventions.

The first step in the writing process is identifying the genre in which you are to write and understanding the conventions of that genre. In completing the assignments in this book, you will be writing **responses** and academic **essays**, which often incorporate one or more outside sources—not only print or web texts but also interviews, images, films, music lyrics, and so on. Other academic genres are listed and defined in Chapter 1. In addition to identifying the genre called for in each assignment, you will need to read your assignment very carefully to make sure you know exactly what is expected of you—for example, how many pages to write, when the assignment is due, and whether the use of outside sources is encouraged (or required).

Understanding Your Purpose

Once you understand your assignment, you should consider your **purpose**—why you are writing. What do you hope to accomplish? For example, do you want to *inform* your audience or to *argue* in favor of a particular position? Your purpose may also be to observe, recall, explain causes or predict effects, describe, analyze, or evaluate—and you may also have other purposes, or more than one purpose.

Understanding Your Audience

Next, consider who your readers will be. For example, will you be addressing your instructor, your classmates, or a wider audience? Understanding what your readers already know about your topic and what expectations or biases they are likely to have will help you decide what information to include and how to present and develop your ideas.

Writing a Response

Most of the writing you will do in college will be in response to reading—assigned books and essays, newspapers and journals, research materials, electronic sources, and so on. If you have followed the active reading process described in Chapter 1, you will have highlighted and annotated your reading material. Once you have done this, you can write an informal **response** in which you assess what you have read and record your reactions to it. This process will not only help you to understand what you have read but also suggest ideas to write about.

Amber Lombardi, a student in a first-year writing course, was given the following writing assignment.

> In the essay "Why We Work," Andrew Curry notes that work today is "hardly the paradise economists once envisioned." In fact, he says, workers are largely discontented, facing long hours and great stress; for many, work has lost the meaning it once had. Do you see this in your own life and in the lives of those you know? Do you agree that work has lost its meaning? Write a one-page response to help you formulate your reactions to the ideas in Curry's essay. Then, referring to Curry's discussion as well as to one or two outside sources, write a two- to three-page essay in which you explore these questions, supporting your points with examples from the experiences of friends and family members. (You can conduct interviews with them in person or by phone or email.) Be sure to explain what you mean by *meaningful work*.

Amber began her writing process by reading "Why We Work" and the Responding to Reading questions that follow the essay on page 358. After highlighting and annotating this essay, she wrote the response that appears on pages 18–19.

Amber Lombardi
Professor Lieu
English 110
2 October 2015

Response to "Why We Work"

In "Why We Work," Andrew Curry discusses why workers today are dissatisfied with their jobs. He starts by examining the Industrial Revolution and how people's jobs got broken up into parts so that a worker would do one task repetitively on an assembly line for hours on end. According to Curry, workers today feel "crushed"; they are like hamsters in a wheel, running as fast as they can just to stay in one place. If today's workers slow down or think creatively, they risk losing their jobs. It seems pathetic that in a society in which everyone has to work, so many people don't think their jobs have any value.

I can relate to this feeling because of the office job I had the summer between high school and college. One of my routine tasks was to copy and paste reviewer comments from three different versions of the same document into one master document. It was tedious, but that wasn't the problem. The real problem was that I found my job frustrating because I could see that there was a better way to do it, but my supervisor didn't want to hear about it.

At this job, I felt I was being treated like the workers whom Curry describes, almost as if I were a body without a mind. After all, my supervisor made it clear that I wasn't being "paid for thinking," as the factory foreman, Frederick Taylor, was quoted as saying in the Curry essay. (Taylor treated workers as if they were interchangeable, and the

Lombardi 2

tasks he assigned them were uninteresting fragments of the whole.) I was warned to stop thinking creatively about how to improve the process and just do it using the old method. As Curry points out, workers resent being treated in this way because it makes it impossible for them to take pride in what they are doing.

According to Curry, the rise in high technology in the 1990s didn't do much to improve the balance between work and life for most workers. Today, most employees are stressed because their work life invades their private life via cell phones and email and they are essentially working 24/7. But would this situation be a problem if the work was something that actually helped the world—something meaningful? To me, that is the important question that Curry is asking.

Collecting Ideas

After writing a response to the assigned reading, your next step is to gather ideas to write about. One useful way to find ideas is to **brainstorm** about your assignment by reviewing and then expanding your active reading notes and your written response. At this point, you can also look for outside sources to supplement your own ideas. Later, you will focus on how to develop and structure these ideas in your essay.

After reading Andrew Curry's "Why We Work" and writing a response to his ideas, Amber Lombardi looked online for information about job satisfaction, and she also conducted informal interviews with her brother and sister-in-law and two friends. Then, she composed the following brainstorming notes. Notice that she supplies page or paragraph numbers for information from her sources so that when she writes her essay, she will be able to distinguish others' ideas from her own and document material she borrowed. (See the Appendix for information on MLA documentation style.)

Brainstorming Notes

In 1930, Kellogg cut the workday by two hours because he believed that the future of work would/should involve more free time, a "workers' paradise," in Curry's words. (pars. 1–2) **But people now work longer and harder to afford the standard of living they want.**

It's harder to get and hold a job; people are willing to accept less just to keep their jobs.

***Employees upset about the reality of their work compared to the ideal. Job satisfaction is going downhill. They feel insecure, overworked, unappreciated, unfulfilled. (Refer to Weber *WSJ* article on job satisfaction, par. 8)

History:

- After Industrial Revolution, idea of workers as being interchangeable; Frederick Taylor, factory foreman, broke down work into "component parts." Assembly line; **can't see whole picture**. Repeating small part of process. (pars. 9–11) [Tedious and frustrating, like task I had!]
- Labor unions fought for reduced hours for workers. (par. 14)
- Roosevelt's New Deal encouraged consumerism; new things for people to want and work for. Then, postwar boom of 1950s and 1960s, everyone working, everyone buying. (pars. 17–18)

More work, less satisfaction. Hard work, no spiritual meaning. (Economic downturn in 1970s.) *[But what exactly is "spiritual meaning" when it comes to work?]*

Now can't count on having a job for life, can be fired at any time. Workers feel less valued. (So why get emotionally invested?) **You are replaceable**.

Instead of being offered job security, workers at high-tech firms in the 1990s were offered free food, on-site massages, dry-cleaning services, games. Companies such as Google still do. (par. 22) But people would rather have more time with family than bonuses and backrubs, right?

Technology allows work to invade home life: always on call. *[But maybe that wouldn't be so bad if you really liked the work.]*

***Opposite of assembly-line mentality.

People I know:

Adam: being a **graduate teaching assistant** is creative, has "huge personal meaning" for him, and he "carries it in his head 24/7." Likes the freedom to make own choices about teaching methods, sees how it helps students.